

Men's Group

A Framework for Connection Among Men

A Guide

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The Script

Opening Script

Welcome to _____ Men's Group. We gather here to practice openness and radical candor, and seek reflection. Our intention is to use the bonds of brotherhood to wake ourselves out of our conditioned patterns so that we may be our truest selves. This isn't easy. The work we choose to do here is uncomfortable and may bring up feelings which disrupt our disposition. This is intentional and purposeful. When we gather in connection to practice this level of self-honesty and responsibility we have found that our lives are fuller and our relationships are more fulfilling.

Our rules of play and principles define how we practice at this meeting.

Would the person with the Principles read them?

(person reads)

Would the person with the Rules of Play read them?

(person reads)

Then go into rounds

Closing Script

That closes this week's Group. Thank you for coming. As we leave and throughout the week I encourage you to talk with one another and stay connected, yet remember that there is nothing to fix.

Principles

Our foundation is built on the following principles

1. That our conditioning is isolation yet we yearn for connection
2. That our thinking has been small and safe and that has distorted our reality
3. That we tend towards consumption yet through service we are free

This group is open to all who identify as men who desire to live by these principles, and follow the rules of play.

Rules of Play

1. **Come as a full adult** — you enter this loose association freely and are responsible for your actions while here. You consent to potentially hearing things that may trigger you.
2. **Say the vulnerable thing** — the more you give up the more you will get out of coming. This does not mean saying more but rather saying the potent part which is often the uncomfortable part.
3. **Leave competition at the door** — as men we have a tendency to default to competition. Competition is not bad - like anything it has a purpose. In the context of this group we have found it to be an impediment to vulnerability and connection..
4. **Do not fix each other** — we are here to bear witness to each other's growth, not to do it for them. Our instinct to problem solve is insidious and while can present as beneficial it ultimately keeps our defenses up and prevents intimacy. If something said seems like fixing, name it.
5. **Confidentiality** — who you see and what you hear here stays here. Also you are responsible for any information or names that you bring into the group. Do so with responsibility and care.

The Concepts

On Safety

Men's group is a place to share and be vulnerable, but it is not a safe space. On the contrary, it is designed to be dangerous to our egos, to our emotional armoring, and to the defense mechanisms that have kept us isolated in disconnection.

We enter this group with the full awareness that we may receive uncomfortable reflections from our peers, and we do so because we would rather intentionally work through our triggers in connection than feel blind to the way they affect our lives.

Why Here? Why Men's Groups?

As men we generally only like to share our insides with woman, for the most part, to get something from her. If I get vulnerable, she will trust me, then I will get this... you can fill in the blanks. Some men fall far into "acting like a woman" to get sex, only to see it kill the intimacy and polarity. Others fall into the infamous "friend zone." All of this is just more and more strategy. However for what? What are we actually looking for. We have discovered that thing is connection.

This culture is stemmed from the myth that men barter connection/love for sex from woman and that woman barter sex for connection/love from men. What if this is not true? What if it's the reverse? What if woman barter connection/love with men for sex and men barter sex for connection/love from woman. Again more strategy.

That brings us to Men's groups. Why Men's group you ask? Because there is nothing here to wager, there is nothing here to compete for, no woman to impress, and no prize to win. We come here for connection and connection alone.

Men's Group is the training camp. A place to navigate the hard spots in our relationship. The spots where we get stuck and close our hearts to the world, to our women, and most of all to our purpose. Here we realize all three are the same and all three take the same skills to penetrate; the sharpening of our swords, the opening of our hearts, and clarity of our minds. At Men's Group we gain these, while developing the persistence, resilience and courage to continue to be the men we want to be.

On Questions

A good question moves the focus deeper onto the person being asked it – who we will call the *Respondee*. The question is *interested* in the thread of

questions and responses that preceded it and in what those responses tell us explicitly and even more importantly implicitly about the Respondee.

Different types of questions tend to have certain effects.

Follow up questions like, "Say More", "What's that like?", allow the Respondee to devolve more intimate details and feelings about a situation. These questions allow the Respondee to guide us where they want to take us, which is the only goal we have.

Imagery Questions. By calling on the senses, these let the respondee get into the sensory, and emotional feeling of the situation. "How does it taste?", "What's the flavor?", "Paint us a picture of it"; these can be literal or figurative descriptions.

Longer questions often longer because they either are setting up some context or referring back to something said earlier. These inevitably move us to a new thread. This can happen and can be just right. However be aware of asking multiple of these in a row. Doing so prevents a real thread from developing and may indicate we are more interested in how asking a clever question makes us look than in the Respondee.

Questions with yes-no responses should be used rarely, if at all. They presume to know where the thread should go. This directness makes them

high risk. If that direction is incongruent with the Respondee they will fall flat. When it is congruent their effect is climactic and they are best used as punctuation. For instance, as the endnote on a deep thread. Be careful not to fall into formula here, not every thread wants to end on a punch. When you are wanting to ask a yes-no question consider if you have another question underneath it.

The Holders' Guide

Meeting Format

Holder

A holder keeps the meeting on track. They may be backed by a second.

The holder acts as the bottom line on keeping the attention of the group on point. They read the script.

General Time considerations

A meeting will be between an hour and an 1 ½ hours. The time will be set before and is subject to vary based on the needs of the group at the discretion of the holder who may consult or get buy-in of the group.

Suggested outline

Beginning

1. Pre-meeting - hand out Rules of Play and Principles to readers.
2. Read Intro including Rules of Play and Principles
3. Round of Names
4. Two or three quick prompts. *(These should be something that can be answered quickly without thought. Sometimes a round of one word responses in rapid succession can enliven the group. Other times we can go deeper with sentence or two.)*

Examples:

Complete the sentence:

- a. Right now I'm feeling...
 - b. I came here to...
 - c. The real or edgy thing I want to say is...
 - d. (Followed by) and The deeper thing is ...
5. Round of longer check-ins
(2-4 minutes. If a prompt is needed: "This is what is coming up for me... in my relationship/ at work / this week/ in sex / etc")

Middle

There are various options here, including:

- Theme - check-ins on a theme or topic either preselected or something that was a recurring theme In the initial check-ins
- Deep - giving a few guys extra attention with deeper check-in where the rest the group uses their attention to ask interested, potent questions
- Two questions - a guy chooses to two men to ask him an interested question each. After, the second man becomes the center of attention and chooses two more and so on.
- Level of Attention - a series of rounds designed to exercise our attention, in the following order
 - a. This is a sensation I have in my body
 - b. This is something I notice about the room

- c. This is something I notice about a man in the group
- d. This is how the group feels to me.
- Other games are possible too. Use your felt sense. Men come to be seen vulnerably.
- Hot Seats

Closing

1. 1-3 closing rounds such as
 - a. Gratitudes
 - b. Each man saying one thing he got from the group
 - c. A noticing about another man in the group
 - d. A desire
2. Read Closing Script

Making Magic

A well done Men's Group will leave everyone feeling more connected to themselves and each other. There will be an aura of a certain flavor of joy. That joy is a product of how much each member of the group let what they needed to say be said, what needed to be felt, be felt, and what needed to be let go, let be gone. It is the aftermath to the discomfort of vulnerability. To create an environment which fosters this kind of exchange there are a few recommendations.

- Keep a few your more regular guys towards the beginning and end of the circle. 2 - 4 at the start and 1 - 2 at the end with the rest scattered among the newcomers and guys who have frequented fewer times.
- Especially for the Holder and the Second, you are leading a group of men on vulnerability it is vitally important for you to be connected and honest with each other.
- Remember to give attention to newcomers.