



Sexuality and  
Reproductive Health



Fatherhood  
and Caregiving

Author:



Institute PROMUNDO

**From Violence to  
Peaceful Coexistence**



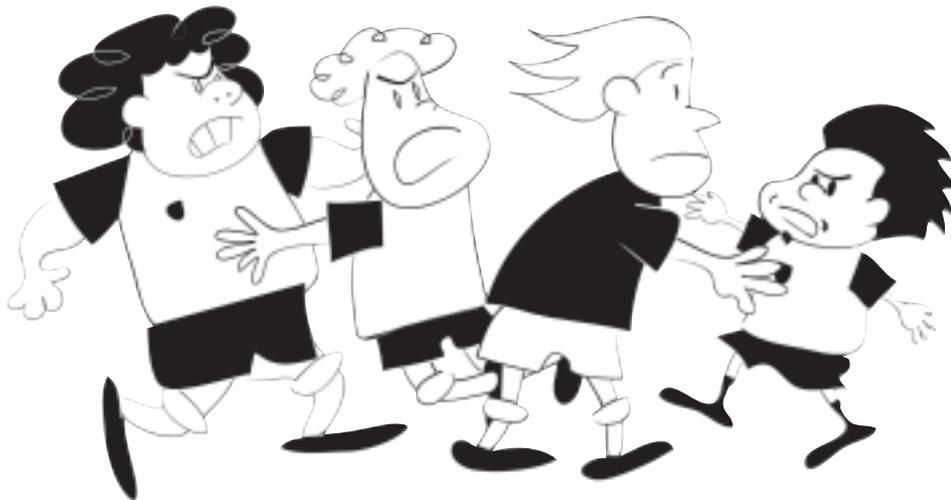
Reasons and  
Emotions

Preventing and  
Living with HIV/AIDS

Section 3



# MODULE 1



## What and Why

Author:



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## OVERVIEW

This Module provides background information on the roots of violence, calling particular attention to the gendered aspect of violence. Most studies on violence and most programs in violence prevention leave out an important fact:

the majority of interpersonal violence in the public sphere is carried out by young men against other young men, and in the private sphere by men against women. Why is it that young men are disproportionately the perpetrators of violence? What can we do to prevent young men's violence?



## Defining Violence, Promoting Peace

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What is violence? At its most basic level, violence can be defined as “the use of physical force or the credible threat of such force intended to physically harm a person or group” (MaAlister, 1998: 6). This definition focuses on the individual act of violence, or interpersonal violence. Violence is also the use of power and threats of power by one group over another, sometimes called institutional violence. Men’s domination over women for centuries, in many contexts subjugating them to second class status, is also a form of violence. The domination of one ethnic group by another, or one social class over another, can and should be called violence. But for the purposes of this manual, we will focus on interpersonal violence.

At its simplest level, violence is that – the use of force or the threat of force by one individual against another. It is important to start with the affirmation that violence is not a random act. It happens in specific circumstances and settings. Violence happens more frequently in some settings than others, and around the world it is more likely to be carried out by and against men – usually young men. In the public sphere, young men are most likely to be the perpetrators of this violence and most likely to be victims. In the private sphere – the home and other private spaces –

men are more likely the aggressors and women the victims. Research on the causes of violence fills volumes of books and has been the topic of thousands of studies. But what is too often left out of these discussions is the gendered nature of violence – the fact that men, and particularly young men, are more likely to use violence than any other group.

When we talk about violence, we must also talk about peace and peaceful coexistence. Too often, we hear about “stamping out violence” or a new program to “combat violence,” or even a “war against violence.” The language we use for talking about violence and preventing violence is itself violence-laden. We want to combat it and to punish, often violently, those who use violence. At the level of schools and communities, we often hear residents talking about wanting to punish those young men who are violent, to repress them; less attention goes to thinking about what would actually prevent violence. The Americas region – along with Russia – has the unfortunate distinction of imprisoning more persons per capita than any other region of the world, usually in conditions that can only be called violent. We punish violence with violence and then ask ourselves where violence comes from. In a particularly insightful overview of violence in the U.S., James

Gilligan of Harvard University argues that rather than deterring violence, the use of the death penalty and other harsh methods for repressing crime in the U.S. actually contribute to violence.

In thinking about preventing violence with young men, we must be able to visualize, imagine and create with them the conditions that promote peaceful coexistence and not just “combat violence.” Talking about peace, negotiation and peaceful coexistence is sometimes given a bad rap and is even ridiculed. But as the British singer Elvis Costello asked: “What’s so funny about peace, love and

understanding?” When we get past the bravado, we find that most young men, when allowed to express it, are fearful of the potential for violence within themselves and of the violence inflicted on them or threatened by other young men. Most young men have experienced or witnessed violence at some point in their lives (or various points in their lives) and are eager to talk about peaceful coexistence. In the activities included here, we want to promote conditions for young men to talk not only about competition, power, fighting and violence – but about peaceful coexistence.

## Violence and Young Men: Reviewing the Numbers

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A review of the data on violence in Latin America and the Americas region leads to a disturbing conclusion: young men in our region of the world are more likely to kill another young man than in any other region of the world. The homicide rate in Latin America is about 20 per 10,000 per year, the highest of any other region in the world. The highest rate in the region is in Colombia, where between 1991 and 1995, there were 112,000 homicides, of which 41,000 were young people, the vast majority males (World Bank, 1997). Most of the killing that happens in Latin America is by young men against other young men.

This largely male violence is a tremendous burden on national economies. The public and private costs associated with violence represent up to 15% of domestic national products (InterAmerican Development Bank, 1999). One study suggests that in Colombia, per capita income might be a third higher today if not for the high rates of violence and crime of the last 10 years (World Bank, 1997). PAHO confirms that violence among adolescents is one of the most important public health problems facing the Americas (McAlister, 1998).

Health statistics from many parts of the world confirm that injuries resulting from violence (followed closely or led by accidents in some regions) are among the chief causes of mortality and morbidity for adolescent boys and young men. Homicide is the third leading cause of death in adolescents between the ages of 10-19 in the U.S. and has accounted for 42% of deaths among young black males in the last 10 years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1991). In Brazil, between 1988 and 1990, Federal Police confirmed that 4,611 children and youth were victims of homicide; the majority of these were male and 70% were between the ages of 15-17 (CEAP, 1993; Rizzini, 1994).

