

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Alfred University

Artistic Reflections on Binary Gender Norms

by

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What do you use everyday?

What are the objects you absolutely adore?

If you could put all of your life right now on a shelf, what would it look like?

Are these objects things you enjoy or could do without?

What do they say about you?

Are they masculine, feminine, both, neither?

This excerpt from my book *Genderation* was adapted from an assignment to compile a collection of objects that inspire me. As I started pulling together my objects it occurred to me that I am a total girly-girl. On my shelf were items of beauty: jewelry, make up, nail polish, and lace. My shelf had become a vanity, but when did I become so vain?

After an extensive art history course focusing on artists who rejected female beauty standards in lieu of more important concepts like equality in the art world and in society, I began questioning my own hyper-feminine interests. Why was beauty so important to me? If my mother hadn't taught me to appreciate appearance, would the items on my shelf still hold the same value in my life?

I thought back to an experience when I was 10. My brother and I both received my dad's genes for a large nose, and mine finally developed by the fourth grade. My mother said "We can always get your nose fixed if you want. It's no problem." She would say this to me a dozen more times, but not to my brother. She said a big nose isn't as big of a problem for men. I didn't realize how much this experience changed me until recently. I never liked my nose because it's not beautiful. Other kids made fun of me for it, and I have always tried to make up for it with all other aspects of my appearance. I don't blame my mother. For women, it is very important to be

beautiful. She understood this and simply perpetuated this pressure. But there are instances like this that cause insecurities in people who don't fit the norm. It is an insecurity that I still have today.

This is one of a few reasons that sparked my interest in parental influence on a child's development of gender norms. My own experience left me wanting to find other moments with my parents that shaped my idea of what it means to be a woman. More importantly, I wanted to know if others had their own memorable moments like mine.

The next reason started over the summer when my friend began her transition from man to woman. This was especially emotional for me to watch because I had known her intimately as a man and I was so happy to see her begin to find herself in a new way. At work she was not comfortable coming out to her co-workers. Then after the presidential election, when many conservatives found confidence in expressing hatred toward LGBT+, it was clear that she and many of my friends felt targeted because they did not fit the norm.

At home during Thanksgiving, my friends did not even feel welcome by their parents. The mother of one of my friends told him not to be openly gay, fearing that he might be attacked. I would rather protect my friend's right to express himself and stand up for him than tell him to hide who he is. He had just come out to his family a few months prior, and on this holiday his father did not speak a word to him. Another friend's mother shared her open opinions about the election on social media. Her alignment with conservative views about gender issues made her son feel unwelcome at home.

These three experiences motivated me to advocate for LGBT+ and gender equality. Moreover, I was deeply affected by my friends' parents. I could not imagine feeling unwelcome in my own home. These issues steered my art practice for the next semester. I started

experimenting with the origins of gender expectations. I worked with gendered toys and colors, looking for ways to represent parental influence over our interests. Feedback from my peers and the essays on feminist artists all had one thing in common: we are products of gender socialization. The gender standards we perceive have been constructed by society, passed down through generations, and more or less influenced by our parents.

By this time in my life I had heard the phrase “Gender is a social construct,” but I had little knowledge of what that meant and how it affected my life. Writings by Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler introduced the idea of gender as performance. These writers taught me that gender is not defined at birth, that when I am born I do not already know that I should sit with my legs closed, be graceful, or belch silently. I am born and I flail my legs, I play in the dirt freely, and I burp after every meal! I am not born a perfect woman, I am taught to be one.

I still wondered if others recognized the pressures to fit into gender norms. Do they know how much their parents instilled in them about their gender expectations? It was my mission to find out. Through casual conversations with friends and acquaintances, readings on feminism and gender sociology, and everyday experiences, I began to learn more about how my culture understands gender and where I stand within it all.

I opened many conversations with a question: “What do you think about feminism?” A few years ago I didn’t consider myself a feminist. I believed in gender equality, but I didn’t burn my bra or hate men. I wasn’t aware that believing in gender equality was the very definition. I talked to a co-worker about feminism. He said, “There are feminists who are too strong. It’s a touchy subject for some people, so I don’t like to get into it. You feel like people are attacking you if you’re a man.” He didn’t think that sexism was related to feminism. The same response came from my partner who would freeze up when I mentioned that something was sexist. One of

the first things I learned is that gender is a uncomfortable subject. People don't want to be wrong. Entering a sensitive situation where you don't know much about the topic is intimidating. We are afraid to be challenged or offend someone, and we don't want to be on the defensive.

A few years ago I had a teacher who called on a poor guy in class, "Are you a feminist?" The boy scoffed, "No." The professor replied "Why not? Do you believe in equality for men and women? Do you think a woman should be paid as much as a man for the same job? Do you think women deserve the right to vote and own property? That is the basis of feminism, yet you do not consider yourself to be a feminist?" It's a sad thing. The word came to mean man-hater. People feared feminists, as was their intent in the 70s. Radical feminists were women who were powerful. They lead the way for women to demand equality.

Fortunately, for a woman now to be using that word is at the same so common place and so progressive. To the women who struggled in the last century for voting rights, birth control, equal pay, and for the feminist movement, it's amazing to be able to say that "feminist" is becoming a more favorable word for not just women, but men too. Thanks to Emma Watson's *He For She* campaign through the United Nations, the dialogue between women, men, and feminism is more open. We are welcoming the idea that men have just as much a stake in feminism as women.

Still, there is resistance. The notion that feminists hate men and want extra privilege is clouding the cause. More conversations revealed that many people who were against feminism believed that feminists were asking for double standards. If a woman should be given equal pay, why is it the man's responsibility to pay for a date? But these are necessary questions. Of course women shouldn't be asking for special treatment on top of equality. As shown in these cases, men feel just as much pressure from our culture as women to fit into the norm.

With this in mind, one must understand the basic concepts of feminism to begin to grasp the ideas of total gender equality. It's not a fight for only women. I found that many people don't understand this concept. There still exists this idea that gender is the same as biological sex. People believe in two categories: male/man/masculine and female/woman/feminine. You are born male, you must act masculine, and you will become a man. Our culture has understood gender this way for a very long time. I understood gender like this until very recently. It's the Christian way of thinking that many Americans follow. They believe that god made man and woman to marry and have children. If you do not follow these rules you are not following what god intended and you are mentally ill.

Unfortunately for those who believe in only two genders, our world is too unique to place into two categories. After talking to a peer who identifies as non-binary, I learned that even on a biological level there are more than male and female. There are so many possibilities when it comes to chromosomes, genes, and genitalia, that no one is perfectly male or perfectly female. We are all unique combinations. Therefore, when we try to funnel everyone into two categories, we ignore so many of the people who don't quite fit in with our definitions.

We continue this harmful behavior when we treat everyone as male or female. Our culture has developed expectations of men and women to perform their gender. These stereotypes present a pressure to conform to specific norms. Sometimes our society lashes out against those who don't conform to these stereotypes, as seen after the election and with laws against transgendered Americans.

These stereotypes are perpetuated through each generation, from parent to child. It is within the early years of childhood that parents are molding their child to become a good person. Feminist writer, bell hooks, summarizes the importance of teaching youth about gender saying,

“Children’s literature is one of the most crucial sites for feminist education for critical consciousness precisely because beliefs and identities are still being formed. And more often than not narrowminded thinking about gender continues to be the norm on the playground” (hooks, 23). The formative years are when we learn what is right and wrong, and how to view the world. Our parents are our guides through this wobbly time.

I began by examining the relationship between the free choice of a child and the censored decisions of an adult involving objects such as toys and children’s clothing. Many products for children are designed according to gender, but children did not dictate that boys are interested in space ships and girls are interested in dress-up. Parents give their children these different toys and dress them in pink or blue. If a boy wants to play with a doll, the parent says, “No. Dolls are not for boys.” These ideas continue as he grows up. “Cheerleading is for girls.” “Quit crying and man up.” “You throw like a girl.” The phrases we grew up hearing make a difference. They say men aren’t allowed to be sensitive, weak, or equivalent to a woman. Women should be inferior, passive, and attractive. These ideas remain and solidify in us as adults.

A recent issue of Time magazine chronicled the life of Mattel's Barbie since her creation in 1959. Over the past 57 years Barbie has come under fire for her unrealistic representations of the female body and the high expectations she has created for girls who idolize her. In 2016 Mattel debuted a line of 23 new dolls with different hair styles, hair colors, and facial structures as well as 3 new distinct body shapes of tall, petite, and curvy. One Mattel researcher hopes the younger generation will no longer snicker at the curvy doll, but it will become more normalized (Dockterman, 44-51). Children absorb the criticism we share about unattractiveness, showing another reason why parents must be careful with the gendered ideas they pass on to their children.

