

THE MAN BOX



GETTING STARTED

OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a group agreement on conduct for reference throughout the program
- Gather the boys' ideas on gender roles using a pre-assessment quiz
- Identify rules society has taught us about the roles of men and boys and women and girls

MATERIALS:

- Copies of "What Do You Think?" pre-assessment quiz
- Copies of "The Man Box" activity sheet
- Slips of paper
- A large box (large enough to tape pieces of paper on)
- Tape

TIME REQUIRED: 90 minutes

TIPS FOR COACHES: Remind the boys that the goal of the program is to help us all learn to have healthier, more respectful relationships. Encourage and model positive group discussion.

GROUP AGREEMENT: Refer to pages 3 and 4 of this guide to establish the initial group agreement. Give reminders throughout the program that the goal is to share ideas in open discussions and for everyone to listen and participate respectfully.



BREAK OUT OF THE BOX

1. To start the unit, explain to the group that the goal of the program is to help us all learn to have healthier, more respectful relationships. Encourage group discussion throughout the program.
2. Next, create a group agreement and rules with the boys and discuss your expectations for the group sessions. (See pages 3 and 4 of this guide.)
3. Post the agreement in a visible location for reference throughout the program.
4. Distribute the "What Do You Think?" pre-assessment quiz. This is a tool that will help gather the boys' thoughts on the program topics and guide the lessons. This assessment is anonymous to encourage honesty. This same assessment will be used at the conclusion of the program to track progress.
5. Collect the completed pre-assessments and review the boys' responses to get a sense of their thoughts on gender socialization, and keep for later use.
6. Place the empty box in the front of the room. Distribute the slips of paper and ask the boys to write down words that demonstrate what it means to be a man. These may be the same terms that they used on their drawings from the pre-assessment quiz.
7. Create your own word strip(s) defining manhood and then tape it (them) to the box as an example. Some examples of words you might use include strong, tough, breadwinner, big, etc.
8. Ask volunteers to share their words with the group. As they share, have them try to explain the words and why they are associated with manhood. When each volunteer is finished, have him tape his word strips to the outside of the box.
9. Explain that:
 - The box represents the man box, which is full of definitions of manhood that can box men in and limit what they can and cannot do or feel.
 - The way we are socialized to think about gender is that there is a right way and a wrong way to be a male or a female. No one is to blame—we've all been taught this.
 - The box can negatively impact boys and men by forcing them to always be on guard and ready to "prove" their masculinity and manhood.
 - The box also teaches boys that one way to have power is to taunt other boys for being "girlie" or feminine. These messages lay the foundation for male dominance and sexism, as they create associations between femininity and inferiority.
10. If there are words that represent violent behaviors or name-calling listed outside of the box, explain that these words are associated with punishments for breaking these rules. They are also reminders to all males and females that they need to stay in the box in order to be safe.
11. Have the boys complete "The Man Box" activity sheet and discuss their responses. Ask the boys if they feel the same rules apply to women.
12. Share with boys the man box rules that follow to determine how many of the phrases were on their lists. Talk about any rules that they may have omitted and ask them what restrictions they create for boys and men, and what possibilities could exist without the rules.

THE MAN BOX



BREAK OUT OF THE BOX

THE MAN BOX

No pain Powerful Women are objects
 Strong No feelings Protector
 No fear In charge Decision maker
 Aggressive No emotions (except anger)
 No weakness Tough
 Athletic Courageous
 Women are property Dominating

MAN BOX RULES

Don't be vulnerable. Don't be too loving.
 Don't act like a woman.
 Don't be too caring. Don't ask for help.
 Don't be too committed.
 Always be in control.
 Don't be too nice or too kind.
 Don't show weakness.
 Don't show emotions. Act like a man.

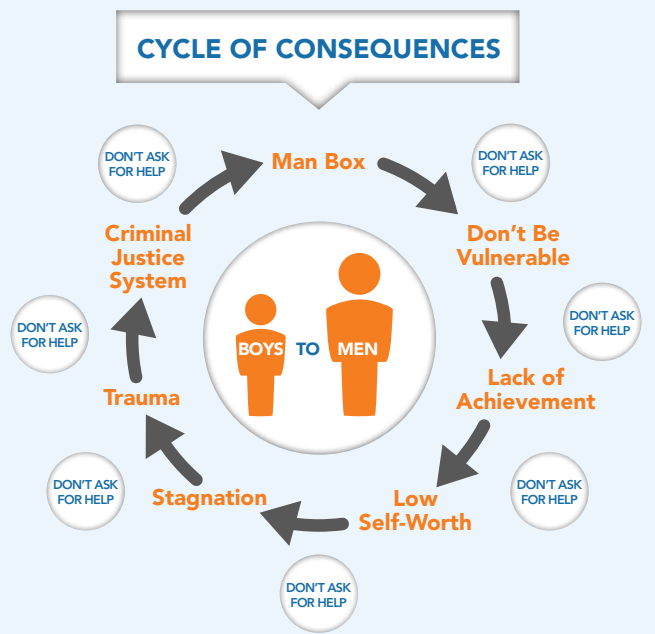
13. If they don't address the following, make sure it is included in the conversation:

