Gender Bias
Effect on different genders, working towards gender equity

Source
Establish class values

- We will be talking about sexuality, gender, pleasure, abuse and safety in these sessions. What will make this class a safe space for everyone to share, express their views and discuss freely?
- How do we want others to behave?
- How will we behave?
Group activity

Looking at gender bias
Participants make groups of 4 persons

A. Each group defines what they understand by gender bias.
B. Each group discusses how gender bias is perpetrated through one of the following.
   1. Words in a language
   2. Movies
   3. Songs
   4. Jokes
   5. Proverbs
   6. Rituals
   7. Jobs
   8. Laws, rules and policies
   9. School textbooks
   10. Design of objects used in transport/ furniture/ safety gear

40 minutes: Each group presents the definition they have written, and the what they have noted

Q to participants: How many of the above areas can we impact as individuals? as a group?

Session is held after this is completed
Gender bias

• Gender bias is the unfair or unjust treatment of an individual based on their gender

• It can impact several areas of an individual’s life such as: employment, nutrition, education, opportunities, remuneration etc.

For eg. In a middle class household, boys may be fed more nutritious food than girls. They may enjoy more freedom and privilege, while girls’ movement outside the house may be restricted.
How did it begin

- There are various theories that talk about the emergence of gender bias.
- For some, it is linked to agriculture and ownership of private property, ability to grow one’s food on one’s land.
- For some, it was due to social inequalities that emerged due to the accumulation of private property.
- For some it was cultural.
- And for others it was something biologically determined.
- We don’t know for sure how gender bias began, but what we do know is that it’s experienced all around us.
When did gender bias start in human history?

- Information age?
- Industrial age?
- Agricultural society?
- Cave-dwellers - stone age – gatherer hunters?
Cave dwellers

- Reproductive differences
- Women can get their own food: gatherer hunter
- No individual ownership of land possible in a jungle
- Link between sex and reproduction is not known
Agriculture – gender bias develops in many societies

- Individual ownership of land is possible in a village
- Men take ownership of land as they have more muscle for reproductive reasons.
- Agriculture on land provides food.
- Women became dependent on men for their food. Women are no longer considered ‘equal’ to men. Work on his land to produce food. Live in his household (the word husband is derived from householder)
- Domestication of animals – role of sex in reproduction becomes apparent
- Women’s sexuality is now controlled – to bear husband’s (householder’s) children
How gender bias affects us

Impact
- Abortions
- Female Genital Mutilation
- GBV
- Toxic masculinity and toxic femininity
- Marital Rape

At Home
In public places
Media
In Education
Language
Health care
At workplace
Gender bias and media

- Creates stereotypical and unrealistic images that influence our view on gender
- Underrepresents and misrepresents individuals from the LGBT community
- Male characters in films are usually ‘macho’, ‘powerful’ and ‘sexually aggressive’ whereas female characters are ‘submissive’, have a conventional body type etc.

Pictures - movie posters?
Who attracts whom?
Toxicity in our lives

What are my experiences of toxic masculinity/femininity?
How did it affect me?
Does it make me feel unsafe?
Cultivating a bold male

- Be strong, active, assertive. Entitled
Message to men: use women
Toxic Masculinity

- Don't cry/ Don't show emotions. Don’t regulate and deal with your emotions. Suppress them completely if these are the ‘weaker’ emotions.

- Aggressive is much better than submissive. Beat up people who bother you, hurt you. Never show weakness.

- Treat women like they are there to serve you. Don’t show sensitivity towards them unless you are “in love”.

- Nobody should talk back to me, My respect is guaranteed, My word is final.

- Real men always want sex, have hot partners, and are always able to satisfy them (porn style), their erections last for an hour (at least)

- We have to provide for our family. I AM the breadwinner and everyone will take what I provide.
Cultivating a shy, delicate female

- Girl, be shy, silent and submissive.
- Be apologetic.
- Respect lies in parts of your body.
- Female body inherently dirty!

