

## GENDER EQUALITY BEGINS AT HOME

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### ABSTRACT

*Gender equality, to me, is respecting women. Gender equality is giving them equal opportunity to shine in life. Gender equality is being accommodative to women. Gender equality is an understanding that the daily chores are not women's job but household jobs for everyone to do.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Gender Equality, UNICEF, Resources, Opportunities, Protection.*

### Introduction

UNICEF says that gender equality means that women and men, girls and boys, should enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protection. Each year on International Women's Day there are discussions and seminars held to commemorate women achievers, to find ways to break the glass ceiling and to march forward. Honestly, all that is great but something far more important is ensuring that there is equality at home. But before we can even aim to do so, we need to question ourselves, if we have achieved gender-equal relationships. If we, as life partners, are in sync with each other's roles, goals and outlooks in life. Are our respective partners, the wind beneath our wings or are they socking the wind out of our sails? Also, do we as women, have equal say and participation, in the important matters of our marital lives, whether it is financial, medical, political or emotional? How involved are we in the decision-making? Or, are we, eternally seeking permissions and validations even for smallest of things?

### How does One Do That?

As little drops make the ocean, big ideas can be better achieved by small incremental, seemingly inconsequential changes. It is these little things that aggregate at a societal level and can drive big changes. Only three steps are to be followed for beginning gender equality at home:

- **To have Age Appropriate Conversations about Gender Stereotyping**

Last year I remember my daughter coming home and asking me why his friend's father stays at home while the mother works. To this, we chose to sit down and understand why he thought it to be odd. We figured out that our daughter, all of 4.5 years then, had already somehow understood that it is the father's job to go to an office and the mother's to stay at home.

- **To Begin by Re-drafting Some of the "Ground Rules."**

There are no tasks around the house that the boys cannot do. Whether it is picking up their plate after a meal or helping lay the table. Whether it is helping around the kitchen or sorting out clothes after they are washed. It is essential to establish that everyone who inhabits the house must perform these tasks. Isn't that a simple thing to do? Something as simple as meal planning can be something that the boys are a part of as well. It need not always be the woman who decides what is made for each meal. After all, everyone is consuming the food, aren't they?

Also there are no tasks or jobs which women cannot do. Stepping out of the house and earning is something which women should and can do.

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- **The Actively Practice 'Feminist Parenting' – Yes, it is a Thing!**

Even though it reads as 'feminist parenting', it essentially means to respect one's feelings without attaching a gender tag to it. Empower the boys to develop a sense of empathy and compassion. Just by being born a male one doesn't necessarily have to be tough and aggressive and just by being born a female one doesn't necessarily have to be soft and polite. Who has defined these characteristics anyway?

With the help of many real-life examples we explained to her that it may not always be that way. You will be amazed at how well she understood this. All it took was a logical conversation with her. So do not shy away from answering such questions, sit down and talk! Clear your kid's thoughts related to gender stereotyping and teach them more about gender equality. But not all relationships are lucky enough to be on equal footing. What does one do then? How do we raise the next-gen to be caring and sensitive yet strong? Again, it all boils down to leading by example. Household chores would be a good starting point. When mothers, establish some ground rules that there are no girl-chores or boy-chores and both genders must be equally responsible and sensitive to their immediate surroundings and tasks around, we would have achieved some progress. Accountability is a must and so is involving the children in the decision making process.

The dreams of both girls and boys should be given equal importance and impetus. But success never comes easily, does it? We as parents should get rid of such pet phrases and also keep our children away from them:

- "She is a girl Na, so she cannot understand Math that easily!"
- "Don't think so much lassie! Just toe the line!"
- "Dear boy! Don't you wear pink! That is a girl's colour!"
- "We are saving for his overseas degree and for her marriage!"
- "Why are you playing football in the mud girl? Who will marry you when you grow up all dark?"
- "Hey Girl! Sit properly! With your legs crossed!"
- "Oh Boy! How many times have I told you not to play with pots and pans? Do you want to end up cooking for your wife when you grow up?"

### Conclusion

While we endeavour to raise gender-sensitive kids, let us also raise a gentleman and a lady! Heaven knows, the world needs them in big numbers, right now. So, Gender equality start from home at the beginning at childhood period.

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