

Maine Boys to Men

Reducing Sexism and Violence Program – Middle School (RSVP-MS)

Seventh Grade Curriculum

Module 3

Module Time: 60 Minutes

Materials:

- Curriculum: Module 3
- AV Equipment / Adaptors
- Module 3 Slide Show (7th Grade)
- Flipchart and markers
- Dry Erase Markers *(If applicable)*
- Binary Concepts Facilitation Worksheet
- Climbing rope or Blue painting tape

Objectives:

1. Define and explain key terms related to gender identity.
2. Identify pressures placed on boys and men to express a rigid form of masculinity.
3. Reflect upon and share personal stories related to the pressures to express a particular type of masculinity.

Module 3 Overview

3.1 - Introduction	5 min
3.2 - New Frontiers – Limits of the Gender Binary	15 min
3.3 - The Gender Box: Be a Man	35 min
3.4 - Closing	5 min

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3.1 Introduction

Objectives:

1. Re-introduce yourselves and the program.
2. Remind students of the safety and support resources referenced in Mod 1.
3. Review the goals for Module 3.

Required Time:
5 minutes

Materials

- Module 3 Slides #1 - #4

1. The room will have already been set up to accommodate seating, flip chart use, technology needs, etc.. Prior to the meeting, set out two spaces on the ground using tape or rope sufficient to potentially hold all the students standing. Have chairs arranged in a circle.
2. **Display SLIDE 1** followed by **Slide 2**. Briefly begin by re-introducing yourselves and any other adults present in the room. Remind students of the purpose of the MB2M 7th grade program and why they are gathered for this module.
3. Remind students of the safety and support resources referred to in Module 1. Take a minute to ask if there are any questions or concerns the participants may have from the last session. Any issues not addressed should be recorded on the flip chart or erase board and returned to when time allows.
4. **Display SLIDE 3: “Today’s Agenda”**. Remind students that the first module focused on safety and support and recognizing stereotypes using the gender box exercise. The second module had activities and discussion on empathy and consent. Today’s focus will be on gender roles and masculinity.
5. **Display SLIDE 4: “Goals for Today”**. Read through the goals as below. Summarize how today’s activities listed on the slide are aimed to give students an opportunity to spend some time discussing gender identity with a focus on experiences of masculinity. As part of the session, facilitators and participants will share stories to prompt discussion and an exploration of these topics.
 - Gain an understanding of what gender is, as well as how biological sex and sexual orientation differ from gender identity.
 - Reflect on our understanding of masculinity and how those ideas are reflected in one’s experiences.
 - Share and discuss stories related to groups’ experiences with masculinity.

3.2 New Frontiers – Limits of the Gender Binary

Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the concept of gender identity. 2. Define terms: Gender, sex, and sexual orientation. 3. Identify the differences between gender, sex, and sexual orientation. 	<div> Required Time: 15 minutes </div> <div> Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbing rope or Blue painting tape • Module 2 Slide #5 - #15 </div>
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1. Prior to the meeting, set out two spaces on the ground using tape or rope sufficient to hold all the students standing.
2. **Display SLIDE 5.** Describe how students will hear a statement and make a choice between the two options given. They must do their best to select one or the other of the choices given. If students ask if they can be somewhere in the middle or state that it isn't fair to only have two options to choose from, let them know you will address their complaint later during the debrief.
3. Begin by instructing students to all stand in the middle of the room, in between the two taped or rope-defined spaces. Read the examples below indicating which box represents one of the answers. Once students have completed one, move to the next example.
 - You are wearing one type of shoe for the next year. You can pick wither winter boots or open sandals.
 - You are deciding what to do as an afterschool activity. You can Play Football or Join the school play
 - You've just failed a test in school. You can Talk to a close friend or Go for a walk alone.
 - You see a friend after a summer away. You can Fist bump them or Give them a hug.
4. Once completed, have the students return to their seats and use following questions to debrief.
 - Were there any choices where neither were choices you would want to commit to 100%?
 - Why not? Can you propose a better solution?
 - How does it feel to be limited to a rigid option?
 - Are there times in life where you feel you've been given a limited choice of just two options?
 - Can we empathize with those who don't fit into a rigid choice (culturally, hobbies, relationships)?
5. **Display SLIDE 5.** Inform students they will now do a vocabulary review, similar to how they defined empathy and consent. Pass out the Binary Concepts Facilitation Worksheet.

Define each term engaging the students in the process and allow some time for questions and further explanation if needed.

