



CUSHIONING THE IMPACT

Level: 1st cycle of high school

Duration: 2 periods of 75 minutes

Goal: To make students aware of the impact of gender stereotypes in order to become free of them and to free others.

LINKS TO THE PROGRAMME	
Broad Areas of Learning	Citizenship and Community Life
Educational Aim	To enable students to take part in the democratic life of the class or the school and develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity.
Focus of Development	Participation, cooperation and solidarity.
COMPETENCIES	
Interdisciplinary competencies	Reflects on ethical questions Engages in Dialogue
Programme theme	Autonomy
Concepts developed	Ethical choice, community life and recognition of others.

Acknowledgement: This Learning and evaluation situation (LES) was inspired by activities on the following website: pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf

STEP 1: INTRODUCTION TO GENDER STEREOTYPES

50 MIN

- A** Distribute the **expressions** document (which students must cut with scissors) and the **Feminine Masculine** document to pairs of students.
- B** Ask the students to sort the expressions into categories where they would fit best: feminine, mostly feminine, feminine or masculine, mostly masculine, and masculine.
- C** When pooling their answers, students must justify their choices.
- D** Ask the students which expressions apply to men only, and which apply to women only. If any expression should receive a unanimous vote, take the discussion further by questioning the students. *For example, if the students indicate that "this person is an auto mechanic" ought to be in the "men" category, ask them what would prevent a woman from being a auto mechanic.*
- E** **!** Certain expressions are linked to sexual orientation and not to identity or gender expression. Examples include "this person wants to kiss a woman lovingly" or "this person wants to kiss a man lovingly." Yet, the valorisation of heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality play an important role in defining "virility" or "femininity." This is why it is pertinent to propose these expressions in the context of this activity. When students pool their answers, it is important to establish this distinction. In fact, gay men are often associated with femininity and lesbians with masculinity, while in reality gay men may also be considered very masculine (football players, for example) and lesbians may be considered very feminine (like certain movie stars).
- F** Ask the students whether they know what we call characteristics which are abusively attributed to an entire group. (These are called "stereotypes.") *If the students propose the word "prejudice," explain that prejudice (judgements concerning a person or thing) emerge from stereotypes.*
- G** Draw the students' attention to the non-pertinent character of a binary division between masculine and feminine. *The first two lines of the chart in the **Feminine Masculine** documents demonstrate that there exists in reality a continuum between these two concepts.*

Etymology

The word **stereotype** is formed from the Greek word *stereos* which means *solid*, and the word *typos* which means *model*. Originally, it referred to a printing process which permitted the reproduction of an identical page by using a layout of typefaces (or cast letters).

DEFINITIONS

A **stereotype** is a simplified generalization applied to an entire group of persons, with no consideration given to individual differences. Stereotypes are fixed images relating to a belief system and are simplifications of reality.

Examples:

- Everyone who lives in this neighbourhood is dangerous.
- All bosses are tyrannical.
- Poor people are lazy.

The word **prejudice** means to judge before. It involves making a value judgement. To be prejudiced means to make an inconsiderate and definite judgement on a person or a group of persons without knowing them sufficiently. Prejudice is a preconceived idea on a person or a group of persons and is always based on a stereotype.

Examples:

- This student is good in Mathematics. It's normal! He's Chinese.
- Of course she spends Saturdays at the shopping centre; like all girls!
- This year I'm in a class with mostly boys. It will be chaos!

STEP 1 (CONTINUED)

DEFINITIONS

Gender: The state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).

Gender Stereotypes: Gender stereotypes are simplistic generalizations about the gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals and/or groups. They are fixed ideas about men's and women's traits and capabilities and how people should behave, based on their gender.

STEP 2 : WHAT IMPACTS DO STEREOTYPES HAVE?

50 MIN

- A** As we learned in Step 1, stereotypes do exist and students are able to identify them after an in-depth discussion. Nevertheless, students may have integrated some stereotypes into their belief systems (you might want to name some examples of stereotypes which the many students agreed upon). Most of the time we tend to conform to the expectations of our group.
- B** Show the **video 'The Mask You Live In'**. Give students time to write their own reflections and questions concerning this video in their impact document.
- C** Show the **video 'Why Aren't Women Choosing Science Careers?'** and give students time to write their own reflections and questions concerning this video in their student document.
- D** Organize the class into teams made up of only boys and only girls. Ask the students to debate the content of the first video, and then the second.
- E** **The following questions may be used to guide the discussion:**
- According to the video, what stereotypes affect boys? Girls?
 - What impact do these stereotypes have?
 - Have you ever thought about this phenomenon before?
 - How did you feel when you watched the video?
 - Do gender stereotypes come from the exterior or the interior?
 - Have you already observed what is explained in the video?
- F** Pooling answers: Gender stereotypes limit people, who end up integrating them and conforming. And this, in turn, causes them to be reinforced.

STEP 3 : WRITE A TEXT ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE JUST LEARNED

40 MIN

Distribute the **Cushioning the Impact** document to the students. Read the instructions and the evaluation criteria with them. Students will write their text in teams of two. It is possible to complete the work at home.