During another conversation I developed my opinion on feminine fashion. There are many tools used traditionally for feminine gender expression including make up and heels. Some feminists are convinced that these tools perpetuate the patriarchal idea that women must be beautiful and gazed upon. Other feminists argue that a woman should have the choice to do whatever she likes with her body. One acquaintance said, “When I wear make up, it has nothing to do with anyone else. I do it because I want it.” Everyone, including men, should be able to wear make up, do their hair, accessorize, use whatever tools they like to express themselves. We should not restrict someone from being unique. If boys were given dolls we might have more caring fathers and men who feel welcome expressing themselves freely through fashion.

My anecdotal and scholarly research enlightened me about gender socialization. I decided I would address the problem where it started: the parent-child relationship. My campaign *Generation* reflects the difficulties of discussing gender. It centers on parents, the key audience, in an informal way that does not put pressure on the task of raising a child with a healthy gender outlook. The book is divided into four sections: Gender, Recognizing Stereotypes, The Role of Parents, and Everyday Changes, which gradually inform the reader about the importance of learning about gender socialization and tips to bring healthy gender practices into their everyday.

The section titled Gender teaches basic definitions relating to the psychology of gender. Biological sex is defined by someone's genitals at birth. It does not necessarily relate to gender. Many people still today believe that gender and sex are the same thing. Luckily our language is changing and those two words indicate the two separate categories. Gender has two parts, identity and expression. The difference is how each idea takes form. Gender identity is how someone feels inside in relation to man, woman, neither, or both. Gender expression is how someone performs their gender through clothing, gestures, speech, etc. in relation to masculinity,

femininity, neither, or both. Someone could identify as a man and express themselves femininely. Lastly, sexuality is someone's sexual and/or romantic preference. All four of these realms are independent from one another.

It is important to teach about the separation of these basic categories because many of us have been taught that your biological sex relates to your gender, your gender defines who you are attracted to, or your gender expression has to do with your sexual preference, etc. Parents should know that their child has the choice to be whoever they want to be, especially when it comes to these categories.

In *Recognizing Stereotypes*, the book asks parents to be more observant of how often gender norms affect us. The reader is given tasks like observing the gender in their profession, in how they censor themselves, and in the way they were raised. My goal is that once the reader realizes that their life is gendered, they can start to understand how much of an impact stereotypes can have on someone who doesn't fit the norm.

The Role of Parents directly addresses how parents function as teachers of gender. This chapter places a spotlight on the importance of being a good role model. It gives parents tips on how to change everyday tasks like chores so they aren't sexist.

The last section, *Everyday Changes*, asks parents the questions I've been asking myself all along: what changes can you make to your everyday interactions with your child to challenge gender stereotypes? The reader is given a choice of six main stereotypes for men and women having to do with appearance, roles, and emotions. Next they choose from of 24 different activities that they will encounter often, and are asked to make a change.

The book is designed with space on each page that invites the reader to write like a journal. This room for response allows personal connection and critical thinking. The coloring

pages stand symbolically as the possibility to be whoever you want to be, and practically as a way to entertain your child when you take a break from learning and responding.

The most significant revelation I have experienced about gender this past year is that we try too hard to make sense of our culture even though it is full of infinite possibilities. My conversation, experiences, and research have shown me it is much easier to recognize that gender is unique to everyone than it is to force it into two categories. The result of forced norms is harmful to everyone, especially those who do not easily fit those expectations. In order to raise a new gender healthy generation, we must start with parents.





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GENDERATION

Jillian Mullen

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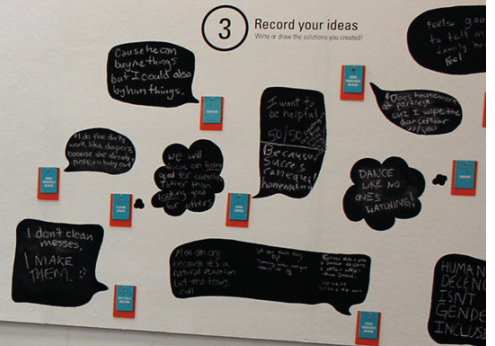
1 Choose a gender stereotype
(What stereotypes remind you of?)



2 Select a daily activity
(What activity can you make in this stereotype?)



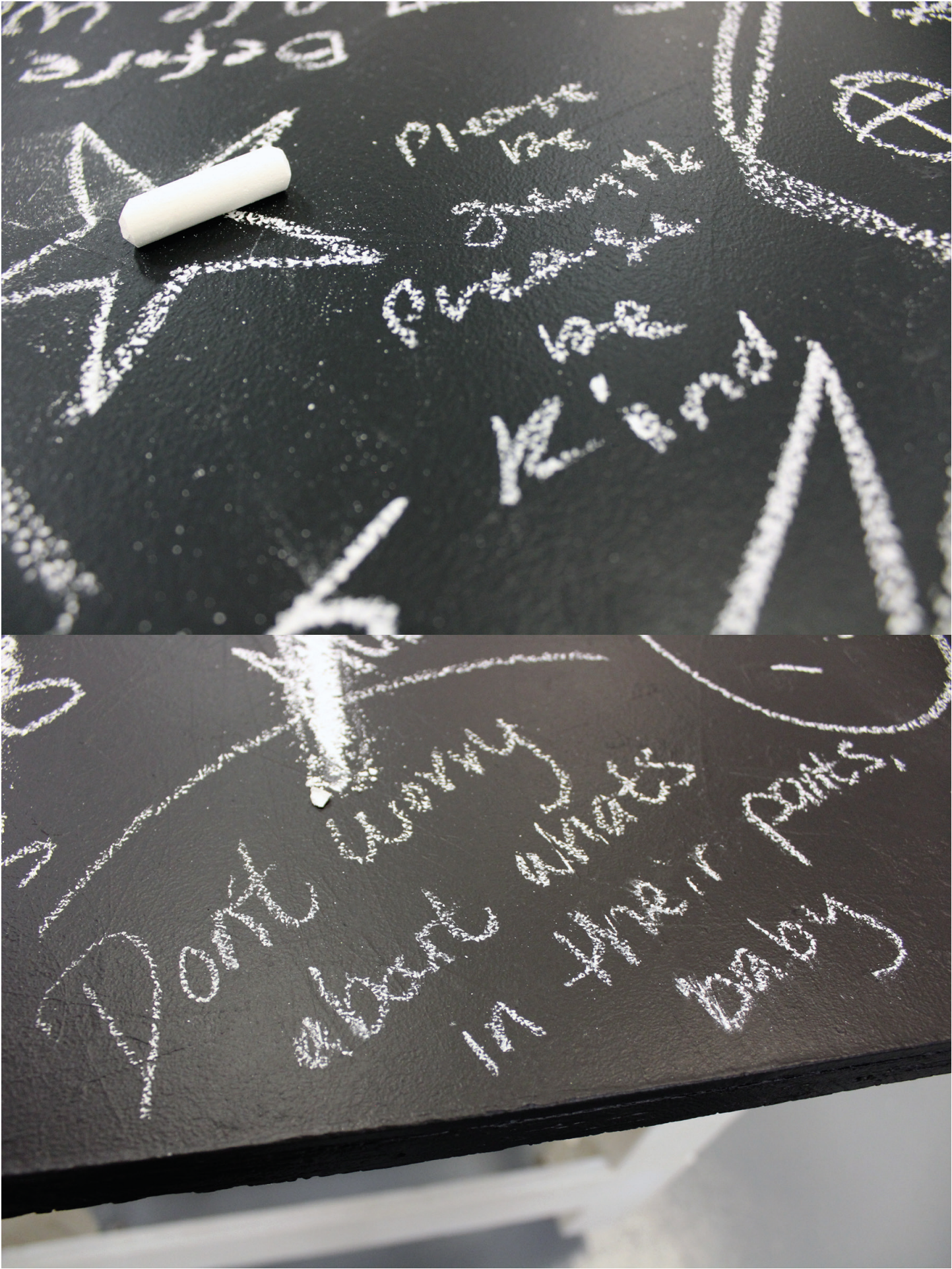
3 Record your ideas
(Write or draw the solutions you created!)



Generation is an exploration of and reaction to social constructions of gender in American culture. This campaign focuses on how to raise children without the pressures of a binary gender system. *Generation* rests on the idea that social change of gender norms is most effectively achieved through targeting the parent-child relationship.

