



Workshop: Male Friendships

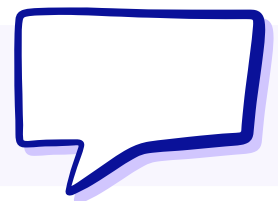
I SAMPLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES



LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Discuss more openly their feelings and experiences in male friendships.
- Identify strengths and challenges of male friendships.
- Summarize how gender expectations for men impact the intimacy of their relationships.
- Demonstrate relationship practices to deepen friendships and make new friends.

II SAMPLE INTRODUCTION



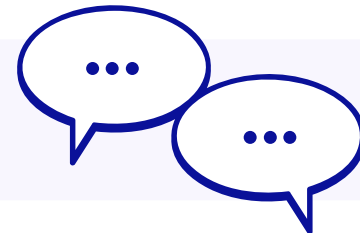
“College can be a very positive social environment and a place to make friends. It can also be challenging to find our place. Even if we have established friends, especially for men, it's common to have friends, but still not feel really close to them. Reflecting to yourself, do you feel you have at least one male friend you feel really close to and like you could tell them anything? If you answered no, you're definitely not alone in that. 65% of men aged 18-23 say that “no one really knows me well” ([Equimundo](#), 2023). We're going to talk more about why that is today and focus on how being men impacts our friendships.”

**III SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Do you have male friends that you feel really understand you and that you can tell anything to? Why or why not?
- Have you ever held back from telling a male friend something about your life, such as a challenging experience or a relationship? What kept you from opening up or feeling like you could share?
- Do you ever tell your male friends that you love them? If not, why?
- If you do not tell your male friends “I love you” how do you show them love?
- How does being a man impact your friendships?
- How do you usually go about making new friends? Do you find it challenging?
- What can we do to get closer to friends?



IV SAMPLE TALKING POINTS



- ▶ Men are raised and conditioned to not talk about feelings or show vulnerability, to handle things on their own, and not need support. However, these are key parts of what forms deep friendships.
- ▶ There are many ways that men shame each other when we go “deeper,” share our emotions, and say we love each other. We call each other “beta” or “gay” or worse.
- ▶ It’s often seen as “feminine” or “soft” to talk about things that go beyond surface level conversations. But, what is stronger or more courageous than sharing what is hardest: when we struggle; when we are scared; and when we feel hurt by someone?
- ▶ If you want to deepen your friendships, have empathy, curiosity, and ask questions. Start small by asking a friend things like...
 - “How are you really? Is there anything that’s been on your mind lately?”
 - “How’s your family doing?”
 - “That breakup sounds really hard. Is there anything I can do to support you?”
- ▶ If your friend seems like they’re not wanting to open up, try to share to do so first. Being vulnerable can create a sense of permission for them to feel like it’s okay to drop the wall.



IV SAMPLE TALKING POINTS (CONT.)



- ▶ Even if we have a lot of people around us we can still feel lonely. Consider the idea of “quality and quantity.” We all need friendships where you can watch a game together but also talk about hard things going on in our personal lives.
- ▶ In addition to not learning how to share, men also don’t learn skills on how to listen and support. It can be uncomfortable to hear very personal things, but we can grow and get better at it.
- ▶ Some components of friendships that you deserve and help friendships last are:
 - Commitment: Reciprocity Showing up for important events such as games, performances, and birthdays.
 - Support: Accepting your friend for who they are, not shaming them, and encouraging each other’s growth.
 - Healthy Conflict: If we never say when we are upset, hold each other accountable, and apologize, it’s hard to build trust.
- ▶ Online friendships are very valuable. We can deepen our relationships there in order to also deepen our relationships in-person, too.
- ▶ Making new friends can also be a big challenge, especially as you exit college. Finding people who share common interests and enjoy similar activities like classes and events can be a starting point.



V SAMPLE ACTIVITIES



VIDEO SCREENING & DISCUSSION: “STRAIGHT MALE FRIEND”

Watch the video. Discuss as a group to probe ideas on friendships, humor, and gender norms amongst men.

Sample Discussion Questions

- Despite it being comedic, do you feel like the skit was accurate in any ways that it portrayed male friendship dynamics?
- Did you disagree with anything about the skit in the way it portrayed straight male friendships?
- Do you feel like your male friendships are “less drama” than female ones? What causes you to feel that way?



CONCENTRIC CIRCLES: FRIENDSHIPS

Ask participants to split in half and then to sit across from each other in concentric circles. Provide prompts and 3-5 minutes for discussion of each question in pairs. Then rotate partners and discuss the next question in pairs. After finishing the pair questions, host a discussion about the experience as a whole.

Sample Prompts:

- Are there things you hide or don’t share with your friends that you’d like to? What keeps you from sharing them?
- Do you think there are stereotypes about men that keep you from being your true self around each other? If so, what are they?
- Is there anyone in your life that you really trust? If so, who and why?
- Have you ever had a friend betray your trust? If so, how did you navigate it?
- How do you show up for your friends? Are there ways you wished they showed up more for you?



VI WORKSHOP RESOURCE LIBRARY



- **Video:** Navigating Male Friendships with Matt Ritter and Aaron Karo - The Man Enough Podcast
- **Article:** 11 Expert Tips For Men Who Want Better Friendships - Fatherly
- **Article:** Why Friendships Among Men Are So Important - Greater Good Magazine
- **Article:** 'It's Rough Out Here': A VICE Guide to Making Friends - VICE News
- **Article:** Our Favorite Male Relationships in Pop Culture - One Love Foundation
- **Article:** Men have fewer friends than ever, and it's harming their health - Vox
- **Report:** The State of American Friendship: Change, Challenges, and Loss - Survey Center on American Life
- **Reddit Thread:** How do you emotionally support your male friends? Are you the sort of friend your friends could cry to?
- **Research:** Privileging the Bromance: A Critical Appraisal of Romantic and Bromantic Relationships - Robinson, White, and Anderson
- **Research:** The role of gender stereotypes in the social acceptability of the expression of intimacy - A. Celeste Gaia