



## Connecting Experience

# Norms, Roles and Biology

AGE GROUP

11+

AMOUNT OF PEOPLE

5+

TIME

30 - 40 MIN

OBJECTIVE

To understand the difference between Sex and Gender, to think about our own ideas of Gender and the type of language we use. To think about ways Gender has impacted their own life.

MATERIAL

Paper, pens, open space



### Instructions

Start by defining both the terms Sex and Gender, below are the definitions offered by the World Health Organisation.

#### Sex

The different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.

#### Gender

Refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men. This includes the norms and roles that women and men are expected to take on and the relationships between the two groups. It varies from society to society and can be changed over time. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and workplaces. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion.

So, we can understand from this that Sex is based on biology, it is the physical makeup of a human. Whereas Gender is an created identity, based on what is taught as the “normal” behaviours and roles of women and men. Gender is seen as something created by society to categorise people. Today people have begun to expand these categories and create a more diverse spectrum to better represent the wide variety of feelings people have about their identity outside of just male or female.

#### Activity: Part 1

Once the group are familiar with the definitions the leader can begin the game. One wall of the room should be designated as Gender and one as Sex. A leader calls out a word and the participants run to the wall that they think that word fits into.

When all participants have chosen a side, give them a chance to speak about why they think a word fits into one category rather than the other.

The below words are just examples, feel free to adapt and expand based on the group

#### Words

- ▶ Male (Sex)
- ▶ Femininity (Gender)
- ▶ Strong (Gender)
- ▶ Vagina (Sex)
- ▶ Masculinity (Gender)
- ▶ Emotional (Gender)
- ▶ Female (Sex)
- ▶ Caring (Gender)

#### Activity: Part 2

Take two pages, one labelled “Man” and one labelled “Woman.” Participants should call out words they associate with each category e.g. strong, brave, caring, emotional and write them on the relevant pages. Continue until the group has run out of words.

Once participants have run out of words, ask which words on each page are positive and circle these ones.

Discuss the words on each page; is one page more positive than the other? Why do you think we associate particular words with particular genders?

#### Debrief:

- ▶ Do you remember an event in your life where your gender affected what happened?
- ▶ Do you think we need to categorise things by gender? Why/Why not?
- ▶ What are ways you think ideas of gender impacts your community?
- ▶ How can you challenge people’s ideas of gender?



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