

Teaching Equality

A project led by Table de concertation féministe · Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine



Intervention Guidelines for Early Childhood Educators

Original version: 2020 | Updated version: 2025

Boys and girls: different at birth?

At birth, the brains of boys and girls differ only in reproductive function. Children aged 1 to 3 years old therefore have the same cognitive (intelligence, reasoning, memory, attention, spatial identification) and physical skills. The differences that develop between girls and boys are attributable to the plasticity of the brain, that is to say, its ability to transform with learning and environment¹. As for the psychological and behavioural differences between genders, while they tend to increase from childhood to adulthood, they are nearly absent in infants and toddlers². The only differences observed at birth relate to the average size of the brain, larger in baby boys, and motor activity, slightly greater in boys. Other differences, such as verbal expression or preference for some toys, emerge between the ages of six months and one year, the age at which children are already subject to social influences, which vary according to the child's sex. Variability among individual brains outweighs the variability between sexes³.

Development of Gender Identity

Although there are almost no differences between male and female infants at birth, with the exception of the reproductive organs, children nevertheless gradually forge their gender identity. At birth, children are unaware of their gender. They learn gradually, as their neurons connect and their cognitive functions develop⁴. According to Kohlberg's cognitive-behaviour theory, children acquire the concept of gender in three stages.

During the first three years of life, children experience **the gender identification stage**: they learn how to distinguish their own sex and that of others by focussing on apparent physical characteristics⁵. More precisely, by around 2 years of age, children have the mental abilities they need to identify themselves as girls or boys⁶. At this age, they know about gender roles, recognize typical gender-specific occupations, engage in gender-typical activities and behaviours and choose attributes associated with the gender to which they belong: games and toys, clothing, accessories, etc.⁷

¹ Catherine Piraud-Rouet, *Stéréotypes de genre : bien les comprendre pour mieux les combattre*, 2021.

² Louise Cossette, *Cerveau, hormones et sexe. Des différences en question*, 2017.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Catherine Vidal, *Nos cerveaux, tous pareils, tous différents !* 2015.

⁵ Denise Boyd et Helen Bee, *Les âges de la vie*, 2015.

⁶ Catherine Vidal, *Nos cerveaux, tous pareils, tous différents !* 2015.

⁷ Véronique Ducret et Véronique Le Roy, *La poupée de Timothée et le camion de Lison*, 2012.

At about 3 to 4 years of age, **gender stability** appears, with children understanding that an individual's gender remains the same over time, that girls will become women and boys, men. However, children of this age do not yet understand that sex also remains the same regardless of the situation. For instance, in the minds of children of this age, a boy wearing a skirt becomes a girl⁸. At this stage, children therefore regard gender role violations as unacceptable and incorrect⁹. They still group people by their physical attributes¹⁰. By the age of three, children become aware that adults behave differently towards them depending on the gender of the child. It is at this age that children adopt gender stereotypes to varying degrees, hence the importance of acting from early childhood to deconstruct such stereotypes¹¹.

This gender stability can also be observed in transgender children, according to a study conducted with 3-5 years old children who completed a social transition, meaning they live with their pronouns, first name and gender expression different from what was assigned to them at birth. Transgender children effectively show behaviors, preferences and beliefs like their cisgender peers, i.e. like other children whose gender identity aligns with the one they have been assigned at birth¹². However, transgender children generally endorse less gender stereotypes and consider gender roles violations as more acceptable than cisgender children¹³.

At 5 to 7 years of age, children reach the age of **gender constancy**, during which they understand that an individual's gender remains the same over time and that it is defined by biology¹⁴, at least in a society that assign a gender at birth based on the child's genitalia. Trans children, however, would believe less in the biological stability of gender, according to the study by Fast and Olson. Children now realize that identity is not influenced by changes in appearance or gender-related activities (so by gender expression) although this identity only becomes permanently stable at around 7 years of age. Other studies suggest, however, that the construction of sexual identity is dynamic and can be reshaped in children later as they develop¹⁵. From this stage of gender constancy onwards, there is no difference between cisgender children and transgender children

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Anastasie Amboulé Abath, *Étude qualitative portant sur les rapports égalitaires (garçons et filles) en service de garde*, 2009.

¹⁰ Yoan Mieyaa et Véronique Rouyer, *Genre et socialisation de l'enfant*, 2013.

