

# How does Culture, Gender & Disability Shape our Self-awareness

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This presentation focuses on how culture, gender and disability shape our self awareness



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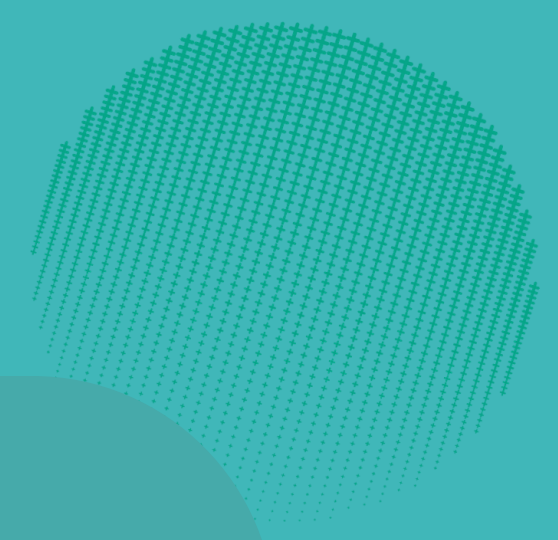
## Introduction

We see ourselves through our identity, worth, strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and social role.  
Culture, gender, and our differences such as living with disability act as lenses.  
They shape what we learn about ourselves, what we value, and how others treat us  
Over time, these powerful forces, form our inner story.

### Reflection:

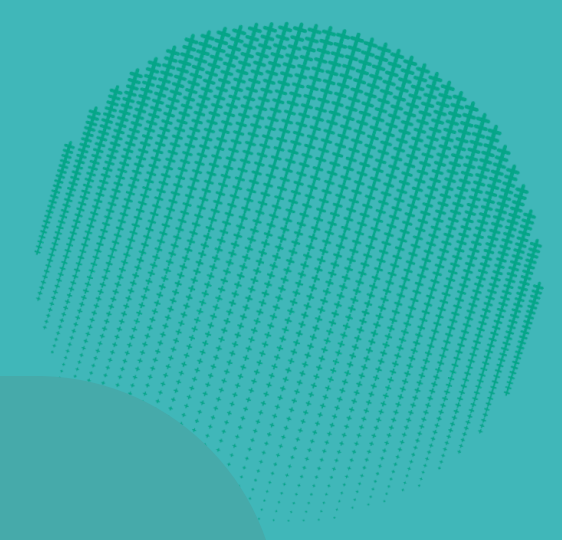
How did you come to see yourself the way you do?  
Why do you behave the way you do?

## How These Forces Work:



- ✓ **Socialization:** From childhood, we are taught “how to be” through family, stories, school, religion, and community rules. These lessons form our self-image.
- ✓ **Gender Roles & Expectations:** Culture and gender set clear roles such as “men are the providers,” “women are the caregivers or nurturers” and that shape goals, behaviour, and our self-worth.
- ✓ **Language & Labels:** Words like “brave,” “weak,” “disabled,” or “stubborn” can stick and shape one’s identity.
- ✓ **Stereotypes & Stigma:** Prejudice and shame can be internalized, lowering self-esteem and increasing isolation.
- ✓ **Access & Opportunity:** Inclusion in education, work, and healthcare affirms value; exclusion undermines it.

## Culture — How It Shapes Self-Perception



- ✓ **Collectivist vs. Individualist:** In collectivist cultures (common in Africa/Asia), identity is tied to relationships and group roles. In individualist cultures, it's linked to personal traits and achievements.
- ✓ **Moral Stories & Norms:** Cultural stories define what is honorable or shameful, setting the standard for self-worth.
- ✓ **Emotional Expression:** Some cultures discourage showing emotion, reducing self-awareness.  
**Why it matters:** Culture can nurture belonging and identity or impose silence and shame.
- ✓ When you silence who you are to please culture, you begin to lose your sense of self.
- ✓ Recognizing these messages passed to us through our cultures helps us decide which one to keep and which one to challenge.

## Gender — How Roles & Expectations Shape Identity

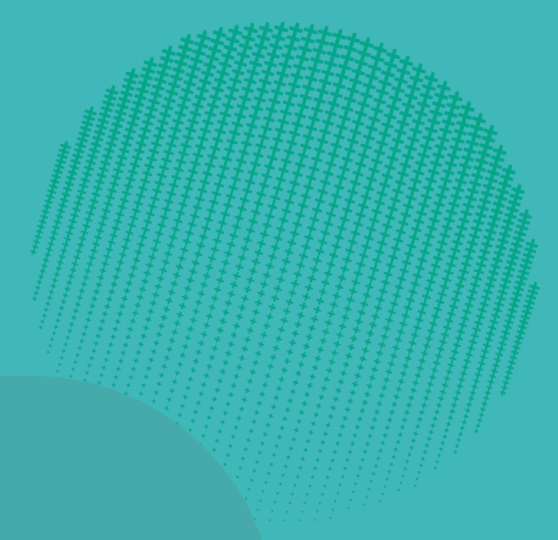


- ✓ **Early Messages:** From toys to speech patterns, children learn gendered behaviours that shape confidence, interests, and self-belief about who they are.
- ✓ **Emotional Rules:** Boys may be taught to hide vulnerability while girls are made to avoid leadership roles. These patterns affect emotional skills, careers, and relationships in future as they grow up.
- ✓ **Feedback & Evaluation:** Men are often praised for assertiveness, whereas women may be criticized for the same trait this influences self-assessment and risk-taking.

### **Why it matters:**

- ✓ Gendered norms can limit potential and harm mental health. Teaching emotional skills and challenging stereotypes enables authentic choices.
- ✓ You are not your gender roles. You are a whole human being with dreams, emotions, strength and weaknesses despite how the society boxed you.

## Disability — How Difference Affects Self-View



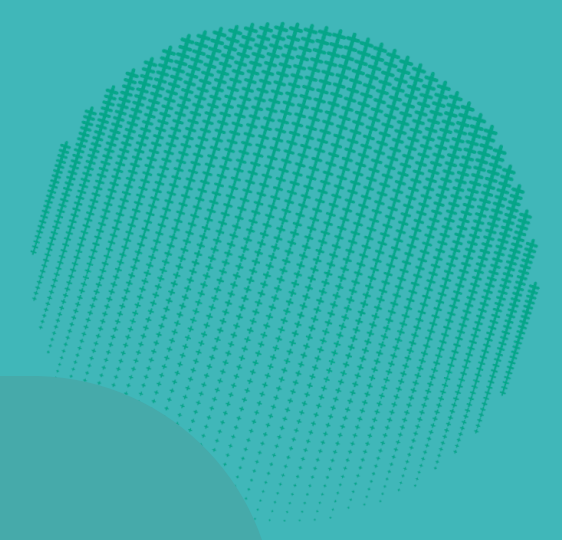
- ✓ **Internalized Stigma:** Public attitudes of pity or avoidance can lead to self-stigma, lowering perceived capability.
- ✓ **Reduced Opportunities:** Inaccessible spaces, limited education, and unemployment send the message that one “doesn’t belong.”
- ✓ **Identity vs. Impairment:** Disability can be embraced as identity and pride or experienced as limitation, depending on inclusion and representation.

### **Why it matters:**

- ✓ Having physical, mental or even learning challenges does not make you less valuable or less human being
- ✓ Every human being has something to offer but they must be able to see it in themselves first
- ✓ Reducing stigma and improving accessibility boosts self-esteem, mental health, and participation.



## Practical, Community-Friendly Actions



- ✓ **Teach Early:** We should promote emotional literacy, diverse role models, and respectful language from childhood.
- ✓ **Challenge Harmful Messages:** Through the use of our leaders, media, and community spaces to counter stereotypes.
- ✓ **Create Inclusive Spaces:** We should ensure schools, services, and events are accessible and welcoming.
- ✓ **Model Alternatives:** Share stories of emotional men, women in leadership, and successful disabled people.
- ✓ **Support Peer Groups:** Safe spaces reduce stigma and help rewrite harmful beliefs. (PMC)
- ✓ **Think Intersectionally:** Tailor programs to overlapping needs

# Conclusion



Our culture, gender and differences will always be part of who we are, but we have the power to choose our identity.

Simply by:

- ✓ Naming what shaped you
- ✓ Challenge the limits
- ✓ Redefine yourself
- ✓ Embrace your full identity

Mental health starts when you learn to see yourself fully, love yourself boldly and show up for yourself authentically.

**THANK YOU**

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