

HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIPS FREE FROM GENDER STEREOTYPES

Ages 11-14 (Level 3)

Description:	Learners identify and explore gender stereotypes. They build their empathy skills as a way to combat generalizations and assumptions about others. The unit closes by having learners reflect on healthy relationships, which are a manifestation of empathy and trust. By identifying safe people in their lives, learners can build support networks helping them to avoid harmful situations, resist bullying and escape violence.
Leading questions:	How do gender stereotypes affect how we treat people? What is empathy and how can we practice it? How can we develop healthy relationships? Are girls and boys the same?
Age group:	11 - 14 years
Subjects:	Language Arts, Social Emotional Learning, Life Skills
Total time required:	4 hours over 4 days
Self-guided / Supervised activity:	Moderate Supervision
Resources required:	A small notebook to serve as a journal, paper, pencil, eraser, coloring pencils/crayons (optional)

Day	Time	Activity and Description
1	60 minutes	EXPLORING STEREOTYPES
	15 minutes	<p><u>Activity:</u> Learners begin exploring gender stereotypes by identifying their own assumptions about what it means to be a boy or girl.</p> <p>Review the following list with learners. Ask them to categorize each one as boy-like or girl-like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher ● Dancer ● Lawyer ● Cleaning ● Running ● Scientist ● Blue ● Pink ● Green ● Nurse ● Cars ● Nurturing ● Strong

	<p>10 minutes</p> <p>15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading <p>Tally up the results. Discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Is there general agreement about what is boy-like vs girl like? → Why do you think there is/is not general agreement? → Where do these ideas come from? <p>Next, ask learners to observe gender roles in their environment and identify where some of these ideas come from. Learners can close their eyes and imagine the places that they frequently go to such as their home, their school, the town streets, commerce centers, the community center or gathering place, their house of worship (church or mosque) and the homes of their friends and family. Discuss any reasons why there might be general agreement about categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What are we taught about what is a “real” man or “real” woman? <p>Next, ask learners to think about cultural products such as media, movies, advertisements, toys, songs or stories that they see and hear around them. Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How does our culture (and/or images in the media) reinforce certain ideas about girls and boys? → What are examples that show how these ideas are reinforced? (For example, what kinds of toys are boys provided vs girls?) <p><u>Define and explain:</u> What are stereotypes?</p> <p>Over time, we develop a generalized view of what it means to be a girl vs a boy. This is called a <i>stereotype</i>. Some of the qualities in the list are true for some people – for example, some women are very nurturing, or some men are strong. They are still stereotypes, however, because we expect ALL men and women to act this way, and of course all of these qualities are not true for all men and all women.</p> <p>Ask learners to add to the lists and generate 2 - 3 stereotypes about boys and girls.</p> <p><u>Solve the riddle:</u></p> <p>Stereotypes can be deeply embedded in our subconscious and, as a result, we can make assumptions about people. Solve this riddle as an example of how we make assumptions based on gender stereotypes of men’s work vs women’s work:</p> <p>A boy and his father are involved in a car accident. The father is killed, and the boy is taken to hospital and into surgery. On seeing him, the doctor says: “I can’t operate on this boy because he’s my son!” How is this possible?</p> <p>(Answer: The surgeon is the boy’s mother.)</p> <p>Ask learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How did this riddle make you more aware of the stereotypes you might hold about men’s roles vs women’s roles in work? → Were you surprised by the assumptions you made?
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	<p>10 minutes</p>	<p>→ How does this riddle show the importance of being cautious before jumping to conclusions about people?</p> <p>Ask learners to return to their categorized list of girl-like vs. boy-like things. Based on the discussion about assumptions and stereotypes, ask learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Are you reconsidering any of your earlier responses? → Do any of your responses appear to be a result of unconscious stereotypes that you might have formed about boys and girls? <p><u>Use art to explore identity:</u></p> <p>In their journals, ask learners to draw a picture of themselves in the middle and then write out or draw around themselves 5 - 10 things they like to do, make them happy, or are of interest to them.</p> <p>When they are done, ask learners to reflect on how they do or do not “fit” into our gender stereotypes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Have you ever felt that you don’t fit a particular stereotype? → How does that feel? How can that be challenging?
	<p>10 minutes</p>	<p><u>Debrief:</u> When stereotypes are rigidly reinforced, they dictate how men and women are supposed to behave.</p> <p>Ask learners to reflect for a few moments on the negative effects of stereotyping, and how it may impact personal happiness and also social growth. Pose a relevant, personal example such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do you think your mother could do something really well, but is unable to because she is a woman and there is a stereotype? <p>Brainstorm a list of the negative effects of stereotyping. Examples might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We may feel that we do not have the choice to pursue a passion that doesn’t conform to a stereotype. ● We may feel that we have to behave in a certain way even if it is not how we feel. ● Not conforming can cause tension, anger, challenges, and sometimes even violence. ● We could miss out on people sharing their talents and ideas that help the whole community, school or family. <p>Guide learners to acknowledge others who have broken stereotypes in order to pursue their passions, such as women scientists, male ballerinas or athletes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do you know of anyone who breaks the stereotype of “boy” or “girl”? → What support do you imagine they may have for their choices?