Violence is often concentrated in certain areas. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, in 1995, there were 183.6 deaths per 10,000 adolescent males ages 15-19 (almost one in 50). Between 1980 and 1992, 10,614 young people ages 10-19 died because of homicides or accidents; 87% were young men and 81% between the ages of 15-19 (Minayo, et al, 1999). In one low-income neighborhood studied in Rio de Janeiro, a staggering 3.3% of the youth population, disproportionately young men, died in one year as a result of drug trafficking activities and police violence.

But homicide is clearly not the only form of male violence. A survey of youth in a low-income community in Rio de Janeiro found that 30% had been involved in fights, the majority of those boys (Ruzany, et al, 1996). In the U.S., a nationwide study examining all types of delinquent behavior (including less violent forms, such as vandalism), found that 14.9 % of boys compared to 5.8 % of girls reported engaging in at least one form of delinquent behavior in the last year (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997). Boys in the U.S. are four times more likely than girls to have been involved in fights (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1992).

Girls can be violent too. When we review data on violence and aggression, it is important that we keep in mind that aggression and violence are not exclusively young men's domain. Comparative studies with boys and girls in several settings find that boys are more likely to use physical aggression, while girls are more likely to be indirectly aggressive – telling lies, ignoring someone or ostracizing others from the social group as a form of aggression. Researchers in the U.S. and in some urban areas in Latin America have reported that girls' participation

in violence has increased in recent years – in effect, some girls are starting to show violent behavior that was previously carried out nearly always by boys (Renfrew, 1997).

When we talk about boys, young men and violence, we must also keep in mind that boys are victims of violence as well as perpetrators of violence. Many young men who use violence were themselves victims of violence. Being a victim of or a witness of violence is associated with using violence. And, because they spend more time outside the home in most cultures, boys are more likely to be exposed to or to witness physical violence outside the home. In some parts of the world, including parts of Latin America, youth are involved as combatants in civil wars or exposed to ongoing armed conflicts. The U.N. estimates that more than 100 million young people around the world were subject to the effects of armed conflict, either as soldiers, civilians or refugees. Young men are more likely than young women to be involved as combatants, some voluntarily, others against their will, others encouraged by political or religious extremists (WHO Adolescent Health and Development Programme, 1998).

## Men's Violence is NOT Natural: Finding the Roots of Young Men's Violence in their Socialization

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Why are so many men violent toward each other and violent toward women? How many times have we heard the phrase: "Boys will be boys"? There is a widespread belief that violence is naturally part of being a man. We must start our discussion by affirming that boys' and men's violence is not natural. It is not inherent nor an essential part of boys' and men's biological make-up.

We also sometimes hear the argument that being violent is a "natural" or "normal" part of boys' growing up and that most boys grow out of it. Violence may sometimes be a legitimate response for protecting oneself or others, but it is not "natural" or "normal." And if it is true that most boys "grow out" of delinquent or violent behavior, there is nothing natural, normal or inevitable about their violence. Violence is a learned behavior, and is learned and repeated more by some young men in some settings. And it can be unlearned and prevented. Waiting for boys to "grow out" of violent behavior is not an appropriate nor realistic response to violence.

Why are some young men violent and others not? Violence does not occur randomly among young men. If we are saying that violence is overwhelmingly male, it is not all young men who are violent! There are clearly aspects and factors that make some young men more likely to use violence.

What then are the reasons for boys' higher rates of violent behavior? Biology may be involved, but to a very limited extent. Some research finds that there are some biological differences between boys and girls in terms of temperament, with boys having higher rates of lack of impulse control, ADHD and other traits such as sensation-seeking, reactivity and irritability - traits that may be precursors to aggression (Miedzian, 1991; Earls, 1991). Research has found that as early as four months of age, temperamental differences can be detected between boys and girls, with boys showing higher levels of irritability and manageability, factors that are associated with later hyperactivity and aggression (Stormont-Spurgin & Zentall, 1995). But some studies may find that boys are more irritable because researchers expect boys to be more irritable, or because parents, showing gender stereotypes, stimulate boys in different ways or are less likely to soothe or calm boy babies to the extent that they calm girl babies. Researchers of violence are nearly unanimous in stating that while there may be some limited male biological basis for aggressive and risk-taking behavior, the majority of boys' violent behavior is explained by social and environmental factors during childhood and adolescence. In sum, boys are not born violent. They are taught to be violent.

How are boys taught to be violent? By watching their violent fathers and brothers. By being encouraged to play with guns and being rewarded when they fight. By being told that the only way to “be a real man” is to fight with anyone who insults them. By being treated in violent ways or subjected to violence by their peers or families. By being taught that expressing anger and aggression is okay, but that expressing sadness or remorse is not.

Families and parents have a major role in encouraging – or discouraging – violent behavior by boys and young men. In low income settings where families are stressed, they may have less ability to watch over their children, particularly sons, and have less control over where they go and who they hang out with. Stressed parents are more likely to use coercive and physical discipline against boys, which may lead some boys to rebel against this treatment. On the other hand, families who have open styles of communication, who interact with respect with their sons (and daughters), and who have the ability to both monitor their sons’ activities, to know who they hang out with and to offer them opportunities, are less likely to have violent sons. Young men who are more attached to families, participate more in joint family activities and are more closely monitored by their families are less likely to be violent or delinquent.

Boys who are labelled as “delinquent” or “violent” or “troublemakers” are more likely to be violent. Boys in many settings have more behavior “problems” than girls – they may be more disruptive in the classroom, they sit still less than girls or they show hyperactive behavior. Parents and teachers often label these behaviors as troublesome, and react in authoritarian ways that create a chain of expectations. Parents and teachers believe some boys will be violent or delinquent and these same boys often become delinquent. Why? Because when teachers and parents label boys as “aggressive” or “troublemakers” they often exclude these boys from activities such as sports. Rather than listening to “troublesome” boys, teachers and parents often stigmatize and exclude them, ultimately encouraging violent behavior rather than preventing it.

Boys who witness violence or are victims of violence are more likely to be violent. Witnessing violence around them is stressful for both boys and girls, but this stress may show itself in different ways for girls and boys. For boys, trauma related to witnessing violence is more likely to be externalized as violence than it is for girls (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997). Most boys are socialized to believe that it is inappropriate for them to express fear or sadness but that it is appropriate for them to express anger and aggression. In many parts of the world, boys are more likely than girls to be victims of physical abuse (not including sexual abuse) in their homes and physical violence outside the home (Blum, et al, 1997; UNICEF, 1998). For example, a study with young people ages 11-17 in Rio de Janeiro found that 61% of boys compared to 47% of girls had been victims of violence in their homes (Assis, 1997). Young men who experience and witness violence in the home and outside the home may come to see violence as a “normal” way – and particularly a male way – to resolve conflicts.

