

What Role Will You Choose?



Youth examine stereotypical gender roles and what it means to be a strong, respectful person.

Why?

Sometimes stereotypical gender roles set the stage for unhealthy relationships. This play looks at what it means to be a strong person and how that may not be aligned with traditional gender roles.

Where and When?

This play works well in any setting that accommodates a small group of youth. The play will take about 60 minutes.

How?

Resources for youth can be found in the Zone 1 resources on the USB Flash Drive that comes with this Playbook.

See through the stereotypes.

Ask the group if they know what stereotypes mean. If no one knows, explain that they are ways that our society expects people to be—even though not everyone is like that.

Ask for any common stereotypes about men that the group might have noted in the exercise above. List those on newsprint. Ask if there are other stereotypes that were not mentioned and write those on newsprint as well. You might ask participants:

- What does it mean to “act like a man?” What words or expectations come to mind?

Draw a box around the entire list. Label this the “Act Like a Man” stereotype. Explain that the characteristics inside the box are a list of attitudes and behaviors that boys are sometimes expected to adopt as they become men in our society. Men and boys are not born this way; these roles are learned.

Ask for any common stereotypes about women that the group might have noted in the exercise above. List those on newsprint. Ask if there are other stereotypes that were not mentioned and write those on newsprint as well. You might ask participants:

- What does it mean to “act like a lady”? What words or expectations come to mind?”

Draw a box around the entire list. Label this the “Act Like a Lady” stereotype. Explain to the group that the characteristics inside the box are a list of attitudes and behaviors that girls are sometimes expected to adopt as they become women in our society. Women and girls are not born this way; these roles are learned.

Next, ask each group to think about a few questions.

- How do these stereotypes affect our relationships? Can you think of situations in which trying to live up to the stereotypes would be unhealthy... could limit possibilities... could hurt other people?

Draw a strong, respectful person.

Trace the outline of one of the boys in the group and one of the girls onto a sheet of newsprint. These will be the generic people for this exercise. Have all the boys gather at the outline of one body and all the girls gather at the outline of the other body. Give each group several markers and ask them:

- “What should a respectful person act like?”

The groups should write everything that comes to mind on the newsprint with the outline on it. Give the group about 5 minutes. Ask each group to share what they wrote down.

Next, ask each group to think about the following questions. Have them write the traits on a separate sheet of newsprint.

- Which of the traits you wrote down make you think of a respectful person in a positive way . . . like someone you would want to be like?
- Which traits would you want in a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Which traits do you assume the person would have to have in order to really be a strong person?

Have each group share these thoughts as well. Encourage discussion about what traits are stereotypes.

Make your own choice.

Finally, ask each person to consider whether this activity made them think differently about what really makes a strong person and why. Will they look for different traits in a boyfriend or girlfriend after this activity? Ask a few people to share their thoughts.

Want to Do More?

- Use with the “Dream Date” play and have the girl and boy teams create their ideal, strong girl or boy they would want to date.
- Include media images of how men and women are portrayed in the media and how that reinforces gender stereotypes.

Resources Needed:



Meeting space



Markers



Newsprint (or large sheets of paper)

Evaluation:

Document what you accomplish using Choose Respect tracking tools:

- **Stand Up & Be Counted**

Keep track of play participants and audience members. The Zone 1 Evaluation Tools contain a sign-in sheet.

- **Cheers & Changes**

After the play is complete, note your successes, challenges, and opportunities for the future. The Zone 1 Evaluation Tools contain a worksheet to help you do this.

Choose Respect feedback tools are recommended if you implement multiple plays. Assess what youth learned from and thought of a series of Choose Respect activities using Choose Respect feedback tools:

- **Youth Feedback**

After completing a series of activities with youth, collect information for your evaluation. The Zone 1 Evaluation Tools contain a feedback form to help you do this.