Image Source: 1, 2, 3
Toxic Femininity

- Your only purpose is to be married
- You need to be protected and provided for.
- You’re not allowed to have an opinion - men’s opinions are better.
- Look down when speaking, no raising your voice, never use curse words.
- Dress has to be neat and clean. So does the room and house.
- Mothers eat last, eat the least nutritious food, eat the least tasty food.
- Shame and disgust around female genitals
- Force feeding children, controlling relationships and their sons,
- Discouragement of financial learning
Honour and Shame

- **Honour** is a concept of a person’s worthiness that affects their self evaluation as well as their social standing.

- **Shame**: a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety or a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute. *(Merriam-Webster dictionary)*

  A person may feel ashamed as a result of comparing one’s actions against one’s own standards. Socialization affects and enables the comparison and standards one sets for oneself.

- **Guilt**: a feeling ...when one has compromised own standards of conduct or violated a moral standard, and bears significant responsibility for that violation.

  Shame or honour are not a thing - these do not reside in any part of the body!
The making of two types of women

**Honorable**
- Protected - hymen intact!
- Marriageable
- Valued if bears male heirs
- Knows her place in a home
- Property of a man, kept out of view, inaccessible to other men.

**Usable**
- Trafficked
- Assaulted. Abused
- Has no place in a home – kept in a ‘shop’
- Is valued for her body, skills to sexually entertain
- Clothed to sexually entice
Power hierarchy across various dimensions

Adapted from ccrweb.ca
@sylviaduckworth
In a heavily gendered, binary world, there is little space created for nonconforming or transgender persons. People are forced to have to choose between binaries - rest rooms, hostels, queues, services.

Gendered environments often look at non-binary, non-conforming and transgender persons as aberrations, to be either excluded, to be wary of, or to be ridiculed and mocked.

Opportunities for members of these minority communities are also limited - either because of self-imposed restrictions (caused by low self-esteem, low resolve to fight back against the bias/fatigue) or by biased decisions by decision makers who are uncomfortable selecting such persons into universities or jobs.
What does the law say?

Domestic Violence Act 2005

- Can be availed only by cisgendered women (of any sexual orientation)
- To file complaint against family members
- Forced marriage covered under “domestic violence”.

enfoldindia.org
Equity and bias

• Equality: having equality in status, rights and properties
• Equity: being fair and impartial
• Bias: inclination or prejudice for or against one group

Source

Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire

Source
Socializing children - our experiences of gendering

Image Source: 1, 2, 3
Ways to be gender inclusive

• Respectful language for others and one’s own body and body parts
• Continued discussions on gender – its experience and expression
• Avoiding limiting each other by certain codes or labels
• Developing a zero-tolerance towards discrimination of any kind
• Explicitly showing support towards those who are marginalised
• Being willing to help

Arrange in lifespan approach
This PowerPoint is part of a project to prevent gender based violence. This project is supported by Ford Foundation.
CREATING SAFE SPACES

Thank You!

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SURAKSHITH APP
Information, stories on personal safety for children.

BAL SURAKSHA APP
Information on answering children’s questions, managing child sexual abuse.

STRI SURAKSHA APP
On crimes against women, laws, interventions and healing techniques.

All Apps in 10 languages, free on android Developed with UNICEF and MeitY (CDAC Hyderabad)
A 48-year-old woman reported feeling depressed and lacking motivation to get any work done since her children became financially independent. She feels she lacks purpose because she was used to her children being dependent on her for the past 20 years and now doesn’t know what to do with her life. She wanted to finish her studies and get her B.Com degree and then CFA, but her husband and in-laws dissuaded her. She tried to convince them to let her work but later realised that her domestic responsibilities demanded more from her. But now that her responsibilities have reduced, she feels lost and lacks a sense of direction. She also reported feeling breathless and sweating excessively when she begins to think about her life.
Counselor’s perspective: points to ponder

• What are my thoughts, emotions and beliefs regarding the concern of the clients?

• How can I further explore what the client stated without bringing in my own ideas of gender bias to influence the client?

• How is gender bias playing a role in exacerbating this individual’s concern?
Counselor’s role

• Understanding and exploring the impact of gender on mental health

• Discovering the client’s idea of gender and challenging an self-limiting beliefs

• Valuing and respecting the client’s opinion rather than assuming the role of an expert in guise of empowering them (don’t open a can of worms that the client is not ready to deal with)

• Introspecting the impact of gender on self

• Reattribution to help clients step back and look at the many contributions to a perceived negative outcome