



Have you ever heard someone say, “Dolls are meant only for girls” or “Boys shouldn’t wear pink”? Well, Sadiq from *Sadiq Wants to Stitch* was told something very similar: “boys shouldn’t stitch.” Instead, in his community, boys are supposed to tend to the sheep. But Sadiq loves stitching! What is he to do?

When someone is told that they should only act a certain way because of their gender, they are being stereotyped. Stereotypes are ideas about a group of people that many people believe, but these ideas don’t apply to everyone in that group. For example, “nurses are all women” is a common stereotype. But there are men who want to be nurses. There are also women who want to be doctors, firefighters, or scientists, but don’t want to be nurses. What other stereotypes can you think of?

Stereotypes are harmful because they stop people from doing what they really like. They can also make you do something you don’t want to do. For example, “video games are for boys” is another stereotype. But when many people believe that, it stops girls from being able to play video games, even if they really like them or want to try them. It also makes boys feel like they should like video games, even if they don’t. Some other examples are “all boys are tough,” “women take care of the house and family,” “girls have long hair” and “boys don’t cry.” Can you tell why these ideas are harmful for both girls and boys?

Very often, we don’t fit the stereotypes given to us – just like Sadiq wanted to stitch even though stitching was seen as a girls’ activity. And sometimes, we *do* fit the stereotypes given to us. If you’re a girl and you like dolls, that’s perfectly fine. There’s only a problem if someone likes dolls, but they’re not allowed to like them because they’re not a girl!

It’s important to remember that when most people say something stereotypical, they don’t mean any harm—they say them because stereotypes have been around for such a long time that they feel normal. We *all* hold beliefs that are stereotypes. So when we catch ourselves saying something stereotypical, we can stop and think about why we said it, and why it’s stereotypical. This way, it becomes easier to break the habit.



Hobbies, emotions, toys, colors, clothes, and jobs don't have gender, even if they seem like they do. Anyone can stitch, cry, play with toy trucks, paint their nails, wear a dress, become a firefighter or like the color pink. Isn't it cool how many more choices we have in the world when we are not bound by stereotypes?

GLOSSARY

- **Abba:** father
- **Ammi:** mother
- **Bhai:** brother
- **Chacha:** uncle
- **Namaz:** a prayer offered by Muslims
- **Noon-cha:** a tea made with milk, salt and baking powder

COLORING ACTIVITY

Remember how Sadiq studied the yellow beak of the magpie? In the same way, use the colors you see around you to color this picture. You can even color the sheep and Sadiq's clothes with the patterns from his rug. Don't worry about staying within the lines or using "correct" colors - have fun!

