

Father's Day: Examining Masculinity

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- 1. What do you think it means to be a man? What defines who and what a man is?*
- 2. What messages were communicated to you about what a man was? By parents? Family members? Friends? Teachers? Place of worship? Etc?*
- 3. Think about the important men in your life. What do they have in common? How do they treat other men? Women? Children?*
- 4. What biases do you hold about what it means to be a man? Are these biases something you can let go of? Would you want to? Why or why not?*
- 5. How do you think society's ideas of maleness & masculinity contributes to sexual violence against women and men?*
- 6. Men are often victims of sexual violence and they are overwhelmingly the perpetrators. Why do you think this is not discussed as often or as openly as sexual violence against women?*
- 7. What were your emotional or physical reactions in answering these questions? Did they make you uncomfortable? Did you skip over any of them? Were you dismissive of any? Which ones?*

Questions/Comments For Your Kids:

Now that you've taken the time to think about your own thoughts on maleness and masculinity, talk about it with your kids. Here are some suggestions on how to get started...

- 1. Ask about the gender dynamics of your child's school, playgroup, class. Are there differential expectations of each sex? Are the expectations more rigid for boys than girls?*
- 2. Talk about the men in your child's life (daddy, teachers, uncles, etc). What makes them special? Do those things have to do with ideas about masculinity? Do they have to?*
- 3. Talk about language that your child hears related to gender. Alter the language that you use for boys as opposed to girls (e.g., boys can be princesses & girls can be superheroes)*
- 4. Ask your child directly what they think the differences are between boys and girls. Don't correct them right away, just listen. Ask where they got their ideas about gender - specifically about what it means to be a man.*

