

Working with Young Men Activities Supplement

by

Gina Halpin

This activity supplement is aimed specifically at youth work with young men. It looks at attitudes and expectations around masculinity and how this plays a significant part in how young men see the world and themselves and where they feel secure enough to interact in a positive way. The activities cover three main themes - **Male Stereotyping / Male Roles; Emotional Awareness and Relationships**

Ice Breaker - Who am I?

Aim: To create an atmosphere where everyone is familiar with each other and feels safe enough to participate.

Materials: Cards and markers.

- Each player gets a card and marker and then writes the name of a person or character on it that he will act out e.g., mouse, Batman, Elvis, a car, Thierry Henry etc.
- Then the players walk about the room acting out their character.
- Each player is only allowed to act out their character once for each person in the room, answering YES or NO for each guess.
- The first person to correctly identify the character is the winner.

MALE ROLES AND STEREOTYPES THEME

Activity One - Jobs for the Boys

Aim: To explore gender stereotypes and provoke discussion.

Materials: Two A3 size sheets of paper with **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** stuck on opposite sides of the room.

- Ask the young men to listen to a statement (see below) and then move to the Agree or Disagree side of the room.

- If they are undecided they can stand in the middle. They can change their mind at any time and move to the opposite side of the room, but encourage them to explain their decision and what influenced it.
- After each round stop to discuss individual points of view, encouraging constructive challenging of different points.

All male hairdressers are gay	There are some jobs that women just can't do
Boys are better at science than girls	Men are better chefs
It's a man's job to protect the family	Women are naturally better at caring for kids
Women are more emotional than men	Men find it hard to have a female boss
Men are naturally better drivers than women	Housework is not a man's responsibility

Source: *Youth Work Now*, March 2009

Activity Two - Man in a Box

Aim: To explore male roles and expectations with young men and to explore alternative male's roles.

Materials: Monopoly money notes, a box and characteristic cards.

- Give the young men a number of cards with characteristics written on them.
- The characteristics should include those traditionally associated with men such as Provider, Aggressive, Strong, Masculine, Athletic etc.. as well as non-traditional such as Home-maker, Caring, Emotional, Sensual & Vulnerable etc.

- Ask the young men to place the characteristic card they feel most related to being a man into the box.
- Once this is done and after debate has taken place, the young men should be left with characteristics which they consider less male or feminine. These too should be then placed in the box.
- Hand out the monopoly money and begin a fake auction of all the characteristics.
- The young men use their fake money to bid for the characteristics they think most relate to being a man and would like to keep.
- At the end of the auction encourage the young men to discuss their opinions and views about the expectations and restrictions place on them by 'putting them in a box'.
- The discussion should allow for debate on how these restrictions influence attitudes and behaviour.

Source: *Young Men and Violence*

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS THEME

Activity Three - Expressing Emotions

Aim: This activity builds empathy and develops young men's skills to recognise other people's emotions and enables them to respond appropriately.

Materials: Flip chart paper, scissors, markers, glue, old magazines, Post-It notes and six cards with the following emotions written on them **SCARED, DISGUSTED, SAD, ANGRY, HAPPY and SURPRISED.**

- Divide the young men into 6 small groups and give each group a emotion card, paper, markers, scissors, glue & some magazines.
- Ask each group not to disclose which card they got.
- Ask each group to look through the magazines and make a collage of faces that depict the emotion on their card.
- After about 20mins ask each group to display their collage on the wall.

- Ask the different groups which emotion is depicted by each collage – how many were correct?
- Use the collage as discussion points to consider emotions and the different ways they can be expressed.

Discussion Suggestions

Is it easy to see what other people are feeling?

What happens if you misread the signs?

Are emotions sometimes deliberately hidden and what reasons could there be for this?

Ask the young men to share experiences of time when they have avoided sharing their true feelings or taken someone up the wrong way.

Source: *Youth Work Now, March 2009*

Activity Four - Music Makers

Aim: To increase emotional awareness by exploring the impact of music on feelings and behaviours.

Materials: CD player, CDs, worksheet and pens.

- Either in groups or individually play the young men a series of song snippets from a variety of music types – select songs that are age appropriate for the group.
- After the music is played ask the young men to consider what the song means to them and the kind of emotions that are stirred as they listen.
- After all the music has been played the youth worker should play the snippets one at a time and allow time to discuss the feelings and thoughts and memories of the young men as they listened. Thoughts may be written down anonymously.

