



Workshop: Dominant & Counter Narratives of Masculinity

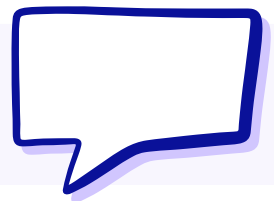
I SAMPLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES



LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Discuss their personal experiences managing expectations on manhood.
- Summarize and contrast the dominant and counter-narratives of masculinity.
- Recognize when their behaviors and attitudes (and those of others) perpetuate harmful, restrictive definitions of “manhood.”
- Model healthy behaviors associated with the counter-narratives of masculinity such as empathy, vulnerability, and non-violent communication.

II SAMPLE INTRODUCTION



“During today’s workshop, we want to explore the expectations of what it means to be an ‘ideal man.’ Where did we all learn what it means to be a man? What ideas of manhood feel helpful and which feel restrictive or harmful? How can each of us be the men we want to be and help the men we know to be healthier and happier? Our time today will help us all think deeply about how these ideas of what it means to be a man shape our campus culture.”



III SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- What was an experience where you learned what it meant to be a boy (e.g., something you saw or heard)?
- What do you think the stereotypes about men are? Do you think they are true? Where do they come from?
- What role do men play in your family? What roles do men typically play in society? Why is that the case?
- What do you think about the term “toxic masculinity?”
- Who do men need to learn from about what it means to be a man? Are there enough male role models?
- What topics related to the expectations placed on men would you like to discuss more?

IV SAMPLE TALKING POINTS



- Men are taught that to be men, they have to be self-sufficient, tough, hypersexual, straight, and in control at all times.
- Being very masculine isn't bad. It's possible to be very “manly” and be caring, empathetic, communicative, equitable, and an advocate for gender equity. Is there a person that displays this combination for you?



IV SAMPLE TALKING POINTS (CONTD.)



- Rigid notions of masculinity are policed. This means that there is a risk of punishment if you act too “unmanly,” such as being ridiculed as “soft” and “gay” by friends, being seen as less romantically attractive, or having a more difficult time getting a job. An example from 2023 was the use of the terms “Alpha” vs. “Beta” male.
- People receive images of what it means to be a man from many places: family; tv; music; friends; and more. Try to notice from advertisements, movies, family, teachers, and others what they are communicating about what an “ideal man” means.
- Masculinity is a health issue. Men who most align with stereotypical images of masculinity are more likely to report suicidal thoughts, depressive symptoms, bullying, sexual harassment, binge drinking, and traffic accidents.
- Consider how you and your friends can hold each other accountable to healthy principles of what it means to be men, for their health and safety as well as others’.
- If we are to change the harmful, restrictive messages we get as men, each of us needs to be a role model for other men and boys.



V SAMPLE ACTIVITIES



**THE “MAN BOX”
ACTIVITY**

The Man Box Activity is a primary tool for teaching about gender norms and expectations. It begins with a brainstorm of “manliness” and “unmanliness,” followed by discussion.

For a full description of the Man Box Activity, visit [Your Courage Project](#) or [A Call to Men](#).

**FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION
“THE MASK YOU LIVE IN”**

A foundational documentary in the field of masculinities, [The Mask You Live In](#) “follows boys and young men as they struggle to stay true to themselves while negotiating America’s narrow definition of masculinity.” The film covers the fundamentals of how masculinity is created in the United States and through experts across numerous fields, illustrates how to raise a healthier generation of boys and men.



VI WORKSHOP RESOURCE LIBRARY



- **Resource List:** *The Masculinity Project - Johns Hopkins*
- **Film & Discussion Guide:** *Tough Guise by Jeremy Erpp & Jackson Katz - Media Education Foundation*
- **Video:** *Why I'm done trying to be "man enough" - Justin Baldoni*
- **Video:** *“Be A Man’: Modernists and Traditionalists Debate Masculinity” - VICE Debates*
- **Video:** *Why Latino Dads Don’t Say I Love You - mitú*
- **Video:** *Masculinity in America - PragerU (Showcases messages about traditional masculinity; e.g., “Patriarchy is threatened”)*
- **Podcast:** *Guys, We Have A Problem: How American Masculinity Creates Lonely Men - NPR*
- **Workshop:** *Unpacking Masculinity - Campus Conversation Starters*