



# Equilibrium

Redressing sexualised attitudes and behaviour

## Session 2 – Who are you?

### Key themes:

Human value and intrinsic worth beyond gender, understanding and challenging the roles and expectations and gender stereotypes communicated through our cultural stories and media.

### Key Questions:

- What roles are boys and girls expected to play?
- Are these roles fair or helpful?
- Where do these ideas come from?
- Have I ever been treated differently because of my gender?
- How can I challenge unfair expectations?

Curriculum Links: [click here](#)

Delivery guidance: [click here](#)

**Aim** – Pupils explore how roles and stereotypes shape identity and self-worth. They will reflect on personal experiences and consider how gendered expectations, in particular, affect people. The aim is to value shared human worth and encourage empathy while challenging unfair assumptions.

### Ground rules:

- **Confidentiality:** We might talk about personal things, people will share their views, opinions or experiences. This is a safe place for you to be open and honest. We need to know that the things people say doesn't get talked about outside this room
- **Respect:** Discussions need to be respectful, allow people the chance to talk, don't talk over each other. Don't speak about other people in the group or in school.
- **Tolerance:** There will be lots of time to discuss, ask questions and express opinions. We may not always agree and this is ok.
- **Fun:** This is meant to be fun, we will talk about some things that will make you want to laugh, we will be able to be silly at times and laugh at each other. However, if it becomes unkind or rude then I will stop us. We need to know when to stop as some of the things we talk about will be important and serious.

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### Warm up – Draw the job

**(Why this? –** This activity helps pupils uncover unconscious bias about gendered roles by seeing how certain jobs and characters are stereotyped)

**Activity** – Without any context, ask pupils to divide their page into four. Draw one of the following characters in each part and give them a name: a surgeon (dr...), a fighter pilot (captain...), a ballet dancer, a boxer.

**(Teacher note** – make sure you do not use any pronouns when referring to each character (i.e. give your ballet dancer a name).

Ask the pupils to fold up the paper and put it to one side or collect the drawing in

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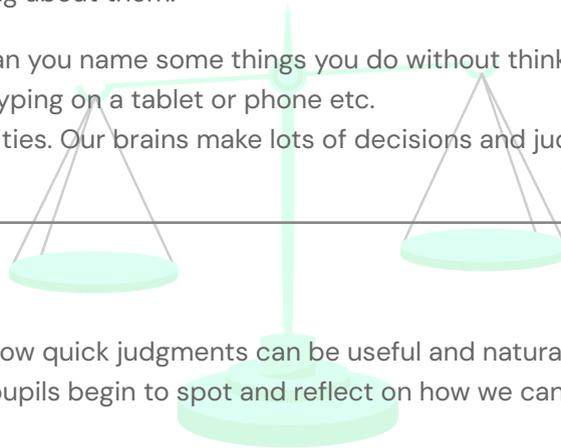
### Who are you?

**(Why this?** – We begin to explore the idea that we might be unaware of stereotypes as they are often unconscious bias)

Our brains are very clever and they do all sorts of things without us ever having to actually think about it?

**Definition** – "Unconscious" – to carry out actions or processes automatically, without being aware that you are thinking about them."

**Reflection Question** – Can you name some things you do without thinking (unconsciously) e.g. breathing, heartbeating, typing on a tablet or phone etc.  
It's not just physical activities. Our brains make lots of decisions and judgements without thinking too.



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### Snap judgement

**(Why this?** – to explore how quick judgments can be useful and natural but also lead to unfair assumptions. This helps pupils begin to spot and reflect on how we can be influenced by unhelpful stereotypes.)

**Activity** – Put pupils into small groups (3–5).

We all make quick decisions to stay safe or get things done fast. Sometimes this skill is helpful for us (like in life or death situations).

At other times making a snap decision can cause problems and be unhelpful and it's better to slow down and think about it

1. Read out or display scenarios and picture prompts one by one.
2. After each, groups must decide:

- SNAP = Yes, this is a situation where you need to make a fast judgment
- SLOW = No, this is a situation where it's better to pause and think more carefully

2. Either provide cards with each word printed ([click here](#)) or assign each word an action e.g. SNAP = stand up / SLOW = sit down

3. Complete a range of scenarios (see slides) then discuss

- In what kind of situation is a snap decision **helpful**? Why?
- In what kind of situation is a snap decision **unhelpful**? Why?

- Are there times when a mixture is needed?
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**Definition – “Stereotype”** – “a simple idea that people have about a situation, person or group of people based on generalised assumptions or expectations about them. These ideas are usually based on some experience or things we have been taught. They are not always true, might be unfair or negative and can be unhelpful or damaging.

**Reflection Question** – Can you think of times when a generalised idea can be helpful? (e.g. green means go. The sound of a fire alarm means get out). What about stereotyping that is unhelpful?