The *Genderation* activity book and interactive workshop are designed to influence people to reflect on their own gendered lives. Ultimately this campaign hopes to build a new generation who rejects gender stereotypes and accept a more fluid gendered society where infinite possibilities are more welcome than check boxes.





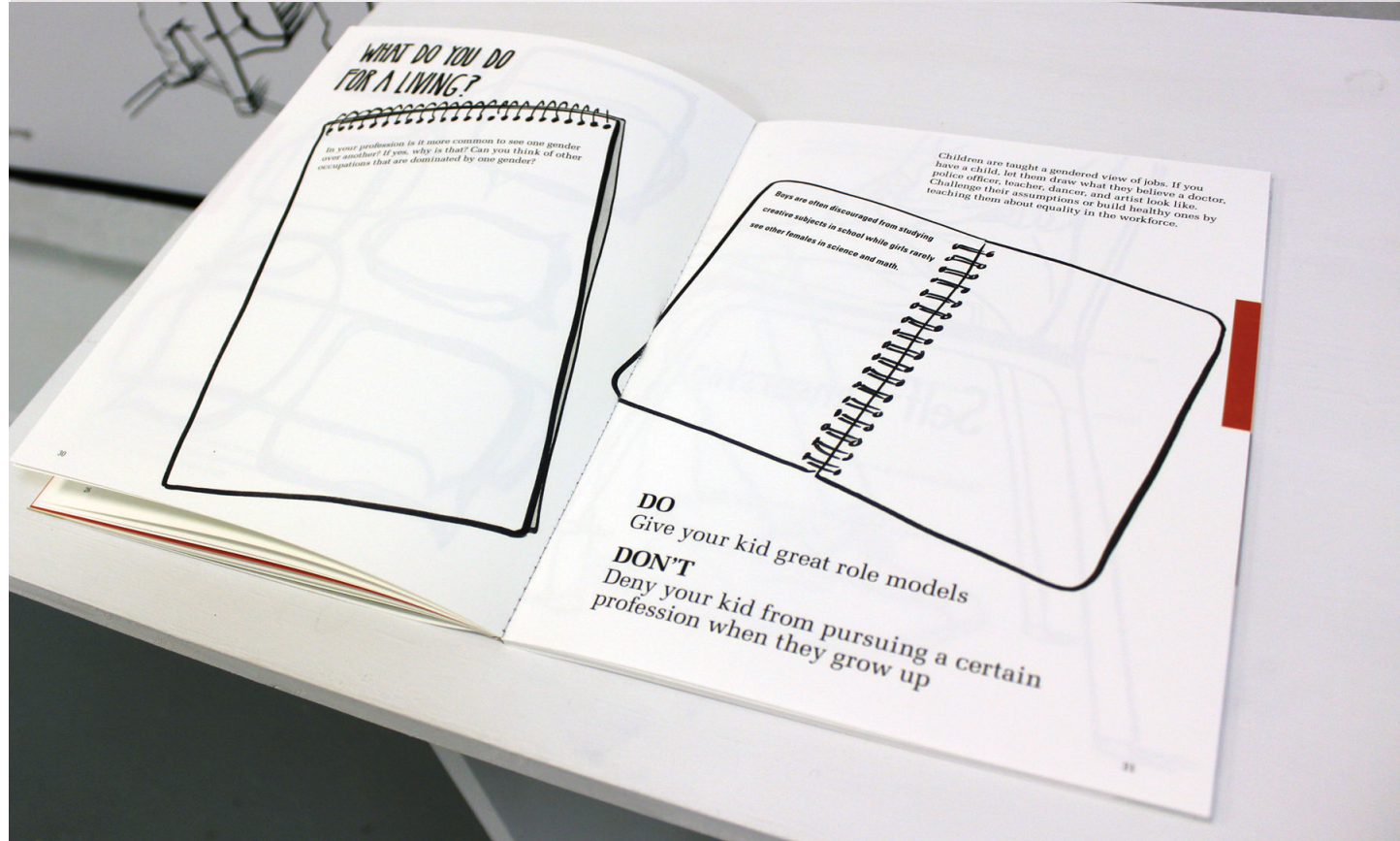
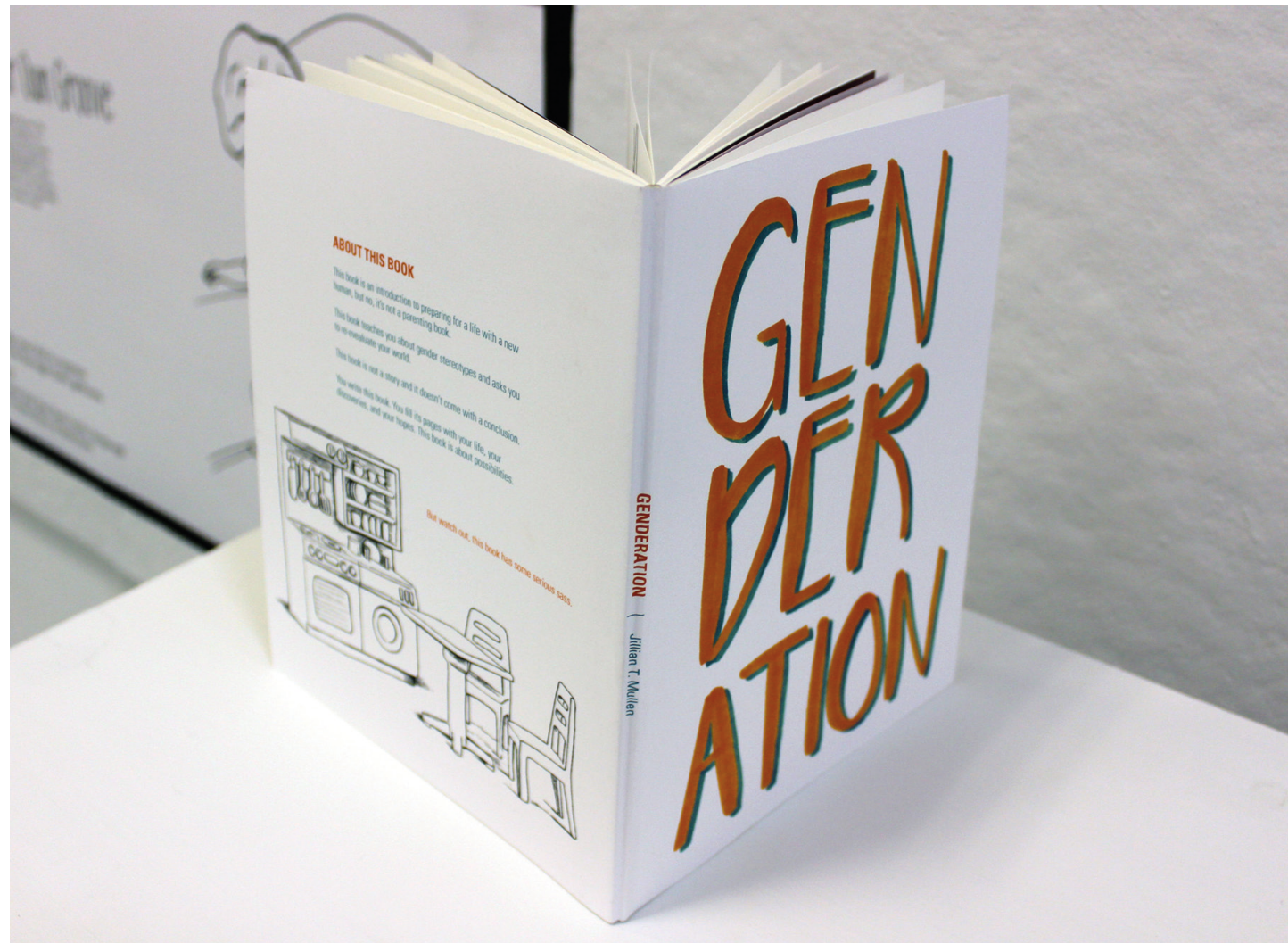




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Introduction

I designed this book because, frankly, I'm sick of parents. This book is for my friends who don't feel accepted at home anymore because their parents don't understand them. I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

You're not going to be a parent like that. See, you opened this book, you've made it this far, and that means you have sympathy. You and I care about how we raise the next generation. We consider the mark we leave on this world. We don't want to f*** up!

I believe I'd raise a great kid, but a lot of people say that. Honestly, wouldn't anyone be a happy parent as long as they don't raise an a**hole? So in this book are the questions we should all ask ourselves. Let's never raise another child that feels like their house is not a home. It starts with us!

