



MALE GENDER STEREOTYPES WORKSHOP

We utilized and frequently quoted from Common Sense Media's 2015 research brief [Children, Teens, Media, and Body Image](#) to create this discussion guide. We recommend visiting [Common Sense Media](#) for additional information on this subject matter.

(Appropriate for ages 8 to 12)

Workshop mission:

This workshop aims to create an informative discussion around gender stereotypes and body image, especially as they pertain to men and boys. Participants will explore the impact and prevalence of stereotypes and examine how external factors such as media trends shape how children and teens see themselves as well as shape societal norms. Participants will take part in an activity that encourages boys to redefine what makes a man a man.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Awareness of stereotypes and their impact on boys/men and society as a whole
- Understanding of internal and external influences that help create and perpetuate stereotypes
- Further development of media literacy skills to analyze various forms of media, with a special focus on gender stereotypes
- Appreciation for positive male traits that do not necessarily conform to societal norms

Preparation:

This workshop will take approximately 2-2.5 hours, depending on the participation level of your student(s)/child(ren). You will also need the following: media examples to analyze (a set of examples is available in this discussion guide), age-appropriate magazines, poster boards, scissors and glue sticks.

Discussion and activity plan:

Introduction to terms and concepts

This workshop begins with an introduction of terms that will be used throughout the lesson. Ask your student(s)/child(ren) to define all/some of these words and concepts if they can, and then follow up with additional information if necessary:

- **Body image:** One's perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions toward one's body. Body image is typically conceptualized through body size, evaluation of physical attractiveness and emotions associated with body shape. (Grogan, 2006; Cash, 2004)
- **Body dissatisfaction:** An individual's negative feelings toward his or her body, often regarding weight and size. (Polivy & Herman, 2002; McLaren & Kuh, 2004).

- **Stereotype:** A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.
- **Traditional media:** Forms of media that existed before the internet, including magazines, television, music and advertisements.
- **Digital media:** Forms of electronic, often Web-based, media and communications, including websites, apps and games.

Male stereotypes in media

Now that your student(s)/child(ren) are familiar with the terms we'll be using, start the discussion with a review of stereotypes perpetuated in the media. Use [media literacy skills](#) and questions to uncover some of the stereotypes hidden and not so hidden in various forms of media with your student(s)/child(ren). We used the following ads and toys as examples:

PRINT ADS — Dockers, Toys R Us, Maxi-Milk, Dodge



Additional thought starters beyond the five key [media literacy](#) questions:

- Dockers – What does the phrase “to wear the pants” mean?
- [Toys R Us](#) – What activities are boys engaged in? What activities are girls engaged in?
- Maxi-Milk – Take a look at the man in the ad. If he is a “real man,” what physical traits does a “real man” have?
- Dodge – What is the tone of the print ad? What emotions does it conjure up for the viewer?

Write any male stereotypes that these examples reinforce on a chalkboard or on a piece of paper under the headline “BOYS/MEN SHOULD” or “BOYS/MEN SHOULDN'T.”

TV COMMERCIALS — Hanes, Chevrolet



Additional thought starters beyond the five key [media literacy](#) questions:

- Hanes – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTpG37OvjFs> How are dads portrayed in this ad? Do you see this portrayal often?
- Chevrolet – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJBpYlC9-Q> What values are people associating with the man in front of the truck?

Write any male stereotypes that these examples reinforce on a chalkboard or on a piece of paper under the headline “BOYS/MEN SHOULD” or “BOYS/MEN SHOULDN’T.”

TOYS — G.I. Joe Extreme



[G.I. Joe Extreme](#) – The 1964 G.I. Joe figure would stand 5’10” if he were life size, and have a 32” waist, a 44” chest and 12” biceps — pretty hefty and muscular, but still within normal ranges. The new G.I. Joe Extreme would have a 55” chest, 29” waist and 27” biceps. (Truechild.org) — 27” biceps would be larger than any professional body builder!

Ask your student(s)/child(ren) to consider what message toys like this might send to the children who love to play with them. If you have a son or male students, ask them if they remember when they became aware of their own muscularity or body shape. Ask them to share that moment if they feel comfortable enough to do so.

