

Chapter 6: Act like a woman/act like a man

Gender 101 training materials

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Chapter 6: Act like a woman/act like a man

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the differences between rules of behavior that society applies to women and men
- Discuss the impacts of social gender rules on the lives of women and men

Time needed

60 minutes

Materials needed

- Jamboard “Act Like a Man” and “Act Like a Woman” copies
 - One Jamboard per group
 - [Template for “Act Like a Woman” groups](#)
 - [Template for “Act Like a Man” groups](#)
- One blank Jamboard with two empty frames

Advance preparation

- Make one Jamboard copy per group. Remember that the templates will be different depending on whether groups are focusing on what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman.
 - It is recommended that each Jamboard is labeled with a group number.
 - Prepare links to each Jamboard and have them available to easily copy and paste into the Zoom Chat. The format for the text that is copied and pasted should be as follows:
 - Group 1: [link to Jamboard]
 - Group 2: [link to Jamboard]
 - Group 3: [link to Jamboard]
 - Etc.
- Make one Jamboard with two empty frames (to be used to record participants’ ideas during the two 10-minute group discussions following debriefs on the small group work)

Steps

Introduction (1 minutes)

Explain to participants that this activity is intended to deepen their understanding and awareness of the different social rules/expectations applied to women and men, the ways in which they may unwittingly perpetuate some of these rules/expectations, and the positive and harmful impacts of these rules/expectations on their lives.

Facilitator Note: This activity is a good way to understand perceptions of gender norms. Remember that these perceptions may also be affected by class, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other differences. It is also important to remember that gender norms are changing in many countries. It is getting easier in some places for women and men to step outside their “boxes.”

Man box, woman box, and hegemonic masculinity and femininity (58 minutes)

1. Technology Action: As participants arrive, begin to create the breakout rooms for the activity. Each group should consist of individuals of the same gender. You will need to have one Jamboard per group, and it should say at the top either “Act Like a Man” or “Act like a Woman.”
 - Groups of 4-5 (single-gender groups)
 - Check “Breakout rooms automatically close after”
 - 10 minutes
 - Check “Notify me when time is up”
 - Countdown after closing breakout room: 15 seconds

Facilitator Note: If participation numbers allow, the “Act Like a Woman” template should be used by all-female groups, and the “Act Like a Man” template should be used by all-male groups. If numbers do not allow, a single gender group can be asked to take on the role of the opposite gender and respond using the opposite-gender template. There should be at least one “Act Like a Woman” group and one “Act Like a Man” group. If there are enough participants for two groups of women and two groups of men, it can be interesting to have one group of women and one group of men complete each template, to compare the perceptions of the different genders.

2. Ask the male participants if they have ever been told to “act like a man.” Ask for a few volunteers to share some experiences in which someone has said this or something similar to them. Ask:
 - Why did the person say this?
 - How did it make you feel?
3. Next, ask the female participants if they have ever been told to “act like a woman.” Ask for a few volunteers to share some experiences in which someone has said this or something similar to them. Ask:
 - Why did the person say this?
 - How did it make you feel?
4. Tell participants that they will now spend some time looking more closely at these two phrases. Explain that by studying them, we can begin to see how society can make it difficult to be either female or male. (Spend no more than 5 minutes on steps 1–4.)
5. Explain that the group will now be divided into breakout rooms of 4 to 5 people. Each breakout room will include members of the same gender.
6. Explain that each group will be provided with a Jamboard on which to take notes. On their Jamboard, they should brainstorm ideas/examples of either what it means to “act like a man” or “act like a woman”. Their Jamboard will indicate which gender they will review as a group.