Our culture is separated by gender. Men do this, women do that, this is feminine, that is masculine. Where do these ideas come from and why do they seem like rules for living? What about those who don't agree?

Gender roles restrict us. They put us in boxes to tell us what we can and cannot do or be, limiting the possibility and choice in our lives.

The biggest influence in combating harmful gender roles in our society is a parent. Children are the future, literally and figuratively. The children of today will be changing our world tomorrow. There is no one better to guide them toward a brighter tomorrow than their parent.

Our parents are the ones who taught us about gender, how to follow it and reject it. They told us, "you can accomplish anything" at the same time reiterating "that's not ladylike."

Not to freak you out, but children are sponges, and everything you say and do can leave a lasting impression. That's why it's too important to learn about gender and start thinking about what type of parent you want to be to raise your child with a healthy gender outlook.

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men”

— *Frederick Douglass*

Gender

Our culture loves categories, definitions, and order. But that's not how gender works. Gender isn't the male and female you may have grown up with. In fact it's so diverse and complicated that it shouldn't and can't be placed in categories.

Before a baby is born, the cells in its body work together to form a functioning organism. Without getting into too much detail with genetics and hormones, sometimes when a baby is born it has male genitals, sometimes female genitals, sometimes the genitals aren't distinguishable as male or female, and sometimes the chromosomal sex does not align with the description of the genitals. In short, there are more possibilities to biological sex than male and female. And that's just the on the physical level!

Within the brain and all the amazing things it can do with ideas and identity, we have gender. Gender is a social construction. Gasp! You may have already heard this phrase, but let's give you an example to break down what this actually means. Imagine that a baby was just born with intersex genitalia, a description for the many possibilities where the sex is not distinguishable as male or female. The parent of this baby thinks about its future. "What gender will I raise the baby if I do not know what sex it is?" And that's the question that tears all arguments of sex and gender apart!

What gender will they raise the baby? Gender has nothing to do with the sex of a person. Let's say they decide this baby will be raised like a girl. They nickname it "princess", put it in dresses, buy it dolls, and call it "she". But its genitals did not decide that any of this would happen, the parent did.

Let's continue: the baby grows up like a girl and one day questions whether their parent made the right decision. Why should this person be expected to live their whole life under the gender role they were assigned at birth?

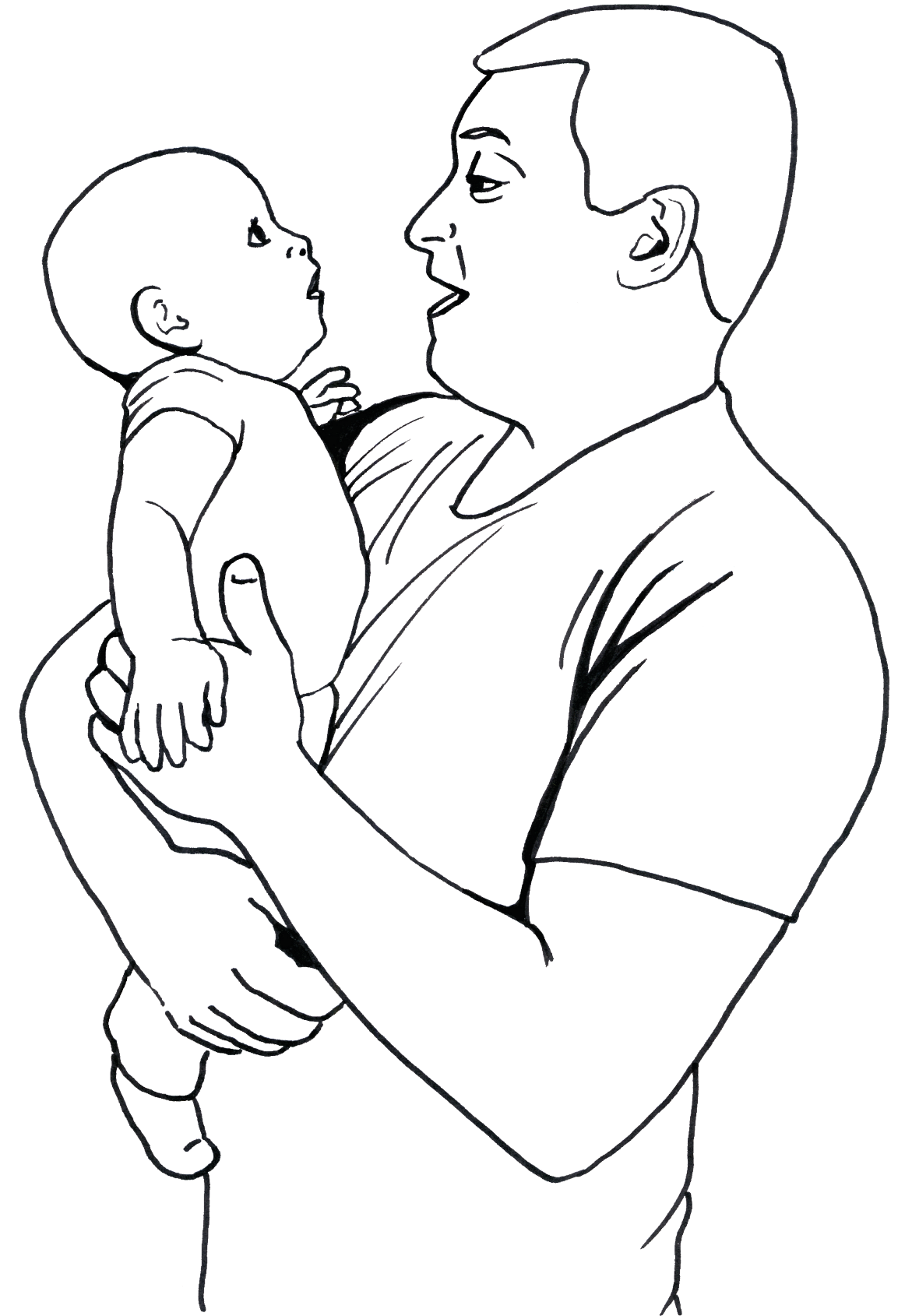
Now imagine this scenario again, not with a person born intersex, but someone who is defined as male or female at birth. The same question still stands: Why should this person be expected to live their whole life under the gender role they were assigned at birth?

Gender is not concrete. It's a choice, a way of living defined by our culture. It's how your parents dressed you up in pink, called you sweetie, and told you not to play too rough with the boys. Our culture says there is male and female, but it's wrong.

This outdated idea that there is only male and female, that males should be masculine while females should be feminine, is called the gender binary. It provides a limited view of gender, specifically the idea that sex and gender are one in the same when they are in fact, unrelated.

Gender is someone's personal relationship to masculinity, femininity, both, or neither. Throughout someone's lifetime they can change genders, not have one, or have many. It's up to them. How they define their gender is also up to them. They can follow what their culture tells them about femininity and masculinity, or follow their own ideas.

There are also two parts of defining gender. Gender identity is the gender or genders that someone feels inside. Gender expression is how someone performs gender through appearance and behavior. Gender identity and expression do not always relate. Someone can identify as male and dress feminine. And of course there are so many more possibilities! That is what makes gender, and the right to choose your gender, beautiful!



Here are some key terms to learn about gender. This is nowhere near everything we know about gender, but it's a good start.

GENDER BINARY

The gender binary is the concept or belief that there are only two genders and our biological or birth gender aligns with traditional social constructs of masculine and feminine identity, expression, and sexuality.

BIOLOGICAL SEX

Our biological sex is how we are defined as female, male, or intersex. It describes our internal and external bodies including our sex organs, chromosomes, and hormones. Biological sex falls on a spectrum just like gender.

GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity is our personal internal experience and naming of our gender. How we feel inside.

GENDER EXPRESSION

Gender expression is how we show or “perform” our gender to everyone around us through clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, etc.

SEXUALITY

Sexuality is someone's sexual orientation or preference. Like most things here, sexuality falls on a spectrum. This spectrum involves degrees of sexual preferences as well as romantic preferences.

TRANSGENDER

Transgender is a way to describe someone whose gender identity does not follow their gender assigned to them at birth. A transition of gender can happen emotionally (within oneself), socially (name change, pronouns, expression), and physically (altering the body with hormones or surgery, for example).

SEXISM

Sexism is prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, based on sex or gender. There exist other forms of hate based on gender like transphobia, cissexism, and transmisogyny.

