

STEREOTYPE-FREE STARTS EARLY

A method set for reflecting on gender stereotypes
in early childhood education



PROFESSIONS FOR WOMEN, PROFESSIONS FOR MEN?

Persistent gender stereotypes and role models still influence young people's choice of occupation and study. Despite comparable performance in school, clear differences are evident in vocational training and university studies.

Although there are around 330 dual vocational training occupations in Germany, the range of occupations chosen by young women and men is severely limited. More than half of young women concentrate on just 10 occupations, none of which are skilled trades. The situation is similar for young men: More than half concentrate on just 20 occupations that require training, most of which are technical occupations. Young men and women also go their separate ways when it comes to studying. Of the 10 most popular subjects, only business administration, economics and law are studied by both sexes. In some subjects - for example, languages, education, social work, mechanical engineering, computer science or electrical engineering - young women or young men largely remain among themselves.

What is a stereotype?

Clichés or stereotypes are ingrained patterns of thought and behavior that refer to groups of people and associate them with certain attributions, behaviors, characteristics and abilities.

Gender stereotypes are assumptions about how women and men are supposed to be, how they think, feel, behave and what they are good at or not. We learn these attributions from birth. Young people often base their career choices on stereotypical ideas, thus severely limiting their range of career choices.

Gender stereotypes hinder girls and boys in the free development of their personality. They become entrenched in the course of our lives unless we critically question them.

With the method set "STEREOTYPE-FREE STARTS EARLY", we would like to support you in showing children how diverse people and their life paths are. Encourage children to pursue their interests in order to discover their individual inclinations, strengths and talents.



Who can use the materials?

- ▶ Professionals in early childhood education
- ▶ All those active in the field of early childhood education
- ▶ Parents and guardians

Get Involved!

Children need support from people they trust so that they are not restricted in their views and experiences and learn to overcome gender stereotypes. In addition to valuing individuality and diversity, stereotype-free early childhood education also requires action-oriented methods, facts, and background information.

In this way, you can make an important contribution to helping children later choose life paths and find careers that fit their individual strengths, interests, and aspirations instead of being limited by gender assignments.

The Initiative **Klischeefrei** wishes you every success and looks forward to your feedback!

STEREOTYPE-FREE STARTS EARLY

Children are confronted with restrictive gender stereotypes at an early age in their social environment, in the media and in advertising. These become entrenched over the course of a child's life and can later have an impact on the choice of career and study. Many occupations are thus excluded from the outset.

Equal opportunity means questioning these gender stereotypes and setting the course early on for equal opportunities in career and life planning - an essential aspect of personal satisfaction and quality of life.

Professions and gender in transition

Many professions are associated with a particular gender. However, the historical perspective shows that in many professions the gender ratio changes over time, for example in computer science: programming was initially a professional activity that was mainly performed by women; today, the proportion of female graduates in computer science in Germany is only around 20 percent. Whether a profession is predominantly practiced by women or men depends above all on whether the necessary characteristics and abilities are attributed to them in the respective historical and social context.

Characteristics and abilities cannot simply be derived from (biological) gender. Rather, they are the result of social processes of attribution and evaluation. What is considered either "male" or "female" in a culture changes over time.

Young people acquire at an early age, the social "knowledge" how "boys" and "girls" are, how they are supposed to be and what therefore suits them. Children learn through observation, imitation and also reinforcement - for example, when a girl is praised for not getting dirty or a boy is criticized for crying. At preschool age, they accept stereotypes as universally valid, which often prevents them from gaining their own experiences and developing their self-confidence more strongly through trial and error.

Gender is often established unconsciously in everyday social interactions, for example, through the way they dress or the toys they choose. This process is called "doing gender." Adults in the social environment play an important role here, because they are role models and in turn pass on ideas of "masculinity" and "femininity" to the children.

Stereotype-free starts early

This method set supports you in questioning gender stereotypes in relation to role models and professions in a playful way. It contains methods for pedagogical work with children, instructions for sensitization and self-reflection in the team, and for involving parents.

For us, stereotype-free daycare means playing and learning free of gender stereotypes! Appreciation for the diversity of children, their individual strengths and interests, their similarities and differences - regardless of their gender.

HELPFUL TIPS CLASSROOMS FREE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

Language creates awareness

In addition to gender-neutral terms, use both the feminine and masculine forms of language (if applicable in your language) to show the full diversity of our lifeworld and of occupations and lifestyles (e.g., female chimney sweep, male doctor, female physician).

Challenging gender stereotypes and boosting self-confidence

Pick up on stereotypical statements that exclude children from certain activities, e.g.: "Boys don't play with dolls!". Question these together and use examples from everyday life to show that strengths, interests and talents are not reserved for just one gender. Point out similarities between girls and boys as well as the differences that exist between "the boys" and "the girls" in each case, for example, based on body size. Also show creativity in forming groups: sock colors or favorite animals work just as well.

Strengthen self-confidence

Boost your students' self-confidence by encouraging them to try new things - for example, by choosing an internship. Emphasize a sense of achievement, for example, as part of the follow-up to the day of action.

Making professions and role models visible

Introduce the diversity of professions into everyday life at the daycare center. Show that both men and women have certain professions and also take on family responsibilities.

Rooms without borders

Show the diversity of occupations. Most professions require key skills, such as teamwork. Do you have separate areas for girls and boys? Redesign and create common spaces for experiences and activities that are open to all children. Involve the children in the redesign of their play areas.

Use stereotype-free media

Review your materials. Not only play corners, but also books, games and toys are often segregated by gender. "Gender marketing" may ensure financial profits, but it ascribes different roles to boys and girls and restricts them in their personal development.

Involve parents

Convince over parents and guardians for your cause and communicate your stereotype-free knowledge to them. Make it clear: This is about diversity, tolerance and individuality. To support you, you will find methods for sensitizing parents and for joint reflection.

Show diversity - even in your own team

Ask yourself and your team who takes on which tasks in the daycare center, also in the pedagogical work with the children. Who is in charge, who cooks, who takes care of the technology in the house, who plays with the children, who does handicrafts?

METHOD OVERVIEW

The method set "STEREOTYPE-FREE STARTS EARLY" includes two methods for children aged 5-6 years. The method set can be used in daycare centers and all institutions of early childhood education.

The elaborated methods are designed for immediate use. Feel free to expand our suggestions with your own ideas.

Title	Learning Objective	Method	Grade Level	Duration
Heroines and Heroes of Everyday Life	Questioning gender and occupational stereotypes; examining different professions and their social significance; promoting creativity and motor skills	Chalk painting and photo project Small group work	Age 5-6	120 minutes
My Heroine My Hero	Make individual and collective identification with fictional characters visible; recognize gender attributions.	Drawing and depicting fictional characters Craft work in groups	Age 5-6	30-45 minutes