¹¹ Diane E Papalia et Gabriela Martorell, *Psychologie du développement de l'enfant*, 2018.

¹² Anne A Fast et Kristina R Olson, *Gender Development in Transgender Preschool Children*, 2018.

¹³ Kristina R Olson et Elizabeth A Enright, *Do transgender children (gender) stereotype less than their peers and siblings?*, 2018.

¹⁴ Denise Boyd et Helen Bee, *Les âges de la vie*, 2015.

¹⁵ Yoan Mieyaa et Véronique Rouyer, *Genre et socialisation de l'enfant*, 2013.

in terms of how they express their gender (clothing, attitudes, etc.) or interests, which are often consistent with their gender identity (games, leisure activities, hobbies)¹⁶.

What causes gendered socialization?

If boys and girls have the same capacities at birth, how is it that just a few years later, they have developed behaviours and adopted roles strongly associated with what is expected of children of their gender? The innate capacities of children, which are invariable according to gender, are in fact modelled by their environment¹⁷. The education they receive within their family units and at educational daycare centres therefore plays a critical role in the break between what is presented in the public space and how these observations are internalized by children or how these stereotypes are reinforced¹⁸.

The **family** is the very first place where children are socialized; there, they learn gender-typical roles, first by watching their parents who significantly reinforce the difference further during their children's second year of life¹⁹. Many studies have shown that the entourage of infants or toddlers does not exhibit the same attitudes towards girls and boys, depending on their gender, even before children are born²⁰. For instance, boys' and girls' rooms are decorated differently and different toys and clothing are purchased depending on the child's gender. An experiment involving newborns showed that their parents described boys as big, sturdy and strong whereas girls were described as small, cute and fragile²¹. Several studies have even shown that parents react more positively when their sons play with toys and trucks and their girls, with dolls or jewellery²². According to one study, parents take care of their daughters, keep them close and mother them. Girls are expected to be obedient, docile and tidy, and have less choice when it comes to activities. They learn to depend on adults rather than relying on themselves. They sense the behaviours expected of them by their parents and other adults, internalizing them and acting accordingly. Moreover, the report points out that these attitudes and behaviours on the part of

¹⁶ Kristina R Olson, Aidan C Key et Nicholas R Eaton, *Gender cognition in transgender children*, 2015.

¹⁷ Catherine Piraud-Rouet, *Stéréotypes de genre : bien les comprendre pour mieux les combattre*, 2021.

¹⁸ Secrétariat à la condition féminine, *Boîte à outils sans stéréotypes*, 2025.

¹⁹ Anastasie Amboulé Abath, *Étude qualitative portant sur les rapports égalitaires (garçons et filles) en service de garde*, 2009.

²⁰ Catherine Piraud-Rouet, *Stéréotypes de genre : bien les comprendre pour mieux les combattre*, 2021.

²¹ Aussi.ch, *Attentes et attitudes différentes face aux filles et aux garçons*, 2019.

²² Denise Boyd et Helen Bee, *Les âges de la vie*, 2015.

parents are perpetuated by educators at educational institutions, who in doing so continue the socialization begun by the family²³.

In heteroparental families, it is the mothers who exert more influence over behaviours; thus, daughters whose mothers have stereotyped behaviours adopt them and, in turn, exhibit the same behaviours while sons of the same mothers, adopting their behaviours, exhibit behaviours that are less stereotypical for their gender²⁴. Some studies have also shown that the children of lesbian mothers feel less pressure to conform to gender stereotypes and adopt less discriminatory behaviour towards the opposite gender. Similar studies of gay fathers have not been reported.

As for sibling influence, older children tend to be more influenced by their parents while younger children put greater effort into copying the behaviours and attitudes of their older siblings. Children who have an older sibling of the same sex tend to adopt more gender-related behaviours than those who have an older brother or sister of the opposite gender²⁵. On the whole, interactions within the family environment will guide tastes, aptitudes and personality traits to bring them more closely into line with the standards for men and women of the society in which the children exist²⁶.

Educational childcare centres and kindergartens for 4- and 5-year-olds are other environments where certain standards, attitudes, habits and knowledge are instilled in children and where they learn what is desirable, even reasonable as goals for adult life. Gender-differentiated socialization reproduces not only inequalities between women and men, but at the same time limits the possibilities of infants and toddlers²⁷. A study conducted in France showed that early childhood educators had stereotypical expectations, proposed gender-based activities and did not treat boys and girls in the same way²⁸. For instance, educators tolerate more unruly behaviours in boys than in girls and let boys monopolize sound space by allowing them to speak more often²⁹.