TRANSPHOBIA

Transphobia is an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people. This also includes feeling uncomfortable about people who do not fall into gender norms.

NONBINARY

Non-binary is a general term to describe people who do not feel male or female. They may identify with a little bit of both, or use the term as its own gender identity. Often compared to genderqueer.

PGP

Personal Gender Pronoun is how someone should be referred to. Many people who do not identify as male or female do not feel it's appropriate for others to refer to them as he or she. Pronouns are ways that our everyday language is becoming more inclusive.

“One is not born,
but rather becomes, a woman”

— *Simone de Beauvoir*

You just learned about the differences between biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual preference. Now see how all of these terms relate in your life.

Most people can describe themselves in this method. Try creating a character by randomizing the answers. There exists someone in the world like your character.

My name is _____ .

At birth my biological sex was _____ .
(male/female/intersex)

Today I identify as _____ .
(a man/a woman/non-binary/agender)

**The way I dress is fairly _____ , so that's
how you could describe my gender expression.**
(masculine/feminine/both/gender neutral)

I am sexually and/or romantically interested in _____ .
(men/women/both/non-binary people/
everyone/no one/my favorite pop-star)

**My biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual
preferences do not dictate one another.**

Self-Check List

Our society is changing and so is our language. You won't get everything right, but making the effort to include others is enough. Use this self-check list to help you be more inclusive in your daily life.

- ☐ **I will not assume someone's gender identity based on their appearance.**
- ☐ **I will not assume someone's sexual preferences based on their appearance.**
- ☐ **It is none of my business what someone's genitals are.**
- ☐ **I will be more aware of using gender pronouns.**
- ☐ **I will try my best to use someone's gender pronoun.**
- ☐ **I will be courteous of when someone is comfortable with me using their gender pronoun as to not out them.**
- ☐ **Although I may slip up, I will correct myself and continue trying.**

Recognizing Stereotypes

You probably learned about stereotypes in school, but you may not have realized they are more integrated into our culture than you think. Social pressures relating to gender are some of the most discreet stereotypes. These are the everyday norms you follow to fit into society's idea of being masculine or feminine. Even those words, "masculine" and "feminine," have prescribed meanings based on our culture and differ in other cultures.

These silent codes we live by to perform our gender can be harmful to your view of yourself and others. Society pressures us to conform to these gender expectations, placing us in categories where we don't belong.

The following activities are meant to get you thinking more about the gendered culture you live in and the harm caused by gender stereotypes.

Make a list of things

What do you use everyday?

*What are the objects you
absolutely adore?*

*If you could put all of your
life right now on a shelf, what
would it look like?*

*Are these objects things you
enjoy or could do without?*

What do they say about you?

*Are they masculine,
feminine, both, neither?*



Take a minute to examine the gender associated with
objects and how they impact your life.

Take Note

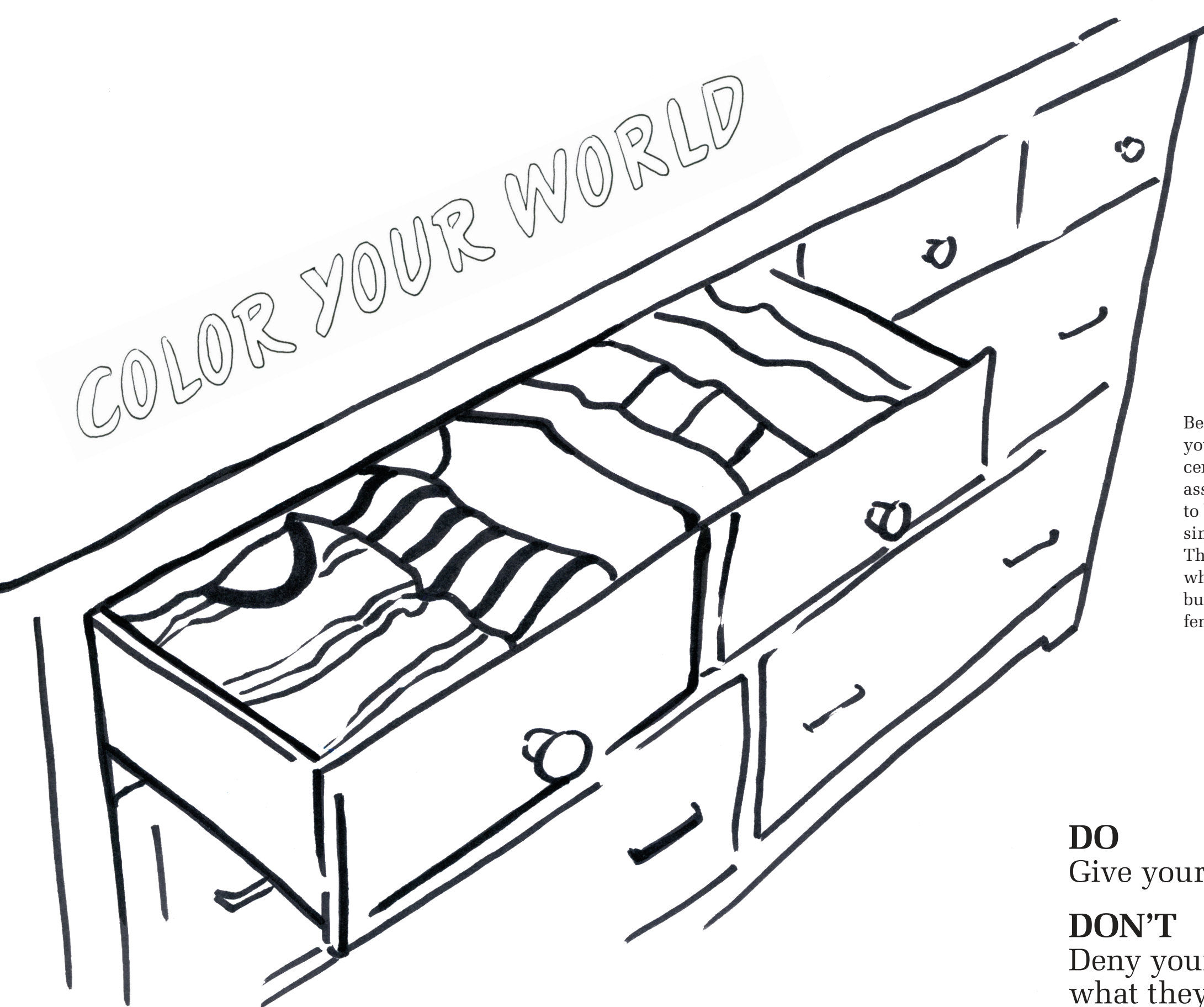
Take this book out with you this week. On the first day, record 5 gendered experiences you encounter. It could be a man holding a door for a woman, someone catcalling, etc. If you find a gendered connection to an interaction, write it down.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

When you pay closer attention, you might be surprised by how many interactions in your everyday life are gendered. If you like this exercise, use the notes in the back to continue.

The next time you take this book with you, try to record 10 encounters where gender was called to your attention, even if the are repeated.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10



COLOR YOUR WORLD

Be aware of the impact of color choices you make for clothing. You can combat certain stereotypes by avoiding the assignment of pink to girls and blue to boys. Boys are told not to wear pink since it is considered a color for girls. There exists inequality in this practice when we let girls wear boyish colors, but make fun of or stereotype boys as feminine for wearing pink.

