

FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

No Limitations – Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes in the Early Years

Practical tips for early childhood services

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS



PERSONAL REFLECTION IS A GREAT START IN IDENTIFYING WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN BEGIN TO BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPES & FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE

- What are your gender biases?
- How might your own gender/sexuality influence your interactions with children?
- How might your everyday 'good' practice reinforce sexism/inequality?
- Reflect on the way that you engage with girls and boys – is it different?
- Do you model a positive attitude to gender equality in your everyday actions and conversations with children?
- How much time do you spend communicating with boys and girls? Do you interact with them in the same way? Talk to them in the same voice?

Look at your surroundings

Do a 'gender' audit of your centre/classroom - is there an **equal representation** of girls and boys, men and women in the books, posters, songs and activities you use?

Display posters depicting men and women in non-traditional roles around the classroom. Ensure that you have posters that depict women in leadership positions and positions of power.

Have more than one 'male' and 'female' doll in the play space or dolls house, as well as dolls of different ages and ethnicities.

Review materials and images used with children to make sure they include gender diversity, non-stereotypical images and non-traditional lifestyles, such as single or same sex parents.

BE A ROLE MODEL! WHEN POSSIBLE, GIVE EXAMPLES OF HOW YOU OR PEOPLE YOU KNOW LIKE TO DO THINGS OUTSIDE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU'RE A WOMAN WHO LIKES CARPENTRY, TELL YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT IT. IF YOU'RE A MAN WHO LIKES TO COOK, MEASURE OUT SOME RECIPE INGREDIENTS WITH THE CHILDREN.

CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE KINDS OF BOOKS YOU INTRODUCE TO CHILDREN.

Stories that depict males and females in traditional stereotypical roles may perpetuate gender biases. It's perfectly ok to use traditional stories, it is just important to consider a balance. Make a point of drawing children's attention to it whenever books and stories challenge – or affirm – stereotypes.

USE of LANGUAGE

Be mindful of the language used when addressing children

For example the use of 'honey' and 'sweetie' to address girls, and 'you guys' when speaking to the entire class

Make a conscious effort to comment on what the girls in your class are good at, rather than what they look like.

For example, 'That's some great skipping!' rather than 'Your hair looks lovely today'.



Play and role modelling

Encourage children to play in different ways that aren't constricted by gender.

Make recipe books with the children, encouraging everyone to take turns 'shopping' for the ingredients, doing the 'cooking' and cleaning up the kitchen.

Practice role modelling diverse gender roles.

Use 'he' and 'she' interchangeably in conversation, particularly when describing professionals or animals i.e. Purposely referring to the bear as she or flight attendant as he.

Encourage children to feel equally free to use the different spaces in the classroom.

Encourage wooden, neutral toys for children to play with that aren't just pink and blue



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