

“Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if at the same time she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good looking, good-tempered, well-groomed and non-aggressive.”

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Greater Expectations?



Level 1



15 to 30



90 minutes



Complexity: Level 1

Group size: 15 to 30

Time: 90 minutes

Overview: This activity uses brainstorming to help participants understand the different expectations towards and demands on girls/ young women and boys/young men in contemporary society. It allows participants to explore concepts of gender equality further.

Objectives:

- To learn how to recognise society's differing expectations towards girls and boys, and young men and young women
- To reveal and discuss the gender expectations and norms which individuals face
- To discuss how gender norms affect people's human rights

Materials:

- Five sheets of flip chart paper
- a large wall
- masking tape
- a marker for each participant

Preparation: Hang six pieces of flipchart paper on the wall. Each paper should be marked with one of the following typical settings:

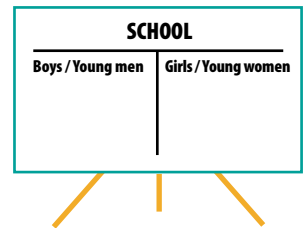
• School · Workplace · Family · Friends · Society · Partner

Divide each piece of flipchart paper into two columns: one should have the title 'boys / young men', and the other should have the title 'girls / young women'.



Instructions

1) Stick the prepared pieces of flipchart paper on the wall before the activity. Tell participants they should take a few minutes to think about what they believe is expected or demanded from girls and boys in the different settings identified on the posters. Allow them to walk around or sit down and think, and stress that they should do this part of the activity individually. They should write their ideas on the pieces of flipchart paper (in the appropriate box or column).



2) Once this phase has been completed, divide the participants into six sub-groups and place each group next to one of the pieces of paper. Tell them to discuss their setting with others in the group. They could use the following guiding questions to support the discussion:

- Which differences can you identify between expectations and demands placed on girls, and those faced by boys?
- What would you like to change?
- How do you think this can be changed?

Allow about 20-30 minutes for this part of the activity.

3) Bring the group together and ask each small group to report back briefly on their discussion to the whole group. Ask the other participants for initial reactions to the results: how do they feel about them, and does anything surprise them?

4) After the presentations, move to the debriefing and evaluation and continue discussion of the group work, focusing on how people can challenge existing gender norms and expectations.



Debriefing and evaluation

Start by asking participants how they felt doing the activity and if there was anything that they found difficult. You can then use the following questions to run the discussion:

- How did you find the exercise? How did you feel during the exercise?
- Was it easy to identify gender expectations in the first part of the activity?
- Where do people's gender expectations come from? Who establishes them?
- Is it easy for boys and girls / young men and young women to fulfil these expectations? What are the difficulties?
- Who helps to promote these expectations?
- How do we ourselves promote them (whether consciously or unconsciously)?
- Have you ever felt pressured by gender expectations? How did it feel? How did you react?

- Have you ever pressured others to conform to gender expectations? How do you think it would have made those others feel?
- Have you ever challenged gender expectations or norms? How was your challenge taken? Were there any consequences?
- Can gender expectations or demands violate human rights? Which rights, and how are they violated?
- How could we or our organisation work to address damaging gender stereotypes and expectations? What could be done to promote gender equality among young people?

Tips for facilitators

While this is a classic brainstorming and discussion activity, the topic of gender expectations can be controversial. Expectations relating to gender are also partly a matter of perception. As a result, this activity may cause disagreement: some participants may see gender expectations as perfectly reasonable, while others may see them as oppressive and demanding. How expectations are perceived is also likely to be linked to cultural and societal values. You could address some of these issues in discussion.

Please note that this exercise has been deliberately based around binary gender norms, however it is highly likely that it will trigger discussion of issues linked to diverse gender identities. If you feel it is important to challenge binary gender norms in the activity, you could add an extra space on the flipchart for 'other genders' besides 'girls / young women' and 'boys / young men'. You will need to adapt some of the questions in the debriefing.

Suggestions for follow-up

This activity can be a good starting point for exploring the concept of gender-based violence and learning about its different forms. The activity "Understanding gender-based violence" looks at different examples of gender-based violence, and participants discuss the consequences for individuals and society.

Ideas for action

Suggest that participants conduct longer-term observations of expectations relating to gender, focussing on different settings. This could be done over a week or a month. The results of their observations could be compared to a survey of young people of different genders in real settings (for example, school) about their perceptions of the expectations placed on different genders. You can initiate a discussion of the similarities and differences between the perceptions resulting from the survey and those resulting from individual observation.

Source: This activity was developed on the basis of an activity developed by the Intercultural Center, Foundation of Women's Forum, Sweden.

