

>>> Our lesson regarding gender stereotypes begins with the students in groups being assigned topics like "clothes," "toys," "personality traits," "interests/careers," etc. Students are asked to brainstorm things typically associated with "boys/men" and "girls/women" under each category - for example, what are girls supposed to like/dislike? What are boys supposed to wear? Afterwards, we look at the lists as a class and discuss questions such as: Are these traits/characteristics true of all boys/girls? For example, can girls also be funny, or like to play video games? Can boys be nurses or emotional? I draw a box around what they have listed for boys vs. girls, and point out that although some people seem to fit into gender norms or stereotypes more than others, almost everyone has times or parts of themselves that are outside the box. This leads us into defining what gender stereotypes are. We talk about how these are assumptions or roles our society has for people based on their gender, and despite the many roles men and women play in today's world, some people still judge others based on how they think males and females act. Stereotypes are ideas about how people will act, based on the group to which they belong. We discuss how these roles or assumptions can be a problem when they are the reason for discrimination or bullying, for example.

>>> Vocabulary

>>> Identity - The sense a person has of herself, who she is and what she thinks is important and defining of herself. Gender identity has to do with how someone relates to his or her gender on the inside.

>>> Gender - The state of being male or female. Gender also refers to the social roles, behaviors and traits that a society may assign to men (masculine) or to women (feminine)

>>> (Note: Many different ideas are considered when defining the term gender. This is a working definition, but one goal of this lesson is for students to develop individual and collective understandings and criticisms of the term so it suits their personal and developmental needs.)

>>> Gender expression - the way a person chooses to show his or her gender to others

>>> Stereotype - an oversimplified and/or unfair belief or idea that groups of people have particular characteristics or that all people in a group are the same

>>> Biological sex - Defined by chromosomes we are born with, which code for certain traits like sexual organs and hormones (we discuss this more during our biology of the reproductive system class). We discuss that for many people, their biological sex matches their gender identity and expression, but this is not true for every person.