

Men of Strength
(MOST) Club
CURRICULUM



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MOST Club curriculum

*“That was great. I wish all my classes were like MOST Club.”
Jason, age 18*

This is a sample of the curriculum to give you an idea of both its depth and breadth. You will find a table of contents, information about the theory of our work, details about our evaluation, a curriculum module, and two of the information sheets we share with young men.

Our philosophy in creating this curriculum was to make it theory-based, outcome effective, highly interactive, holistic in its approach, and most important of all, fun for the members and facilitators to use over and over again. Our second expanded edition captures these goals and will provide members with more engaging and inspiring moments during each of the sessions.

This curriculum is mapped out in a way in which the session goals, objectives, and supplies are laid out at the beginning of each session, which should provide the facilitator with the needed information for preparation. Following the goals and objectives, you will find more detailed guidelines to help you facilitate each part of a session.

The goals and objectives should be communicated to the members at the beginning of each session so they are well prepared to engage in the exercises and the issues.

Now with everything that you’ve read to this point remember this first and foremost, this curriculum is a guide and should be used as such. It was created to be flexible. If your Club is more advanced on an issue, HIV for example, then maybe you should spend less time on that session and more on Rape as a Men’s Issue. Remember have fun, be creative with the sessions, and continue to seek counterstories to engage our members.

Above all, our efforts to engage young men is guided by the following concepts and values, which form MCSR’s foundation and inspire the organization’s work.

Prevention: Men Can Stop Rape upholds the value of stopping violence before it starts and of challenging the root sources of sexual and domestic violence.

Nonviolence: Traditional masculinity and violence go hand-in-hand. Men Can Stop Rape recognizes men’s capacity to act nonviolently is an essential value to stopping violence against women and other forms of violence.

Redefining Masculinity: We believe that men need alternative ways of being men, and that redefining masculinity is a vital part of bettering the lives of women and men. We need to redefine masculinity so that strength is about empathy and speaking out for what is right. MCSR believes that men can be confident and assertive without being violent.

Male-Positive: Men Can Stop Rape is against all generalizations that totalize and stereotype any group of people. We believe that men can play positive roles both in stopping sexual violence and in redefining masculinity.

Gender Equality: We believe that men’s violence against women cannot be prevented without the parallel goal of gender justice. All systems of oppression, including the system of oppression against women and girls, foster cultures of violence. Therefore, men must join with women as allies in creating an equitable and just world for all genders in order to end men’s violence against women.

Topics

Sessions 1 – 5: Becoming Aware of Dominant Stories and Masculinity

- Session 1: “Introduction and the Time Capsule”
- Session 2: “The Earth is Flat and Other Dominant Stories”
- Session 3: “The Real Man: The Dominant Story of Masculinity”
- Session 4: “Show Me What You Got: Proving Manhood (Telling the Dominant Story of Masculinity)”
- Session 5: “What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Stronger – Or Does It?: The Consequences of Proving Manhood (Living up to the Dominant Story of Masculinity)”

Sessions 6 – 9: Learning about Counterstories and Masculinity

- Session 6: “Introduction to Counterstories”
- Session 7: “The Earth is Round and Other Stories of Resistance”
- Session 8: “Mid-Term Check-in and ‘Gut Check’”
- Session 9: “The Strongest Man You Know”

Sessions 10 – 13: Counterstories, Masculinity, and Men Preventing Sexual Violence

- Session 10: “Counterstories of Sexual Assault: Rape as a Men’s Issue”
- Session 11: “Supporting Survivors: A Counterstory of Strength and Healing”
- Session 12: “Don’t Drop the Soap: Dominant and Counterstories of Male Survivors of Sexual Assault”
- Session 13: “The Continuum of Harm: What Men Can Do to End Men’s Violence Against Women (Part I)”

Sessions 14 – 16: Counterstories and Diverse Issues Related to Masculinity

- Session 14: “Hip Hop and Counterstories”
- Session 15: “HIV/AIDS”
- Session 16: “Teen Fatherhood”

Sessions 17 – 20: What Members Take Away from the Club

- Session 17: “Living the Counterstory: What Men Can Do to End Men’s Violence Against Women (Part II)”
- Session 18: “Time Capsule (Part II)”
- Session 19: “Becoming Men of Strength: The End of the Beginning”
- Session 20: “Focus On Strength”

Guiding Frameworks

Men Can Stop Rape's Men of Strength Club is grounded in three frameworks: dominant stories and counterstories, the environmental change model, and social norms.

Dominant Stories and Counterstories

The concepts of *dominant stories and counterstories*, adapted from Hilde Nelson's *Damaged Identities: Narrative Repair*, has been central to the development of the Men of Strength Club. While Nelson relates the concept to the moral agency of oppressed peoples, MCSR has applied it to the moral agency of men and masculinity. *Dominant stories* are narratives representing the values and messages associated with a shared understanding of what it means to be a man as defined by traditional masculinity.

