


Instructions for Vertical Urination:

A Young Men's Workshop



We hope this Guyde will get you thinking about stuff you'd normally keep bottled up, or maybe encourage you to share your stories and experiences with other young men. We also want to make sure that men's issues aren't just pushed away anymore, left to fester, and sometimes rear their ugly heads in ways that can harm you, and the people in your life. We've included this workshop outline so you can use it to hold your own young men's workshop. If you need some help getting started, or you have questions about this stuff, give us a call (1.877.717.1577) or send us an email (tgmag@tgmag.ca).

We've tried to keep this workshop just about sharing stories and experience, so you won't need much in the way of materials, just some guys and a place to meet.

In order to create the "safe environment" that guys need to be in to talk openly and freely, we have a few suggestions for you:

Make it a "sausage party". This means guys only. Sorry girls.

Talking about men DOES NOT mean you sit around bashing women. This is not a competition with women. If you're talking about women (too much) in the workshop, what's the point of pretending to be talking about young men's issues?

Make it "peer led". Sorry teachers! It's most effective if it's led by someone that is not an authority figure, it really allows people to loosen up.

The Students Commission bases all its work on the "4 Pillars". Respect, Listen, Understand and Communicate. Everyone must respect each other (no insults, no negative comments, etc.) in order to truly hear (listen to) what people are saying. Only when you can listen effectively can you start to understand each other, and that's when you REALLY start to communicate. Not everyone is going to agree with each other, but there's always room to let people have their own opinions without facing insults and stuff!

What's said in the room stays in the room! This is one of the most important factors to creating a "safe environment". Anything that's shared needs to be left at the door.

There are a few times when what's said in the room MUST leave the room. It is very important that this next part is explained VERY CLEARLY at the beginning of each workshop. If someone talks about how they are going to harm themselves you need to get them in touch with social services (counsellor, Kid's Help Phone, etc.). If someone says that they are going to harm another person or they have harmed another person, you need to get them a lawyer and phone the police. If someone talks about how a minor (under 18) is currently being harmed, you need to report it to a government child services department. IF YOU CAN'T DO THIS BY YOURSELF GET SOMEONE ELSE! Contact a teacher, principal, counsellor - someone that can help you help this person.

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Here are some tips for facilitators of workshops, if you want MORE, write to us and we can send you a copy of our Facilitation Guide!

Keys of effective facilitation

1. BE CLEAR

Being focussed and straightforward are the keys to effective communication. Be clear and direct with the group in terms of what you will do. Speak in simple terms without jargon and technical terms. Address questions and comments directly. Try to focus discussion on one topic at a time, while still respecting the flow of ideas coming from group members.

2. FACILITATE – DON'T TEACH!!!

The youth participating in the focus group are the experts and your role is to create a safe place for them to share with each other what they think about youth engagement and how they feel based on their own experiences. Try to make discussion as informal and relaxed as possible.

3. BE ORGANIZED AND FLEXIBLE

It is important to be prepared for the focus group, but be aware of needs and interests that might arise from your group. Listen to their comments and remain flexible; adapt your plan to suit their needs.

4. BE POSITIVE AND NON-JUDGMENTAL

Treat all responses as valuable, affirming the participation of group members.

5. BE UNDERSTANDING AND ENCOURAGING

Understand and accept each person's own experience and the challenges they face in trying to cope with these issues. Ask open-ended questions* to encourage each person to explain what they are thinking/feeling. Be aware of quiet participants and try to make them feel more comfortable. Draw them out without singling them out or pressuring them.

6. LISTEN CAREFULLY AND ACTIVELY

Give your energy to each group member as they are speaking and confirm what has been said by reflecting it back to the person.

7. BE INFORMED

Know what resources are available for youth in your community so you are prepared to answer questions and draw their attention to the supports available (i.e. know your local resource guide for youth!).

8. BE CONFIDENT AND BE YOURSELF

Youth will respect your experience and support regardless of your background, as long as you are open, honest, interested, clear and respectful of them.

* open-ended question: a question that encourages a response more detailed than simply a "yes" or a "no"

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And now! On to some questions

We suggest setting aside at least 1 hour to do this workshop, but more time is better! These questions are just guidelines, it's really important to let the group go where it wants to go.

1. We heard a lot about the "unwritten rules" of being a guy. A code of conduct, if you will. Does this exist? If so, what are some of these rules?
2. What is the BEST part of being a guy?
3. i) What does it mean to be a guy?
ii) How did you come up with those answers? Where did you learn/hear that? Do you really believe it?
4. i) When you look at the media (tv, movies, magazines, video games, etc.) how do you see men being portrayed? What kinds of things are men doing? Give some examples.
ii) Pick an example (ie. man getting smashed in the testicles is funny) Now, reverse the gender of the man. Is it still relevant/funny/socially acceptable to see a woman portrayed in that way? Why do you think it's okay for men?
5. i) Where/from whom do you feel the most pressure to have sex?
ii) Do you ALWAYS have "safe sex"? What reasons do you have for not having safe sex?
iii) Do you get a physical once a year from a doctor? (blood tests, prostate exams, etc.) What reasons do you have for not doing that? Can you think of a way to make it easier to go?
6. i) Keeping in mind our Confidentiality Agreement: Have you "or a friend" ever committed a crime? What kinds of crime? What motivated you?
ii) What does (or would) prevent you from committing a crime?
7. If you could pick one (realistic) goal to make yourself a "better man" what would it be?

Remember, these questions are JUST a guide, allow the conversation to flow naturally!

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