DO

Give your child access to the rainbow

DON'T

Deny your child the right to choose what they are excited to wear

COURAGE SELF-ESTEEM CONFIDENCE

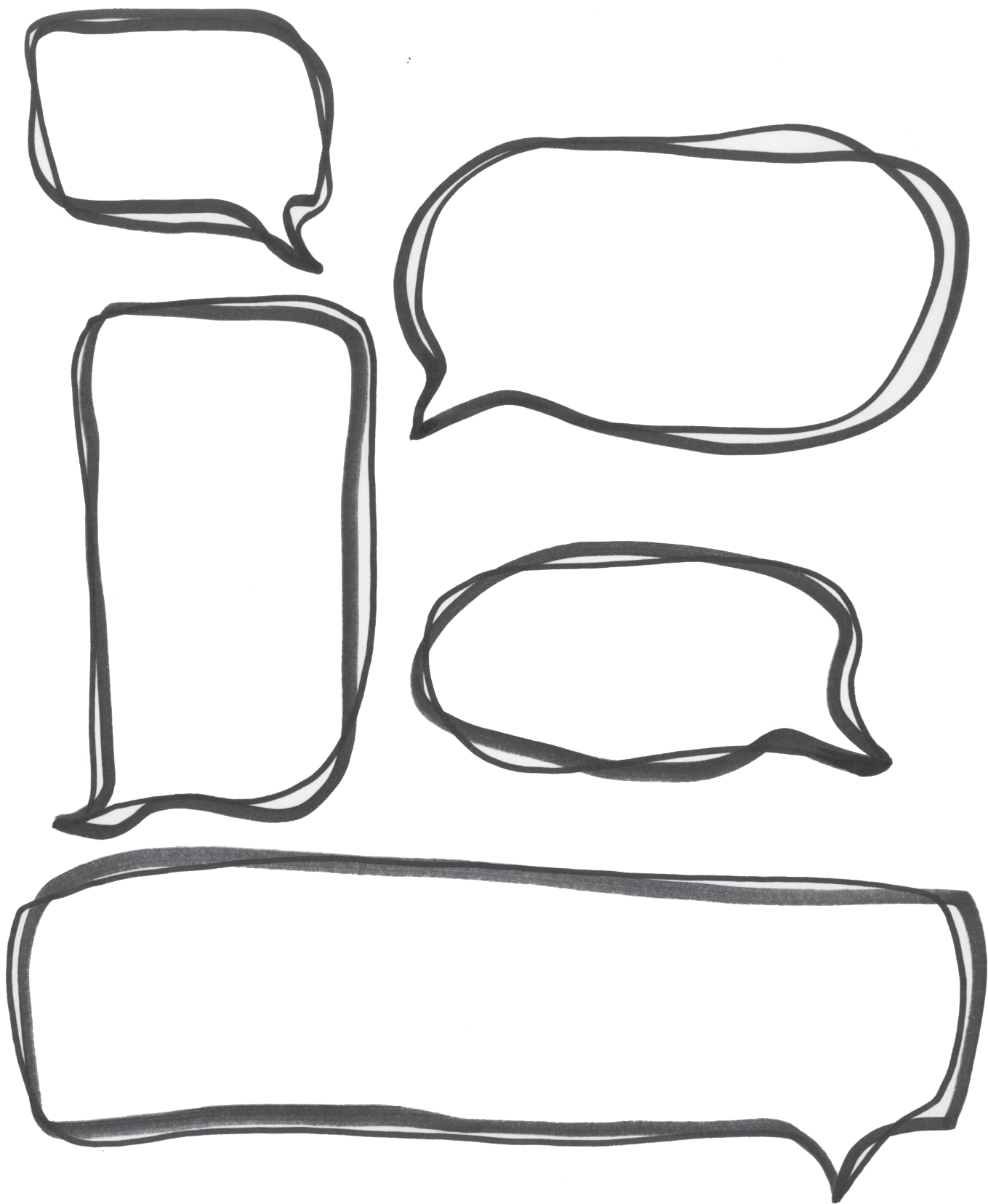
Write down 20 of your personality traits.

Are you quiet?	_____	_____
Curious?	_____	_____
Analytical?	_____	_____
Polite?	_____	_____
Observant?	_____	_____
Stubborn?	_____	_____
Talkative?	_____	_____
Athletic?	_____	_____
Assertive?	_____	_____
Empathetic?	_____	_____

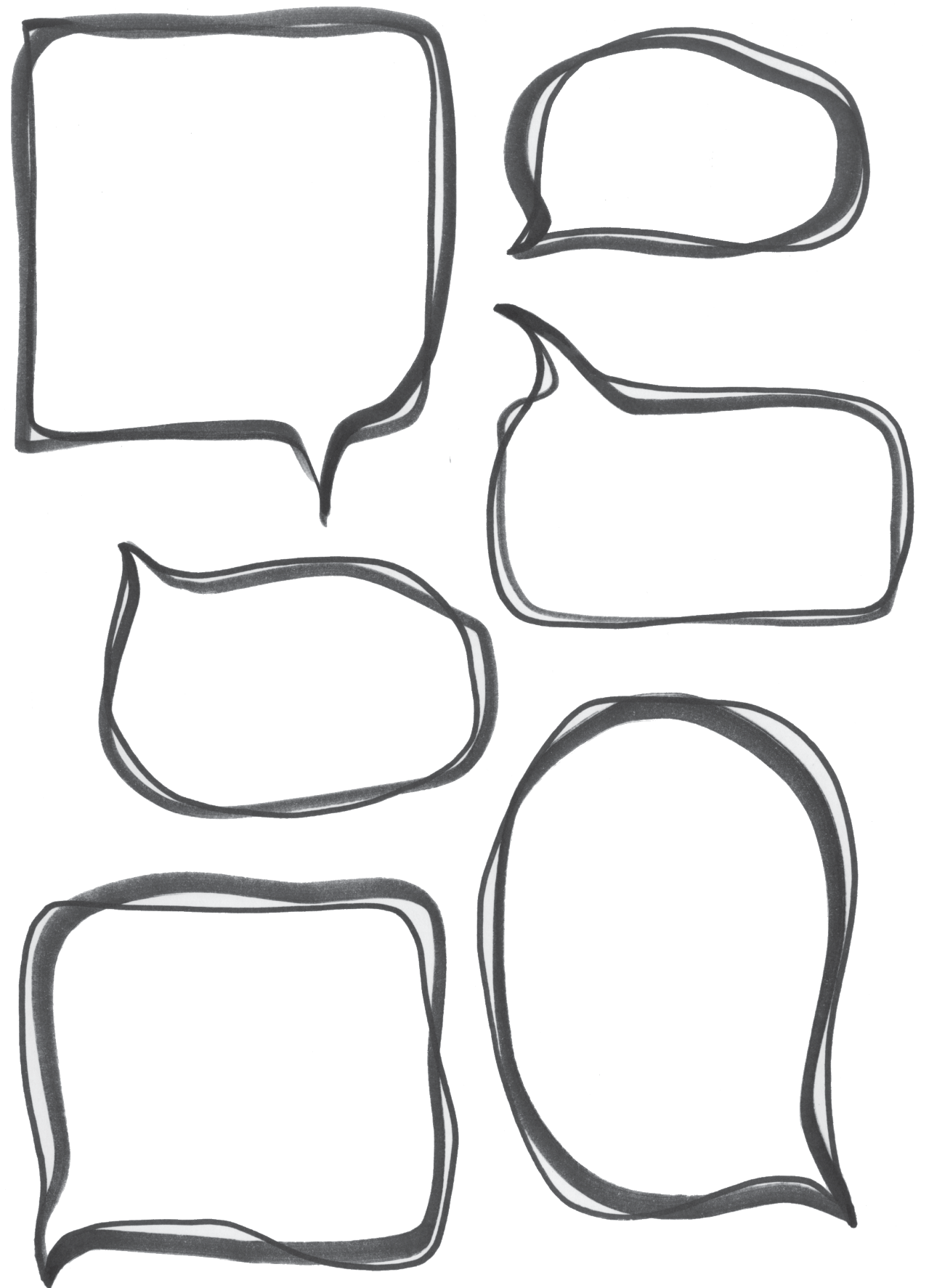
Do you consider any of these traits as feminine or masculine?

If yes, why do you think you make this connection?

The popular saying “boys don’t cry” perpetuates the idea that males should not be sensitive or emotional. In our society, emotion is seen as weakness, which women are allowed and expected to show, but not men. This is harmful to many, especially when anger and violence can become substitutes for sadness.