Write any male stereotypes that these examples reinforce on a chalkboard or on a piece of paper under the headline “BOYS/MEN SHOULD” or “BOYS/MEN SHOULDN’T.”

Common male stereotypes

Now that you have a list going on things “BOYS/MEN SHOULD” be/do vs. what “BOYS/MEN SHOULDN’T” be/do, gather more stereotypes through discussion:

- What are some common stereotypes people have when it comes to men or boys? What do people say men or boys “should” be? (Examples: Men should be strong, men should be the breadwinner, etc.)
- Have you heard some of following sayings: “Be a man,” “A man’s man,” “A man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do”? What other sayings like these have you heard? What do you think they mean? When do people use these sayings?

Write any male stereotypes that these examples reinforce on a chalkboard or on a piece of paper under the headline “BOYS/MEN SHOULD” or “BOYS/MEN SHOULDN’T.”

Common male “can’ts” and “shouldn’ts”



HATCH DISCUSSION GUIDE

Move on to common things people or society say men/boys cannot and should not do. Ask your student(s)/child(ren) to name these with the following questions:

- Now that we've discussed some things that men are "supposed" to be according to common stereotypes, can you tell me some things boys and men are NOT supposed to do according to common stereotypes? (Examples: show emotions, enjoy the arts, cry, etc.) Why do you think people say that? And what does it imply?
- What are some things people say to boys or men that they don't say to girls or women? (It might help to give them some examples of common messages people send girls/women, such as "Girls can't play sports," etc.) Why do you think people say that? And what does it imply?

Write any male stereotypes that these examples reinforce on a chalkboard or on a piece of paper under the headline "BOYS/MEN SHOULD" or "BOYS/MEN SHOULDN'T."

Regulating male emotions

Together, build a list of emotions boys/men are "allowed" and "not allowed" to have as dictated by stereotypes and societal norms with the following questions:

- Think about expressing emotions. Typically, which emotions do we as a society/culture think men should express? Which emotions are men NOT supposed to express?

Write any male stereotypes that these examples reinforce on a chalkboard or on a piece of paper under the headline "BOYS/MEN SHOULD" or "BOYS/MEN SHOULDN'T."

Impact of stereotypes

Have your student(s)/child(ren) take in all the content on the chalkboard or paper. Open a dialogue about the potential impact of these stereotypes with the following questions:

- Where do you see or hear these stereotypes or messages? (Examples: media, sports, parents, friends, etc.)
- How often do you think you encounter these stereotypes or messages?
- Over time, what kind of effects do you think messages like this have on boys and men, especially while they are young?
 - What about the effects of banning boys or men from feeling certain emotions? For example, what happens when we tell boys they shouldn't cry when they're upset?
- Have you ever felt negatively or positively impacted by a stereotype? Tell me about it.



Defying stereotypes – Defining a man activity

This activity is designed to encourage your student or child. We also suggest dividing into smaller groups of three to six if you are planning to do this with a larger group of children/students, though a workshop leader should be present when each smaller group reviews its final project. (If you are doing this activity with one child, then create your own collage, and participate!)

- Hand out poster board, scissors, glue sticks and several age-appropriate magazines with diverse subject matter.
- Give your student(s)/child(ren) 20 to 25 minutes to create a collage using images and words from the magazine that represent an ideal man in their eyes. Encourage them to think outside the box and about things they enjoy, love or are inspired by.
- Have each student or child present this collage to the group and explain why they selected the images and text they used.

Activity

Debunking male stereotypes

After everyone has completed the activity, wipe the board clean of all the stereotypes, and begin listing traits your groups decide are positive traits that men/boys should aspire to.

Resources:

<https://www.common sense media.org/research/children-teens-media-and-body-image>

<https://www.common sense media.org/educators/gender>

<http://pigtailpalsblog.com/2010/11/have-yourself-a-very-sexist-holiday/#.VQLpVOFBkds>

http://truechild.org/Images/Interior/learnthefacts/fastfacts/_fast%20facts.pdf