

My Gender Journey

As professionals working with families and their children, there is a unique and influential role to be played in helping create the conditions where children can be safe in authentically expressing and identifying their gender. By embracing the richness of the gender spectrum, teachers, counselors, therapists and other adults working with kids can help to broaden their own as well as children's understandings of gender, and in so doing, help every child feel seen and recognized. An important part of that work is to consider one's own experiences, messages, and beliefs about gender, both growing up as well as in your professional role.

Spend a few minutes looking over and answering the following questions. Write your answers down, and hang on to them. You may find it interesting to revisit your reflections at some point in the future, after you have had a chance to learn more about gender through training and your own efforts. Know that there are no "right" answers; each of us comes by our own understandings of gender in a context. Messages and traditions associated with gender are complex reflections of society, family, culture, community and other socializing forces. Use this opportunity to pause, and examine your own gender history.

The exercise is divided into two parts: the first asks you to think about your own personal experiences with gender, while the second looks at your professional experiences.

My Personal Gender Journey

Today's Date:

1. Growing up, did you think of yourself as a boy, a girl, both, neither or in some other way? How did you come to that recognition? When?

2. What messages did you receive from those around you about gender? Did those messages make sense to you?

3. What's your first memory of gender defining or impacting your life?

4. How were students who did not fit into expectations about gender treated in school by other students? By the adults around them? By you?

5. Have you ever been confused by someone's gender? How did that feel for you? Why do you think you felt the way you did?

6. Has anyone ever been confused by your gender, possibly referring to you in a manner not consistent with your own sense of gender? How did that feel for you? Why do you think you felt the way you did?

7. Is there anyone in your immediate circle (family, close friends, colleagues) who is transgender or otherwise gender diverse? How would you characterize your comfort level about their gender?

8. If you were to describe your gender without talking about how you look or what you do, what would you share?

My Professional Gender Journey

Today's Date:

1. How have issues of gender and gender diversity "shown up" in your work with families and youth?

2. Is there a child with whom you have worked that was/is transgender or in some other way gender diverse? What was your level of comfort in the situation?

3. What training have you received about gender, gender diversity, and/or gender inclusive practices?

4. How would you characterize your school or organization's overall level of acceptance for children or youth whose gender is seen as different by those around them (if completing as an individual skip to next question)?

5. What is your own comfort level with discussing issues of gender diversity with:
Colleagues? _____

Parents? _____

Children/Youth? _____

6. Based on your personal and your professional journeys, how do you believe that your own previous experiences with gender influence the work you do? Are there ways in which those experiences enhance your ability to create greater gender inclusiveness? Are there ways in which those experiences inhibit your ability to do so? How so?

7. Do you have any final reflections about documenting your gender journey? Are there any goals you wish to set for yourself, personally? Professionally?