²³ Anastasie Amboulé Abath, *Étude qualitative portant sur les rapports égalitaires (garçons et filles) en service de garde*, 2009, p. 20.

²⁴ Diane E Papalia et Gabriela Martorell, *Psychologie du développement de l'enfant*, 2018, p. 207.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²⁶ Catherine Vidal, *Nos cerveaux, tous pareils, tous différents !*, 2015.

²⁷ Anastasie Amboulé Abath, *Étude qualitative portant sur les rapports égalitaires (garçons et filles) en service de garde*, 2009.

²⁸ Nicolas Murcier, *La réalité de l'égalité entre les sexes à l'épreuve de la garde des jeunes enfants*, 2007.

²⁹ Anne Dafflon-Novelle, *Filles-garçons : socialisation différenciée ?*, 2009.

Peers, whether in educational settings or elsewhere, also contribute to the gendered socialization of children. By the age of three, children are already playing in groups of the same sex, which reinforces gender behaviours³⁰. The influence of peers would seem to be more marked in boys: when barely able to walk, they already pay more attention to the reactions of other boys to their own behaviour than to the educator. This trend continues and may even increase with age³¹.

Finally, the children's **material environment** (toys, the media, books, etc.) also influences their endorsement of gender stereotypes. Play allows the children to acquire and exercise motor, cognitive and social skills that will have a major impact on their later development. Various studies have shown a link between the practice of visuospatial type games (block games and other construction games) and the results of visuospatial aptitude tests. Play activities could have a greater influence yet on the lives and career choices of girls and boys³².

From birth, children indeed evolve in a gendered environment; rooms, toys and clothes differ for boys and girls³³. Parents and other adults offer different toys to girls and boys long before they ask for them or clearly display distinct preferences, reinforcing endorsement of stereotypes³⁴. These socializing agents also help reinforce gender roles. For instance, children are very good at finding their way around a toy store and recognizing **their** space. Indeed, for many toys there is a girl version and a boy version, like pink bikes and blue bikes. This is a sales strategy to encourage parents to buy more. It is not easy for parents to hand down big sister's pink bike to her little brother, and this reinforces stereotypes³⁵. Furthermore, a number of toys for girls already strongly encourage them to pay particular attention to their appearance, reinforcing in them these stereotypes: makeup kits, hairdressing and manicure accessories, dress up games, etc. The universe of princesses, where beauty is put forward as something of paramount importance, leads girls to count on their appearance while still very young.

Sex and Gender Identity

Gender identity is described as the intrinsic feeling of being a boy or a girl or somewhere between these two poles (or not feeling a sense of belonging to any gender). So there is no connection to sexual orientation, which refers to the physical attraction or love felt towards one

³⁰ Diane E Papalia et Gabriela Martorell, *Psychologie du développement de l'enfant*, 2018.

³¹ Eleanor E Maccoby, *The Two Sexes: Growing Up Apart, Coming Together*, 1998.

³² Louise Cossette, *Cerveau, hormones et sexe. Des différences en question*, 2017.

³³ Catherine Vidal, *Nos cerveaux, tous pareils, tous différents !*, 2015.

³⁴ Louise Cossette, *Cerveau, hormones et sexe. Des différences en question*, 2017.

³⁵ Véronique Ducret et Véronique Le Roy, *La poupée de Timothée et le camion de Lison*, 2012, p. 10.

kind or the other. Research suggests that gender identity be established by the age of three³⁶. Young children can therefore feel a gender identity that differs from their biological sex. It is still hard today to explain why some children have a gender identity different from that assigned to them at birth. One thing is certain; **the education they receive cannot explain** why individual children have a gender identity different from their biological sex³⁷. As a cisgender person, whose gender identity is the same as the one that was assigned at birth, it is not necessary to understand what it feels like to be trans to have compassion for those children and accept them as they are.

Consequently, an inclusive educational childcare environment that does not reinforce gender stereotypes will enable children who do not identify with their biological sex to feel accepted and safe. In fact, if educators allow all children to take part in the activities of their choice, regardless of the toys, clothing or activities traditionally associated with one gender or the other, children who feel a gender variance will feel more included.

