



This tip sheet has some ideas for parents and carers who would like to raise their children to have respectful relationships, and an equality mindset – we are all different, but we are all equal!

- Role modelling is important. If you and your partner respect each other as equals your children will copy. If you and your partner yell at each and call each other names, your children will copy that also. Speaking and behaving respectfully to each other at home will encourage your child to grow up with similar values and apply these values to their own relationships today and into the future.
- Teach your children to question conventional stereotypes. Why can't boys like pink? It is okay for girls to like trucks and machinery. If they gradually develop a critical eye as they grow it will help them reject media stereotypes.
- Limit their exposure to movies, internet or TV that is discriminatory and doesn't support your values as a family.
- Avoid assigning chores on the basis of gender - girls are just as good taking out the rubbish bins as boys are at doing the dishes!
- Remember that the more equal a relationship is - the safer it is. Gender equality is closely linked to healthy, respectful relationships. Inequality is linked with our Australia-wide problem of women's and children's safety. Do your part to promote a safer society. The retailer, Target made the decision to "eliminate boys and girls signs from their toys and bedding departments". This is a helpful cultural shift, always try to encourage your child to choose their toys based on their interests.
- Ensure your child sees that mum still has financial rights and power at home, even if she is in a non-paying role of child rearing at the moment. Model shared decision making where possible.
- Actively defend your child and educate anyone who makes unhelpful comments like "You should cut your hair you look like a girl!" or "You should be more lady like". You don't have to get angry, just saying something like "We don't believe in that stuff" is usually effective.



- Avoid stereotyping and sexualising children. A great book is “Redefining Girly: How Parents Can Fight the Stereotyping and Sexualizing of Girlhood, from Birth to Tween ” by Melissa Atkins Wardy. Another is “Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys ” by Stephen James.
- If you find yourself telling your girls to be careful when they take risks and your boys to be tough if they express vulnerability - consider what messages they are receiving. It’s important for boys and girls alike to take a few risks and express their feelings. It may not be obvious, but they often need some encouragement in these areas.
- Encourage the men in your child’ s life to take an active, involved, hands on role in parenting/caring, and do try not ' gate keep ' by insisting they do things just as you do, or criticise their efforts. It’s ok for kids to experience different parenting styles as long as some basic rules are consistently in place.
- Don ’ t let people label your child. If the early years educator calls your daughter a tomboy or makes a negative comment about your son’s emotional needs, gently correct them. Labels aren’t helpful to anyone.

These are just ideas to consider. You are the expert regarding your child - your behaviour and actions have a major impact on how they grow up. Enjoy the journey!

Please feel free to contact us with any comments and/or questions - we would love to hear from you. Email - nlmerzel@playgroup.org.au



Scan the code to access all our songs!