

EQUAL FOOTING

boosting gender equality in your workplace

Welcome to Equal Footing

You are receiving this email because you have been part of the Equal Footing program at your workplace.

This email reinforces some of the messages you have heard from the face to face training.

Take some time to have a read and head to our Facebook page to have your say or forward this to a friend who might be interested.

Gender Equality at Home

Promoting gender equality in the workplace is fair and sensible, but what happens when you get home each night? Many of us parent in the same ways we were parented, so it's likely you are unconsciously adhering to out-dated gender roles in your house. If you have kids, what are your attitudes, casual comments and behaviours teaching them about gender? Our children grow up in a society where gender expectations and assumptions are applied to them from any early age: most adults talk to a little girl about her clothes or hair, and with a boy about what sports he likes. This soon gives them the idea that looks matter for girls and being sporty is vital for boys. You'll have your own ideas about whether this is a problem.



Housework And Raising The Kids

Research from the Australian Institute of Family Studies has found that women spend almost twice as much time on housework and childcare than men, even when they're working full-time. This is what most kids see and grow up believing is 'normal'. Are you happy with this? It's a legacy from decades past when men were the breadwinners and women were responsible for the domestic front (apart from 'masculine' tasks like mowing the lawn and taking out the rubbish). However, with 65% of Australian women aged 20-74 in paid work, those days are over. Look at what you do around the house (and with the kids) through a gender lens. Mix it up, share the burden, try to be more equal.

Parental Roles

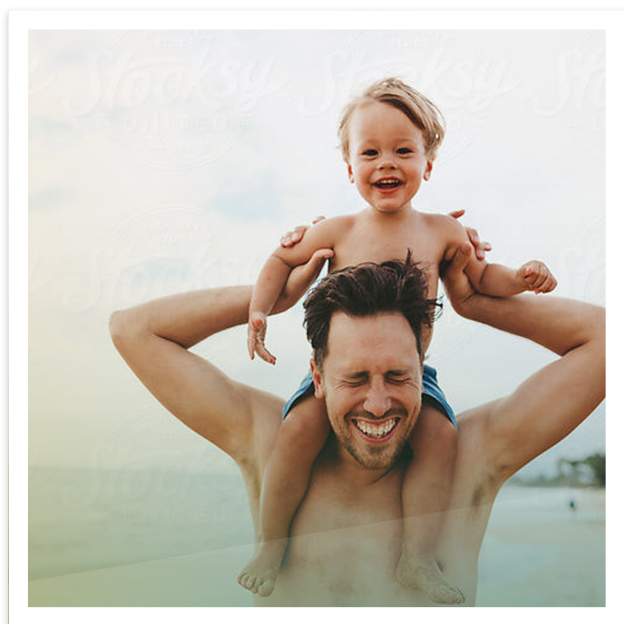
If you have children, ask yourself if you've stepped into traditional parental roles that are determined by gender and supposedly draw on the natural strengths (and weaknesses) of both sexes. Are you, as the father, expected to be the authoritarian 'bad cop'? Are you, as the mother, assumed to be more innately nurturing, so you're the one who takes care of the kids when they're upset or unwell? Why does it have to be that way? Our personalities are better indicators of our strengths as parents than our gender. Build on your natural gifts - and if that means that Mum tutors them in maths and Dad cries with them the first time they break up with a girlfriend/boyfriend, then that's great.

Children and Gender

Kids aren't born with ingrained ideas about gender and what society expects of them as boys and girls, men and women they learn these things from us, and from a very early age. Who says blue is for boys and pink is for girls? Why can't girls play with toy trucks and boys want to be princesses? Question what society tells you about gender and think twice before applying these things to your kid's lives. Let them be who they want to be, without gender constraints. This is one of the greatest gifts you can give a child. It says "I love and accept who you are" and instills a wonderful confidence in them.

When you're around kids, try to:

- Ask girls about school; their thoughts on world events and their interest in sports
- Talk to boys about their friends; how they feel about things, what they love most in the world
- Compliment them on their conversational skills; involve girls in adventures, risk taking, wrestling and climbing trees
- Encourage girls to get dirty; go camping, make shelters and be self sufficient at times (holidays where you 'rough' it are ideal)
- Engage boys in art, dance, and an appreciation of beauty
- Play 'what if' games with kids that stretch their ideas about what's normal for their gender
- Watch movies with them about girls and boys doing extraordinary things that break with gender stereotypes



Words do Matter

Have a think about some of the terms you heard adults use during your childhood. There are probably lots of gender-based words and labels you remember that are a legacy from long ago, when men were seen as more competent or more important than women.

English language is loaded in lots of subtle ways to reflect society's attitudes and assumptions about gender, and the words we use reflect what we think about people's sex, culture, sexuality, abilities and disabilities. It's not that we deliberately say this stuff as a put down - it's just some unconscious gender stereotyping at work again. For gender equality to succeed, we all need to start thinking about the words we use.

If we acknowledge this and start expressing ourselves in a more gender-neutral way, we will slowly and subtly help shift society's attitudes about gender roles, stereotypes, and expectations. It will also make us better role models for colleagues, friends, and our children.

No, this doesn't mean you have to write he/she in front of everything, or become absurdly politically correct - it just means that you stop before making comments that reveal unconscious gender bias. For example:

- By using terms such as “male nurse” or “female bus driver”, you’re pointing out that they are actually an exception to the rule and that these roles really “should” be filled by one of the two sexes. Remove the gender and they mean exactly the same thing.
- There is still a natural impulse for us to refer to nameless, faceless groups of people as “him”, particularly when discussing something usually associated with masculinity. For example: “The average spectator at the footy spends half of his time queuing for things”. Try to use “their”.
- Unless you’re talking about a particular person, substitute “he” or “she” for “you”. It’s more direct, as well as being gender neutral.
- Refer to people’s “partner” rather than husband and/ or wife. You’re then including everyone (and not excluding those who don’t identify as heterosexual). Also, be aware that not all married women like being called the “wife” (or even “ladies”) – they usually prefer the term “women”
- Avoid referring to men by adults’ titles, and women by adolescent titles. For example: “The men from accounts and the girls from marketing would like to speak with you.”
- Be aware of and avoid traditional gender associations from certain words (especially career roles and positions), such as:
 - Chairman (chair, chairperson)
 - Man made (artificial, synthetic, constructed)
 - Policeman (Police officer)
 - Manpower (workforce)
 - Foreman (supervisor, team leader)
 - Salesman (sales person, representative, consultant)
 - Shop girl (staff member, salesperson)
 - Gunman (shooter)
 - Actress (actor)
 - Waitress (waiter, waiting staff)



A Glimpse Of Global Gender Issues

Worldwide, you’re more likely to be poor if you’re female. That’s a fact. It’s also highly likely you’re doing most of the work. Discrimination and injustice are major causes of poverty worldwide, and women and girls bear the brunt of it in every aspect of their lives.

- Around 70% of the 1.3 billion people who live in extreme poverty are women and girls (World Revolution, 2010)
- About two-thirds of the 759 million adults who lack basic literacy skills are women (UNESCO, 2010)
- More than 350,000 women die each year from complications during pregnancy and childbirth – 99% of these are in developing countries (UN, 2010)
- Women perform 60% of the world’s work and produce 50% of the world’s food, yet earn only 10% of the world’s income and own 1% of the world’s property (UN Women, 2010)
- Women hold only 19% of parliamentary seats worldwide, and only 16% of ministerial posts. Globally, only one quarter of senior officials or managers are women (UN, 2010)