

Can boys like girly things and girls like boyish things?

KEY WORDS

stereotypes | support | unique



There's this idea floating around that certain things are just for boys or just for girls. But guess what? That's a **stereotype**. A stereotype is an untrue or oversimplified and widely-held belief about something. In fact, anyone can like whatever they want, no matter their gender.

If you're a boy and your interests and hobbies might be labelled as "girly," such as makeup, fashion, cooking, sewing, shopping, don't change for fear of ridicule from others! There's no rule saying you can't enjoy these things just because of your gender.

On the flip side, if you're a girl who loves things that people might label as "boyish," such as video games, certain sports, cars, repair work, don't let anyone tell you it's wrong! You're not hurting anyone by pursuing what you love, and what you love to do should not be limited by your gender.

Breaking down these stereotypes is not only crucial for our own personal growth and self-expression but also for creating a **more open-minded society for all**.

The thing is, stereotypes about how boys and girls should behave and what they should like (otherwise known as **gender norms or roles**) have deep historical roots, which is why they're so present in society today. Traditionally, certain hobbies, activities and even colours have been assigned to either boys or girls, which has only created a **narrow framework on how people should behave**, just based on their gender.

These stereotypes can have a negative impact on the personal development of both young women and men, and might even discourage us from pursuing our authentic identity.

For boys, the pressure to conform to traditionally masculine interests might discourage them from exploring creative or nurturing activities. On the other hand, girls who are drawn to activities labeled as "boyish" may face judgment and shame.

Here are a few ways we can challenge these harmful stereotypes:



- **Promote language that is 'inclusive'**

When describing behaviour or interests, use words that avoid labelling something as 'girly' or 'boyish' and instead be open to using adjectives such as: 'creative', 'inspiring', 'tough', etc.

- **Educate yourself**

Stay informed about gender issues, stereotypes, and the impact they can have on people. Read books, articles, and watch documentaries that explore diverse ideas about gender.

- **Critically analyse content in media**

Outdated stereotypes can often be seen in movies, TV shows, advertisements, and social media. Identify and start discussions about representations that simply try to fit young women and men into a box.

- **Be you and support others**

Breaking stereotypes starts from within, so be true to yourself and be an ally to your friends that may have interests outside of assigned gender roles.

Breaking free from stereotypes is a journey, but we can all contribute to a more tolerant society together. Let's celebrate that boys can like anything and girls can like anything - embracing the idea that we're all wonderfully unique.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION
AND GENDER**

