

# A "Man Box" Thought Piece

In this TedTalk, Everyday Sexism, Laura Bates, inspired by her own experience of sexism, talks about how she was motivated to make a difference in the UK and the journey this took her on.

While this piece is UK based, the story can just as easily be told by Australian women.

So where does this place us as boys and men? What thoughts does it provoke for us? Can we play a role in removing everyday sexism?

**Watch the full TedTalk and then respond to the questions below with reference to the first 4-5 minutes of the talk which deals with Laura's personal experience of sexism.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhjsRjC6B8U>

**Which Man Box pillars are presenting here?**

- Heterosexism: women treated as objects for men's purpose, seen as lesser than men, existing to serve the sexual purposes of men
- Aggression and Control: Sexually violent actions and speech

**Have you observed any of these forms of sexism in your day to day life?**

Prompt students to think about what they've noticed:

- In social circles
- In the school yard
- Outside of school, maybe on the bus/train, sporting clubs
- At social gatherings like parties or get-togethers
- In the home

**What alternative beliefs and actions could we embody to avoid becoming involved in this type of behaviour?**

- Fostering gender-equal values where women aren't treated as objects for men's purposes
- Addressing any inappropriate conversations in peer groups
- Breaking down gender constructs/ stereotypes that reduce people to limiting roles
- Abandoning character traits that use domination or "power-over"
- Demonstrating caring and considerate attitudes that keep all people safe

**What values and practices in your school could promote positive actions and beliefs amongst young men?**

- Incorporating gender equal practices in classrooms and school yards
- Including strategic education on matters of sexism and the damaging outcomes of hyper-masculinity
- Modelling a proactive gender-equal culture throughout the school.

## Pillars of the Adolescent Man Box



### Emotional restriction

Assumption that to be masculine, boys must be emotionally stoic and refrain from sharing their feelings with others



### Constant effort

Belief that to be masculine, one must constantly, and without interruption, maintain one's tough, confident and strong public persona



### Social teasing

Assumption that to be masculine, one must be able to both dole out and stand up to teasing and taunting in the peer context



### Heterosexism

Norm that masculinity is defined in opposition to homosexuality and femininity, and that one must distance oneself from behaviours and attitudes traditionally thought as "girly" or "gay"

Although adolescent boys are at a different stage of development, they are exposed to ideas about what it means to be an adult man. As a result, we have included the adult Man Box pillars below.

## Pillars of the Adult Man Box



### Self Sufficiency

A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears and problems shouldn't really get respect

Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help



### Acting Tough

A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak

Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside

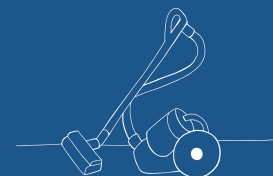


### Physical Attractiveness

It's very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good

Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin

A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly



### Rigid Masculine Gender Roles

It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of younger children

A man shouldn't have to do household chores

Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women

### Hypersexuality



A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can

A "real man" would never say no to sex

### Heterosexuality and Homophobia



Someone who is gay is not a 'real man'

Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine

### Aggression and Control



Men should use violence to get respect, if necessary

A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage

If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time