Easy access to weapons contributes to violence. In some parts of Latin America, easy accessibility of weapons is part of the problem. Having access to weapons, of course, does not cause violence but it does increase the likelihood that violence will be more lethal. A fight over an insult or a girl is more likely to lead to a homicide when one of the actors has a gun or a knife. And in most of Latin America, it is boys who are more likely to have access to weapons. In some settings, learning how to use and play with weapons – particularly knives and guns – may be part of how boys are socialized.

Where they live is a major factor related to young men’s violence. As previously mentioned, some parts of Latin America have extremely high rates of violence: parts of Colombia, parts of Brazil, parts of the U.S., for example have higher rates of violence than other parts of the region. Boys who are raised in neighborhoods where armed gangs exist, or where sectarian violence involves men and boys, are more likely to use violence and to be victims of violence. Research on gangs in Brazil and the U.S. suggests that such

groups often emerge when other social institutions – the government, family, community organizations, schools – are weak. Higher rates of violence in some areas may also have to do with local culture. For example, in some parts of the Americas, young men may believe they are supported by their peers or local norms when they use violence as a response to insult or injury.

Who they hang out with is also a major factor contributing to violent behavior. Studies in the U.S. find that hanging out with delinquent or violent peers is one of the strongest factors associated with boys' violent behavior. However, it would be simplistic to conclude that violent peers "cause" other boys to be violent. Young people tend to look for other young people like themselves for their peers. Violent boys may be more likely to hang out with other violent boys. But clearly, who boys hang out with and who they listen to is a factor to be considered. Some researchers suggest that because boys generally spend more time outside the home – often in street-based peer groups who promote competition, fighting and delinquency – they are more likely to be violent than are girls, who are more likely to be socialized in the home or around family members.

Boys who perceive hostile intentions in others are more likely to be violent. Studies in the U.S. have found that young men who are violent are more likely than their less violent peers to perceive hostile intentions in others, or to misinterpret the behavior of others as hostile. Violent boys seem to have difficulty with "emotional intelligence" – i.e. the ability to "read", understand and express emotions in appropriate ways. Boys who use violence are more likely than less violent boys to "misread" the intentions of others, believing them to be hostile when they are not. In addition, young men who are violent often justify their violence by blaming it on others, and often use dehumanizing labels for their victims.

Similarly, boys who have an exaggerated sense of honor are more likely to use violence. Research on violence in Brazil has found that many cases of man-to-man homicide start over relatively minor altercations, generally



about an insult, often in bars or other public spaces, and escalate to lethal levels.

For some boys, being violent is a way to define who you are. Adolescence is the time of life when we generally define who we are. For some young men, this might be defining yourself as a good student, or as religious, or an athlete, or a hard worker, as artistic, or as a computer geek. But it might also be defining yourself as a bully, or thug or a *bandido*. Research with young men in violent peer groups (gangs, or *comandos*, or *pandillas*, or *comarcas*) concludes that young men involved in these groups find a strong sense of identity in these groups – identity they haven't found elsewhere. For some young men, being part of a violent peer group may be a way to survive or a means of self-protection. For young men in some low-income urban settings in the region, many of whom have little else which gives them meaning and clear roles in society, violence can be a way of achieving a name for themselves. On the other hand, when young men find an identity in something else – as students, hard workers, fathers, husbands or in music, sports, politics (depending of course on which politics), religion (again

where they meet and interact with violent peers. Other studies suggest that boys who are marginalized or excluded or treated as “misfits” while in school are more likely to be violent. In sum, the school – as the most important social institution where young people hang out – is an important site for encouraging or preventing violence.

Does the media have anything to do with boys’ violence? Some studies have found that viewing violent media images may be associated with carrying out violence, but the causal connection is unclear (McAlister, 1998). Watching violence on TV or in movies probably does not “cause” boys’ violence but it no doubt contributes to some boys’ belief – and our general belief as a society – that men’s violence is normal, even cool.

Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that violence is not merely associated with low- income adolescent boys. Much research on violence has focused on low-income young men; in some settings, poverty is associated with higher rates of some kinds of violence. Poverty is itself a form of social violence, but poverty should not be considered the cause of interpersonal violence. Middle class adolescent boys in many settings are also involved in violence, and also socialized to use violence to express emotions and resolve conflicts, just as most boys in low-income settings are not perpetrators of violence. In studying and responding to violence, it is imperative that we not stigmatize or label low-income boys, or boys in general, as inherently violent, and that we recognize that the majority of boys are not perpetrators of violence.

depending on which religion) or some combination of those – they generally stay out of gangs or violent peer groups. A study with young men whose peers were involved in gangs in Chicago and Rio de Janeiro found that those young men who weighed the cost of violence, were fearful of violence, and found alternative identities and alternative peer groups, were more likely to stay out of gangs (Barker, 2001).

Boys who are doing poorly in school, are less connected to the school setting, or are marginalized or excluded within the school setting are more likely to be violent or delinquent. In nearly all parts of urban Latin America, completing secondary education is increasingly necessary for entering the formal sector workplace. Numerous studies have found that poor school performance, school drop out and the lack of a sense of belonging in school are associated with higher rates of delinquency and other violent behavior. In some urban areas of Latin America, boys are dropping out of school at higher rates than girls. However, being enrolled in school is not enough. For some boys, the school can be the place



## Gender-Based Violence: Young Men's Violence Against Women

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Men's violence against women is an international public health and human rights concern that deserves greater attention. About 30 studies from around the world, many of these from Latin America, have found that between one-fifth and one-half of women interviewed say they have been victims of physical violence by a male partner (Heise, 1994). In Latin America, women's rights advocates, governments and U.N. organizations have devoted important attention to protecting women from such violence and initiated shelter and support programs to women who have been victims of domestic violence in the past 10 years. But far less attention has focused on working with young men and adult men to prevent violence against women.

Men's violence against women often starts during adolescence. Men do not spontaneously or suddenly become violent toward women when they become adults. This violence often starts in adolescence, or earlier. Studies with university students in the U.S. find that between 20 and 50 percent of both males and females say they have experienced physical aggression during a dating relationship (although young men's violence toward women is nearly always more severe). In a current PROMUNDO project with young men in two low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro, the young men have reported numerous incidents of having used violence toward their female partners – and some incidents of violence by their female partners against them. In a study carried out by PROMUNDO and Instituto Noos in Rio de Janeiro, nearly 25% of men ages 15-60 said they had used physical violence at least once against a female partner, with the highest rates of violence reported by younger men. This suggests the need to work with young men when their values and attitudes about gender and styles of interaction in intimate relationships are being formed.