Counterstories are narratives that resists the constricting values and expectations of masculinity's dominant stories and therefore represents a moral shift. These serve as Men Can Stop Rape's and our Men of Strength Club's foundation for developing healthier, positive, nonviolent masculinities associated with moral behaviors and identities in the following ways:

- Increase young men's understanding of the dominant story of masculinity and its consequences for men and women
- Increase young men's awareness of counterstories of masculinity
- Empower young men to act
- Promote sustained action and commitment to preventing violence against women

Environmental Change Model

The environmental change model, developed and enhanced throughout the years by many professionals and activists working for social change, including Alan Berkowitz and Chris Kilmartin, provides a blueprint for moving individuals and groups from the passive role of bystander to the active role of social change agent. Instead of looking for immediate change in young men's movement towards action, this model proposes that seven steps are necessary to empower one to act in the service of change.

- a. Notice the event*
- b. Identify it as a problem*
- c. Feel motivated to and capable of finding a solution*
- d. Acquire skills for action*
- e. Act*
- f. Evaluate and revise*
- g. Repeat/Sustain*

Visible Allies and Social Norms

Solomon Asch and Social Norms

The third key framework that informs our work is the importance of visible allies. Based in social-psychologist Solomon Asch's conformity experiments and current writing on social norms that describes how an individual's perception of others dictates individual attitudes and behaviors, the concept of visible allies illustrates how individuals hold their own beliefs, but do not speak or visibly show those beliefs to others because of their perceptions about the beliefs of others.

Evaluation Tools and Strategies

In 2003, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified the MOST Club as one of the country's most innovative sexual violence prevention programs and began a two-year partnership with MCSR to evaluate the impact of the Club. With training and technical assistance from the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) in North Carolina, MCSR has developed a series of resources, tools, and strategies for working with young men in long-term programs.

Based on this research review and our own experience working with youth, RTI and MCSR developed measures for identifying how youth group members reflected on and embraced more progressive and diverse beliefs about gender roles through our programs. With the goal of visible change in how Club members define gender roles, RTI and MCSR created a logic model that helps us see the different steps through which members of a successful Club must go through.

The goal of our evaluations, then, is to ensure that group members have measurably shown they have successfully met all of the steps in the logic model. We used the logic model to create markers for our measures, or, in other words, the logic model helped us to identify how we would determine what information we needed to know from participants and facilitators to show that we were making progress.

“Men of Strength has allowed me to see the world in a totally different light. I now have a greater respect and appreciation for women, and I don't participate in activities that demean women anymore.”

Matthew Clark, MOST Club Member
Hyde Leadership Public Charter School

“I believe the MOST Club has made me a better person because I don't feel I have to be superior to women. I feel I can be their equal. I have a feeling that women I meet feel safe around me. I, to the best of my ability, try to treat women with the same level of respect that I treat my mother and sister.”

Chad Smith, MOST Club Member
School Without Walls

“Everyone had a chance to speak their minds [in the MOST Club]. Usually in other programs, if one person says it, they just put it up. But here, not just one person. Even if we are running out of time, nobody is left out. Even if there is one minute left, they make sure everyone gets a chance.”

Delante Britton, MOST Club Member
Good Shepherd Teen Learning Center

Sample Week Module

Session 3:

“THE REAL MAN: THE DOMINANT STORY OF MASCULINITY”

Learning Objectives:

- To identify traits that are associated with traditional notions of masculinity
- To recognize traits associated with the dominant story of masculinity in oneself

What You'll Need:

- 5 pairs of images of recognizable male images from popular culture
- Flip chart and a set of colored markers
- Video (optional)

Outline of Session Content:

“THE REAL MAN: THE DOMINANT STORY OF MASCULINITY”
(Approx. 60 Minutes)

I. Show Video (optional)

II. REAL MAN EXERCISE

- A. Use images of high profile men to generate characteristics associated with what society considers a “real man”
- B. Generate themes from this set of characteristics

This exercise is designed to explore traditional definitions of masculinity. Based on the examples from popular culture members will generate a list of characteristics they assigned to “real men.” Once you have presented several pairs of images, have members look over the list of traits they created and ask them to pull out any themes they notice.

Typically, themes emerge around power/dominance, physical appearance/strength, invulnerability, leadership, violence, emotional control, overcoming obstacles. Explain that the profile they created and the themes they picked out are what we refer to as the “DOMINANT STORY OF MASCULINITY” – what society, the media, movies, video games, commercials, magazines, songs tell us it means to be a real man. All of us receive messages every day that reinforce this understanding of manhood. What we’re going to do in the group in the future is take a closer look at this profile and figure out how it benefits and costs men and women.