 Being me

Duration: 45 minutes

Purpose of the task

This activity has been designed to enable students to explore how views about appropriate male and female behaviour have changed over time. It also provides them with the opportunity to explore changing community attitudes to how male and females should behave. The activity allows for students to connect issues of gender to different positions of power central to adolescent behaviour and relationships.

Course outcomes

2.2 Challenge inequity, discrimination and harassment based on age, sex, gender, race, religion, disability and sexuality.

3.1 Evaluate how contextual factors influence attitudes, values and behaviours.

6.2 Demonstrate behaviours that model positive values, beliefs and attitudes and promote inclusion and equity for self and others.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Clarify personal values and expectations related to gender.
* Challenge negative community values, attitudes and expectations relating to gender roles and gender diversity.
* Recognise the influence that gender expectations and assumptions have on personal identity, relationships and behaviours.
* Examine gender expectations, agency and the implications for social relationships

Required resources and materials for preparation

Student activities are set around:

* small group
* individual activities
* offline
* online

Equipment required:

* Board or graffiti sheets, e.g. butchers paper per group of 4-5 students
* Handout 1 – discussion questions – 1 per small group of 4-5 students
* Marcus wants to be a man transcript – 1 per pair minimum
* Internet access for [Like a girl clip](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs)

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Personal values and beliefs   * influences on values and beliefs, e.g. technology, social and cultural norms, media, family, relationships * influence of values, attitudes and beliefs on decisions and actions in various contexts * self-concepts |
| Relationships  Focus: Promoting safety, equality and respect in relationships | Valuing and advocating for the rights of self and others   * changing perspectives and challenging stereotypes * respecting others * challenging discrimination based on race, sex, age, disability, religion, culture, gender and sexuality   Power and influence in relationships   * power in relationships, e.g. positive use of power, situational power * expectations of partners and others * different values and beliefs |

Teaching notes

Before students can examine power as a part of relationships, they need to understand what is meant by gender and how gender is shaped by the social world in which they live. Students should be given the opportunity to identify how their behaviour and the behaviours of others is influenced by expectations associated with gender.

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audio visual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Learning experiences

Activity one - Expectations (20-25 minutes)

Note:The following statements may have been previously explored through the 7-10 PDHPE curriculum. Students will have changing views on gender as they move into their senior years. Where students feel comfortable, encourage students to work with a partner to share their views and position themselves in relation to the gender-based statements.

1. Students work with a partner to discuss the following statements:
   * One of the things I enjoy most about being a male/female is…
   * My friends would say that I am…
   * I act powerfully when…
   * I define masculinity as…
   * I define femininity as…
   * If I were a member of the opposite sex I would probably enjoy…
   * As a male/female, I strongly challenge the expectation that I should…
   * One of the most important things in my life is…
2. In small groups, students share their responses and discuss the following:
   * Do you think personal perceptions of gender and expectations have changed since students in your class were in primary school? Why? Why not?
   * What similarities and differences were there across group responses?
   * When did students first become aware of their masculinity or femininity?
   * Where do young people get their ideas about ‘appropriate’ male and female behaviour? Create a list. Which of these sources can be trusted sources? Why? Why not?
   * Where can young people access information that shows the diversity of masculine and feminine behaviour in a positive way?
3. Discuss with students the use of the phrases “be a man” and “act like a lady”.
   * Survey students’ familiarity and understanding of these terms.
   * Where this term is not culturally relevant for students, substitute for more familiar concepts such as “girl” or “woman”.
4. Use visible space (board, graffiti sheets) to create two columns/ areas for recording student responses. As a large group share and record responses to the following two statements:
   * What does it mean to act like a man?
   * What does it mean to be a lady?
5. Students record their responses under the appropriate heading. This can be done using sticky notes for each student,
6. In small groups, students discuss the following questions (**Handout 1**):
   * What are the contexts in which they have come across these terms, e.g. on TV, from family members, at school?
   * What are the main themes emerging from the lists?
   * What do these say about expectations of males and females?
   * Are these attitudes still common and relevant today? Why? Why not?
   * Are there any expectations you would like to see changed? Why?
   * Are there any expectations you would like to remain? Why?
   * What does it say about social relationships?
   * What does it say about gender, sexuality and power?
   * How do individuals, groups and communities resist or challenge the representations?
   * Are expectations to ‘act like a man’ or ‘be a lady’ different in rural and urban contexts?
   * How might these expectations lead to negative outcomes?
   * Are there situations when these expectations could lead to positive outcomes?
   * On this basis, would you want to be male or female? Why?