Where then does men's violence against women come from? Why are men violent toward women? The causes and factors associated with men's violence against women are varied but we have some ideas on where this violence comes from – and how we can prevent it.

Research from various parts of Latin America suggests that domestic violence, as well as sexual violence, are sometimes part of the "sexual" or "gender scripts" in which dating and domestic violence are viewed as justifiable by men when women "betray" informal marriage and cohabitation "contracts," for example, if they have an outside relationship, or if they do not fulfill what are seen as their domestic responsibilities. Men who believe they are entitled to these things may resort to violence when they are denied these "benefits of patriarchy." Research also finds that young men sometimes condone domestic violence among their peers, providing mutual support for each other.

Like male-to-male violence, men's violence against women is deeply rooted in the way boys and men are socialized. Because men are often socialized to repress their emotions, anger is sometimes one of the few socially acceptable ways for men to express their feelings. Many men lack adequate interpersonal communication skills. Coupled with this, boys are often raised to believe that they have the "right" to expect certain things from women, and the right to use physical or verbal abuse if women do not provide these things (domestic tasks or sex, for example).

For some men, domestic violence is often associated with economic stress. Some men, when they are unable to fulfill their traditional role as provider, may resort to violence in an attempt to "re-assert" their traditional "male" power. Higher rates of domestic violence are

associated with low self-esteem and traditional ideas about gender roles on the part of men. Men who have or perceive few other sources of self-worth and identity may be more likely to resort to violence in their intimate relationships. Similarly, traditional “machista” views about sexuality in which men view women as sex objects without sexual agency are also associated with domestic and sexual violence. Data from a hospital-based center assisting women victims of domestic violence in Rio de Janeiro found that one-third of their male partners who used violence were out of work at the time of the violence.



As in the case of male-to-male violence, research has found that men who witnessed domestic violence in their own families of origin, or were themselves victims of abuse or violence in the home, are more likely to use violence against their own female partners and children – creating a cycle of domestic violence.

Young men’s silence about other men’s violence contributes to domestic violence. Research carried out by PROMUNDO in a low-income community in Rio de Janeiro found that while more than half of 25 young men interviewed reported witnessing violence in their homes, the majority said that they felt powerless to speak out against this violence. The young men often used the refrain – “between a man and woman no one should intervene”. They also feared that if they intervened, the violence would be directed toward them (Barker, 2001). Boys who are

raised to believe that violence against women is “normal” may be more likely to repeat this violence in their own intimate relationships. Overcoming the silence of men who witness other men being violent toward women is a key starting point for our work.

Men’s violence against women can be prevented when men as a group start taking responsibility for men’s violence against women. There are a number of important initiatives in various parts of the world — including the Americas region — beginning to work with men in domestic and dating violence prevention. Some of these awareness-raising groups have taken place with military recruits or police (in Bolivia, for example), in sports locker rooms (in the U.S.) or in the school (in the Netherlands) with the goal of increasing men’s awareness about such issues, or with the idea of creating positive peer pressure so that young men themselves convince their peers that such behavior is unacceptable. In a few countries in Latin America, NGOs have started discussion groups with young men, who want to work in a group setting to discuss their past acts of violence against women and their desire to prevent such acts in the future. The White Ribbon Campaign, started in Canada, is an international awareness-raising campaign of men seeking to prevent violence by men against women and to raise awareness about such violence among other men. Chapters of the White Ribbon Campaign have now been started in countries around the world, using the white ribbon as a symbol of men’s pledge not to commit violence against women and not to make excuses for men who use violence against women. In the first two months of the campaign, as many as 100,000 men in Canada wore the ribbon. The campaign now has chapters in the U.S., Spain, Norway, Australia, Namibia and Finland, and has inspired similar campaigns in Brazil, Mexico and elsewhere. In Brazil, PROMUNDO, ECOS, PAPAI, Instituto NOOS, CES and Pro-Mulher have launched the Brazilian version of the campaign.

Some young men are also the perpetrators of sexual violence against women. Some boys are socialized to believe that young women “owe” them sex, or may believe that using force or coercion to obtain sex is a “normal” part of intimate relations. In a 1992 national survey of US adolescents ages 15-18, 4.8 % of males, compared to 1.3 % of females, reported having forced someone into a sexual act at least once. Studies also find a strong connection between a young man having been a victim of abuse, including sexual abuse, in the home and subsequently carrying out sexual assault or dating violence. This evidence argues for the need for services for young men who have been victims of physical and sexual abuse both as a form of treatment but also as an important element in preventing potential sexual or dating violence against others.

Documenting the sexual violence of some boys against girls (or against other boys) is further complicated by societal norms in some regions where sexual coercion may be seen as part of boys’ “normal” sexual script. A few studies have looked at the social setting in which domestic violence, dating violence or sexual coercion takes place, seeking to understand how dating violence and sexual coercion may be reinforced in the male peer group.

Just as boys are the victims and perpetrators of male-to-male violence, research has also provided information on the extent that adolescent boys are victimized by physical and sexual abuse. Most studies confirm that girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse or sexual coercion than are boys, but numerous studies confirm that large numbers of boys also suffer from sexual abuse. A study of low-income youth ages 12-25 in Brazil found that 20% of sexually active youth said they had been forced to have sex against their will at least once, with girls reporting about twice the rate of boys (Childhope and NESAs, 1997). A recent nationwide survey in the US found that 3.4% of males and 13% of females had experienced sexual assault (“unwanted but actual sexual contact”) (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997). In a survey of youth ages 16-18 in the Caribbean, 16% of

boys reported being physically abused and 7.5% reported being sexually abused (Lundgren, 1999). A study in Canada found that one-third of men surveyed reported having experienced some kind of sexual abuse (Stewart, 1996; Lundgren, 1999). In a study in Nicaragua, 27% of women and 19% of men reported sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence (FOCUS, 1998).

