

A "Man Box" Thought Piece

In January/February 2018, an AFL Football club engaged in a team building camp that negatively impacted some of the players. These types of camps are often designed to build resilience and mental toughness for players, but this program resulted in emotional harm and disunity amongst the players.

Read through the attached article and respond to the questions below. Refer to the Man Box references on the back of this page to assist you.

<https://www.theage.com.au/sport/afl/inside-the-camp-that-brought-down-the-adelaide-crows-20200630-p557od.html>

Which Man Box pillars are presenting here?

Adolescent Man Box:

- Constant Effort
- Social Teasing

Man Box

- Self Sufficiency
- Aggression and control
- Acting tough
- Heterosexist taunts and bullying were likely used when team members were ordered to belittle one another

Have you observed any hyper-masculine "rites of passage" type initiations or practices in your day to day life?

- Boys promoting conflict between each other to spur on fights for entertainment.
- Challenging one another to perform risky actions to prove oneself.
- Objectifying girls, sometimes in a sexual way to show off to peers.

What alternative beliefs and actions could we embody to avoid becoming involved in this type of behaviour?

- Team building exercises that promote bonding rather than driving each other apart.
- Supportive and encouraging words that empower each other.
- Emotional intelligence to work through past obstacles.
- Problem solving exercises that require the members to work together to solve

What values and practices in your school could promote positive actions and beliefs amongst young men?

- Collective agreements on the kind of conduct we wish to see school-wide
- Creating safe space and time to practice new skills and values
- Support for role models who lead by example
- Normalise efforts made to change rigid gender roles
- Bringing ambassadors for healthier masculinities to talk at the school

Pillars of the Adolescent Man Box



Emotional restriction

Assumption that to be masculine, boys must be emotionally stoic and refrain from sharing their feelings with others



Constant effort

Belief that to be masculine, one must constantly, and without interruption, maintain one's tough, confident and strong public persona



Social teasing

Assumption that to be masculine, one must be able to both dole out and stand up to teasing and taunting in the peer context



Heterosexism

Norm that masculinity is defined in opposition to homosexuality and femininity, and that one must distance oneself from behaviours and attitudes traditionally thought as "girly" or "gay"

Although adolescent boys are at a different stage of development, they are exposed to ideas about what it means to be an adult man. As a result, we have included the adult Man Box pillars below.

Pillars of the Adult Man Box



Self Sufficiency

A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears and problems shouldn't really get respect

Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help



Acting Tough

A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak

Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside



Physical Attractiveness

It's very hard for a man to be successful if he doesn't look good

Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin

A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly



Rigid Masculine Gender Roles

It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of younger children

A man shouldn't have to do household chores

Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women

Hypersexuality



A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can

A "real man" would never say no to sex

Heterosexuality and Homophobia



Someone who is gay is not a 'real man'

Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine

Aggression and Control



Men should use violence to get respect, if necessary

A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage

If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time