This exercise can be used in conjunction with the previous activity on emotions, using the list of emotions listed on the walls to prompt the discussion and explore why certain types of music trigger certain emotions.

Source: *Young Men & Violence*

RELATIONSHIP THEME

Activity Five - Gender Game

Aim: To consider attitudes to sex, sexual health and gender stereotypes.

Materials: Flip chart paper, markers, set of gender game cards (see below)

- On the flip chart paper draw 2 large circles that overlap in the middle. Next to one circle write **FEMALE** and next to the other write **MALE**. In the overlap area write **BOTH**
- Divide the young men into small groups and explain that this activity is about attitudes and opinions that people may have. Stress that you are not asking them to divulge information about their own sexual experiences (it may be appropriate for this activity to set out group rules and confidentiality boundaries before starting).
- Hand each group a sheet with gender game cards listed and some markers and ask them to read what is on the card, and as a group decide where on the paper the card should go Male, Female or Both.

Worry about pregnancy	Want to use condoms
Want to remain a virgin until they get married	Spends a lot of worrying about relationships
Think that having lots of money makes them more attractive	Think its ok to have one night stands
Want to feel loved before they have sex	Want to have a family
Feel pressured into having sex	Want to have more than one sexual partner
Worry what their boy/girl friend thinks	Get hurt feelings
Put pressure on their partner to have sex	Learn about sex from magazines
Have usually taken drugs or alcohol when they have sex	Worry that they might not be good in bed

Once all the groups have finished going through each of the gender game cards facilitate a feedback session to find how why the group selected each category and where they got their information from.

Source: Body – Physical health and wellbeing activities just for young people, by Vanessa Rogers

Activity Six - Man to Man

Aim: To raise awareness about relationships between men

Materials: Situation cards (see below).

Write each of the following situations on cards and get the individuals in the group to read one at a time and answer the following 2 questions – then discuss the answers.

Question 1: How would you feel in this situation?

Question 2: What would you do in this situation?

Situations:

You meet your best mate in town, he puts his arm around your shoulder as you talk.

You've just scored the last-minute goal for your side. Your team mates hug and kiss you.

You arrange to go to the cinema with your girlfriend, but then your mates invite you to a party.

You've been going out with someone for a long time and are quite keen on them, then one day you see them sitting in a cafe with your best mate.

You have an arrangement to go out with your best mate. Someone you met at a party and who you fancy texts you to go out.

You are out driving with your mates. At a set of traffic lights they try to get you to have a race with another car.

You are out with some friends and one of them gets drunk and starts a fight with another group of young men.

A friend comes to your house after having an argument with his parents. He is upset and crying.

A group of your friends start to pick on your best mate, slagging him and winding him up.

Source: Boys will be boys....

Myths about Men....

True or False??

Boy's don't cry

Real men don't show their feelings

Men are no good at looking after babies

A man needs to be well built to be attractive

Looking after yourself means
being able to fight

Men are naturally violent

Gay men are not real men

The man should be the breadwinner
in the family

Men don't talk to other men about their
problems or emotions

It's a man's world

If two men love each other,
it must mean they are gay

Men don't fall in love, women do

You've got to be tougher than the rest.

Source: Boys will be...

**Gina Halpin is the
Information and Resources Officer
with the Irish YouthWork Centre**

Resouces and Links

Youth Action Northern Ireland - works with young people to support them as active and equal citizens.

www.youthaction.org

YMCA - provides opportunities for people to grow and develop holistically.

www.ymca.ie

BeLonG To - provides support and information to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people

www.belongto.org

YouthReach - Education and training programme for early school leavers.

www.youthreach.ie

Youth Health Promotion - works to provide a broad based flexible health promotion support and training service to youth organisations.

www.youthhealth.ie

Mental Health Awareness Site - provides support and information for those suffering from mental health issues.

www.youthmentalhealth.ie

Spunout - indepentant charity working to empower young people to create personal and social change

www.spunout.ie

Bodywhys - provides support and advice for those suffering from eating disorders

www.bodywhys.ie

Aware - provides support for those suffereing from depression

www.aware.ie

Grow - provides help for people who are suffering from mental health problems.

www.grow.ie