Things to Keep in Mind When Dealing With Children

Several elements must thus be taken into account when working in early childhood education, and the goal is to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. As children develop their gender identity between the ages of 0 and 7, early childhood is a critical time to provide all children with diverse models and opportunities, without confining them to traditional roles or gender stereotypes. There are several tools available on our [Teaching Equality Website](#) to make your educational childcare space and teaching practices inclusive and free of gender stereotypes. Finally, we need to be aware that we ourselves are products of gendered socialization and that, unintentionally, we contribute to reinforcing them. Keep your critical eye open and be ever ready to ferret out those stereotypes!

³⁶ Table nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie et la transphobie des réseaux de l'éducation, *Mesures d'ouverture et de soutien envers les jeunes trans et les jeunes non binaires : Guide pour les établissements d'enseignement*, 2017.

³⁷ Secrétariat à la condition féminine, *Boîte à outils sans stéréotypes*, 2025.

Specificities About Infants and Toddlers' Learning Styles

The socialization of children is gender-differentiated during early childhood, whether through their environment, the toys offered to them, their families or the staff in educational care settings³⁸. Consequently, children undergo a gender-differentiated educational experience. This section deals with how gendered socialization modulates the characteristics of the children's connection to learning.

First of all, this translates into **differentiated interactions with adults and peers**. Adults, parents and educators, although they feel they do not act differently with children, change their behaviour depending on a child's gender. This results in different learning and in different experiences for children. The older the children, the more their peers influence their behaviour.

Nor are the **toys, activities and material** presented to children free of stereotypes, quite to the contrary. Consequently, they create different gender-dependant learning experiences, encouraging girls to build certain competencies and boys, others.

This differentiated educational experience gives way to variations in the evolution of the different domains of a child's development according to his or her gender. The following statements were taken primarily from the *Guide d'observation des comportements des professionnel-le-s de la petite enfance envers les filles et les garçons*, from the *Étude qualitative portant sur les rapports égalitaires (garçons et filles) en service de garde* by Anastasia Amboulé Abath and from the Secrétariat à la condition féminine's Portail sans stéréotypes. These statements can help understand how the educators and the toys they are using can, unconsciously, influence boys' and girls' development.

Emotional and Social Domain

According the *Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle* (EQDEM) 2022, boys of the region are proportionally more likely than girls to be vulnerable in the areas of "social skills", "emotional maturity", and "communication skills and general knowledge". The Emotional and Social Domain includes many elements that can be influenced by gender

³⁸ Anastasie Amboulé Abath, *Étude qualitative portant sur les rapports égalitaires (garçons et filles) en service de garde*, 2009.

stereotypes, such as making choices based on one's tastes and interests, participating in group life, and developing their self-esteem³⁹.

Gender stereotypes associated with interests and toys are acquired very early. By the time they are 20 months old, children have favourite toys typical of their own gender. Children play less often with objects typically used by the opposite gender in the presence of a peer, especially when that peer is of the opposite gender. By 2 to 3 years of age, children already have substantial knowledge about stereotypical gender-specific activities, occupations, behaviours and appearances. Children, especially boys, who engage in activities typical of the opposite gender earn negative feedback from their peers. Activities that receive disapproval are completed more quickly than those that are positively reinforced. The more time girls and boys spend with children of the same gender, the more their behaviour becomes gender differentiated.

Educators use boys more than girls to test stereotypical toys for boys although no significant difference is observed for neutral and girls' toys. There is a **broader range of toys for boys**, and when it comes to material (puppet names, group facilitation tools, characters), the references are primarily masculine. Toys associated with boys include things used in the construction, transportation, technical and scientific fields, to maintain order or wage war and for occupations associated with high social status, such as doctors.

At the age of 3, the presence of dolls in the activities of girls systematically leads them to reproduce mothering scenes and to develop role playing. At the same age, only boys distinguish between dolls as objects and dolls as toys that represent babies requiring someone to take care of them. They are not as affected as girls by the symbolism of things. There are more costumes for girls than for boys.

Adults use girls' first names less often than boys' when speaking to children, and a group of boys is addressed differently from a group of girls (for instance, "hey, big guys" versus "hey, girls"). References are essentially feminine when it comes to the role of parents in the domestic and nurturing spheres. Girls are primarily complimented for their attractive appearance, which can negatively affect their confidence in their capacity to learn and develop new skills.

