



The “Mixing it up” Activity (Secondary Education)

Purpose:

- To engage students in critical thinking about gender norms in their socio-cultural context
- To sensitize students to the links between gender norms, and sexual and gender-based bullying, including homo/transphobia depending on the context
- To encourage students to take action in response to sexual and gender-based bullying

Facilitator(s): One or several teachers

Target Group: Learners aged 13 and above

Time: 60 – 90 minutes

Materials: None

NB: Prepare for this activity by writing or typing the text of Role play #1 and Role play #2 (see procedure 2) on separate sheets of paper, which will be handed out to small groups in class.

Procedure:

Part 1 (20 minutes)

- 1) Explain the objective of the exercise using simple words, such as the following: During this activity, we will be acting out different role plays that will help us understand how a young man or woman can be discriminated against (or treated unfairly) because of how they look or act. We will discuss how this kind of discrimination relates to discrimination based on someone’s sexual orientation. Lastly, we will also explore appropriate and inappropriate ways to respond to situations like the role plays we will perform.
- 2) Divide the class into small groups of approximately 5 students. Hand each small group one of the scenarios below:

Role play #1

A girl whose appearance is quite masculine has been seen holding hands with another girl at school over the lunch break. She quickly let go of her partner’s hand when she saw she was watched by a group of fellow students. They make fun of her when she gets back from lunch.

Characters: the girl whose appearance is quite masculine, her partner and the students who make fun of her.

Role play #2

A new male student has been admitted into your school. His appearance is different than the way boys’ appearances usually are in your school (e.g. the way he dresses, the way he speaks, etc.). During a class one of the teachers makes comments on the new student’s appearance in front of all his classmates. The teacher even seeks approval from the classmates and they all approve except for one student who says that it is the right of every student to choose how he appears. The boy also protests and says that it has never been a problem before.





Characters: the male student whose appearance is different from the norm, the teacher, the classmates who giggle and the classmate who expresses a different view.

Note: You may also invent other scenarios, which are adapted to your specific school and community setting.

- 3) Give each group maximum 10 minutes to prepare the role play based on the scenario they received. Students should decide who will play each role and choose names for the characters that are different from their own names, or from names of other students in the classroom (this is to avoid any confusion between real situations and the role play as otherwise some students may feel hurt during the role play).

Part 2 (40 minutes)

- 4) Depending on the size of your class you can pair up groups and have them perform and discuss their two role plays (maximum 10 minutes by role play). Then ask for a couple of volunteer groups to present their role plays (one for each scenario) and discuss each in front of the whole class.
- 5) Once groups have stopped their role play ask participants how they felt during the role play, starting with the students who played the roles of the students who were bullied by their fellow students.

Note: You should refer to the characters and not the students when you debrief the role plays to make clear that this was fiction.

Part 3 (30 minutes)

- 6) Initiate a discussion asking the following questions:
 - Is it a problem for a girl to look masculine in our school/ in our community/ in our country? Why? Or why not?
 - Is it a problem for a boy to appear differently in our school/in our community/in our country? Why? Or why not?
 - How are girls supposed to look and act? Why?
 - How are boys supposed to look and act? Why?
 - Has it always been always like this?
 - Is it OK to insult someone because of the way they look? Why? Or why not?
 - How would you feel if someone insulted you or beat you because of the way you look?
 - What can be done in the school if a student is bullied because of the way they look?
 - Do you know what the words “gay”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, “transgender” and “straight” mean? Can you explain what they mean?
 - Does a girl/woman who is a lesbian or is bisexual always looks masculine and acts like a boy/man?
 - Does a boy/man who is gay or bisexual always looks like a girl (effeminate) and act like a girl/woman?

Note: If you think time will be limited for this section of Part 2, be sure to ask some of the questions related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues.





If you live in a country where it is not possible to talk about homosexuality you can ask the following questions:

- Is it a problem for a girl to look masculine in our school/ in our community/ in our country? Why? Or why not?
- Is it a problem for a boy to appear differently in our school/in our community/in our country? Why? Or why not?
- How are girls supposed to look and act? Why?
- How are boys supposed to look and act? Why?
- Has it always been always like this?
- Is it OK to insult someone because of the way they look? Why? Or why not?
- How would you feel if someone insulted you or beat you because of the way you look?
- What can be done in the school if a student is bullied because of the way they look?

Part 4 (15-30 minutes)

7. Explain to students the following items listed below:

- Just because a boy/man looks like a girl and acts like a girl/woman doesn't mean he is gay or bisexual;
- Just because a girl/woman acts like a boy/man doesn't mean she is a lesbian or bisexual;
- Even if they are, it is not something they choose to be;
- There is no reason why they should be bullied based on what they are or what we assume they are.

If you live in a country where it is not possible to talk about homosexuality you can explain the following items:

- The way boys/men and girls/women are supposed to look/act is completely influenced by the society where we live. The way it is now is not the way it was before, and it will continue to change;
- We are all different in the way we look and act;
- It is not acceptable for teachers and students to bully (insult, beat, etc.) students just because they look/act different from the way they are supposed to.

