
Boys Only Toolkit



Boys Only Circle



Introduction

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Boys Only Circle

Getting boys to volunteer answers to challenging personal questions can be difficult. Many boys are fearful of ridicule or embarrassment when showing their experience or stance in front of their peers. The Boys Only Circle allows boys to use their bodies to answer questions. The act of taking a few steps can often be easier for boys than speaking or writing about their responses.

Start sessions by having boys stand in a circle around a rope or similar circle boundary. Start the session by asking gentle questions e.g. step into the circle if you have brown hair. Step into the circle if you are the eldest child. As the boys become accustomed to the idea of stepping forward and start to feel comfortable with the group and trusting of the facilitator, introduce your topic for the session. The boys may be seated on the floor or standing while

you introduce a general understanding of what you want to explore in the session.

The questions offered in each module are suggestions only. You may find that you have some specific questions that suit your group. You might consider allowing boys to ask their own questions later in the session.

Start with soft questions and as trust develops introduce more probing questions. Be sure to create a safe and trusting environment so that boys are more willing to expose their reactions. Some sessions can easily touch sensitive nerves and boys may feel vulnerable if the group is not in touch with each other.

Many boys will find these sessions easier to connect with if the facilitator is a young male. Older males can create a more intimidating atmosphere which is not conducive to boys opening up about sensitive issues. You may find that

bringing in an outside youth worker helps the boys to relax and to invest in the sessions.



Rules:

The rules are those facilitators and the boys come up with together. Rules are important for the structure of group sessions. It's important for the facilitator to set a few ground rules and then allow participants to collectively create rules for the group. Allowing the participants to create the rules conveys the expectation that the class will operate as a community and makes them more willing to abide by the rules. Rules can be both general ("be respectful") and specific ("raise your hand to speak in Boys Only") and should be brief and positive (stay away from rules starting with "no..."). Once established, post the rules where they are visible and go over them often. Here are some sample rules:

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- 1) What is said in Boys Only Circle stays in Boys Only Circle.
 - 2) Be respectful.
 - 3) Make eye contact when talking.
 - 4) Clean up after yourself.
 - 5) Keep your hands to yourself.
 - 6) One person talks at a time.



Safe Space:

It is imperative that Boys Only Circle facilitators create physically and emotionally safe environments where the participants feel safe to share their feeling and ideas. Maintaining confidentiality, trust, and openness between participants and facilitators through dedication, consistency, and active listening will help establish this environment. Creating rules such as “what happens in Boys Only Circle stays in Boys Only Circle” or “what is said in here stays in here” can also help establish this safe space.



Facilitator's Roles:

It is the facilitator's role to prepare, lead, participate and plan Boys Only Circle sessions. The facilitator should also commit to being a part of the program consistently, creating a safe space, and acting as a role model and mentor to the participants. Furthermore, the facilitator should maintain records, maintain relationships with parents/guardians, and make referrals to community organizations when necessary. Male facilitators can act as much needed positive male role models in the lives of the participants. It is recommended that facilitators be passionate about social justice, trained to work with youth, and committed to continuing their own relevant education and training.



Sitting in a circle

- The stepping into the circle exercise may have generated an environment suited to exploring issues through discussion or reflection.
- The next step in exploring boys' attitudes to the topic being investigated is inviting them to share and explore their responses to the questions raised in the stepping into the circle session.
- First, you will need to create a safe space and some rules.
- The starting point may be to get all participants seated inside the circle. Use a length of hose or a long extension cord to create your circle.
- Reinforce the rules and invite boys to contribute any rules they feel will make the space safer and comfortable. The rules should reinforce the following qualities:

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- Warmth, closeness, connectedness, caring, respect for others, confidentiality, constructive feedback, cultural sensitivity, non-judgmental responses and inclusivity.

Boys Only Circle Cards

- The pack of 173 Boys Only Cards and the pack of Boys Resilience Cards give you over 300 questions, statements and ideas to stimulate conversation. Use them as appropriate to get conversation started.

Reflection

- The final activity of the Boys Only Circle can involve boys having the opportunity to reflect upon the session privately and to record their thoughts and experience. Boys are usually less interested in journaling than girls. You may prefer to use different terminology e.g. keeping a logbook.

A sample Boys Only Circle Logbook is included in the toolkit.



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