Emotionally, we notice that adults don't allow boys to **express their emotions** as fully as they do girls ("big boys don't cry!"). Emotional states and feelings are discussed more often with girls,

³⁹ Ministère de la Famille du Québec, *Feuillet explicatif destiné au parent*, 2025.

increasing their sensitivity to others and fostering the emergence of a more cooperative interaction style in girls' groups. Anger is a more tolerated emotion in boys. In childhood, they primarily learn to express their anger, which could later hinder their ability to communicate.

The development of **social skills** to experience **harmonious relationships** is also influenced by gender dynamics. Girls are more often asked to help boys than vice versa. Girls are asked more often to put away the games and toys, and they tidy up or offer to tidy up toys even if they haven't played with them. Boys, on their part, have difficulty putting things away; they prefer to go on playing. When there is a conflict between children, adults more frequently ask the girls to be conciliatory. Girls are often the losers when an adult is not there to handle the conflict. They give way more easily, letting the boys take over their space or whatever they were playing with. Boys sometimes interrupt girls' games by taking over, by destroying their set up or by forcing them to change their scenario. When boys interrupt their play, girls react by making proposals for continuing their activity, negotiating, calling for an adult or running away.

Regarding **the rules of group living**, boys are punished more often and demonstrate less self-control. Their unruliness is tolerated more and discouraged less. Fathers prohibit their sons from doing things twice as often as they do their daughters because boys are more likely to handle forbidden objects. Boys are called on more frequently than girls by the educators, and they receive more attention. Between the age of 3 and 5, boys obtain more instructions in response to their questions, which encourages them to become involved in activities.

To summarize, children's interactions with adults as well as the toys we propose them are differentiated according to their gender, and this strongly impacts their social and emotional development. They learn how to function in a group and express their emotions and interests in a way that conforms to society's expectations of their gender.

Language Domain

The regional results of the 2022 EQDEM teach us that boys are significantly more likely than girls to be vulnerable in the communication skills development domain. When looking at studies on the topic, we notice that adults sing songs and talk more often to baby girls. Adults adopt a much broader range of expressions with girls than with boys. Moreover, girls mainly engage in activities that are more related to playing pretend and role playing. All of this benefits girls in their language development.

However, we notice that public speaking is more encouraged in boys. Professionals interrupt girls more often than boys. Girls are asked to be quiet when they are too “talkative”, whereas boys speak out and continue to do so longer than girls and occupy more physical and sound space.

Physical and motor skills domain

As soon as they enter primary school, boys generally already have developed better gross motor skills, whereas girls have better fine motor skills than boys. Why? Many things can explain these differences.

As soon as they are born, adults have more physical interactions with baby boys, which helps them develop a better consciousness of their body very early in life. Boys engage more readily in activities involving sand or climbing. In terms of motor skills, a little boy who is “not very adept” physically generally receives more negative remarks than a little girl whose motor skills have developed to the same degree. It sends boys the message that we expect them to be really good at gross motor skills.

On the other side, we expect girls to be obedient, docile and orderly, and have fewer choices in terms of their activities. Little girls are more often invited to take part in “quiet” activities sitting at a table. A girl deemed “agitated” is scolded more often than a similarly agitated little boy. And as the choice of toys or clothes by parents often depends on the baby’s gender, not on his or her spontaneous behaviour, we notice that clothes deemed “for girls” (dresses, skirts, fine shoes, elaborate hairstyles, etc.) make exploring and developing gross motor skills more difficult. On the other hand, quiet activities such as crafts or role playing at the kitchenette allow girls to develop fine motor skills that boys aren’t encouraged to develop in the same way.

Cognitive domain

The regional results from the 2022 EQDEM indicate that boys are more likely than girls to be vulnerable in the general knowledge domain, which is included in the cognitive domain in the early childhood network. When looking at boys’ and girls’ socialization, we can see how children are encouraged to develop certain skills and acquire certain knowledge according to their gender.

First of all, stereotypes about boys—contending that they are more rational or cartesian and consequently, more talented than girls in science—and about girls—claiming that they are more

emotional, more creative, and therefore superior to boys in art or literature—are highly persistent. These preconceived ideas about the skills of girls and boys can have important implications for their academic confidence and motivation.