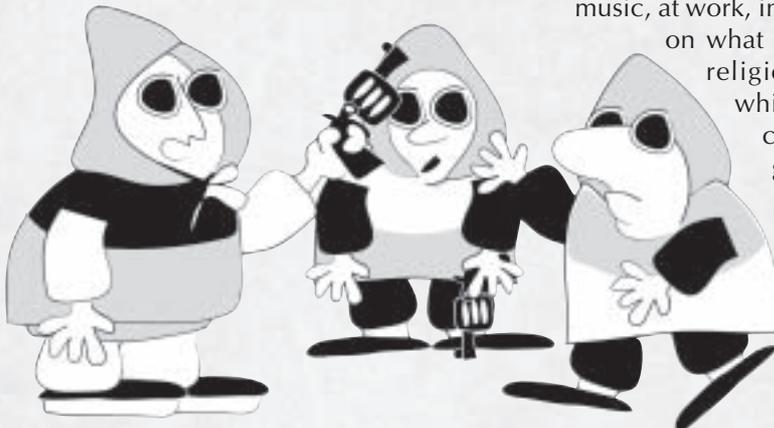
In addition to the other long-term implications of having been a victim of domestic or sexual violence, both sexual and domestic violence have implications for sexual health. An ongoing comparative study of sexual violence during adolescence in South Africa, Brazil and the US has found that sexual coercion and violence in adolescent intimate relationships is associated with lower condom use. Research with Hispanic women in the U.S. has found that women who are victims of domestic violence are less likely to use condoms or feel empowered to control their reproductive options.

SUMMING UP, the causes of some young men’s violence either against other young men or against women are multiple and often interact. The important point is that we have tremendous research on the causes and factors associated with young men’s use of violence. In Module 2, to the extent possible, we have attempted to incorporate these research findings into the group activities offered.

## Gangs

In various parts of the Americas, there are organized groups of drug traffickers – in Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, the United States, among others. In some communities, these groups have established themselves as a “parallel authority,” that is, as a community institution in areas where the power of the State is weak or unable to meet the needs of the community. In some locations, the leaders of these groups are seen as heroes. In this situation, drug trafficking groups can be strong “socializers” of young men, recruiting and inviting them to participate in their activities. These groups have different names – gangs, “commandos.”

However, it is important to mention that not all groups called “gangs” or something similar are necessarily involved in drug trafficking or illegal activities. These groups vary from place to place, and it is important to understand the context in which they exist. Also, it is worth mentioning that research with boys who participate in gangs or *commandos* demonstrate that it is not just poverty or unemployment that lead a young man to participate in an organized group of drug traffickers, but various factors – individuals, family, and local context – can lead young men to join these groups. It is also important to emphasize that even in communities where gangs and *commandos* are powerful, not all young men participate. Generally, only a minority become involved.



In different parts of the region, there have been and still are, various attempts to repress these groups, primarily via police repression. Diverse experiences from the region suggest that repression has not been an adequate response. More promising work with gang intervention shows the importance of offering alternatives to young men who participate or who have the potential to participate: cultural activities, job access, opportunities for community participation, and spaces for bringing young men together – with a shift away from repression.

It is clear that for some young men, violence is a way to form an identity. For many, adolescence is the time of life to think about the question: who am I? A young man can define himself as a good student, a religious, an athlete, a hard worker, an artist, a computer wiz, or various other things. But he can also define himself as a *bandido* (bandit). Research with young men who participate in these violent groups in the US and in Brazil concludes that they feel a sense of belonging and identity that they don't find elsewhere.

For many low-income, socially excluded young man living in urban areas, belonging to a violent group is a way for them to survive, to feel important, and to gain a sense of belonging in their lives. On the other hand, when young men discover their identity in a different outlet, as students, fathers, partners or husbands, in music, at work, in sports, politics (depending on what type of political group), in religion (again, depending on which religion), or even in a combination of these – they generally stay away from gangs or violent groups.

## Resilience and the Prevention of Youth Violence

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How can we explain how some youth from certain backgrounds become involved in violent activities like gangs, and others, from the same context, do not? In various parts of the Americas, recent research has identified individual and family characteristics of youth from low-income areas and in high-risk situations who become successful in school and at work, and who do not become involved in gangs and other violent groups.

These studies frequently refer to the concept of resilience, which addresses “successful adaptation, despite risk and adversity.” Resilience means that some young men, even in difficult circumstances, find positive alternatives for overcoming the risks that surround them. In a comparative study between young male juvenile delinquents in Rio de Janeiro and their cousins and brothers who were not, the author identified a series of protective factors that favor non-delinquency on the

part of young men. In this study, the youth who were not delinquent, or resilient 1) showed greater optimism in relation to their life realities, 2) had a greater ability to express themselves verbally, 3) were the oldest or the youngest child in the family, 4) had a calm temperament, and 5) exhibited a strong, affectionate connection with their parents or teachers (Assis, 1999). Similarly, other research in Brazil, with boys from an area where the “comandos” had a strong presence, identified the importance of alternative models, the ability to reflect and construct positive meanings in the face of adversity and non-violent peer groups in keeping low-income youth away from violent groups (Barker, 2001).

Resilience is a concept that helps us understand the subjective realities and the individual differences that youth exhibit, and offers insights in how to stimulate positive ways to overcome adversity in particularly difficult contexts.

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# MODULE 2



## Educational Activities

Author:

**FROM VIOLENCE TO  
PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE**



Instituto PROMUNDO

 **OVERVIEW**

This module presents a series of group activities, prepared and tested in the field, to be applied in groups of young men, concerning the question of preventing violence and promoting peace. These activities, whenever possible, have taken into account the research into violence and young men and the factors associated with violence mentioned in Module 1. However, even though participation in group reflection activities is useful, it is

not necessarily enough to change the behavior of young people. Nevertheless, we have noticed in practice that these activities are effective in bringing about changes of attitude in young men in the short term. As such, we recommend the use of these activities as part of a broader integrated program of preventing violence and promoting peace which includes families, communities, schools, youth organizations, the media, public policymakers, and of course, young men themselves.



This activity presents a methodology for fostering and encouraging respect in communication among the group, using a traditional stick or staff of authority.

# Activity 1

## Talking Stick

**Purpose:** To promote communication and dialogue based on respect among the young men.

**Materials required:** A stick, preferably carved wood or other ceremonial stick or staff.

**Recommended Time:** 1 hour

**Planning tips/notes:** In many countries in Latin America, we use a ceremonial stick used by indigenous groups. If one cannot be found, improvise. A piece of cane can be used, a baseball bat, a rolling pin, or a club made of wood or metal. Even a broom stick serves the purpose. While it is preferable to have an authentic talking stick or ceremonial staff, the most important thing

is the meaning that the group attaches to the stick. The group can also create its own stick, writing their names or the name of the group on it or painting it.

This activity is good to start the process of discussing violence (and all the other themes in this manual series), because it can also be used to create rules for the orderly functioning of the group. While they are talking about the rules of the stick ritual, the facilitator can ask the group if there are any other rules for the peaceful coexistence or functioning of the group that they would like to include.