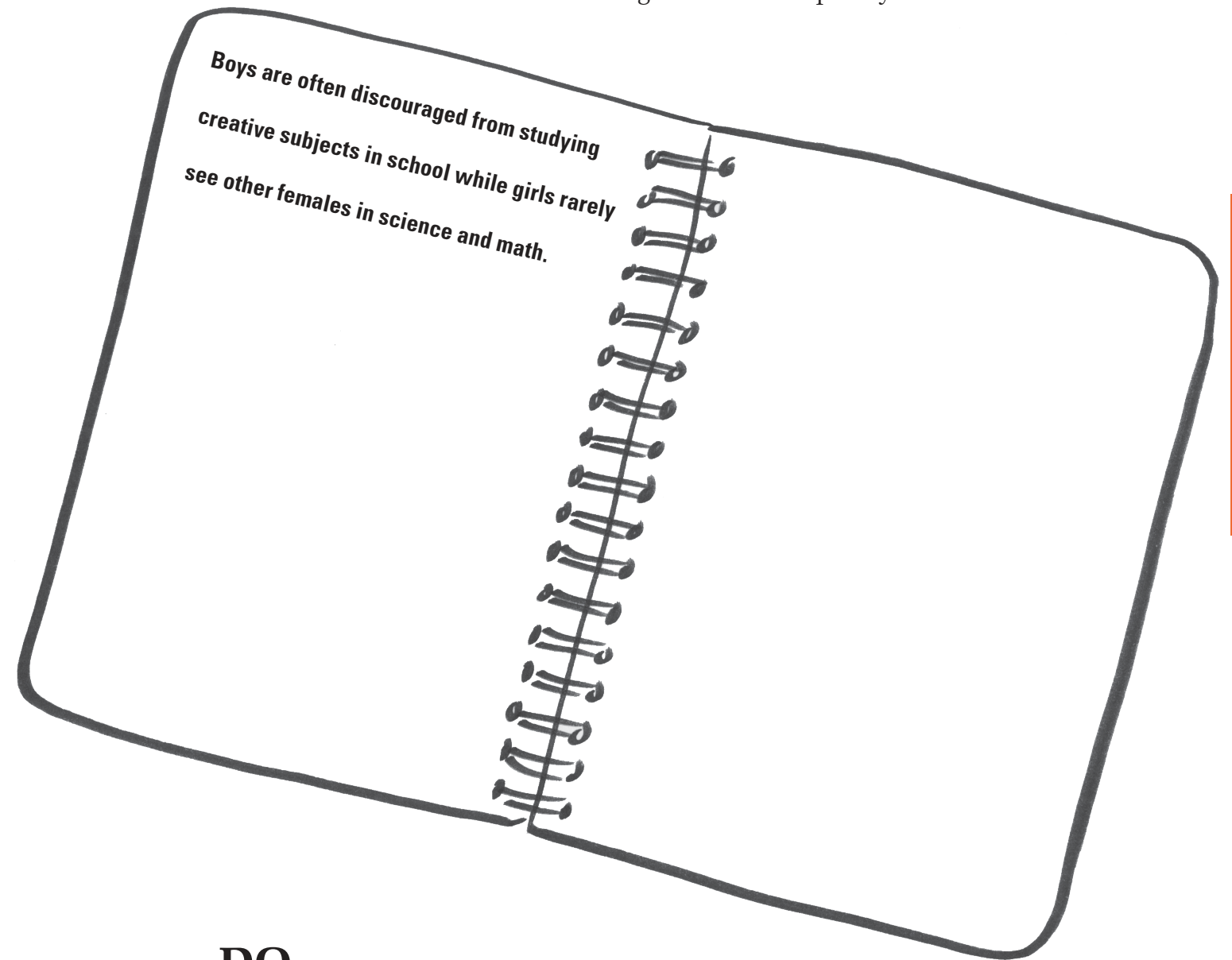
What other sayings have you heard in your life time that perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes? When you remember any, write them down here.



WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?



In your profession is it more common to see one gender over another? If yes, why is that? Can you think of other occupations that are dominated by one gender?



Boys are often discouraged from studying creative subjects in school while girls rarely see other females in science and math.

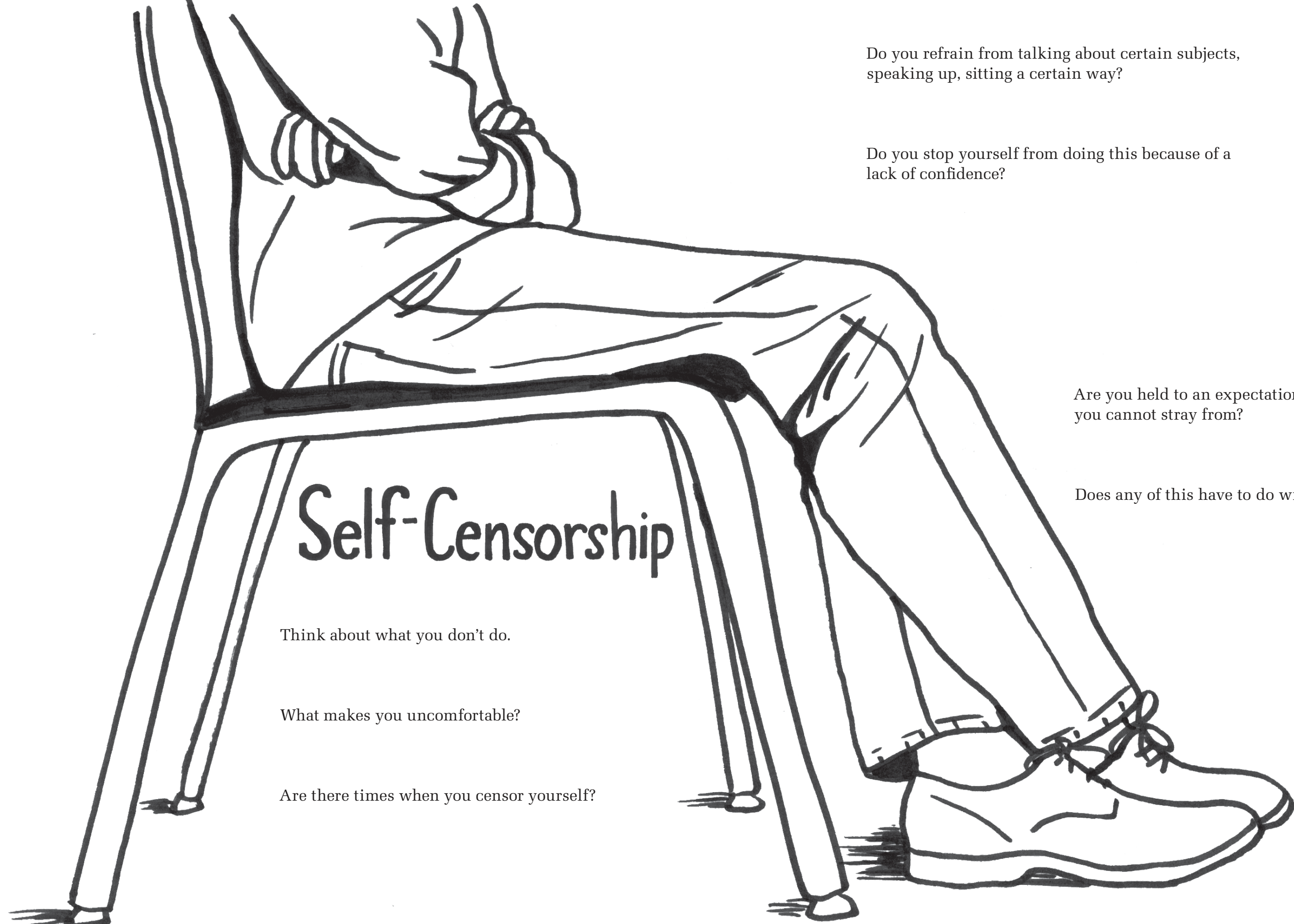
Children are taught a gendered view of jobs. If you have a child, let them draw what they believe a doctor, police officer, teacher, dancer, and artist look like. Challenge their assumptions or build healthy ones by teaching them about equality in the workforce.

DO

Give your kid great role models

DON'T

Deny your kid from pursuing a certain profession when they grow up



Do you refrain from talking about certain subjects, speaking up, sitting a certain way?

Do you stop yourself from doing this because of a lack of confidence?

Are you held to an expectation of behavior that you cannot stray from?

Does any of this have to do with your gender?

Self-Censorship

Think about what you don't do.

What makes you uncomfortable?

Are there times when you censor yourself?

