

# qual parenting

Happy  
kids



# Equal parenting and happy kids

**Maribyrnong City Council support gender equality in all areas of life. This short guide has been developed to acknowledge and support the important role parents and families play in this beautiful work.**

**Gender Equality** is reached when we address gender inequities and stereotypes. It is the equal and valued participation of all people in all areas of life, including family life.

**Gender equality means kids can be true versions of themselves.**

It means little boys aren't humiliated if they cry, girls are considered strong and brave, and all children no matter their gender are encouraged to explore the things they're interested in, which helps them reach their full potential.

***It makes them happier.***

Gender equity is how we get there. It makes our society fairer. It means that everyone is given opportunities to follow their dreams and interests, and not be limited to certain activities, because of who they are.

It also means acknowledging that some people need more help than others, because of disadvantage and diversity.

**Gender Equality makes our world safer, fairer and more interesting for everyone.**

I like playing football with my Mum.  
Child aged 8.



# Start early

I think that we  
can be anything  
we want!  
**Child aged 9.**

Early childhood is a key developmental period when children begin to learn about gender and their place in the world.

Children begin to understand and act out gender roles and stereotypes at an early age.

This can have long term effects on their values and the choices they make in life.

Parents can play an important role in promoting gender equality and building children's resilience to resist rigid gender stereotypes in early childhood.

**Gender stereotypes** are when we expect, or force people to like certain things, or be a certain way, because of what gender they are.

Boys can't be  
fashion designers.  
**Child aged 8.**

You can do the  
same things as  
each other.  
**Child aged 7.**

Girls can't be builders  
because they're not  
strong enough.  
**Child aged 8.**

My mum takes  
care of me more.  
**Child aged 7.**

# Why is this important?

Children's self-worth can be lowered if they don't fit into these gendered assumptions around what they should be doing - this has been shown to cause mental health, self-esteem and body image issues throughout life.

## The freedom to be yourself

A truly gender-equal environment is not about making children do things that they don't want to. In fact, it's the opposite. It's about giving children the freedom to choose their own interests.



This is  
me



Being a  
amazing horse  
Rider.

# Equal parenting

It's all equal at home I think except cooking  
Child aged 7.

## What practical things can parents do at home?

Support your children to do a range of different activities that break traditional gender roles.

Be mindful of the language and tone you use. Use positive language when children want to try something new.

**Role model this yourself through equal parenting.**

Parents from all communities and cultures share a love of their children and want the best for them. There are many ways to raise children and many different types of parents.

However, when both parents share in the care of children, no matter their gender, great things happen. This is what we call **"equal parenting"**.



Cuddling my Dad  
at bedtime.  
Child aged 6.

Equal parenting helps reduce the chances of postpartum depression, which is most often seen in new mothers, but can affect fathers too.

When everyone in the family helps with parenting, children have better educational and social outcomes.

Men's roles in the family expand and grow, which leads to better physical and mental health outcomes for them and their family.

Families take all different shapes and sizes.

Single parent families raise great kids, as do extended, gender diverse and same-sex families.

All  
families are

different.

Kindness  
is  
important.

most

# Some tips

My Mummy and  
Daddy both  
do the dishes  
because it's fair.  
**Child aged 7.**

## Set goals

Talk about what being 'equal' means to each of you, how you want to split your responsibilities and what goals you'd like to set for your family.

## Communicate

Tell your partner when you need extra help, or are feeling overwhelmed.

You don't have to split things 50/50, you can play to your strengths, but when all parents participate in the care (school, health, personal care) that is involved with children, the whole family thrives, and no one misses out on opportunities to do paid work, or spend time with their children.

Most employers now have policies which mean parents can take time off to care for children without discrimination.

Speak to your employer about flexible work arrangements and carer's leave.

Both men and women are entitled to this and it shouldn't affect your chances of promotion or the way the company looks at you.



We acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples past, present and emerging.

**A big “thank you” to the children at Footscray Primary School for sharing the drawings and quotes reprinted in this guide.**

Maribyrnong City Council is a child safe organisation committed to child safety and supporting the best interests of children and young people in everything we do.

For more information about this, or any of the topics covered in this resource please contact **[childsafety@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au](mailto:childsafety@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au)**



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