



UNIT TWO

Understanding Gender

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Understanding Gender Overview

(20 minutes)



Purpose

To provide peer educators with a general overview of the topics to be discussed in the unit



Materials Needed

☐ A copy of the *Understanding Gender: Overview* handout for each peer educator



Directions

Step 1

Distribute copies of the handout, *Understanding Gender: Overview* to each peer educator. Have students go around, reading aloud one paragraph at a time.

Step 2

Discuss the following questions.

1. What are some of the stereotypes about how males and females should behave?
2. How could some of those stereotypes be harmful in a relationship?
3. What does the term “gender equality” mean to you?

Understanding Gender: Overview

Gender roles, as defined by society, influence how we perceive and express ourselves in our relationships with parents, siblings, friends, and especially our partners. Understanding gender dynamics is an essential foundation for understanding human development and sexuality. Society often dictates the ways in which males and females are expected to behave in the world. While gender roles have become somewhat less confining in the last 20 years, particularly for women, gender bias and stereotyping still exists. The activities in this unit open the door for critically evaluating our societal gender roles, stereotypes, and the potential for bias, harassment, and violence.

The goal of this unit is to raise students' awareness about the issue of gender, and to begin to explore and discuss how gender role expectations shape our self-concept, our behavior, our goals, and our intimate relationships. While there are no right or wrong answers, Teen PEP promotes certain core values that are a part of healthy relationships, including equality and respect for one another's feelings, values, choices, and sexual decisions. A healthy and mutually respectful relationship enables partners to communicate, set boundaries, and take responsibility for the sexual decisions they make.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Name at least five stereotypes of how a male should act
- Name at least five stereotypes of how a female should act
- Describe three ways that a person might be considered to be outside a gender box
- Describe three ways gender stereotypes influence expectations related to sexual behavior

Take Home Messages

The essential messages from this unit, to take home:

- Every person has the right to make his or her own sexual decisions regardless of societal norms and expectations
- Individuals in a relationship have the right to equal decision making and treatment
- Every person has the right to be safe and free from harassment and violence

Gender Boxes

(30 minutes)



Purpose

To identify common gender stereotypes, the pressures to conform to those stereotypes, and the consequences of not conforming



Materials Needed

□ Newsprint & markers



Directions

Step 1

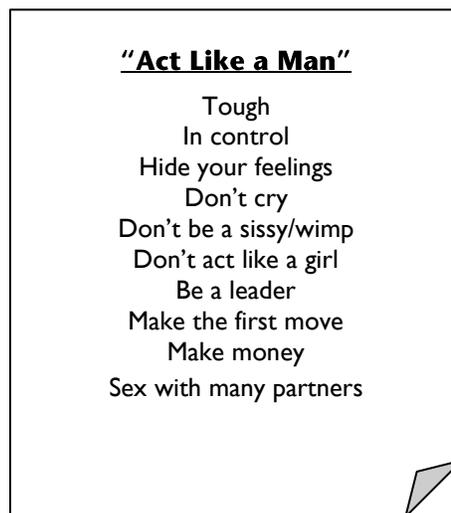
Remind peer educators that during the *Gender Fishbowl* activity on the retreat they spent some time talking about gender in terms of their expectations of the other gender. In the *Agree/Disagree/Not Sure* activity they discussed their own values regarding gender roles, including who should support the family and who should pay for dates. In this lesson they will evaluate messages that come from the media, parents, and friends about what it means to be male or female in our society.

Step 2

Ask students to imagine that they are at a family gathering and their little brother falls and bangs up his knee and starts to cry. Your uncle says to him, “*Stop crying and act like a man*”.

Write “Act Like a Man” across the top of the board or on newsprint. Discuss the following questions and record student responses in a single list. (*See the following diagram*)

1. What do you think your uncle meant when he said, “Act like a man”?
2. What other messages do males get in our society about how they’re expected to act?

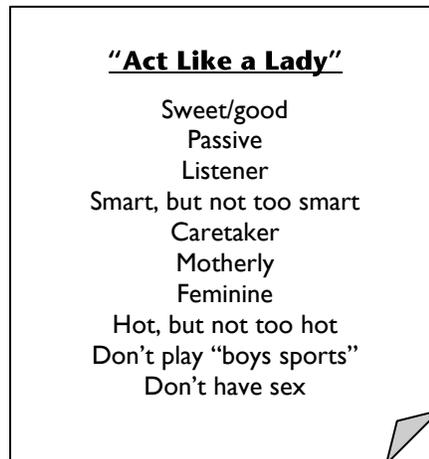


Step 3

Ask students to imagine that their little sister runs into the kitchen and yells, “The boys won’t let me play football.” Your aunt says, “*Stop that; you need to act like a lady.*”

Write “Act Like a Lady” on the board next to the other list. Discuss the following questions and record student responses in a single list. (*See the following diagram*)

1. What do you think your aunt meant when she said “Act like a lady”?
2. What other messages do females get in our society about how to act?