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### **First impressions – “stereotypes”**

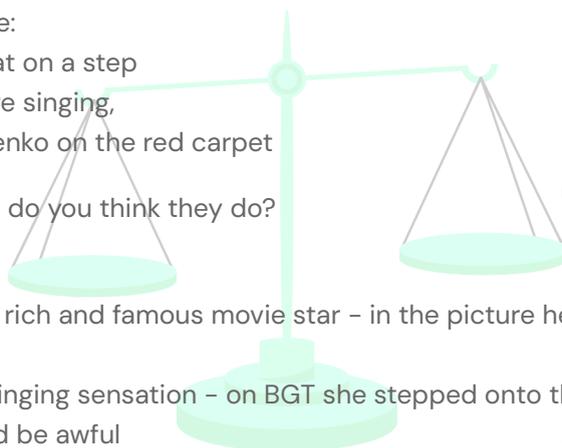
**(Why this?** – pupils begin to reflect on how stereotypes are often untrue, unhelpful and sometimes harmful)

**Activity** – Show a range of pictures and ask pupils to tell you their first impressions – “say the first thing you think when they see the picture”.

- 1) Pictures to include:
  - Keanu Reeves – sat on a step
  - Susan Boyle before singing,
  - Valentina Shevchenko on the red carpet

Who is this person? What do you think they do?

- 2) Reveal the truth
  - Keanu Reeves is a rich and famous movie star – in the picture he looks like a homeless person
  - Susan Boyle is a singing sensation – on BGT she stepped onto the stage and everyone thought she would be awful
  - Valentina Shevchenko – is an MMA champion



**Discussion** – We all have stereotypes and these ways of thinking about people can affect the way we treat them, our expectations and limitations we place on them.

This is particularly true when thinking about gender.

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### **Draw the job (review)**

**(Why this?** – to emphasise and raise awareness that we all carry gendered stereotypes and develop these generalised views from an early age)

**Activity** – Ask the pupils to open their paper, by raising hands count up how many drew each character as male/female? There will probably be a bias towards males in some roles and females in others. This is gender stereotyping – we all do it to some extent.

Reassure pupils that this is common and we will all have some stereotypes – our focus is on noticing this and trying our best to slow down and think more carefully (refer to “**Snap judgements activity**”)

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**Definition** – “**gendered stereotype**” – “when people assume that boys or girls should act, think, or like certain things just because of their gender”

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### **Stereotype Sorting**

**(Why this?** – Begin to explore some of the common gendered stereotypes and the impact of them)

**Activity** – Look at the sentence starters – many of the stereotypes we have heard will begin with these words. Can we identify some common gendered stereotypes by finishing these sentence starters:

Girls love... girls are... girls aren't... girls can... girls can't...  
Boys love... boys are... boys aren't... boys can... boys can't...

**Reflect & Discuss**– Are these views true? Are they always untrue? (Might they be true sometimes, of some people and not others?) How can these kinds of views be harmful or unhelpful?

**(Remember** – pupils may share a stereotype they do not hold but have heard – make sure you don't take offence if someone shares a negative stereotype but unpack how it is harmful)

**(Teacher note** – this may be a moment where some pupils reveal the influence of harmful or extreme views around gender roles and stereotypes – see “**What if**” / Guidance for support.)

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### **It's personal!**

**(Why this?** – this activity brings the session to a head by providing space for pupils to be open and honest about their experiences of gendered stereotypes and the impact of this)

**(Teacher note** – It is important to maintain a safe and supportive environment and manage the discussions to ensure people can be honest without upsetting each other – see “**What if**” / Guidance for support.)

**Activity** – Prompt:

“Have you ever been told or made to feel like you had to act a certain way because you're a boy or a girl?”

Pupils may choose to share anonymously by sticking notes to a wall or board/ completing a padlet or they may be happy to share experiences within a discussion

(**Remember** – pupils need to be reminded of the ground rules and the importance of confidentiality and respect).

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### “What if” – Conversations about gendered stereotypes

This session may provide a space where pupils express or raise offensive, harmful or extreme language or views. We suggest considering responses to the following scenarios

What if...

Someone shares some concerning negative stereotypes about girls/women

Someone expressive offensive views or language about LGBTQ+

Key things to think about:

- Remember that just because pupils repeat offensive or harmful language or views does not mean they understand this language or hold these views
- The emphasis is on creating and maintaining a culture and space where pupils feel safe
- Always consider the right time and place to discuss further – depending on the context and content you may wish to divert the conversation and return to it in a different context.
- Challenging or confronting such views has been shown to be unsuccessful in changing views/opinions, further conversation in the right context is encouraged

Response suggestions:

- If possible and the views are not extreme, draw the discussion to consider how such views would make others feel and encourage empathy

“I have heard some views like this before – I wonder how these views might make people feel”

- You can redirect responses that are more extreme or harmful and follow up later:

“Thanks for sharing – lets see what someone else thinks for now and but I’d like to hear more about that later” (follow up any discussions after the session, keeping relevant safeguarding staff informed)

Ask questions:

- Where have you heard people talking about such views or using such language?
- What do they understand about such language and views?
- How might such language or views impact others?

Follow up

- Ensure records are kept of what was said and what was done in response
- Refer to school policies about what action should be taken
- Speak with senior leaders about what action should be taken

What if...

Discussions escalate and people become upset

Key things to think about:

- The teacher should maintain a role of managing and guiding the discussion. Pupils should understand that the school rules continue to apply and they are expected to continue to follow the instructions of the teacher (this is made explicit in the session ground rules)
- If the teacher decides a discussion should end pupils will have to accept this