Activity two – Who’s the man (10 minutes)

1. As a group, read the transcript Marcus wants to be a man.
2. In small groups, students discuss the question, “What does being a man mean to you?” Students should consider responses from the earlier discussion and record discussion points to redefine what it means to be a man.
   * Where possible students could work in a combination of both single sex and mixed sex groups to determine any variations on opinions and ideas across the groups.
3. As a whole group, share thoughts on “What does being a man mean to you?”
   * The discussion should focus on ideas such as looking after others (brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, and friends), taking responsibility for decisions and actions, showing respect and support for others.

Activity three – Like a girl – the power of language (10 minutes)

1. Explain to students how language can be powerful and can send messages directly and indirectly which impact on the health, wellbeing and identity of individuals and groups.
2. As a group, discuss where students have heard the term “like a girl” use, e.g. sport settings, home, and playground.
3. Students work in pairs or small groups. Ask students:
   * Describe what it means to act like a girl, e.g. run like a girl, throw like a girl, cry like a girl.
   * What is the intention of the phrase in that context? For example, when someone says you throw like a girl, it is often used as an insult to express that a throw was weak or soft.
   * What message does this language and phrase send to others (including young girls)?
   * What are the implications for personal identity if this term is used in society without being challenged?
   * What are some alternative phrases that could be used instead?
4. Wrap it up by watching the clip [Like a girl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs).

Marcus wants to be a man

This is Marcus. He likes fast cars, Spaghetti, and Pixar movies make him cry [Sad background music].

Marcus wants to be a man but there is a problem; he just doesn’t know what being a man means. In fact, no one does anymore! It’s a full-blown man-crisis! [Sound of a rocket taking off]

It never used to be like this. We used to live in a golden age, where men were men, and women were [pause] second-class citizens.

Actually, scrap that bit about it being a ‘Golden Age’. Then some bright women with big ideas had to go and spoil the party, demanding social change and gender equality for all. And everyone who wasn’t a complete jerk agreed.

Marcus is also not a jerk. He’s just confused. Without a solid idea of what masculinity is, he is doomed to wander through life without ever really understanding what it takes to be a man, right? Maybe not.

The truth is Marcus now has the freedom to choose the type of man he wants to become. Being a man can mean whatever you want it to. Masculinity manifests itself in many ways. It means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. So, have a think about the values that are important to you, keep doing what you love to do, and respect other people’s points-of-view. If you do all these things, you’ll be a man without a doubt.

Source: Cain, B. (2014). [Marcus wants to be a man](http://au.reachout.com/marcus-wants-to-be-a-man). Viewed at <http://au.reachout.com/>

Handout 1 - Discussion questions

Following on from our discussion about what it means to be a “man” and a “lady”, and the list we have created, discuss the following questions with your small group.

What are the contexts in which you have come across these terms, e.g. on TV, from family members, at school?

* What do these say about expectations of males and females?
* Are these attitudes still common and relevant today? Why? Why not?
* Are there any expectations you would like to see changed? Why?
* Are there any expectations you would like to remain? Why?
* What does it say about social relationships?
* What does it say about gender, sexuality and power?
* How do individuals, groups and communities resist or challenge the representations?
* Are expectations to ‘act like a man’ or ‘be a lady’ different in rural and urban contexts?
* How might these expectations lead to negative outcomes?
* Are there situations when these expectations could lead to positive outcomes?
* On this basis, would you want to be male or female? Why?