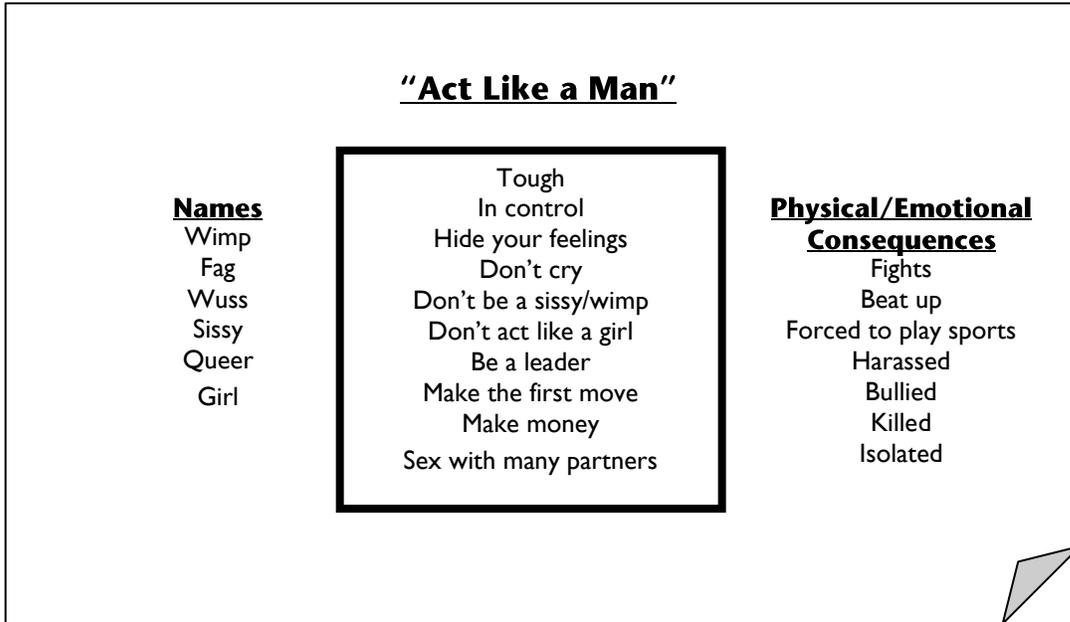
**Step 4**

Draw boxes around each of the lists and explain to students that these are *gender boxes*. These are the rules—the ways that society tells us we should act. If you **fit** into your gender box, everything is pretty comfortable. But some people just don’t fit into the box.

Step 5

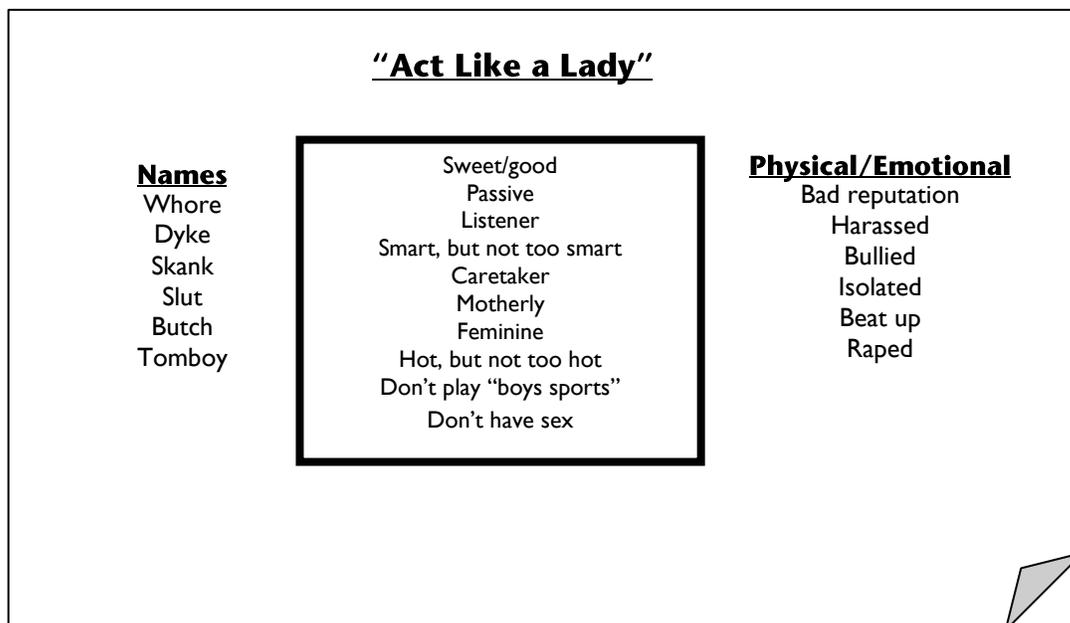
Discuss the following questions and write responses outside the “Act Like a Man” box. (*See the following diagram*)

1. What names are boys called who don’t fit into the box?
2. What physical and emotional consequences are there for boys who don’t fit in the box?

