

# RAISING ETHICAL SONS

## UNDERSTANDING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Together we can change the narrative by challenging limiting ideas about gender, and supporting our children to be who they want to be and to pursue their passions beyond gender stereotypes.



Working to end sexual assault and domestic violence



## How do gender stereotypes lead to violence against women?

Gender inequality is one of the key reasons why the rate of violence against women is so devastatingly high.

### Gender stereotypes teach young people that:

- It is normal for men to have a greater amount of power and importance – and for women to prioritise men's needs and interests in a relationship.
- It is natural for men to use forceful behaviour in their relationships – and for their female partner's behaviour to be obedient and passive in response.
- It is natural for men's concerns and priorities to out-weigh a female partner's in relationships.

**By addressing gender stereotypes with your children and your whole family, you can make sure that our future generations will not tolerate these harmful attitudes which make violence against women possible.**

## What are gender stereotypes?

Boys are strong and tough	Girls are gentle and emotional
	Boys have important things to say
Girls just like to gossip	
Boys are active & good at getting things done	Girls are beautiful
Boys are rough and play hard	Girls are nice and sweet
	Boys are good at sport and science
Girls are good at cooking and art	
Boys are ambitious	Girls are nurturing
Boys will become leaders	Girls are good at helping
	Boys will provide for their families
Girls will become mothers and carers	
Boys will be the head of their households	Girls will be homemakers

# HOW CAN YOU ADDRESS GENDER STEREOTYPES WITH YOUR SON AND IN YOUR FAMILY?

## **If you hear one of your children saying something that reflects gender stereotypes:**

You don't need to tell them what they are saying is wrong, but ask them questions to explore their ideas like – “Why do you think that?”

“Can you think of a boy or girl who isn't like that?”  
“Do you think you're like that all the time?”

## **If you are having a conversation with your children, and you've noticed that your daughter is speaking less than your son:**

Ask your daughter what she thinks of your conversation, and show your children that you value both your son and your daughter's contributions equally.

## **If you run into gender stereotypes when you're watching TV or reading a book, help your children unpack them.**

Ask them questions like “What do you think of that?”  
“Do you want to be like that? Do you want other options?” “Are there boys or girls that you know that are not like that?”

## **Make sure all of your children don't feel limited by gender stereotypes during play time. Give them the chance to try all toys whether they are girls or boys toys.**

If they hesitate because they think that a particular toy is “for girls” or “for boys” – make sure they know that it's okay for them to enjoy all toys, and encourage them to pursue their interests.

## **Make sure that your son knows that it is okay for boys to be sad and cry.**

You can do this by affirming your son when he is sad instead of telling him things like “Boys don't cry,” and by openly sharing sadness and other vulnerable emotions with your son.

## **Encourage your son to have both female and male role models to look up to and admire.**

You can do this by reading books or watching movies together about women and men in history who achieved great things. If your son has a particular passion – like space travel, football, or another field that tends to be male-dominated – find out more about great women and men in those fields. Have a chat afterwards to talk about what makes these women and men admirable.

## **When talking to children and young people about their future jobs, try not to reinforce gender stereotypes.**

Encourage them to think about all the amazing options that are open to them in the world, and to pursue their curiosity and passion wherever it may lead them.

**Break gender stereotypes with your son by doing activities like playing with 'girl' toys together, cooking and cleaning together, or looking after younger children together.**



To learn more about the importance of addressing gender stereotypes, take a look at this video from **Our Watch** that explains the connection between gender inequality and violence against women.

