

All About Gender Norms

By Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMMM)



From an early age we learn how we're "supposed" to act based on gender. These "rules" are called gender norms and stereotypes, and they affect everyone.

Stereotypes:

Assumptions, judgments, and beliefs about someone based only on their identity, or a group they belong to.

"She's a girl, so she must be good at cooking."

Norms:

Pressure or expectations placed on people to look and act certain ways, based on their identity or a group they belong to.

"Boys should be tough and never cry."

What's the downside of gender norms and stereotypes?



Sometimes gender norms and stereotypes can make people feel stuck in a box. They also make it harder to understand your own boundaries, and to respect other people's boundaries.

They may feel extra confusing for people who don't identify as a boy or girl.

All people deserve:

*respect
equal opportunities
respectful relationships
freedom to be themselves*



No matter what their gender is.



Gender expectations can change over time

Ideas about gender can change across time and culture. This is why we learn about how our society thinks about gender.

How do you think gender norms or stereotypes have changed in the past 100 years? In what ways have they stayed the same?



What is gender policing?

Gender norms are like unofficial laws. Sometimes, people act like gender police officers, pressuring others to stay inside the box.

Gender policing is very common, but it still crosses boundaries and can make people feel hurt or insecure. Both kids and adults sometimes act like gender police officers.



Questions? Need help?

SASSMM is here to help if you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, harassment, or been hurt in a sexual way. You can also call us if you have a question about sexual violence, or if you're not sure what happened.

You can call us 24/7 at **1-800-871-7741** and speak to an advocate.

Visit us at sassmm.org for more information.

