

COUNSELLING MEN: AN INTRODUCTION TO MAN- FRIENDLY COUNSELLING

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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- Participants will:
 - Recognise the value of man-friendly counselling
 - Understand difficulties men may experience in therapy
 - Identify strengths and vulnerabilities associated with traditional masculinity
 - Develop empathic understanding of masculinity and men
 - Identify strategies to engage men in treatment
 - Explore strategies and goals for change

GENDER ISSUES

- Training in gender
- Gender equals
- Gender guidelines

MY INTEREST IN COUNSELLING MEN



WHY STUDY MEN IN COUNSELLING?

- Men considered more powerful, privileged, and less vulnerable sex.
- Lower mental health service utilisation than women.
- Equal mental health need.

DIFFICULTIES WITH MEN

- Mandated
- Resistant
- Closed off and sceptical
- Want quick fix answers
- Attempt to take charge of the session
- More difficult to connect with (Vogel, Epting, & Wester, 2003)

CULTURAL INCOMPATIBILITIES

- Counselling incompatibilities with men. See next slide.
- The need for help is potentially humiliating for men.
- Male stigmatization in counselling.
- Masculinity is core to a man's identity.
- Men to adapt to treatment or treatment to adapt to men?

Typical psychotherapy demands

Self-disclosure
Renouncing to control
Non-sexual intimacy
Showing weaknesses
Feeling shame
Acting vulnerable
Seeking help
Expressing emotions
Being introspective
Addressing relationship conflicts
Confronting pain and suffering
Acknowledging failure
Admitting being ignorant

Masculinity demands

Hiding private life
Maintaining control
Sexualizing intimacy
Showing strengths
Expressing pride
Acting invincible
Being self-reliant
Being stoic
Taking action
Avoiding conflicts
Denying pain and suffering
Endlessly persisting
Feigning omniscience

Source: Brooks, 1998, p.44

GENDER THEORIES

- Gender and sex
- Masculinity and femininity.
- Two theories:
 - Shaped by society: Social learning. Gender role learning
 - Influenced by biology: Essentialism. Gender identity
- Hegemonic or traditional masculinity.
- Masculinities.

FOUR RULES FOR BEING A MAN

- 1. Sturdy oak:** Invulnerability, sacrifice, stoicism, show no weakness.
- 2. Big wheel:** Preoccupation with status, work, and achievement. Must be successful.
- 3. Give 'em hell:** Interpersonal domination, adventure, risk-taking, even violence
- 4. No sissy stuff:** Avoid appearing feminine

(David & Brannon 1976 cited in Stevens & Englar-Carlson, 2010)

MASCULINITY THEORIES

- Gender Role Conflict (O'Neil) - focuses on restriction.
- Gender Role Strain (Pleck) – focuses on impact.
- Roles that are rigid, restrictive and/or sexist that leads to negative consequences to self and others.
- Typically only applied to men and boys.
- Experienced devaluing from self and others, or devaluing others when norms violated.
- Motivated by fear of the feminine. Must earn masculinity.

MAIN PATTERNS

1. Emotional restriction
2. Achievement, power, competition focus
3. Restriction of affection between men
4. Fear of homosexuality
5. Commitment to work
6. Objectifying sex
7. Negative impact on (and neglect of) health

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER ROLE CONFLICT

- Negative attitudes towards help-seeking
- Violence and aggression
- Suicide
- Depression, stress, and anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Family conflict
- Parenting issues
- Lower self-esteem
- Alexithymia
- Increased psychological defensiveness in treatment

O'Neil, J. M. (2008). Summarizing 25 years of research on men's Gender Role Conflict using the Gender Role Conflict Scale: New research paradigms and clinical implications. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 36(3), 358-445.

STRENGTHS OF MASCULINITY

(Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010)

1. Male relational styles
(e.g. shared instrumental activities)
2. Male caring (e.g. protecting, action empathy)
3. Generative fathering
4. Male self-reliance
5. Provider
6. Courage and risk-taking
7. Group orientation
8. Humanitarian fraternal organisations
9. Men's humour
10. Male heroism

MALE-FRIENDLY COUNSELLING

- Multicultural counselling principles applied to treatment of men.
- Therapists understand masculine values.
- Therapists design treatment interventions to build and maintain rapport.
- Therapists may or may not target maladaptive aspects of masculinity for treatment focus.

