

Activity 4: Rights and responsibilities



Informed by the evidence base

Research demonstrates that those with rights-affirming attitudes are less likely to engage in gender-based violence and that belief in the equality of men and women is protective against the uptake of violence-endorsing attitudes and practices.[54, 55] Therefore, it is important for children to learn about human rights, to learn how to respect human rights and to learn within a school environment that models respect for human rights. When students learn about human rights, they are better placed to defend their rights and those of others.[56, 57]

Learning intentions

- Students will identify the difference between 'rights' and 'responsibilities'.
- Students will identify some rights and responsibilities that apply to them.
- Students will identify some people in their lives who share responsibility for protecting their human rights.

Equipment

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster** <https://www.unicef.org.au/stories/poster-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child> for display or reference
- Access to or copies of school values or vision statement and class rules/norms
- Rectangular pieces of poster paper (brick-shaped)
- Pens, pencils and notebooks or digital devices
- 'It's my world' model

Method

Part A: Introducing rights and responsibilities

1. Invite students to turn and talk with a partner, before discussing with the class: 'What do we mean by "rights"? What are our rights?' After whole-class sharing, co-construct a definition. Record the class definition of 'rights'.

What are 'rights'?

Our rights are what every human being deserves, no matter who they are (regardless of gender, colour or race) or where they live, so that we can all live in a world that is fair for everyone.

Explain that over the years, people from many countries have met to think about how we can create a world that is fair and gives everyone human rights – a place where everyone is valued and treated with respect. This group is called the United Nations, and they have created a number of agreements that say that all people, including children, should have their rights protected. This should happen no matter who they are, what gender they are, where they come from, who they live with, what they look like, or whether or not they have a disability. They should all have the right to be free, to feel safe, to be protected from harm and to be able to learn and grow up to be the best person that they can be.

(For example, children should have the right to education, the right to health care, the right to clean air and water and healthy food, the right to safety and privacy, the right to be protected from harmful adults, the right to leisure and play, and the right to remain with their family unless their family is causing them harm.)

2. Invite students to also identify some of the rights that they have at school. Record these.

Assist students to compare these suggestions with the rights identified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster.

3. Inform the class that when people talk about rights, they also talk about who shares the responsibility to protect people's rights. Ask, 'What do we mean by "responsibility"?' Invite students to turn and talk with a partner. After whole-class sharing, work together to come up with a definition.

What are responsibilities?

Responsibilities are duties. Often these duties are towards others, but they can also be to ourselves. For example, we may be responsible for getting ourselves dressed and putting food in our mouths. That is a responsibility for ourself. We may be responsible for making sure a baby does not swallow a toy that we are playing with. That is a responsibility we hold for someone else. Responsibilities are duties or expectations we are supposed to do, to make things work, and to show care and respect for others and for our environment.

Record the class definition of responsibility.

4. Invite students to list some of the responsibilities they have at school. Record these. (To contextualise their ideas, consider inviting students to make links with the school values and vision statement, and the class rules.)

Ask:

- Looking at this list of rights and responsibilities, what do you think might happen when people don't take on responsibility for helping to protect the rights of others?
- How would this affect others?
- What would happen if no one kept the rules or no one got their job done?

Elicit examples, such as: it might be unfair or dangerous, other people could feel unsafe or unhappy, or other people would lose their rights.

Explain that many of us are fortunate because we have a lot of people being responsible in ways that help us. Ask: 'Who are some of these people who help protect our rights? Who can we appreciate and thank for the way they show responsibility for protecting our rights?'

Part B: It's my world activity

1. Review the definitions of 'rights', 'responsibilities' and 'respect' used in previous activities, inviting students to remember the generalisations they made at the conclusion of those activities. This time, invite students to add to or modify their original ideas. Ask, 'If we think rights, responsibility and respect are 3 very important things that help to make the world a safe, fair and happy place, then what can we do to help this happen in our class, and in our school?' Invite student responses.
2. Show students the 'It's my world' model included in this activity. Point out how it shows that even though we are each just one small person, we are also part of a home, a class, a school and a community. At every level there are things we can do to make our world a better place.

Display or sketch the concentric circles of the model (as shown) radiating from 'me' to 'home', 'class', 'school' and 'community'.

Ask students to think about:

- How can I take responsibility and show respect for rights in each of these places in my life?
 - What can I do?
3. Invite students to think-pair-share about actions that can be taken in each of the spheres to show respect for others. Invite each student to create their own model (or provide the handout as a base). Challenge them to find at least one action they can take at each level.

4. Invite students to share their models. Lead a focused discussion on gender and respect. Ask:

- Is this respectful action suggested by (name of student), one that may be respectful to students of any gender?
- Could it also be respectful to adults of any gender?
- Are there any other actions we could add to the list?

5. Provide time for students to add any extra ideas to their models, and then to put a star next to the action that they are most determined to take in the next few days.

Coaching point:

Diversity of beliefs. Some students may share that due to their religious, cultural or family beliefs, it is difficult for them to know how to support those of diverse gender identities and sexuality. This can feel like a challenging situation to address. One approach that may help is to reassure students that people do not have to share the religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds of others to show them respect. Respect is about the way we treat people. School and classroom expectations of behaviours and values promote kindness, respect and good treatment for all students, parents, carers and staff.

Review

Ask the class to discuss with the person next to them what they learnt in the activity. Ask students to comment on what helped them to realise that they show respect for others in many ways, and that when they do this, they are also showing responsibility for the ways their actions can affect the rights of others.



Provide content advice prior to an activity/lesson

Teacher note: Teachers should read the content advice guidance in the Introduction well in advance, plan ahead with their school leadership team and colleagues, and revisit protocols for management of students who may show distress or engage in help-seeking. Inform students about upcoming content for Topic 8 in case they want to talk to a teacher, parent or carer in advance of or in response to the activities.

Reflecting on everyday practice

- What teaching and learning practices do you use to create a gender-inclusive learning environment? Consider your classroom routines, behaviour management, use of learning groups and learning experiences, text selection, and use of positive role modelling.
- How do policies and practices in the broader school environment influence the construction of a gender-inclusive learning environment?
- To what extent does your school's bullying prevention or inclusion and diversity policy specifically address harassment or discrimination based on sexuality, gender identity or intersex status?

Extension activities

Invite students to create a story about a character who is a good role model for showing how someone of any gender can be strong *and* gentle, and adventurous *and* helpful.

Talking further

Talk with people at home about what they think advertisers do to try to sell their products to children. Ask if they think different messages are sent to children of different genders about what they should hope to buy or own.

'It's my world'

Model