7. **Technology Action:** Copy and paste into the chat links to each Jamboard. Jamboards should be clearly labeled Group 1, Group 2, etc. (see example below). Make sure that the linked Jamboards are distributed appropriately between all-male and all-female groups (see Facilitator Note above for more information on distributing “Act Like a Man” and “Act Like a Woman” among the groups).
 - Example:
 - Group 1: [Link to Jamboard]
 - Group 2: [Link to Jamboard]
 - Group 3: [Link to Jamboard]
8. Explain to participants that, as they are being moved to a breakout room, they will see on their screen to which numbered room they are being moved. Once they are in their breakout rooms, their room number will be at the top of the Zoom screen. Their breakout room number will represent their group number, and should be used to know which Jamboard to open.
9. **Technology Action:** Screen share a sample Jamboard, and demonstrate how to use the Jamboard as you explain the following.
10. Explain to participants how to use the Jamboard. Once they click on the link, they will be brought to a collaborative space (similar to a whiteboard), where they can add text, images, shapes, and sticky notes. For the purposes of this activity, they will be primarily using sticky notes. They should use **one sticky note** for each idea. To add a sticky note, hover over the white box with text that is accessible on the toolbar to the left side of the board. If you hover over it, it will say “Sticky note”. Click the icon. On the window that opens, type your idea. Then click, “Save”. Finally, click anywhere on the Jamboard (outside of the sticky note window) to close the sticky note window and continue manipulating the Jamboard.
11. Responses on the Jamboard will be anonymous as long as participants are not signed into a Google account.
12. Remind groups that they should select one person before coming back to the main room who will be the “spokesperson” for the small group. The spokesperson will present the Jamboard verbally to the rest of the larger group.
13. Remind participants that they should use the “Ask for Help” button once in their breakout room if they need help from a facilitator.
14. Ask if anyone has any clarifying questions before you move the group into breakout rooms. (Spend no more than 5 minutes on steps 5 to 14.)
15. **Technology Action:** Open the breakout rooms.
16. **Technology Action:** Open all Jamboards on your computer (each in its own tab). Watch each Jamboard. If you notice certain groups not adding any content to their Jamboard, join that group to see if they have any questions.
17. **Technology Action:** Send broadcast messages to remind the groups when they have 5 minutes, 3 minutes, and 1 minute left.
18. **Technology Action:** Close the breakout rooms after approximately 10 minutes.
19. **Technology Action:** Share your screen and show each group’s Jamboard as they present.
20. Once each group has returned, invite the spokesperson from each group to talk about what they added to their Jamboard. Begin with an all-male “Act Like a Man” group. Follow with any other all-male “Act Like a Man” groups, asking if they have anything to add that has not been presented. If

there is an all-female “Act Like a Man” group, ask them to present next, and draw attention to any areas where the female group’s perceptions about acting like a man differ from the male group’s.

21. Once each “Act Like a Man” group has presented, explain that the lists that were constructed of the “male characteristics” constitute what can be referred to as the “man box” because the characteristics act as rules intended to confine men and boys to a specific definition of masculinity (Spend no more than 5 minutes on steps 19 to 21).
22. Next, facilitate a 10-minute discussion using the following questions and record some of the participants’ answers on a blank Jamboard frame:
 - What are the benefits to men and boys of living inside this box? What are the potential harms to men and boys?
 - In what ways could men’s and boys’ adherence to the rules of the “man box” impact the lives of women and girls?
 - Can men and boys live outside the box? Is it possible for them to challenge and change the rules?
 - What consequences do men and boys face in stepping out of the box?
 - When is it acceptable for men and boys to step out of the box?
23. Invite the spokesperson from an all-female “Act Like a Woman” group to present their Jamboard. Follow with any other all-female “Act Like a Woman” groups, asking if they have anything to add that has not been presented. If there is an all-male “Act Like a Woman” group, ask them to present next, and draw attention to any areas where the male group’s perceptions about acting like a woman differ from the female group’s.
24. **Technology Action:** Share your screen and show each group’s Jamboard as they present.
25. Once each “Act Like a Woman” group has presented, explain that the lists that were constructed of the “female characteristics” constitute what can be referred to as the “woman box”. (Spend no more than 5 minutes on steps 23 to 25).
26. Next, facilitate a 10-minute group discussion using the following questions and record some of the participants’ answers on a blank Jamboard frame:
 - What are the benefits to women and girls of living inside this box? What are the potential harms to women and girls?
 - In what ways could women’s and girls’ adherence to the rules of the “woman box” impact the lives of men and boys?
 - Can women and girls live outside the box? Is it possible for them to challenge and change these rules?
 - What consequences do women and girls face in stepping outside of the box?
 - When is it acceptable for women and girls to step outside the box?
27. Next, introduce the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity by explaining the following points (spend no more than 3 minutes on this step):
 - The characteristics listed in the “man box” and the “woman box” are forms of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity, respectively.
 - Hegemonic masculinity/femininity is the social pressure to conform to a singular predominant idea of “what it means to be a woman or a man” in one’s culture. Hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity are valued more than other expressions of masculinity and femininity.

They are also often defined in opposition to one another; for men to remain dominant, women must be submissive and subordinate.

28. Before closing, allow participants 5–8 minutes to ask questions and/or make comments.

Closing (1 minute)

End the activity by stating that throughout their lives, men and women receive messages from family, media, and society about how they should act as men and women, and how they should relate to other men and women. As we have seen, many of these differences are constructed by society and are not part of our nature or biological makeup. Many of these expectations are completely fine and help us enjoy our identities as either a man or a woman. However, we all have the ability to identify unhealthy messages as well as the right to keep them from limiting our full potential as human beings. There are many ways to be a woman or a man. As we become more aware of the ways in which some gender stereotypes can negatively impact our lives and our communities, we can begin to think constructively about how to challenge them and promote more positive gender roles and relations. Therefore, we are all free to create our own “man box” and “woman box.”

Sources

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