THERAPIST PREPARATION

- Awareness of gender and masculinity
- Adjust expectations
- Respect masculinity and men's relational styles
- Caring and competent
- The person of the therapist
- Monitor for bias, stereotyping, and use of power
- Be aware of intersectionality
- Learn about the cultural experience of men

THE OTHER GENDER STORY

WOMEN

- **The State:** Women have less female representation
- **The household:** Women do more housework and child rearing
- **Violence:** Women are more likely to be abused
- **Paid work:** Women paid less
- **Sexuality:** Women's sexuality treated negatively
- **Culture:** Women misrepresented in culture and media
- (Walby cited in Handique, 2015)

MEN

- **The State:** Men's concerns have little representation
- **The household:** Men have less opportunity to spend time with their families
- **Violence:** Men are more likely to experience and die by violence
- **Paid work:** Men obligated to work longer hours in more dangerous conditions
- **Sexuality:** Men regarded as sexual predators
- **Culture:** Men treated as less moral and more disposable in culture and media

HIDDEN INEQUALITIES

- Higher chances of dying (homicide, heart disease, cancer, overdose, workplace deaths, suicide, soldier deaths)
- Higher chance of victimisation by violence
- Higher chance of conscription and obligation to go to war
- Higher chance of imprisonment and harsher sentencing
- Higher chance of homelessness
- Lower chance of completing school or attending university
- Lower paternal rights

QUOTE

- "To put it simply: men are neither supposed nor allowed to be dependent. They are expected to take care of others and themselves. And when they cannot or will not do it, then the assumption at the heart of the culture is that they are somehow less than men and therefore unworthy of help. An irony asserts itself: by being in need of help, men forfeit the right to it."
- — Peter Marin

REFRAME MASCULINE CRITICISMS INTO STRENGTHS

Stereotypic View	Reframed View
Chauvinistic	Protects others
Good old boys	Is loyal to friends
Poor listener	Problem solves
Enjoys danger	Can be heroic
Unfeeling	Withstands pressure
Entitled privilege	Provides to others
Shows off	Takes physical risks
Need to control	Takes charge
Fear of vulnerability	Can absorb pain
Competitive	Wants to succeed

(From Stevens & Englar-Carlson, 2010, p.208)



ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Delivery format
- Orientation to the service and interventions
- Anticipate difficulties and reluctance
- Ease men into counselling
 - Don't address feelings too soon
- Strengths focus, believe in men's capacity, reframe
- Language
- Validation
- Reduce shame
- Action/cognitive orientation
- Directive and structured
- Collaboration

His Behavior

Benefit to Self and Others

Responsible

Can be relied on

Clear thinking

Solutions under pressure

Conscientious

Gets work done

Strong

Others may lean on him

Self-sacrificing

Lessens danger for others

Courageous

Is rewarded by others

Physically caring

Provides security

Practical

Time efficient

Dedicated

Stays with the difficulty

Wanting to succeed

Produces results

(From Stevens & Englar-Carlson, 2010, p.209)



ASSESSMENT

- Conceptualise issues with masculinity awareness
- Explore goals
- Explore coping including strengths and weaknesses
- Explore topics that may be of interest or relevance for men. See next slide.

AREAS OF INTEREST

- Work
- Relationship – partner and parent
- Emotions
- Addictions
- Secrets
- Suicidality
- Externalising behaviours (e.g. anger)
- Sex
- Shame

REBUILDING

- Treatment goals
 - Increased awareness of masculinity related problems and possibilities
 - Role flexibility
 - Enhanced relationship skills
 - Enhanced emotional awareness
 - Enhanced social connections
 - Enhanced awareness and fidelity to one's own deeper values
 - Enhanced empathy and self-compassion

REBUILDING

- Interventions

- Men's groups
- Multiple therapy approaches can be made more male-friendly
- Psychoeducation, particularly relating to emotions
- Values clarification and commitment
- Male therapists often a role model or help man identify his own role model

- Emotion focus

- Emotional awareness
- Identification
- Tolerance
- Expression
- Regulation

REBUILDING

- **Redefined masculinity**
 - Expanded awareness of problematic and restricted masculinities
 - Gender role analysis
 - Expanded awareness of impact on their own lives
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy masculinity values/behaviours
- Develop a preferred understanding of masculinity with increased options

FEMALE THERAPISTS WITH MEN

- Why men choose female therapists:
 - More comfort
 - More relational sensitivity
 - Urged by female partner
 - Recommended by another person
 - Previous negative experiences with male therapists
 - (Johnson, 2005)
- Recommendations
 - Recognise the impact of men's socialisation and the differences with one's own gender socialisation
 - Monitor for unresolved issues with men impacting therapy
 - Mindful of relationship dynamics (potential for sexual attraction, invite into special woman, emotional caretaker roles, challenging and devaluing)
 - Monitor use of power
 - Recognise the role of shame
 - Provide insight into more female-oriented perspectives

MALE THERAPISTS WITH MEN

- Be mindful of male power competitiveness between client/therapist
- Be mindful of masculine fusion and losing objective perspective. Blind spots in shared assumptions
- Countertransference issues
- May provide a positive male role model

SUMMARY

- Aim to enhance cultural knowledge and self-awareness in relation to men. Recognise diversity between men.
- Maintain male-friendly attitudes.
- Develop male-friendly rapport building strategies.
- Invite men to review their coping strategies, including what works well and what works less well.
- Work on developing strategies that address goals and deficits, including more flexible understandings of masculinity and new ways of managing emotions.
- Male and female therapists both have strengths and vulnerabilities when working with men.

QUESTIONS



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