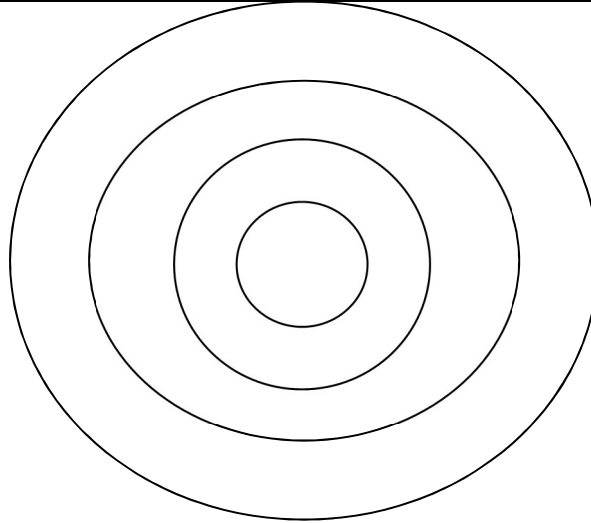
		<p>Ask learners to look back at their drawing and share some positive affirmations, particularly around the areas where learners defy gender stereotypes. For example, “It’s very important that I am interested in becoming a scientist.”</p> <p>In closing, learners can pose the same riddle to their family members and reflect on the responses.</p> <p><u>Learning artifact</u>: Identity drawing in journal.</p>
2	<p>60 minutes</p> <p>10 minutes</p> <p>20 minutes</p>	<p>BUILDING EMPATHY</p> <p><u>Connect to previous lesson</u>: Begin by asking learners to share their reflections on presenting the stereotype riddle to their family. Were family members able to solve the riddle? Were they surprised?</p> <p><u>Discuss</u>: Learners begin exploring and developing their empathy skills: the general ability to see things from the perspective of others.</p> <p>Ask learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do you think your mother could do something really well, but is unable to because she is a woman and there is a stereotype? → If we pause before we make an assumption about someone based on stereotypes, how can that help us have a better relationship with that person? → Why is it important to get to know and see others for who they are? What does this include? (i.e.: their passions, interests, and work) → How can we avoid making assumptions about them and connect with them on a personal level, whether they are a girl or a boy? <p><u>Activity</u>: “Love My Neighbor” is a group activity that creates a culture of welcoming and pushes against stereotypes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have learners sit in a circle. Inform learners that everyone will get a turn and that this game is not competitive; it is about uncovering our shared experiences and moving beyond stereotypes. - The first student stands in the middle of the circle and says “I love my neighbor who...” and completes the sentence for something that is true for them. For example, “I love my neighbor who has an older sister.” Everyone who has an older sister gets up and moves into the center to the player. - Repeat for every learner. <p>*Alternatives during social distancing: 1) Give each learner several pieces of paper that they can roll up into a ball (or some other item that can be their “symbol”). Instead of moving to the center, they can toss their paper to the middle. 2) Learners raise their hands or stand in place instead of moving to the center.</p>

15 minutes	<p><u>Debrief:</u> Discuss with learners how this activity helps push against assumptions we might have about people based on stereotypes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How did it feel to see others have a shared experience? → Was there anything surprising about this activity? Anything challenging? <p><u>Activity:</u> Learners apply their empathy skills by listening to the experiences of their peers. Using the statements shared by students in the “Love My Neighbor” group activity, have students arrange themselves in small “affinity” groups. For example, there might be a group of learners who all have an older sister. It is best to keep group sizes small for this activity. Within their groups, ask learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Describe what they like most about this experience. → Describe what can be challenging. → Identify what they would like other people to know. <p>After the brainstorm, ask each group to present to their peers. After the presentations, ask the learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How did listening to others help you understand them better?
10 minutes	<p><u>Activity:</u> Learners build empathy by actually experiencing something similar. People who design solutions for others must first deeply understand the experience of the other. Ask learners to think about medicine bottles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How are medicine bottles designed? → What do they look like? → Have you ever tried to open a medicine bottle? → If you were designing a medicine bottle, what are the top 3 - 4 things you would keep in mind? Generate a list of ideas from the learners and ask them to draw what your medicine bottle might look like. <p>Next, ask learners to imagine that they have arthritis in their hands. Arthritis is a condition that causes pain and stiffness in one’s joints. Ask learners to make their hands into fists and imagine that opening their fists causes a great deal of pain. Ask learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If someone with arthritis in their hands would be able to use the designed medicine bottle? Could they open and close the bottle easily to get their medicine? → How might you alter the design of your bottle now that you have some empathy for people with arthritis? <p><u>Note:</u> Details for this challenge can be modified to suit the learners’ environment, or they can also identify their own challenge from the environment and find a solution.</p> <p><u>Debrief:</u> Empathy is the ability to see things from the perspective of another, and to understand how it feels to be them. Ask students to share their experiences of empathy with friends and family members. As an educator, when do you use empathy to be a better teacher?</p>