In some groups this activity might seem too rigid and can only be used for one session. In other groups, it can be used for the following activities or returned to every now and then.



## The History of the Talking Stick

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The idea of the talking stick began with groups of North American Indians who used it in ceremonies as a type of scepter. At times, when groups of men from the tribe sat down in a circle at the end of the day to discuss any disagreements or for the older Indians to pass on information and oral traditions to the younger members. The talking stick represented the power of the tribal chief or leader. When he took the stick, it was a sign for the others to remain quiet and listen to his words. When another man wanted to speak, he asked permission to hold the stick, and then he was acknowledged by the others as having the right to speak. Symbolically, passing on the stick signified passing on the power and the right to be heard by the other members of the tribe.

In many cases, the stick can also be used as a weapon. It is a piece of wood or a heavy club which can also be used to defend someone or attack a person or an animal. The person that holds the stick has a potential weapon in his hands. The relationship and the discussions among the persons has a similar meaning: through our words and our body we can construct relationships based on respect or we can offend someone. The same ability to speak and express ourselves can bring people closer or can be also used to insult them. The same hand that can caress or embrace others, can also be used to hit them. The talking stick can be used by the group as a symbol of cooperation or as a weapon.

The objective of the talking stick is to promote understanding and dialogue, distributing power among everyone. Each member of the group has the right to ask for the stick, and must respect the person that is holding it, waiting for him to stop talking. And each person who holds the stick must also be ready to give it up.

This activity was used initially with a group of young men with whom PROMUNDO works in a low income area of Rio de Janeiro. When we started working with the young men, they were not used to waiting their turn to speak, and showed little respect when someone else was speaking, whether it was an adult or another young man. The conversation or discussion among them sometimes led to threats of force, albeit half-hearted, as well as criticism or insults. With the use of the talking stick activity, we observed a striking change in attitudes at the group meetings. They began to listen to one another and the young men themselves began to insist on the use of the stick and compliance with the rules. After some time (over six months) we stopped using the stick because the practice of listening and following turns when speaking had already been incorporated into the group.



## LINK

This activity can be used for all the other sections in this series. It seeks to introduce a style of dialogue - of listening to the other person and respecting what they say - which is necessary for all the activities.

## Procedure

- 1- Ask the group to sit in a circle.
- 2- Holding the stick in front of you, tell the story of the talking stick to the group.
- 3- Pass the stick around the group, insuring that everyone has the chance to hold it in his hands.
- 4- When the stick returns to you, ask the group to say what they think about the use of the stick as a way of commencing the discussion. Use this question as an opportunity to introduce the ritual of the talking stick. Participants who wish to speak should address you to ask for the stick, and then the next participant should address whoever has the stick at that moment to ask him for it and so on. As the facilitator of the group, the stick should not return to you each time. It should be passed directly between the members of the group, allowing them to control the discussion themselves. When the facilitator wants to speak, he should request the stick from whoever is holding it.
- 5- Explain to the group that you are going to read a series of cases or stories to be discussed in the group. Using the stick, ask the members of the group to discuss each case, giving their opinions. If the participants try to speak without asking for the stick beforehand, repeat the rules of the ritual.
- 6- If time allows, and depending on the group and the facilitator, discuss additional cases in the same way.
- 7- Discuss the following questions.

## Discussion questions

-  How does the use of the talking stick affect you when discussing these questions?
-  How do you feel when you are holding the stick or when someone else asks to speak?
-  When you are in a group of male friends what are the discussions like?
-  When we are discussing a particular theme or a case in the group, should everyone have the same opinion?
-  What is the difference between consensus and unanimity? Is it possible to reach a consensus even when not everyone agrees with the final decision or opinion?
-  Why at times do we not want to speak in the group?
-  Thinking about the examples in the cases described, what is violence? Is there a clear or simple definition?



## CLOSING

-  Ask the group if they want to carry on using the talking stick in other activities. You can also ask the group if they want to be responsible for guarding the talking stick between sessions.

## Cases of Violence for Discussion

In Brazil, there is a political movement called the Movimento dos Sem Teto - The Homeless Movement, which represents people with no income and no land or homes. Periodically, they demonstrate by occupying land and in urban areas they organize protests drawing attention to the needs of low-income families and to the unequal income distribution in Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro, about 50 members of the movement recently walked into a supermarket and began to fill their carts with various products. The customers who were in the store became frightened and began to leave. The supermarket staff did not know what to do. The group that organize the protest, all homeless persons, got to the check-out and tried to pay with a check called a "misery check", a symbolic check that had no value in reais but which represented the millions of dollars siphoned off from public money through corruption. What do you think about the tactics of this group? If you were the manager of this supermarket, what would you do?

You are dancing with a group of friends. When you are about to leave, you see a couple (a boy and a girl, apparently boyfriend/girlfriend) arguing at the entrance. He calls her a bitch and asks her why she was flirting with another guy. She says: "I was not looking at him ... and even if I was, aren't I with you?" He shouts at her again. Finally she says: "You don't own me". He hits her and she falls down. She screams at him, saying that he has no right to do that. What would you do? Would you leave? Would you say anything? Would it be different if it was one guy hitting another?

William asks Susana to go out with him one afternoon. They chat a little, have a bite to eat, and William invites her to a motel, saying he has some money to spend a few hours there. Susana agrees. They get to the motel and begin kissing and caressing. William begins to take off his clothes. Susana stops and says that she doesn't want to make love. William is furious. He tells her that he has spent a lot of money going there and says: "What are my friends going to say?" He pressures her to get her to change her mind. First he tries to be seductive, then he begins yelling at her in frustration. Then he begins pulling at her forcefully, pushing her down on the bed. What do you think he should have done? What do you think Susana should have done?

Pedro has had a hard day at school. His mother is giving him a hard time because of his grades and tells him that he can't go out that night. In class, he's unable to answer a question that the teacher asks him. In the playground, after the class, Sandra, a girl in Pedro's class, laughs at him because he couldn't answer such an easy question. "It was so easy. Are you really that stupid?" Pedro tells her to shut up and pushes her against the wall. Sandra is furious and says: "If you touch me again, you just wait and see..." Pedro replies: "No, you just wait and see..." He slaps her across the face, turns around and walks away. Sandra tells Luis, her eldest brother what has happened. Luis looks for Pedro that evening. What should he (Pedro) do? What should Luis do?

This activity consists of openly talking about the violence that we suffer and perpetrate.

