

Gender: Participants define gender and discuss ways it influences their lives.

Lesson Plans:

1. “Just Because…”--Stereotypes
2. Gender

Lesson: “Just Because”—Stereotypes (adapted from TKF)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: How do others perceive you? What is it like to be you?

OBJECTIVES/PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS: **Participants define “stereotype;” participants identify stereotypes and expectations that others place on them; participants break down stereotypes and expectations, and define themselves outside of stereotypes.**

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE: Stereotypes are commonly held beliefs, assumptions, or oversimplifications about groups or types of people. We all learn stereotypes about gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and age from the media, our peers, and families. Stereotypes, whether supported by evidence or not, make it difficult to see people as individuals. Some stereotypes, both positive and negative, get translated into expectations from parents/guardians, teachers, friends, and society as a whole: if, for example, you believe that blondes are not smart, you may not recognize the abilities of a blonde student or push her to succeed since you **already believe she won’t**. **Some stereotypes also get internalized: if a blonde student is constantly teased that blondes are not smart, she may begin to believe it and be less motivated in school.** Teaching participants about the historical origins of stereotypes, how to think critically, and the importance of seeing people as individuals will help them challenge stereotypes.

MATERIALS:

- Pens or pencils
- Pictures or videos promoting common stereotypes
- **“Just Because” worksheet**

LENGTH OF LESSON: 30 minutes

PROCEDURE:

1. Begin by asking participants to brainstorm things people think about them based on how they look or because they are part of a certain group, especially things that are not necessarily true. **Give examples: “people think I am a trouble-maker because I skateboard” or “people think I am good at math because I am Asian” or “people think I like pink because I am a girl.”** If participants say what people think about them without attaching it to a reason, ask them why they think people think that (to get them to say the group it is associated with). Ask participants to share how it makes them feel that people may think that about them if it is not true or even if it is.

2. Explain that the ideas they just brainstormed are stereotypes. Explain that stereotypes are beliefs or oversimplifications about groups or types of people. Give examples of common stereotypes: “blondes are not smart,” “Muslims are terrorists,” “African-Americans like chicken,” “people who are fat are lazy,” “girls can’t throw balls,” “people who are gay try to hurt children.” Explain some stereotypes may have evidence to support them, but that does not mean they should be applied to the whole group—it is not true, for example, that ALL blondes are not smart. Remind participants of how they felt when others projected stereotypes onto them—even though they may be part of that group, they are not how some people assume they are.
3. Explain we learn stereotypes from our families, friends, and the media. Show pictures or videos depicting common stereotypes.
4. Tell participants they will write a poem based on stereotypes about their own identities. In the poem, they will also get to debunk the stereotypes by stating positive traits about themselves.
5. **Read example “Just Because” poems.**
6. Pass out the “Just Because” worksheets. Give participants ~15 minutes to work on their poems. Assist as necessary.
7. When participants have completed their poems, have them read them aloud. Remind them to practice being confident as they claim their identities.
8. Ask participants what they learned today. Ask them to tell you what they know about stereotypes.
9. Participants can take home their poems or they can be posted in the Girls Only space.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What stereotypes do you play into, on purpose or not? Do you think some stereotypes are true? What assumptions do people make about you that aren’t true? What assumptions do people make about you that *are* true?

EVALUATION: Did participants identify common stereotypes? Did participants identify stereotypes people have about them? Did participants write a “Just Because” poem? Did participants challenge stereotypes?

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Have participants brainstorm practical ways to challenge stereotypes. Have participants put their ideas into practice and report back on how they challenged stereotypes.

Just Because

Just because I am _____,

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am _____.

Just because I am _____,

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am _____.

Just because I am _____,

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am _____.

Just because I am _____,

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am not _____

I am _____.

Just Because

Anonymous teen girl, San Diego CA

Just because I am Mexican,

Doesn't mean I speak Spanish

Doesn't mean I am "illegal"

Doesn't mean I'm illiterate

I am a good reader.

Just because I am a girl,

Doesn't mean I like to shop

Doesn't mean I am boy crazy

Doesn't mean I can't play sports

I am a loyal friend.

Just because I'm Catholic,

Doesn't mean I go to church

Doesn't mean I read the bible

Doesn't mean I am better than you

I am a nice person.

Just because I am young,

Doesn't mean I am naïve

Doesn't mean I don't care

Doesn't mean I will "understand someday"

I am a human being.

Lesson: Gender

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How does being a girl influence your life?

