

About This Guidebook

We think of this curriculum as a kind of adventurer’s guide into the mostly uncharted territory of facilitating supportive, strengths-based groups for boys in schools and community settings. We offer ideas for routes and pathways to interesting adventures and reasons why such adventures are important. Our hope is that this guidebook will serve as a kind of map for you to use as you navigate the challenging and rewarding work of mentoring and counseling boys. Our guidebook provides both the big ideas that orient our work—why we go down this path at all—and the small details of how we plan for and lead each week’s adventures in order to accomplish our goals and arrive at our destinations. This guidebook is divided into three sections:

BAM! Orientation

BAM! Example

BAM! Instructions

In BAM! Orientation, we present data that describe the challenges that boys are facing interpersonally and academically. We then outline some of the factors, biological as well as cultural, that influence boys’ development. We also describe the ways we have found to work with boys in ways that address the challenges they face while still building on their strengths. We conclude this section with an outline of the goals we have for the work we do with boys in our groups.

In BAM! Example, we tell the story of our experience facilitating a particular BAM! group of 11 boys as it developed over a 10-week period. These week-by-week narratives illustrate the rich texture of our experience working with boys while bringing to life the theories and goals behind our work. In these stories, you will get to know some of the boys we have worked with, their struggles, and the relationships we developed with them over time as we both succeeded and stumbled in our efforts to connect with them.

In BAM! Instructions, we provide the detailed curriculum you will need to recreate the activities for each of the 10 group sessions described in the previous section. We also share with you the objectives, planning considerations, and prompts for processing each activity. In addition, we also highlight the role of the group facilitator—including advice for both men and women leaders—and discuss the nuts and bolts of beginning a BAM! group. Lastly, we provide evaluation forms and further ideas for you to use in your work with boys.

Our primary goal for this guidebook is to provide you with a strengths-based and positive approach to understanding boys and working with them in groups. It may seem contradictory, then, that our next section focuses on the challenges and problems that boys face in their development. We know that boys are already too often seen as problems and requiring participation in groups addressing such issues as anger management, social skills, and pregnancy prevention. While we believe that boys, on average, do need to learn more effective ways of meeting the world, we also believe that the world needs to learn to meet boys more helpfully as well. This is our challenge in this

guidebook: to present a model of understanding and working with boys that is realistic about addressing the problems they face while also providing a positive and strengths-based approach to working with them.

We believe you will find this guidebook both thought provoking and practical, and we hope it inspires you to imagine new possibilities for the boys with whom you work.