## Activity 2

### Violence Clothesline

**Purpose:** Identify the forms of violence that we perpetrate or that are committed against us.

**Materials required:** String for the clothesline. Tape. Three sheets of paper (A4 size or equivalent) for each participant. Clothes pins.

**Recommended time:** 1 hour and a half

**Planning tips/notes:** When we talk about violence, we think mainly of physical aggression. It is important to discuss other forms of violence besides physical violence. It is also important to help young people think about the acts of violence that they perpetrate, because very often we think that it is the other persons who are violent but never ourselves. With the use of this activity, we observed that for the young people we worked with it was much easier to talk about the violence they had suffered. Describing acts of violence – particularly those that occur outside their homes – was easy. We even noticed that they felt a certain relief in being able to relate these experiences which they had survived. Commenting on or talking about violence committed against them inside their homes was a more delicate matter. Some commented on domestic vio-

lence, but did not want to go into details, and we did not insist. Talking about violence which they had committed was even harder. First, because they always wanted to justify themselves, blaming the other person for being the aggressor. This activity provided material for two work sessions. Should you feel that the participants do not wish to expose personal details about themselves, consider alternative activities in this manual that require less personal “disclosure.” As mentioned in Module 1, being a victim of interpersonal violence is associated with committing acts of violence later. Helping young men grasp this connection and think about the pain that violence has caused them is a potential way of interrupting the victim-to-aggressor cycle of violence. If any young person reports that he is suffering any type of violence or that he has suffered recently any type of abuse – including sexual abuse or systematic physical abuse at home – and is less than 18 years old, in some countries, the facilitator must report the fact to the child and adolescent protection authorities. Before carrying out any task in this manual, the facilitator should consult his or her own organization to clarify the ethical and legal aspects related to that country concerning violence against young persons under 18.

## Procedure

1- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to talk about the violence we practice and the violence practiced against us, and talk about our feelings in relation to this.

2- Explain that we will set up 4 clotheslines and that all the participants should write a few words on the sheets of paper and hang them up on the line.

3- Give each participant 4 sheets of paper (A4 size).

4- Place on each clothesline the following titles:

-  Violence practiced against me
-  Violence that I practice
-  How I feel when I practice violence
-  How I feel when violence is practiced against me

5- Ask each participant to think for a while and write a short reply for each item. Each person should write at least one reply for each clothesline (or category). Allow about 10 minutes for this task. Explain to them that they should not write much, just a few words or a phrase, and place it on the corresponding clothesline.

6- Ask the participants, one by one, to read out their replies to the group. They can give other explanations which become necessary, and the other participants can question them about their reply.

7- After each person has placed their replies on the clothesline, the following questions are discussed, using the talking stick if so desired.

### CLOSING

-  Ask the group what it was like for them to talk about the violence they have experienced. If anyone in the group shows a need for special attention due to an act of violence they have suffered, the facilitator should consider referring the young man to appropriate services and discuss the issue with other senior staff at your organizations.

## Discussion questions

-  What is the most common type of violence practiced against us?
-  How do we feel about being a victim of this type of violence?
-  What is the most common type of violence we commit against others?
-  How do we know if we are really committing violence against someone?
-  Is there any connection between the violence we practice and the violence we are victims of?
-  How do we feel when we practice violence?
-  Is any kind of violence worse than another?
-  In general, when we are violent or when we suffer violence, do we talk about it? Do we report it? Do we talk about how we feel? If we do not, why not?
-  Some researchers say that violence is like a cycle, that is to say, someone who is a victim of violence is more likely to commit acts of violence later. If this is true, how can we interrupt this cycle of violence?



### LINK

Some young people may feel that they want to do something about the violence around them after participating in this activity. Refer to or make use of other activities, particularly activities 4 and 11 in this section, which are designed for this purpose.

This activity discusses the relationship between the idea of male honor and acts of violence, presenting the history of male honor and cases for group discussion.



## Activity 3

### A Live Fool or a Dead Hero: Male Honor

**Purpose:** To discuss how male “honor” is associated with violence and how we can think of alternatives to violence when we feel insulted.

**Materials required:** A space to work and creativity. Enclosed Resource Sheet.

**Recommended time:** 2 hours (or 2 sessions of 1 hour each).

**Planning tips/notes:** Some groups find it difficult to construct a story or choose the actors to dramatize it. It is important that the facilitator is aware of this and creates a suitable atmosphere to get things moving, emphasizing the fact that they do not need to be “real

actors” and that they do not have to worry about having a sophisticated play or story.

As was discussed previously in Module 1, one of the factors associated with violence among young men is the question of insults and honor. Research suggests that many killings among young men commence with verbal discussions – whether about a football game, about a girlfriend or an insult – escalating from an exchange of blows to homicide. Other studies suggest that young men have a greater propensity to use violence when they attribute hostile attitudes to other young men. This activity seeks to help young men understand why they sometimes act this way; how such behavior may give rise to violent incidents, and how it is possible to change such behavior.

## Procedure

1- Divide the participants into groups of 5 to 6 members. Explain that they have to create and present a short skit about an exchange of insults or an argument between young men.  
2- Once the groups are formed, hand out a sheet of paper to each group with one of the following situations:

Marcio and Fabio are arguing at break-time because of school work. One accuses the other of having cheated off of him. Marcio says that he will wait for him outside to settle the matter. When the class is over.....

A group of friends are at a football game. They are fans of the same team. A fight begins when another fan of the opposing team arrives and ....

A group of friends are in a bar. A fight begins between one of the young men and a stranger (another young man) when ...

A group of friends go dancing. One of them, Leo, sees that some guy is staring at his girlfriend. A fight begins when Leo...

Samuel is stopped in his car in traffic. When he drives off and wants to turn right, another car on his left cuts him off, forcing him to brake sharply. Samuel decides to...

3- Explain that the activity consists of developing a short skit based on what is written on the sheet handed out to each group. The skit should last from 3 to 5 minutes. Explain that they can add any details they like.  
4- Give the participants about 20 minutes to discuss it among themselves and put on the play.  
5- Ask the groups to perform their plays. After each one, allow time for discussion and comments.  
6- Discuss the questions below.  
7- Then, read out and discuss the "Resource Sheet: Where does 'Male Honor' come from?"

## Discussion questions

-  Are these situations realistic?
-  Why do we sometimes react this way?
-  When you are confronted with a similar situation, in which you have been insulted, how do you normally react?
-  How can you reduce the tension or aggression in a situation like this?
-  Can a real man walk away from a fight?