OBJECTIVES/PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS: Participants deconstruct how being classified as a girl influences their lives; participants explore the difference between biological sex, gender roles, and personal assumptions; participants think critically about the limitations and effects of gender roles.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE: **Gender expectations play a significant role in defining young people's** lives and their aspirations for the future. Girls today live in a world where rape and physical abuse instill fear, women often do not receive equal pay for equal work as men, and women are not represented equally in government,. Teaching young people to deconstruct gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes helps them think critically, challenge sexism and homophobia, and helps them make decisions on how to look, act, and be based on their individual thoughts and feelings rather than on societal expectations.

MATERIALS:

- Board or large paper
- Paper
- Pens and pencils

LENGTH OF LESSON: 45 minutes to 1 hour

PROCEDURE:

1. Begin by explaining that today participants will be thinking about what it means to be a girl or boy in our world today.
2. Explain the difference between biological sex and gender roles. Explain biological sex is the physical characteristics that make someone male and female. For example, a female is typically born with a vagina and ovaries and a male is typically born with a penis and testicles. Explain a gender role is the way a person behaves (or the way our society says a person should behave) as either a boy or a girl. Explain the main difference is that biological sex is something people are born with and a gender role is ideas and behaviors people learn, not ideas they are born with.
3. Divide participants into two groups.
4. Pass out paper and pencils to each group. Direct one group to brainstorm: What is expected of girls in our world today? Direct the other group to brainstorm: What is expected of boys in our world today? Ask both groups to think about how the world expects girls and boys to be, act and look. Remind them to think about what the media (ex: TV, movies, magazines) expects boys and girls to be like.
5. Have each group share with the whole group. Some examples include: boys play sports, boys do not cry, boys ask people out, girls wear makeup, girls wear skirts, girls have babies. **Post the lists on the board or copy them onto the board. Draw a box around the "boy" list and a box around the "girl" list.**

7. Explain that some things in each list are based on biology, like women having babies, and that even though women can have children and are expected to have children, not all women want to have children.

8. **If participants bring up the idea that someone may be called gay or lesbian for “stepping out of his/her box,” ask participants what gay or lesbian means. Explain that sexual orientation is different than gender roles— heterosexual means you are attracted to the opposite sex, gay/lesbian means you are attracted to the same sex, bisexual means you are attracted to both sexes. Remind participants that people can also be unsure about or questioning their sexual orientation and that is okay.**

9. Begin a discussion about gender roles. Ask participants:

- How do you feel when you see this is what is expected of boys and girls?
- Is there anything in the girl box that boys are not able to do? (No. Boys have the ability to _____ and _____). If we look at the boy box, is there anything that girls are not able to do? (No, girls have the ability to _____ and _____). (Remind participants **these boxes include things that boys and girls are “supposed” to do or be like, not what they might actually be like**).
- Do you think it might be hard for a boy to do things outside of the boy box? Why? Do you think it is hard for a girl to do things outside of the girl box? Why?
- Do you think the pressure to stay inside the box is just as strong for girls as it is for boys? (There is pressure on both boys and girls to behave a certain way).
- **What might happen if someone steps outside of his/her box or doesn't fit in his/her box?** (He/she might feel afraid, judged, or be made fun of. Or, he/she may feel freer, happier, and more well-rounded)
- Do you think people who do not fit into these boxes deserve to be treated badly? (All people deserve to be treated with respect and as an equal).
- Do you think it is fair that boys and girls feel pressured to behave according to gender roles? Why?
- Are these ideas people are born with?
- Is wearing makeup something a girl is born with? (No, girls are not born with that. It is something people learn. Some girls choose to wear makeup and some do not. Physically or biologically, anybody – a girl or a boy – can wear makeup).
- Are boys born so that they cry less? (No, they are not born less able to cry than girls. Physically or biologically, males and females can cry).
- **Where did these beliefs of how boys and girls are “supposed” to be come from? (People may have learned these beliefs from television, movies, friends, religion, family, etc.).**

10. After the general discussion, ask participants to share how being a girl affects their life. Ask: Does being a girl limit you? Does it have to limit you? What do you like about being a girl? What **don't you like about being a girl? Do you ever wish you were a different gender? Why or why not?**

11. Erase the boxes to demonstrate equality. Explain that all boys and girls have the right to be who they are. Explain that sometimes gender roles can make limitations and unrealistic expectations for ourselves and the people around us. Explain that the more we are aware of

what is biological fact and what are beliefs about gender roles, the more each of us is able to make our own decisions about how to look, act, and be.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What do you like about being **a girl**? **What don't you like about being a girl**? Do you ever wish you were a different gender? Why or why not?

EVALUATION: Did participants discuss how being a girl impacts their lives? Did participants discuss gender?

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Have participants think of creative ways to challenge gender roles and report back about their experience. Invite someone who identifies as transgender to visit Girls Only to talk about gender expectations and their experience.