Parents take care of girls, coddle and nurture them, which encourages them to rely more on adults than on themselves. They are less often congratulated when they do something well. Toys associated with girls are connected to the fields of care giving, appearance, childcare and sales, which confines them to a certain knowledge field.

Questions asked of boys who are 24 to 30 months of age tend to concern objective information about objects and people. They receive fewer compliments and, when they do, they are complimented for their physical strength. They receive more encouragement to succeed at a task. Construction and interlocking games as well as the technical range LEGOs are part and parcel of boys' activities. These games, more focussed on the success of the activity, give boys the opportunity to handle objects and explore space.

The role of children's literature

Children's books are important pedagogical tools for the early childhood educators, but they also participate in differentiated socialization. Since children's books are used at the moment a child builds up his or her identity, they contribute to indicate which characteristics are associated with each gender⁴⁰. Gender stereotypes are widely used in stories to support children's understanding. This is why it is very important that the educators make sure all children are represented in a variety of roles when using children's literature.

	Female Characters	Male Characters
Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer of them hold occupational roles, and there's not much variety in the occupations they do have, traditional ones at that (education, care giving, sales);• generally, have access to only one role, a family role or an occupational role;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are depicted more often in public places and actively occupied;• are depicted in a greater variety of occupational roles and in some cases are given greater value;• are often depicted as holding two roles: a family role and an occupational role.
At home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• are more often shown inside, in the mother's role;• In the private sphere, the mother is most often depicted doing domestic tasks and activities relating to parenting duties;• participate in domestic tasks more often.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fathers appear more often in recreational activities involving their children (games, sports, reading) or in quiet moments (reading a newspaper, watching TV).
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The clothing worn is connected to their domestic tasks (apron);• wear clothing and other items that are exclusively for women (jewellery, hair accessories).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Little boys are frequently depicted in a non-gendered manner;• Men are more often depicted in professional accoutrements (wearing glasses).
Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women appear in secondary roles slightly more often;• They are underrepresented in illustrations compared to boys;• Books telling the story of male heroes are twice as numerous as stories about female heroes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are more often illustrated on the cover pages of books;• Boys' first names predominate in story titles;• appear more often in central roles than in secondary roles;• Play more sports activities;• Boys argue more and do more foolish things than girls;• Anger and unruliness are associated more often with boys than with girls.

⁴⁰ Sarah Jane McKinley, Elaine Turgeon et Isabelle Plante, *Les métiers pratiqués par les personnages féminins et masculins dans les albums jeunesse de classe de maternelle 4 ans en milieu défavorisé*, 2025.

General Recommendations

Once we become aware of the gender socialization that takes place from early childhood and the effects it can have on children's development, we must take action to identify gender stereotypes in our daily lives and work to deconstruct them, both in us and within the children entrusted to our care. Here are a few recommendations based on different domains of child development and aspects of the work of early childhood educators.

Social and emotional domain

Children's own choices and interests

1. Encourage children to be open-minded about other children's choices. Show them that the gender of individuals doesn't limit them in their choice of toys or activities;
2. Support children who make choices that are perceived as different. Avoid raising doubts in the minds of children when they don't conform to stereotypes (for example, a boy having fun walking a stroller, a girl wearing a fireman's helmet) and correct children who comment on these behaviours or make fun of them;
3. Support and encourage the educational, professional and social aspirations of children, both in the way they perceive those aspirations and in real life. Help them to become convinced that anything is allowed and possible;
4. Encourage and praise children for all their endeavours and not just for those we might feel they are predisposed to take part in;
5. Be careful not to convey stereotypes about parental or professional roles when speaking by using examples that cross stereotypical gender boundaries (for instance, talk about a dad who cooks or an on-duty policewoman);
6. Diversify the division of work in the home or at the educational childcare centre so that children are given non-stereotyped responsibilities;
7. Correct the impression that some activities are for women and others for men;
8. Invite children to enjoy a diversity of experiences. Show them that girls and boys can participate in all tasks. Some believe that non-intervention encourages children to choose freely but, on the contrary, it tends to reinforce gender-stereotypical play choices in children;
9. Give preference to reading and activities that feature original representations and a range of characters as well as qualities and behaviours that are different from traditional models;

10. Encourage children to choose activities or toys not typically associated with their gender, or toys they tend to ignore. You can do so by organizing thoughtfully your play area in a way that fosters gender diversity;
11. Be aware that offering an education free of stereotypes does not mean removing all toys considered stereotyped (for instance, a doll, a kitchenette, a fire truck, etc.). On the contrary, encourage children to make their own choices regardless of gender stereotypes;
12. Give children a mixture of books and toys, and find alternatives to commercial materials (for instance, use things you collect outdoors);
13. Choose children's games and toys with care, especially in terms of colour; since symbolic games are often pink, boys will hesitate to engage in this type of activity;
14. Display on the walls images that show boys and girls in non-traditional or non-gender roles.

