



F is for **FEMININITY**

This resource has been designed by Lyn French, A Space Director, to be used with the emotional learning cards from the set entitled '**A-Z of Emotions**'. Purchase the cards online at www.inivacreativelearning.org

Part of who we are is linked to our gender. We are physically either male or female. However, ideas about masculinity and femininity have changed over time. In today's world, it is now accepted that we are all a part of the human family and share the same qualities and emotions regardless of our gender. Being female or being male means different things to each of us.

- **Describe what femininity means to you. How would you describe 'masculinity'?**

In our society, girls / women and boys /men are often described in stereotypical ways with 'male' and 'female' seen as opposites.

- **Look at the following characteristics and feelings and categorise them as either stereotypically male or female:** loud/ emotional/ creative/ sporty/ sympathetic/ tough/ a 'follower'/ cries easily/ confident/ sensitive/ good listener/ never showing emotion/ tender/ warm/ protective/ courageous/ strong leader

In reality, we all share the same personal qualities and emotions - each of us can be tender or courageous or be a follower or a strong leader regardless of our gender. A woman can be the one in the family who goes out to work while the man stays home and nurtures the children - there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to take up family roles either.

- **What are the different roles adults take up in families, schools and the community?**
- **Are some roles more commonly held by women or men? Should this change?**

Femininity is commonly associated with being gentle, tender, warm and maternal. Of course girls or women can have these traits but so can boys and men. Girls and women can also be risk-takers, leading society towards change. They can be emotionally strong, decisive and able to assert themselves.

- **How would you describe being assertive? Why is it an important quality to develop?**

One of the feelings some regard as supposedly 'unfeminine' is anger. Anger is an emotion we all have. To be whole inside, we need to be able to feel all of our feelings.



Sometimes girls and women don't realise they are angry - for example, they might cry instead. However, if we own our anger and express it constructively, it can be a powerful and empowering tool.

- ***What does 'empowering' mean to you?***

In the late 1800's, in the UK, women became increasingly angry about having no say in how they lived. They formed a powerful movement called the **National Union of Women's Suffrage**. The word comes from medieval Latin - 'suggragium' - which means the right to vote. They used their anger to bring about a very important change - being able to vote meant that women finally had a voice. However, it took until 1928 before women had the same voting rights as men.

- ***What are some of the choices girls and women can make today that they couldn't make in recent history?***

In the 1960's and 70's, feminism began as a social protest movement in the West. Girls and women wanted to be seen as equal in every way to boys and men. Nowadays it is recognised that we all have to work towards a more fair and just world. Everyone should have the right to shape their own identity.

- ***How would you describe your identity? What has influenced who you are today? What kind of person would you like to become?***

Dr Balick is a psychotherapist, author, academic and resident therapist on Radio 1. He tells us that "there are lots of expectations about what it means to be a boy or a girl but there's no right or wrong way to be either one. The world is full of stereotypes that tell us how we 'should be'. Just like people aren't 'in boxes', people don't fit neatly into stereotypes either. " Another stereotypical but outdated idea is the assumption that girls are expected to be attracted to boys and that having a boyfriend is an important way of showing their status.

- ***If a girl or women you know is in a same sex relationship, what are your feelings and thoughts about this?***

Dr Balick says when it comes to sexuality, you can't make assumptions about people either. We don't have to label ourselves right away as 'straight' or 'gay' or 'bi' or 'trans'. Sexual identity can take time to work out and may change as we get older.

CONCLUSION We're all a combination of so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits. Feelings and personality traits are not gender-specific - we're all human beings. Today, girls and women have more choices than any other time in history.



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Look at other worksheets and **Emotional Learning Cards** in our series to help you identify your feelings and figure out who you are. Our cards use art to help start you thinking and talking about themes such as what we feel, who we are and where we're going in our lives.

You can also read more about growing up in Dr Balick's book called '**Keep Your Cool: How To Deal With Life's Worries and Stress**' - you'll find out we all have similar feelings and thoughts as we are growing up!