	5 minutes	<p><u>Learning artifact:</u> Challenge learners to keep an “Empathy Journal” for two weeks. Every day they must practice empathy and write the circumstances. They can also do something for someone after empathizing with their needs. An example would be seeing that your mother is hot and tired from working, and bring her a glass of water. Record this in the journal.</p>
3	60 minutes	<p>ACTING ON EMPATHY</p>
	10 minutes	<p><u>Connect to previous lesson:</u> Remind learners of the previous activity in which they used empathy to design a better medicine bottle. By being empathetic to others, our work can be relevant and meaningful to a wider range of people. Ask learners to think of other examples of how things are designed to accommodate people’s needs. For example, the importance of ramps to get into buildings, rather than just stairs. How does the addition of ramps demonstrate empathy? Without empathy in building design, some people - such as those in wheelchairs - would be excluded from participating.</p>
	35 minutes	<p><u>Activity:</u> Designing and creating solutions for other people is some of the work of engineers. An engineer is a person who uses science and math to find solutions to problems. Whether you are a boy or a girl, we can all develop our design and engineering skills by having empathy. In today’s activity, learners will consider some of the challenges faced by girls and use their skills of empathy to brainstorm more inclusive solutions. They will then create an “empathy message” to communicate an obstacle or challenge that girl’s face.</p> <p>Divide learners into 5 groups and assign each group one of these activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. going to school 2. playing sports 3. collecting clean water 4. going to the doctor 5. earning an income <p>In groups, ask learners to brainstorm challenges or obstacles that a girl might encounter when attempting the activity. Use the following guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What barriers might prevent a girl from attempting this activity? → What kinds of challenges do girls specifically face? → How do stereotypes about girls pose challenges? <p>Next, each group should choose one of those challenges and design an “empathy” message to help others understand this challenge from a girl’s perspective. Learners might design a poster, create a skit, or make a drawing that can be presented to peers. Afterwards, lead a reflection asking learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What did it take to create a message that draws out empathy? → What was challenging about it? What was powerful?

	15 minutes	<p>→ What kinds of messages or drawings worked best? Why do you think this is?</p> <p>→ Have you ever seen a poster or advertisement that caused you to empathize? What did you like about it and why do you think it was effective?</p> <p>*Alternatives during social distancing: Assign each learner one of the five challenges and allow them to share ideas sitting at a distance, and then to present their final solutions from a distance.</p> <p><u>Debrief</u>: Engage students in the closing activity “A Wow and A Wonder”. After exploring the topics of gender stereotypes, empathy and the power we have to help others through our attitudes, assumptions and actions, ask each student to share:</p> <p>→ A Wow: one new thing they have learned so far, perhaps something that surprised them,</p> <p>→ A Wonder: one thing they still have a question about or don’t really understand yet.</p> <p><u>Learning artifact</u>: Record their “empathy message” clearly in their journal.</p>
4	60 minutes 15 minutes 15 minutes	<p>EXPLORING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p><u>Connect to previous lesson</u>:</p> <p>Lead learners in a low risk Pair-Share discussion to help them practice empathy as well as active listening. After exploring the topics of gender stereotypes, empathy and the power we have to help others through our attitudes, assumptions and actions, ask learners to discuss how they feel with one of their peers. The first speaker should take 1-2 minutes to describe how they feel about the topics covered so far, and the listener should remember 2-3 striking points that were made. They then switch roles, taking another 1-2 minutes to speak and listen. Next, each learner can share with the class something that their partner said that was interesting, helpful or striking in some way.</p> <p>*Alternatives during social distancing: Learners write their answers to the prompts and exchange their answers with their partner.</p> <p><u>Activity</u>: Learners will focus on the relationships that support their healthy development. Having a healthy relationship with others is critical for young people and their ability to resist inappropriate social pressures, manage and resolve interpersonal conflict, and seek help when needed. Particularly in the case of abuse and violence and/or abuse against girls, young men need to understand their role not only as possible perpetrators, but also as critical support to ensure safety for girls to pursue their passions, safe from harm.</p> <p>Ask learners to think of five people in their lives: siblings, friends, teachers, family members, mentors, etc.</p> <p>→ What makes each of them special?</p>

