

Athletes As Leaders



Session 8: Messages about Manhood

Make sure you have:

- Group agreements to refer to during "Warm Up" (only if needed)
- Technology to show YouTube video during "Work Out"
- Ball to throw during "Cool Down"

Warm Up

Introduce topic: (1 min)

Welcome! Today we are going to talk about messages about manhood. In one of our previous sessions we talked about gender stereotypes and societal messages about girls and women. Today we will talk about some of the social messages that we all hear, about what it means to "be a man." We are also going to talk about how we can help change harmful messages about manhood, and how to hold people accountable when they are making choices that hurt themselves or others.

Introduce & show video: (4 min)

We are going to watch a video from The Representation Project called "The Mask You Live In." It is a trailer for a full-length movie. As you watch the clip, think about the types of messages that people get even from a very young age, about what it means to "be a man."

"The Mask You Live In-Trailer" (3:09)

<https://youtu.be/hc45-ptHMxo>

Work Out

Discussion Questions: (5 min)

- ❓ *What are some other messages in our society about what it means to "be a man" that are not in the video or that you have heard people say? [Possible answers: be tough, be in control, pressure to have sex, objectify women, be the protector, be aggressive, don't get too close, can't ask for help].*

❓ *How do these societal messages about “being a man” hurt men and boys? [Possible answers: they may get bullied if they act differently, they may bottle up their emotions, they may become violent, they may develop depression and not get help, they can be lonely].*

❓ *How do these societal messages about “being a man” hurt women and girls? [Possible answers: they can be victims of men’s violence & aggression, they can be made to feel like they are weak or submissive, they are not seen as having as much potential or value].*

Talking Points: (2 min)

- » *Gender stereotypes affect everyone and are harmful to people of all genders. They can make people feel like they need to fit into narrow roles. Society often sends messages that boys should be hyper-masculine, powerful, in control, and unemotional. Girls are stereotyped as being weak, over-emotional, and their physical appearance is most important. Let’s not add to these messages and pressures for people to act this way. We should let people just be themselves.*
- » *Some of the worst things that men and boys can be called are feminine or homophobic - like being called a “girl” or being called “gay.” Insults like “fag, pussy, soft, bitch” are not okay and give the message that they are not being masculine enough. Insulting a guy in this way is actually also insulting women and LGBTQ+ people because so many of the insults are related to being a woman or being gay.*
- » **So here is a challenge for you:** *Think about the role that you play in reinforcing gender stereotypes for both men and women. Think about how these stereotypes are harmful to people of all genders and limit people from being their true selves.*
- » **As student leaders and athletes,** *you can help create an environment where all people are supported. You can support people who reject harmful messages about manhood and reject them yourself. Everyone benefits when men and boys are connected to their emotions, when they have authentic friendships, when they respect women, and when they resolve conflict with non-violence.*

Facilitator Notes

It is important to use these words as examples, or use slang words that are more common in your community.

Cool Down

Team Talk: (8 min)

Now it is time for you to lead the Team Talk! Let’s get in a circle and get ready to pass the ball. We are going to think of things that you can all do as student leaders & athletes. Hopefully these will be things everyone in the group can agree to do, when you are interacting with people on your team, at school, on social media, or in the

community. We are hoping they will become the new team norms that will help you take action as leaders in the community.

This week we will discuss ways to challenge gender stereotypes about men and boys:

- ① Think about a boy who is challenging gender stereotypes. Maybe he is showing his true feelings of being hurt, or doing an activity that is stereotypically “for girls,” and people are calling him homophobic names. How can someone help in this situation?
- ② Now think about people who are trying to “be a man” in an unhealthy way. Maybe they are talking about women like objects, telling someone to “man up,” or always interrupting people and acting like they know more. How can you approach these types of situations?
- ③ Lastly, now think about a really serious situation, like if you know someone who is considering suicide, or who is abusing their partner. What programs or people could you go to for help?

Facilitator Notes

Refer to the community resources you mentioned in the previous session if not mentioned.

Thank you for all of your participation and sharing. You have so many great ideas for spreading healthy messages about manhood. We all play a role in supporting our friends and also holding them accountable. It's time to break for the day (or get to practice).

Close the circle with a team cheer.