- Believing that some people are “less than” others leads us to dehumanize or objectify them—which means we see them as objects and less than human. This puts all of us at risk for violence and makes the world more dangerous for our families and friends.
- The man box does not allow us to be fully human. It requires boys and men to shut down parts of themselves and their emotions for fear of being insulted, teased, etc.
- The man box limits boys and men by pressuring them to always be on guard and ready to prove their manhood.
- It also prevents boys and men from asking for help and using the support of others to succeed.

14. Next, ask them to discuss some benefits of breaking out of the man box. Answers may include feeling free to share feelings, not having to defend themselves, and having more equality between men and women.

15. Introduce the “Cycle of Consequences.”
 (See the Program and Certification Process Guide for additional details.)

- Explain to the boys that the cycle represents the possible negative effects of the man box and its rules.
- The cycle is perpetuated by the notion that boys and men cannot ask for help.
- Boys are taught not to be vulnerable. This can create a lack of achievement if boys don't ask for help if needed.
- In turn, this can cause a feeling of low self-worth if someone feels stuck. That can lead to stagnation, or not having goals or a direction. In turn, that can cause trauma. The cycle then shows that some boys and men wind up in jail because they are trapped by the man box and its rules.



THE MAN BOX



BREAK OUT OF THE BOX

16. If the conversation becomes negative toward society, women, or men, or if the boys question or brag about the man box attributes that demonstrate lack of respect or value, remind them that we have all been taught society's rules and the goal of the lessons you'll be doing over the next few weeks is to help raise awareness about these topics. It's important that they understand that the program is not about blaming society or bashing men. Instead, it is about becoming aware of potentially negative behaviors associated with society's gender rules, learning to think more critically about situations, and learning tools to help promote healthy, respectful relationships and behaviors that value others. Remind them that we all want to be valued, safe, and treated with respect, and we want the same for our family and friends.



FLIP THE SCRIPT

“ I can change what I've been taught.”

Encourage the boys to observe the men around them, including themselves, and see if the man box holds them back. Think about what makes it difficult to venture from the man box to the possibility box. One element that can prevent the move to the possibility box is fear. Acknowledge the fear and encourage the boys to discuss what they are afraid of or what might prevent them from breaking out of the box. The fear of being perceived as “not man enough” or “less than a man” is the glue that holds the man box together.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

DIRECTIONS

Do not put your name on this questionnaire—it should be done anonymously. Your answers will be used to help guide group conversations. Read the directions for each section below.

READ the job titles and label each according to your **first thought** about who does the job. If you think of it as a man's job, label it **"M."** If you consider it a woman's job, label it **"W."** Or use **"E"** for either. Remember to label them based on **your immediate response** to the job.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TEACHER	BUILDER	SINGER	DOCTOR	ATHLETE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MODEL	BABYSITTER	ARTIST	COACH	POLICE OFFICER

ANSWER the following questions by circling Yes or No or writing your answer on the lines.

- Have you ever been told to "man up" or "act like a man"? Yes | No
 What do these phrases mean? _____
- Is it okay for a girl to ask a boy to a dance? Yes | No
- Have you heard the phrase, "Who wears the pants in the family?" Yes | No
 What does this mean? _____
- Are there rules and expectations for how men and boys should act and behave? Yes | No
- Are there rules and expectations for how women and girls should act and behave? Yes | No
- If you answered "Yes," who makes these rules? _____
- Do you think there is a gender barrier in society? Why or why not? _____

DRAW a picture on the back of this sheet answering the question, "What do you think a man looks like?" Using short labels (one or two words), identify five aspects of a man in your drawing.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Which labels on your drawing could apply to females as well?

THE MAN BOX

DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Think about the words that describe what it means to be a man. Write rules associated with these words in “The Man Box” below.

Example: If “strong” is a word that describes a man, what is a rule that might be associated with that word?
Don't ask for help.

Don't ask for help.

THE MAN BOX

Step 2: Look at the box labeled “The Possibility Box.” If there weren't any man box rules, what would be possible? Fill in possibilities for how a man could comfortably behave if the man box rules didn't exist.

Example: *Ask for help when you need it.*

Ask for help when you need it.

THE POSSIBILITY BOX

THINK ABOUT IT!

- What challenges, such as emotions or expectations, stand in the way of moving from “The Man Box” to “The Possibility Box”?
- What would you be afraid of or what might prevent you from breaking out of “The Man Box”?