The Role of Parents

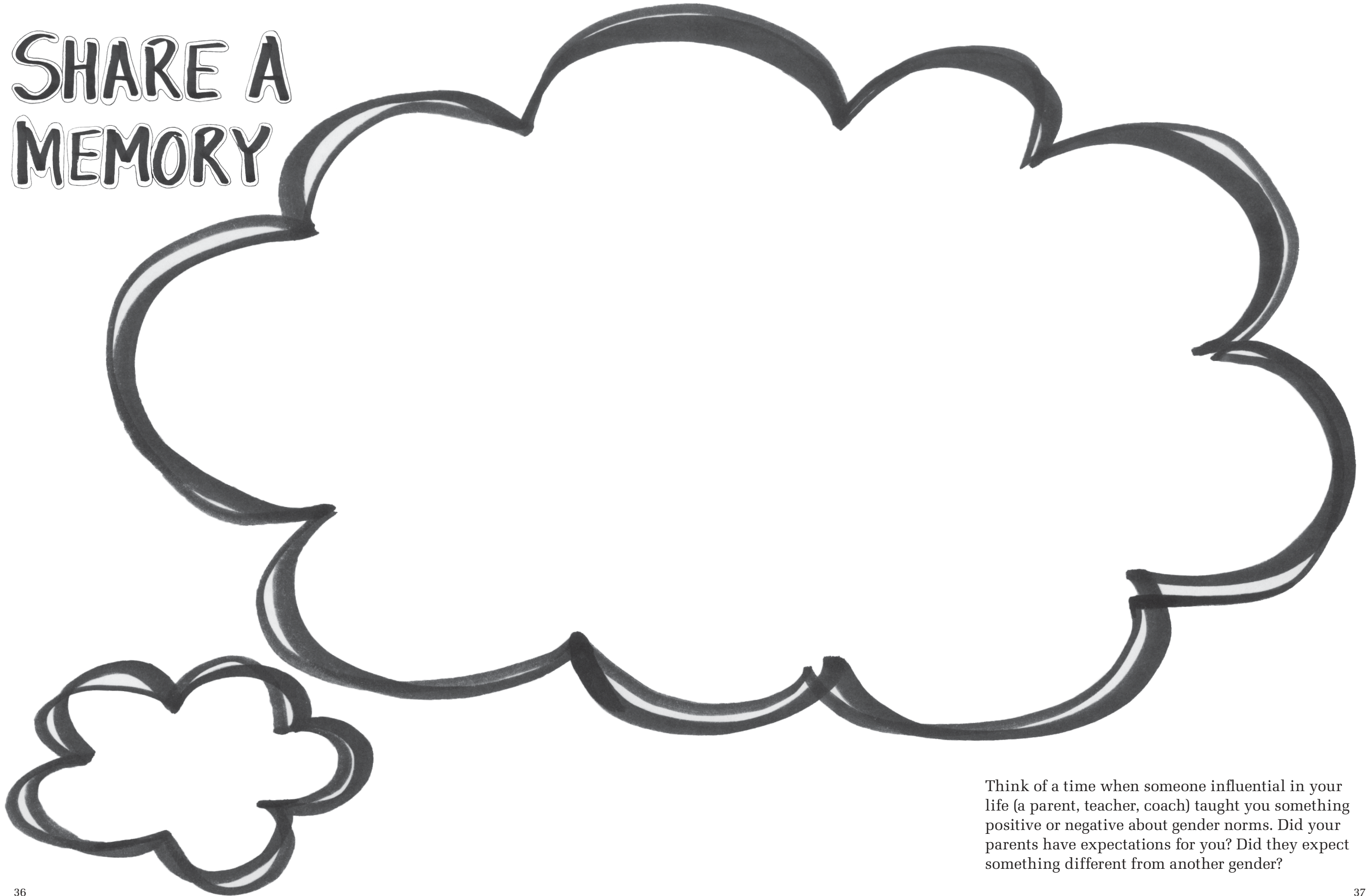
As a parent, you are a superhero. For those first few years, you are the light of your child's young life and they are yours. But that doesn't come without responsibility. Everything you do has the potential of making the biggest impact on their life.

But you already know that! You wouldn't be using this book if you didn't already know you need to be the best role model possible for your child.

These next activities give you some tips and new perspectives on raising your child with the best intentions in our gendered world.



SHARE A MEMORY



Think of a time when someone influential in your life (a parent, teacher, coach) taught you something positive or negative about gender norms. Did your parents have expectations for you? Did they expect something different from another gender?

Move to Your Own Groove

Your body has a gendered language of its own. The way we sit, stand, and walk can all conform to or resist a gender norm. Dance is a very obvious realm where we might be judged for dancing outside our gender norm. Many find it uncomfortable to watch men dance with their hips because it's too feminine. At the same time, women who try to sit comfortably are reprimanded and told to "sit like a lady."

DO

Encourage your kid to express themselves through their gestures

DON'T

Tell your kid that their body language is too masculine or feminine





they're all ears

Gossip is one of the many ways stereotypes are reinforced on a daily basis. Everyone criticizes each other through gossip. We put people down based on their looks and behaviors, all under the guise of gossip, a free, yet harmful, exchange of opinion.

As the main role model for growing children, parents are in the spotlight for delegating what is acceptable and what is not. Parents can unknowingly pass on harmful ideas and gender stereotypes through overheard gossip.

DO

Try to find goodness in everyone and encourage your child to do the same.

DON'T

Be quick to judge others in front of your child.

AROUND THE HOUSE

How do you divide up household chores among your family?

Car Care

Cleaning the Bathroom

Cooking

Decorating

Dishes

Grocery Shopping

Laundry

Lawn care

Repairs

Taking out the Trash

Tidying Up

Vacuuming



For a very, very long time, our heteronormative culture has had women in the home, taking care of children, cooking, and cleaning, while the men were off doing everything else. Yeah, it's not exact, but we all know that story where the husband expects to come back from a long day of work to a warm, home-cooked meal, a clean house, happy children, and a lovely wife. We also know that this stereotype doesn't cut it for our updated society where women work nearly half of the labor force.

Careful division of chores can be a powerful tool to teach your child about gender equality and eliminate long standing stereotypes that women are homemakers and men are breadwinners.

DO

Show your kid that everyone is responsible for taking care of the home.

DON'T

Separate chores based on gender, leaving the heavy lifting and dirty work to the men and the sewing and cooking to the women.

“Every morning she
watched me hide myself.”



Expression

Our media presents a lot of pressure to conform to beauty standards of both femininity and masculinity. However, it's not just the media to blame. Magazines, ads, websites, and more cater to the desires of our culture. *We* are the ones that perpetuate these pressures of beauty.

While it's well known that women stress over their weight, hair, make up, breast size, etc., men are often overlooked when it comes to beauty standards. Men also feel pressure to fit the idea of a masculine appearance, which includes being muscular, tall, well-endowed, etc. Men do not have the same range in choice of expression that women do, like wearing make up, various styles of clothing, or changing hairstyles. Everyone should be able to express themselves with all forms available to us.

What or who is beautiful?

Who taught you what beauty is?

If something isn't beautiful, is it bad?

Do you believe beauty is powerful?

In your experience, is makeup a tool for self-expression or gender normative behavior?

Do
Encourage your child to express themselves with their appearance.

Don't
Restrict your child from using certain tools to portray their expression.

Everyday Changes

Everyday Changes is an activity to stimulate ideas for integrating healthy gender practices into your day-to-day life. This three step process presents new scenarios to get you thinking critically about how you personally can combat gender stereotypes. In the end, you'll have a list of new solutions that you can use daily to help your child or yourself live with a healthy gender outlook.

1

Choose a gender stereotype

What stereotypes resonate with you?

2

Select a daily activity

What changes can you make in this day-to-day activity to address your chosen gender stereotype?

3

Record your ideas

Write or draw the solutions you created!

1 MEN DON'T CRY

2 WATCHING TV OR A MOVIE

3 I try to hide it when I tear up at movies because it's not manly. Next time we watch one as a family, I'm going to let it out. Hopefully that will show my kid not to be afraid of showing their emotions.

1 MEN ARE MACHO

2 READING A BOOK

3 I won't stop reading *My Little Pony* books to my son. He loves them! Why should I stop him from enjoying something just because it's "for girls"? They teach him about friendship, caring, and leadership.

1 WOMEN ARE BEAUTIFUL

2 PLAYING SPORTS

3 I don't want my daughter to feel pressure to look pretty, or feel bad when she's a sweaty mess. Instead of dress-up, we play games outside. I'm convinced she's going to be the next best soccer player!

1 Choose a gender stereotype

What stereotypes resonate with you?

MEN
MUST BE
SUCCESSFUL

WOMEN
DO
HOUSEWORK

WOMEN
ARE
BEAUTIFUL

MEN
ARE
MACHO

WOMEN
ARE
SENSITIVE

MEN
DON'T
CRY

2

Select a daily activity

What changes can you make in this day-to-day activity to address your chosen gender stereotype?



3

Record your ideas

Write or draw the solutions you created!

1

2

3

1

2

3

1

2

3

1

2

3

1

2

3

1

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3

[illegible]

SOURCES

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← Read this!

Kimmel, Michael. *The Gendered Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Inc., 2011.

Best, Charlie. *Gender (an/in) Education!*. Alfred, 2017.

Best zine of the year! ↑
(Decided by me)

“Female, Male & Intersex at a Glance,” *Planned Parenthood*, accessed April 2017.

“Data & Statistics,” United States Department of Labor Women’s Bureau, accessed April 2017.

← The latest stats on women in the work force!