6. Using **SLIDES 6 through 15**. Define each term engaging the students in the process and allow some time for questions and further explanation if needed. Tell students facilitator is not an expert on gender and topic is always changing.
- **Biological Sex** is a label given at birth such as male or female, or intersex based on characteristics such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, and hormones.¹
 - **Gender** describes things that are typically associated with being either male or female. Gender is socially constructed, varies from society to society, and can change.²
 - **Gender Binary** is a concept or idea that there are only 2 genders (male and female) that are completely separate from one another.³
 - **Sexual Orientation** describes who someone is romantically, emotionally, and sexually attracted to. Sexual orientations include gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, and asexual.⁴

¹ World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/glossary/en/>; Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/glossary>

² World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/glossary/en/>; Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/glossary>

³ Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/glossary>

⁴ Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/glossary>

3.3 The Gender Box – Be a Man

Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify the stereotypical masculinity traits participants may have been exposed to.2. Instill an awareness of how men are pressured to perform within specific gender roles.3. Discuss how society may react to those who do not conform to the male expectations.4. Identify the ways in which masculinity characterizes men (particularly white men) as the dominant group in the culture.	Required Time: 35 mins
	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flip chart and markers

1. Inform the students, in this exercise, they will have the opportunity to reflect more on what they think or hear about what it means to be masculine – to “be a man”. The questions that will be raised in this exercise will focus what is the stereotypical guy like? What does the phrase “man up” (or “be a man”) mean? What does he look like or act? What does he do?
2. The general flow here is to move from seemingly superficial questions (what does a man look like, what media does he indulge in, what sports does he play?) to questions of great consequence (how does he deal with problems, what emotions does he hide?). This format allows students to understand the flow of the exercise and warm up to the idea before reaching some of the heavier content.
3. **PART I: Generate the Man Box:** Facilitator may be able to make a smooth transition directly using the previous story to the gender man box exercise or may follow the scripted lines below eliciting suggested responses. These questions transition from speaking about a stereotypical man, to asking questions about men in general. It is important to not abstract some singular stereotypical man, and connect it to expectations and pressures that all men face.
4. Facilitator should be sure to reserve time to include input related to emotional traits of stereotypical male.
5. Record brief answers on flip chart or white board.
6. After 10 minutes, draw a box around the words provided and place label over box: MAN BOX.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS TO GENERATE THE MAN BOX

GENERAL STEREOTYPE QUESTIONS	SUGGESTED RESPONSES
What does the stereotypical man look like?	Strong, Big, Jacked, Ripped, Tall, Beard, Suave, Rugged, Good-looking
How does he act?	Tough, Brave, Aggressive. In control, powerful.
Does he play sports? What sports does he play? What's manly about these sports?	Football, Basketball, Hockey. These sports involve a lot of physical contact
What type of music does this guy like? Movies? TV	Rap, Action movies, violent movies and TV
What does this stereotypical guy do for work? What's manly about these jobs?	Pro-athlete, lumberjack, construction, CEO, plumber, fisherman/lobsterman, banker, office worker. These jobs either involve being strong and tough, or involve making a lot of money and being in control.
What does this guy do when he gets home from work?	Watches sports. Drinks a beer.
What does this guy spend his money on?	New car, new boat, beer or alcohol, big house
Who are men supposed to date	Girls and women. The HOTTEST women. Expected to be with a lot of women
How is a man expected to get a kiss? What do we see in the movies?	Just send it. Full send. No consent. Moment is right and the guy will know.
What is the man's role in the family?	Brings home the money. Breadwinner and provider. Is not expected to clean/cook.
What is the man's role with the kids?	Disciplinary. Plays catch/coaches children on sports. Expected to not be too affectionate.
What are this guy's hobbies?	Lifting/going to the gym. Watching sports.
QUESTIONS ON EMOTIONAL TRAITS	SUGGESTED RESPONSES
What if a man has a problem with another guy. How is he supposed to solve that problem?	He is supposed to fight the other guy. Prove his dominance through a physical altercation. Intimidate the other guy. Uses violence to solve problems.
What about if the problem is a deep emotional problem? How are men expected to deal with it?	He isn't. He is supposed to hide it/bottle it in. Not supposed to ask for help from others.
Are there emotions guys are not expected to show?	Sadness, fear, affection (specifically towards other men and boys),
Are there emotions guys are expected to show?	Anger. Sometimes happiness (to a degree, still have to remain cool and calm and in control).