For harmonious relationships between children

15. Teach children to respect others and that mockery should not be tolerated. Teach them how to respond to mockery and discuss the consequences of bullying;
16. Avoid making children compete (boys against girls) and reinforcing differences;
17. Encourage cooperative and collaborative behaviours;
18. When a boy and a girl fight over a coveted object, be careful not to ask the girl to conciliate first.

Gender-equal interactions with children

19. Compliment children about what they are and not about their appearance (for instance, instead of greeting a little girl by telling her that she has a beautiful dress, tell her that her smile is a ray of sunshine sure to put everyone in a good mood);
20. Avoid using words that put people into boxes (boys, girls);
21. Pay attention to the number of times you call on girls and boys for answers or assistance and the time you give them, without disadvantaging one or the other;
22. When speaking, avoid using masculine terms only. Use the feminine form as well as the masculine form (for instance, say "fireman" and "firewoman") or, even better, use a gender-neutral term (for instance, "firefighter");

Expressing emotions

23. Give boys the same opportunity as girls to express all their emotions.

Language Domain

1. Focus on early literacy activities that appeal to the interests of the boys in your group (and not necessarily interests that are typically considered “masculine”) and that involve physical activity (for example, books that encourage children to move around).
2. Suggest role-playing games to boys to improve their language and socio-emotional skills.

Physical and Motor Skills Domain

1. Give girls building games so they can build their fine motor skills and relation to space;
2. Encourage girls and boys to improve their strength and physical abilities by taking part in activities such as soccer, dance or martial arts so they learn to control their bodies and develop a sense of body competence;
3. Pay a specific attention to boys when they take part in crafting or drawing activities to support their fine motor skills development.

Cognitive Domain

1. Openly criticize stereotyped images in the public space and help children develop critical thinking;
2. Pay special attention to the gender stereotypes you or the children convey, take advantage of the opportunities they present to deconstruct such stereotypes and start a discussion with the children;
3. Diversify the activities in which you ask the children to participate;
4. Offer children a variety of tasks and responsibilities and encourage them to switch them from time to time. Ask boys and girls to do their fair share when it comes to putting away their toys so that girls do not feel this is essentially a girl's job;
5. Invite boys to do tasks that are stereotypically associated with the opposite sex, such as washing dishes, sweeping, tidying and caring for a young child;
6. Invite girls to do tasks that are stereotypically associated with the opposite sex, such as finding a solution for fixing a chair or helping with the yard work;
7. Keep some books containing gender stereotypes to inspire discussion with the children (4–5 years old) and help them build their critical thinking.

With your work team

1. Ask your colleagues to let you know when you say or do things that reinforce the children's attachment to gender stereotypes and welcome this criticism with humility and gratitude;
2. Ask one of your colleagues to watch you or film you during a session where you interact with the children;
3. Rethink how the space is organized to create a neutral, non-gendered environment; and
4. Choose neutral themes for your activities and design activities that allow children to develop a range of skills.

Taking action with parents

1. When you need to ask the parents something about their child's care, speak with both the father and mother;
2. Inform the parents of your goal to provide gender-neutral, stereotype-free education and what this entails;
3. Feel free to ask parents to dress children, especially girls, in comfortable clothes that will allow them to move and develop their motor skills without fear of dirtying or tearing their clothing; and
4. Explain to parents that children, especially boys, are free to express their emotions in your environment and that this is necessary for their overall development, especially in terms of social and emotional domain.

Self-reflection

1. Ask yourself about your own reactions to certain gender stereotypes (for instance, why do you tell little girls they're pretty and little boys that they're full of beans?);
2. Don't feel guilty: Deconstructing gender stereotypes requires humility and we also have to "unlearn" what we've been taught our whole lives to think of as the established order of things.

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