**Step 6**

Discuss the following questions and write responses outside the “Act Like a Lady” box. (*See the following diagram*)

1. What names are girls who don't fit into the box called?
2. What physical and emotional consequences are there for girls who don't fit in the box?



Step 7

Discuss the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of these names and actions? (*They force people into the box and make them afraid to be themselves*)
2. Why do people care whether or not we stay in the boxes? (*They are threatened by people that are different and these names and actions make them feel superior*)
3. What messages around gender roles exist in your family or culture?
4. What ways do you think gender expectations have changed? (*It is not as shameful for men to show emotion, take care of children, or be in more traditionally female careers. Females can find support for stepping out of the box in terms of career or how they look as long as it is not too extreme, but the box seems more rigid for males.*)
5. How do gender stereotypes affect expectations regarding sexual behavior? (*There is an expectation that males will be assertive or make the first move. There is an expectation that females will be passive and do what her partner wants. Males are expected to have sex with multiple partners, while females are expected not to have sex.*)
6. What can you do if you don't fit in the box? (*Look for support and like-minded people within your family and community.*)
7. What can we do as a group to decrease harassment and violence against people who are different?

Adapted from Helping Teens Stop Violence, by Allan Creighton and Paul Kivel, Hunter House Publishers, Alameda, CA, 1992

Advertising & Gender

(30 minutes)



Purpose

To help peer educators become a critical consumer of popular culture by identifying the role of advertising in establishing and reinforcing gender stereotypes



Materials Needed

- A variety of print ads that use gender stereotypes to promote products
- Three copies of *Advertising & Gender* handout for each small group



Directions

Step 1

Remind students that in the Gender Boxes activity there was discussion about society imposing certain roles based on gender. Media is a part of society and this lesson will explore how print media reflects gender roles and stereotypes.

Display one ad and use the questions below to analyze this ad with the whole group. This discussion will serve as a model to the students for how they will analyze ads in their small groups.

1. What is this ad selling?
2. If the ad shows both a male and female:
 - a. What are the men doing vs. the women?
 - b. Who is active vs. passive?
 - c. Who has the power? How is the power depicted?
3. What gender stereotypes do you see, if any? For example, how do the people look? What are they doing? Do you see anybody outside of a gender box?
4. What is the underlying message of this ad? (*If you wear these clothes you will get the man; this is how men/women look; this is how they act towards one another*)

Step 2

Divide the class into 5 small groups and distribute three ads to each group. Have each group answer the questions on their handout.

Step 3

Have each group show their ads and briefly report back to the large group about the most significant findings from their ads.

Note!

Ads do not need to be overtly sexual but should illustrate implied gender roles or stereotypes of males and females. Advisors may provide the ads or ask students to bring in ads the day before the class. If possible, save ads for use in future classes.

Step 4

Discuss the following questions.

1. What groups of people are not represented in these ads?
2. What are the major messages that we saw about gender roles?
3. Give some specific examples of other media (TV or music) that portray gender stereotypes.
4. What do you think is the cumulative effect of messages about gender in media?

Step 5  **Homework** 

Assign students to bring in one example of media that portrays a positive message about males or females and prepare a 2-3 minute presentation to be delivered in the next activity, *Message in the Media*. Examples can include:

- A print ad
- TV episode summary
- Song lyrics
- A commercial

Students will be expected to show or read their example of media and briefly describe the positive messages that are portrayed, such as:

- Respect
- Equal power
- Communication
- Positive role models
- Diversity
- Physical health

Message in the Media

(45 minutes)



Purpose

To reinforce positive messages regarding gender roles



Materials Needed

- Message in the Media* presentations prepared for homework from last class
- Newsprint & markers



Directions

Step 1

Remind students of the homework assignment they were given during the last activity. Ask for volunteers to give their 2-3 minute presentations of positive media messages with the group.

Step 2

Ask the large group to name the values that were portrayed in their presentations and write them on newsprint.

Sample responses:

Respect
Equal Power
Communication
Positive role models
Diversity
Physical health

Step 3

Discuss the following questions.

1. What can happen when people in a relationship do not have respect, equal power, or good communication? (*Decreased self-esteem, no voice to make own decisions, increase in risk-taking behavior, increase in dating or sexual abuse*)
2. When we did the *Gender Boxes* activity we talked about how hard it is for people who are different to come “out of the box.” How does promoting respect for all help teens have healthy relationships? (*Ability to choose what is right for him or her self, set boundaries, be respected; ability to be open about relationships will decrease risk-taking behaviors*)
3. How can equal power contribute to a healthy relationship? (*Decreased feeling like an object leads to increased self-esteem; good communication leads to increased positive decisions—can talk about values, abstinence, or using birth control if sexually active; you have a right to decide your own future.*)