

# THE BREAKDOWN: EXPLORING TRANSPHOBIA AND GENDERISM

\*THIS LESSON SHOULD BE TAUGHT AFTER MISGENDERING AND RESPECT FOR PRONOUNS

## DISCLAIMER

This activity could be emotional or triggering for folks who are transgender or gender nonconforming, so please make space for those that may have specific asks during this conversation. This may include students asking to leave the classroom during discussion, or the ability to push back on problematic statements.



## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will begin to explore transphobia and genderism by examining and expanding their definitions. Students will reflect on examples of transphobia and genderism and discuss ways that these systems of oppression impact the lives of trans and gender nonconforming people. They will connect this to previous discussions about gender stereotypes and their limitations. Members will also share ways they've experienced or witnessed transphobia in school, if applicable.



## OBJECTIVES

Students will learn definitions of transphobia and genderism.  
Students will process transphobia and genderism in ways that it applies to their school.  
Students will identify ways that they can work on projects and campaigns in their school to address transphobia and genderism.



## THINGS TO PREP & TOOLS NEEDED

Flip-chart paper, markers, and index cards. On flip-chart paper, post definitions of transphobia and genderism and put them up on the wall.



## TIME

55 minutes.

## ALL ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

1. (5 minutes) Introduce the lesson and explain that today we will explore transphobia and genderism. Explain that today we will focus on how transphobia and genderism impacts everyone.

Example: "Hello, everyone. Today we're going to break down the big ideas of transphobia and genderism and discuss how they show up in everyday life. We're going to take a look at their definitions and break them down in our own words. Afterwards, we'll use our time to come up with ways to

increase awareness of transphobia and genderism in our school.”

2. (10 minutes) Ask everyone to review the posted definitions of transphobia and genderism.

Transphobia: Hatred or fear of those who are perceived to break or blur stereotypical gender roles, often expressed as stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and/or violence.

Genderism: The systematic belief that people need to conform to their gender assigned at birth in a gender-binary system that includes only female and male.

3. (10 minutes) Ask students to write out reflections of both terms in their own words with specific regard to transphobia and genderism in everyday life.

It is transphobia when someone is called names because they're wearing a dress and they are perceived as a boy.

It is genderism when people can't fathom that there are gender options beyond boy or girl.

It is genderism when someone doesn't understand that you don't identify as a boy or a girl.

4. (10 minutes) Have students add their reflections to the definitions.

5. (10 minutes) Gallery walk to review and reflect on the experiences that have been added on the posters with each other.

6. (5 minutes) Ask students to think about when they've experienced or witnessed transphobia and genderism in school. Remind students not to share the names of other people without permission. Have them share with a partner and then list some of their examples on the board.

7. (5 minutes) Review the list. Ask students if they want to tackle any items on the list as a project or action.

Example: There are only two gender options on school forms. Can students create a campaign to have them changed?

Collect ideas. Discuss how you can further address these examples of genderism and transphobia in your school, and how you can spread a greater awareness and celebration of trans and gender nonconforming people.

## FOLLOW-UP/EXTENSIONS

1. Read GLSEN's Pronoun Resource for more information on gender-inclusive language.
2. Bring students back together and have them watch [Janet Mock interview Alicia Menendez](#) on Fusion. Ask students the following:
  - In what ways does Janet Mock's interview highlight transphobia and genderism? Pick out specific examples.
  - Hold mock interviews as educational tools to help students avoid or navigate transphobia and genderism.  
Note: Janet Mock is an American writer, transgender rights activist, author, and former staff editor of People magazine's website.
  - Is there a local trans/gender nonconforming activist group in your school or community? Contact them and ask if they'd be able to present a workshop or host a conversation on transphobia and genderism.
  - Have the students present to other classes, at an assembly, or to the faculty to raise awareness about transphobia and genderism.

## TAGS

Gender, transgender, stereotypes.

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER!  
EMAIL US AT [STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG) OR [EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG).