

Extension Activity Kaupapa: Exploring gender roles, power, and how we view harm.

Goals & Gains: Understand that gendered expectations can shape the way coercive behaviour is seen, judged, or dismissed.

Explain

We've kept Parker and Kai's genders open on purpose, because coercive control can show up in *any* relationship — regardless of gender. But we also know that the way people react to these situations can be shaped by gender expectations. Statistically, most victims of coercive control are women, and most perpetrators are men — but what happens when that's flipped? What if *Parker was a guy*, and *Kai was a girl* — or vice versa? Would people take it as seriously? Would Parker still be believed? Would Kai still be seen as controlling?

Discussion Prompts

How do gender roles shape how we view control in relationships?

- *People might think it's less serious if a girl is being controlling — like it's just jealousy or insecurity.*
- *A guy being controlled might feel embarrassed or like people won't believe him.*
- *We often expect boys to be "strong" or "in control," so if they're the victim, it gets minimised or joked about.*
- *Girls might be called "clingy," and guys get seen as "protective" even if they're actually being controlling.*

What messages do we hear from media or society about who's allowed to have power in a relationship?

- *In movies, guys are usually shown making the big decisions — like where to go, what to do.*
- *Girls are expected to be more emotional or forgiving, so people might excuse their controlling behaviour.*
- *In songs, it's common to hear stuff like "You're mine" or "I can't live without you" — and it's painted as romantic.*
- *Sometimes guys get praised for being possessive, like it means they "really care."*

If Parker was a guy and Kai was a girl, would people notice the warning signs sooner — or ignore them? Why?

- *People might not take Parker seriously — like "he should be able to handle it."*
- *They might assume Kai's behaviour is "not that bad" because she's a girl.*
- *Some people might even say Parker's lucky to have someone that "obsessed" with him — which is not okay.*

What about same-gender relationships — are the challenges when it comes to talking about coercive control in queer or non-hetero relationships?

- *People might not notice coercive control because they don't expect abuse in queer relationships.*
- *They might assume there's "equal power" because both people are the same gender — but that's not always true.*
- *There can still be emotional manipulation, jealousy, isolation — all the same stuff.*
- *It might be even harder to get help, especially if people don't take the relationship seriously or if someone isn't out.*

Extension Activity Kaupapa: Exploring how media can reflect, normalise, or challenge healthy, unhealthy and abusive behaviours in relationships.

Goals & Gains: Develop critical thinking around the messages we absorb about love, jealousy, and power.

Explain

Media plays a huge role in how we learn about love, relationships, and what's considered "normal" in how people treat each other. Song, for example, can send really empowering messages — but other times, they can blur the line between love and control. In this activity, we'll take a closer look at some popular lyrics and ask: What is this song really saying about relationships? This is a chance to unpack the difference between genuine care and emotional manipulation, and to think critically about the messages we're surrounded by every day.

Activity

Look at song lyrics about relationships and discuss them as a class or in groups.

Examples:

- Bound to You – Christina Aguilera
- Every Breath You Take – The Police
- Birds of a Feather – Billie Eilish
- Adore You – Harry Styles
- All of Me – John Legend
- Crazy In Love – Beyonce
- Just The Way You Are – Bruno Mars

Discussion Prompts

What does this song say about love and relationships?

How does the tone or vibe of the songs influence how we feel about the lyrics?

Do any of the lyrics sound like red flags or signs of control?

Would this be OK if someone said this to you in real life?

How might someone feel if they were in a relationship like the one described in the song?

What kind of relationship is being modelled here? Is it something we'd want to experience or promote?

If we were rewriting this song to model a healthy relationship, what would we change/ keep the same?