

## Week 6: Making Lists

This week, the boys learn about social influences on male behavior and identity and the consequences that result when boys fail to behave in expected ways.

### Session Objectives

- To learn about male socialization

Boys will leave this session with an understanding of how teasing and shaming often force boys to give up parts of themselves and to behave in ways that are personally and socially destructive. The group examines the ways that social messages about masculinity confine boys to a limited set of behaviors and feelings.

- To expand the boys' emotional repertoire

Boys will go further today with the discussion about teasing, discussing the ways that boys are teased when they do not go along with expectations for men and boys. Boys list the names that boys are called and explain how being called those names makes them feel.

### What You Need

Foam safety mat

Blindfold

Chart paper and markers

A personal story about having been teased for behaving differently from what is socially acceptable for men and boys

### What You Do

**Opening (5 Minutes)** Ask each boy to describe something about himself that he likes or is proud of.

**Facilitator Story (10 Minutes)** Tell a story that describes a time when you went against social expectations for boys (“outside the box”) despite the inevitability of being teased. Describe the outcome and, particularly, how it impacted your thoughts and behavior. Use the following story if you need to:

#### **Facilitator Story: “What’s *She* Doing Here?!”**

When I was about 15 years old I had a paper route. Every day I would fold my papers, stuff them in my shoulder bags, and then ride around my neighborhood delivering them to all the houses on my route. One Friday afternoon, I was delivering my papers and thinking about a party I was going to have on Saturday night at my house. I had invited some of my friends and we were going to play ping-pong, play music, and eat lots of food.

I was thinking about this party when I threw a paper into the driveway of Terry Walford's house. Terry was a girl in my class who was different than the rest of us. She kind of looked and walked funny and she didn't have any real friends at school at all. As I threw the paper, I saw her walking around the yard of her house by herself, and I realized how lonely she must be. I decided that I would invite her to my party.

Terry was really happy to be invited to the party and she was the first one to arrive the next night at my house. When my other friends showed up, one of them, Wally Jeffries, gave me a weird look when he saw Terry. Then he said, loud enough for everyone to hear, "Sick! What's *she* doing here?!" When I told him that I had invited her, I half expected him to leave the party. Maybe I just hoped that he would leave. But he ended up staying anyway and so did Terry. I remember feeling uncomfortable during the party about having invited Terry, but I also felt kind of proud too.

Describe how the story relates to established social expectations for boys' behavior.

**The Boy in the Box Activity (25 Minutes)** Ask the boys to generate a list of the social expectations and pressures that they experience. Refer to last week's session about teasing to frame this activity. Write boys' responses on a large sheet of butcher paper, hung where everyone can see. On the paper, draw a large box in which you will write their responses.

Next, ask the boys to create a new list of the types of names that boys get called when they act differently from the box (e.g., when boys are not tough or strong). Finally, ask boys to talk about the effects of being called these names. The following prompt is given as an example:

When we are called these names or when we worry about being called these names, how does it change the way that we might normally behave?

**Keep in Mind...** The list they generate might have pro-social boy behaviors (e.g., being loyal or athletic) as well as limiting behaviors (e.g., only showing anger or getting into trouble). It is important that part of their list contain some of the limiting messages boys receive. If boys have difficulty thinking of some of those qualities, have them think of a popular media figure (e.g., Bart Simpson or Eminem) and have them list the messages that those figures send boys about what a boy is supposed to be like. Give specific examples if group members are offtrack.

**Willow in the Wind Activity (20 Minutes)** It is likely that a few boys have not yet had the chance to do the Willow in the Wind activity. Give them the opportunity to complete the activity here. Please refer to week 5 for instructions on this activity's procedure and process.