7. **PART II: Discuss the Man Box:** Use the questions below to move to a general discussion on general potential consequence of society having this Man Box. Suggested questions are provided below.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS ON THE MAN BOX

QUESTIONS	SUGGESTED RESPONSES
Why do you think we drew a box around these words?	No right or wrong answer, but move towards the idea that boxes can be constricting.
What do boxes do?	Keep things in, keep things out
What does it feel like to be in a box?	Constricting. If too small, can feel claustrophobic or can be comforting/feel safer than being outside the box
Are there consequences to a man hiding a lot of emotions?	YES. If we are constantly bottling it up, we might eventually break down. Mental health may suffer. Depression, substance use, self-harm/suicide
If we are honest with ourselves, have any of you ever felt the pressure to be inside this box?	Acknowledge students' responses.
That being said, is everything in box bad?	Most of the things in the box are fine.
What are the good things in the box?	Have students point out things in box that could be good.
So, if we know that the box can have some good things in it, then when does the idea of the box become problematic?	When have to change who I am to meet the standards of the box. When I don't want to be in the box, but I feel like I have to be in the box to be accepted.

8. **Discuss consequences of stepping outside the Man Box:** Shift discussion to engage students to share what consequences might occur if a male expresses traits that are *outside* the Man Box. Refer to the table below for some prompting questions. Record answers in groupings reflecting three areas: gender (specifically pertaining to women), sexual orientation, and ability or disability. These groups will be referenced once students complete sharing the possible consequences.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS FOR CONSEQUENCES OF STEPPING OUTSIDE THE MAN BOX

QUESTIONS	SUGGESTED RESPONSES
How might someone be treated when they step outside the box? (e.g., quit football to join knitting club)	Poorly. Isolated. Ostracized. Made fun of. Called names.
What names might they get called if they step outside of this box?	Words related to: Gender: Bitch, pussy, cunt, girl, sissy Sexual orientation: gay, fag, “no homo”, queer Ability/disability: soft, weak, special ed, retard
Are these words compliments or insults? Why do people use these words?	Insults. People use these words to make people feel bad. To put people down.

9. After input, draw three boxes around the different categories showing how many of the words are related to gender (specifically pertaining to women), sexual orientation and an ability/disability.
10. Have brief discussion about the categories of these words. Ask what does it say about women when we use their identity as an insult? Ask what does it say when we use a gender related word or a disability as an insult?
 - It says that women are somehow **less-than**. When a man gets called a girl when he isn't “acting as a man should”, we are degrading all those who identify as female.
 - We are creating a hierarchy that has straight able men at the top, and women, people who identify as queer, or people who have a physical or learning disability below.
11. Ask students how someone might react if he acts outside of the box so is regularly treated like this and/or getting called the names.
 - He might decide to act in ways that put him back in the box. Fighting, turn to substances, playing “cool” sports, etc. (e.g., quit knitting, and go back to football).
 - Become depressed, withdrawn.
12. Are these words ever used as jokes? Do jokes ever go too far?
 - Yes, they are often used as joke. Yes, sometimes those jokes go too far.
13. Refer to the words and treatment as “**policing words**” that men use to police other men's behavior and attitudes and serve to push men and boys back into the box.
14. **PART III: Discuss how to avoid the negative side of a Man Box:** Ask students to consider this new perspective gained from discussing these words and treatments. Summarize by stating that they can be hurtful to other boys and men, as well as the identities of others talked about here. These words also create an unfair hierarchy, so it is best to not use these words at all.
15. Prompt students to remember the empathy exercise and share how the student experiencing the consequence may feel.

16. Ask students to share how they could break down the walls of the box and limit the negative effects of having a rigid masculine stereotype.
 - Personally not use this language.
 - Tell people you don't like those words when you hear others use them.
 - Appreciate and CELEBRATE the parts of yourself, as well as the parts of others, that do not fit within the box. Explain that there are parts of yourself that fit in the box, and that there are parts of me that certainly do not fit within the box. Give an example. (ex. I really enjoy baking cupcakes, but that is not necessarily considered a manly thing to do. Nonetheless, it is something I really value about myself).
17. Encourage students to voluntarily share any parts of themselves that they appreciate and celebrate that do not necessarily fit within the box (Whole Self Activity). Begin by sharing one thing that you value you about yourself that doesn't fit in the box. Make sure to be super encouraging of anything students might say here. If they enjoy listening to Pop music, enjoy rom-coms, sing choir, or like to play with dolls, be super affirming. "That's super awesome," "Me too," "awesome, thank you for sharing." The idea here is to end the exercise on a positive, encouraging note: we can redefine masculinity however we like!

3.4 Closing

Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review questions and comments from participants2. Remind students of resources available in the school (location of program) and encourage them to access those resources if they need them.	Required Time: 5 mins
	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module 3 Slide #20• Support and Safety Handout

1. Open up the space for questions and further thoughts on the gender activities.
2. Remind them of the support resources that were provided them during the first session and provide additional copies of the [Support and Safety Handout](#) if needed.
3. **Display Slide 20.** Thank students and show appreciation for their engagement in the conversations and activities.