



Who Decides?

The Girl & Boy Boxes

OBJECTIVES

- To identify how gender socialization influences social dynamics
- To identify how social norms and can impact a young person's self identity
- To empower students to identify when these norms are negatively impacting their friendships

MATERIALS

- Index cards
- Post it notes
- Pencils or markers
- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Cardboard boxes
- Toys/sports equipment

Session Outline

What Are We Doing Today?

We are learning about an invisible set of rules that often guides and can even control people's feelings and behavior.

Our Genius Ideas from Last Time

Time: 10 minutes

Last session we talked about the experiences that some of us have in common and we drew our armor. What do you remember most about the experiences people had in common? What do you think was most important about doing either of those exercises?

Activity: Can boys and girls be friends?

This activity can also be done using Kahoot

Time: 10 minutes for writing 10 minutes for discussion

Purpose: Creating the environment to discuss boys and girls gender expectations

Can boys and girls be friends? Answer "Yes" or "No" on your post it note

Teacher says: *Take your post it note and stick to the board and then return to your seat. Let's look at how many yes's and no's we have. What do you think about everyone's answers?*

Explain why you wrote yes or no:

Now I am going to give you an index cards and you're going to answer a question: Why do boys and girls who are close friends often get teased by other people?

Teacher collects the index cards and then mixes them up and returns one card to each student. Each student will read "their" card and then explain to the group what the card said.

Activity: Being Boxed In

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Show students how the invisible rules of gender can influence their perception of what is acceptable to be as a girl and boy

Whether you teach *Owning Up* in a single-gender or mixed-gender group, our students have to

work, cooperate, and be in relationships with one another. In later childhood, children can begin to judge themselves and others and show aggression to peers who don't conform to gender expectations. This session uses a modification of the Act Like a Girl and Act Like a Boy Boxes to show students the impact of these gender dynamics.

Materials

- Two big cardboard boxes
- Five objects cultural associated with boys
- Five objects cultural associated with girls
- Five objects with gender neutral associations

Some objects to consider; soccer ball, football, book, hairbrush, toys, mirror, colored binders, calculator, fuzzy keychain, and pencil case

Teacher says:

Has anyone made you follow a rule you didn't like? Can you give examples?

How about a rule that didn't make sense to you? Can you give some examples?

Now we are going to talk about an invisible set of rules that often guides people's feelings and behavior. It's a little weird, though, because you can't see it—but it's there.

*You will see that there are two big boxes in our room. At the front of the room I have placed a variety of objects. Together I want you to place the objects in the box that you think most people believe belongs in a “**boy**” box and belongs a “**girl**” box. In the middle of the room I want you to place objects that don't go in either box. If you really disagree with what other people are doing, make a note of it and we will discuss later.*

Students place objects in the boxes.

Time: 10 minutes

Teacher says:

So let's take a look at what you put where and talk about it.

How do you think people in the class made the decision about where each object should go? Did anyone really disagree? Why?

Now I am going to give you an index card and answer the following questions:

- *What if you are a boy but you really like something that was in the girl box?*
- *What if you are a girl but you really like something was was in the boy box?*

Teacher collects the index cards and then reads the answers out loud.

What did you feel as I was reading people's answers out loud?

Is there pressure for boys to have the things in the boy box or like the things in the boy box?

Is there pressure for girls to have the things in the girl box or like the things in the girl box?

How much do you think these boxes affect the students in your school? Can you think of examples?

How much do you think these boxes affect the adults you know? Can you think of examples?

Why do people care so much that some things should go in a particular box?

The following questions can be answered in discussion or by writing on index cards.

Question 1: How do you think your life would change if people weren't so influenced by the boxes?

Question 2: What is one thing you can do to make Act Like a Girl or Act Like a Boy Boxes less powerful?

Let's go back to our earlier question: Can boys and girls be friends? Now that we have gone through the box exercise, do you have any additional ideas about this question?

Wrap It Up

Time: 5 minute

The box is a way of understanding people's behavior. The box can influence how you think about yourself and other people in ways that may or not feel "true" to you.

No matter who you are, you have the right to have the interests you like.

If you feel uncomfortable about what we covered in the session today, just like any other session, come and talk to me about it.

Carry It With You

Watch your actions, thoughts, and feelings to see if the rules of the box are influencing you.

You can also see if people around you are influenced by the box. If you catch yourself being guided by the box, think about breaking the specific rule you think the box is making you follow.