RAISING ETHICAL SONS

TALKING ABOUT NEGATIVE GENDER STEREOTYPES FOR BOYS AND MEN
You can empower your son to reject unhelpful messages about what it means to be a man by openly talking with him about negative gender stereotypes.

Full Stop Foundation

Working to end sexual assault and domestic violence

Talking about negative gender stereotypes for boys and men

Our society teaches boys and girls that it is normal for men to act in ways which are violent, forceful, and to put their desires over the needs and interests of others. This may mean that when men act in ways which are aggressive or coercive – physically, sexually, or emotionally – young men and women believe that this is normal.

It is not normal. Such behaviours and beliefs are harmful. By having open conversations with your son about negative gender stereotypes for men, you can help him navigate this negative gendered messaging, and empower him to have positive male role models and respectful relationships.

"When you go your own way, it feels good because you feel free and you can do what you want to do."

You can use the **'#HatchKids Discuss Male Gender Stereotypes'** video to start a conversation with your son about what stereotypes he sees in the media and how they make him feel.

For older boys, you can also discuss the trailer for '**The Mask You Live In**', a documentary about how negative stereotypes are impacting boys and young men.

Discuss with your son what it means to be a man or be masculine – what ideas come to mind?

Are they ideas that reflect negative stereotypes for boys and men? If so, ask questions to help your son break down and challenge these ideas.

Are they ideas that challenge negative stereotypes for boys and men? Show your son that you support these ideas, and that they are positive qualities that boys and men bring to our society.

You can also ask your son if he relates to the ideas of masculinity that he has talked about. Does he feel like he is like that, or that he wants to be like that? Does he feel excluded from that idea of what boys and men should be? Encourage him so that he knows that you love and support him, even if he doesn't fit these expectations.

Watching films and TV shows is a great chance to explore examples of positive & negative male role models with your son:

Ask your son which characters – male and female – he looks up to and why, and have a conversation about positive attributes of the characters he admires.

If a character he admires acts in ways which reinforces negative stereotypes for boys and men, ask your son to think about the impact that this character is having on others around them.

SOURCES

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