	<p>15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Think of an example of when you felt supported by one of these people (perhaps they helped you with a difficult problem). → Think of an example of when you felt trusted by one of these people (perhaps they confided in you about something that worried them). → Think of an example of when you felt trust in one of these people (perhaps you confided in them about something that worried you). → Think of an example of when you felt protected by one of these people (perhaps they stood up for you when someone was being mean). → Think of other examples of when you felt that you have a healthy relationship with one of these people. <p>Discuss three aspects of healthy relationships:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In a healthy relationship, being around the person will make you <i>feel good</i> about yourself - for example, your intelligence, your looks, your personality. 2. There is an equal amount of give and take in a healthy relationship. In an unbalanced relationship, one person might be giving more of their time, patience, energy, or support, without getting it back from the other person. 3. In a healthy relationship, you feel safe and can trust the other person. You can share information and your questions, and trust that they won't shame, judge, or belittle you. You can also trust that they will have your best interest at heart. <p>Ask learners to reflect on disagreements in relationships. For example, if two close friends have a disagreement, does that mean they do not have a healthy relationship? Discuss how healthy relationships can have conflict and disagreement, but they are healthy because the two people communicate in ways to resolve those disagreements. In some unhealthy relationships, people have difficulty communicating, sometimes getting emotionally or physically out of control. In such situations, one person is made to feel unsafe and may feel a breakdown in trust.</p> <p><u>Activity:</u> Because trust is a critical part to healthy relationships, ask learners to create a Circle of Trust. This exercise allows learners to visualize who in their community they trust with information, advice, and support.</p> <p>In their journal, ask learners to make four rings of circles as follows:</p>
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In the middle circle, have students write the word “me.” In the second circle, write “Most Trusted.” In the third circle, write “Somewhat Trusted,” and in the outermost circle, write “Least Trusted.” Begin the exercise by asking learners to think of 5 - 10 people they know and arrange them in the circles from Most Trusted to Least Trusted.

Now provide the learners with a scenario, such as “getting accurate health information about my body.” Ask them to arrange the people in the trust circles. Does anyone get moved in or out of a circle? Are new people added? For example, do the learners add chemist/pharmacist to any of the circles? Doctor/midwife/nurse? What about the opinions of people in authority, such as community leaders? Where do the learners’ peers fall in the circles?

Debrief:

Close this session with an affirmation exercise. Ask learners to affirm that they have people who they trust in their lives. Ask learners to reflect on the activities of the week using the following prompts:

- What was most surprising for you?
- How do gender stereotypes make us feel?
- How have the activities helped you identify your own assumptions and stereotypes?
- What strategies can we use to move beyond gender stereotypes and see people in a more nuanced way?
- How can we build healthy relationships with others?

Record the ideas of each learner on a large paper, and reread the ideas aloud.

Activity: As a final, closing reflection, ask each learner to finish this sentence on a small paper: *From now on, I will try to* _____ . Pass a hat or small basket around for each student to place their commitment paper. As you close the circle, thank learners for their ideas and commitments to improving their relationships and their treatment of others.

15
minutes

	<p><u>Learning artifact:</u> Drawing of trust circles. A reflection on what they have learned about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● stereotypes ● empathy ● acting on empathy ● designing from empathy ● healthy relationships
Assessment Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active listening to and engagement with others in group activities. - Creativity in developing their own empathy messages. - Clarity of writing and drawings. - Ability to self-reflect and consider one's own thought processes.

Learning outcomes:	<p>Self Awareness Students will learn to identify emotions, develop accurate self-perceptions, and recognize their strengths, foster self-confidence, practice self-efficacy.</p> <p>Social Awareness Students will learn to take the perspective of others, practice empathy, appreciate diversity, respect for others.</p> <p>Self-Management Students will practice impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, and self-motivation.</p> <p>Relationship Skills Students will learn to communicate with others, build relationships with peers, practice teamwork.</p> <p>Responsible Decision Making Students will learn to identify problems, analyze solutions, solve problems, practice critical thinking skills, evaluate and reflect, take ethical responsibility.</p>
Required previous learning:	None
Inspiration:	None