## CLOSING

 The Resource Sheet that follows can be useful to help young men reflect on where the concept of "male honor" comes from, that is to say, the historical and cultural context. Many men believe that this type of attitude in the face of an insult is "natural" and universal. Using the resource sheet, the facilitator can help in deconstructing or questioning this type of behavior.

# Resource Sheet

## Where does Male “honor” Come from?

In many cultures, a man’s name, honor and pride are important factors, sometimes taken to extremes. Some researchers suggest that the “honor culture” in some parts of the Americas comes from the nature of colonizing these frontier regions. In rural Mexico, in parts of South America and the Southern parts of the USA, men often herded livestock on land in regions where boundaries and borders were not clearly defined. There was no judicial or law enforcement system nearby (it is common in cowboy films to have disputes over land where the sheriff arrives a couple of days after the conflict started). To survive, the men believed that they themselves had to defend their property. In such a context, it was necessary for the men to be seen by others as someone “not to be messed with.” To be seen as an aggressive man or even dangerous meant that no one would bother you.

For some young men in gangs or even in violent urban settings, this type of thinking still remains. To make your name as a tough guy, even someone out of control, is a form of defense. If you think that another young man is a tough guy, perhaps is even armed, he can say anything and you will let it ride and not take him up on it. In some urban areas in Latin America, some young men know the importance of having a reputation like this – which means they will be respected and not be hassled by the others.

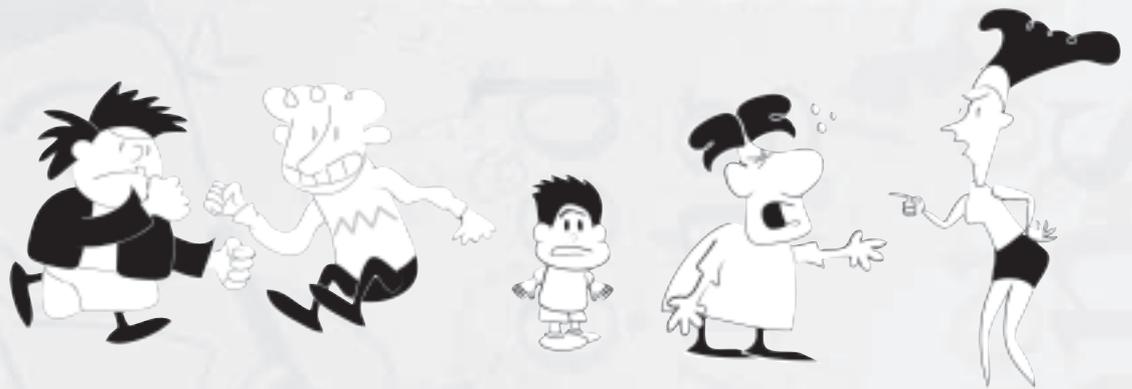
The “honor culture” is also found in Latin America in the form of “machismo,” which has its roots in European colonization and in the male domination found in some ethnic groups in the region. Machismo comes in part

from the Mediterranean countries of Europe, and is associated with the image of the tough guy who has many sexual partners (in addition to his wife), who protects his ‘honor’ and seeks out danger, often in the form of disputes or duels. From the machismo viewpoint, men are “sexual predators” and women are “pure and innocent”. According to the macho culture, a women’s place is in the home, while the man demonstrates his virility by having a large number of sexual conquests and a large number of children. Thus, for the macho, a ‘real man’ is someone who protects the honor of the women in his family – his wife, sisters and mother. They should be “pure” and their sexual life and honor should never be brought into question. A man in a bar, who wants to fight another, has only to direct his gaze at the other’s girlfriend and the age-old traditional scene is played out. The same would occur if he said something about the other’s mother or sister.

These and other forms of “male honor” are deeply rooted in our culture. How many times have we not seen groups of men trading insults? How many of these insults have something to do with sexual conquests? How many jokes, stories of insults are related to supposed sexual conquests? Think of how many expressions we have to “tarnish” the reputation of someone else’s mother. Is it just a coincidence that we provoke another man by saying: “son of a bitch” (or in Spanish or Portuguese, “son of a whore”) or “go fuck your mother?” This is the worst insult that a ‘real man,’ in the macho world, can be faced with – someone doubting the honor and purity of his mother, and hence doubting his very honor.

## Discussion questions

-  What does machismo mean to us?
-  Does machismo still exist? Is the ‘honor culture’ still intact?
-  What can we do to change this ‘honor culture?’
-  Knowing where this comes from, does this help us to change it?



This activity has a 'homework' assignment which consists of observing and noting the examples of daily violence that surround us.

## Activity 4

### The Violence around Me<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** To critically discuss the violence that we see in daily life, including what happens in the street, in our homes, school, workplace and in the media<sup>1</sup>.

**Materials required:** A worksheet or notebook for each participant.

**Recommended Time:** 1 hour for the group activity. A week to do the "field work".

**Planning tips/notes:** This activity is to be used as a "homework" assignment. The participants will maintain a "field diary" for a week on forms of violence that they see in their daily life, whether in the street, at home, at school, in the workplace, in the media and elsewhere. This diary is a small workbook where the participant should register what he has seen, what he felt, what he thought or was able to do when confronted with a violent situation. The facilitator should

present this activity a week before the day for presenting the results, explaining the purpose to the participants and handing out a workbook to each of them for their "field diary." Unlike the "Violence Clothesline," this activity is designed to draw attention to the minor cases of violence that we observe in daily life, particularly images of violence that we often ignore. Try to get the participants to find examples of images and acts of violence that we see in daily life in order to provide a few tips about what they can observe and note in their "field diaries."

The purpose of this activity is to produce a critical reflection on images in the media and acts of violence – minor and major – that we witness, critically perceiving their explicit or subtle characteristics. But it also serves as an indication of how young men perceive violence – certain habits and behavior are so deeply ingrained that minor daily acts of violence are not even perceived.

<sup>1</sup>This activity was inspired and based on the video, "Artigo 2<sup>o</sup>" produced by the ECOS.

## Procedure

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1- A week before, explain to the young men that they are going to keep a “field diary” about the violence that they see around them. Explain that the idea of the “diary” is for them to note acts of violence or violent images that they observe around them for one week. Suggest that they look for it in their schools, at home, in the street, in the workplace, in the community, in the media (that is, on television, in magazines and newspapers, etc.) and in the other places that they frequent. The degree of detail in the diary is up to them. They can write a few words, a few phrases or feelings and thoughts that they had about the violence observed.

2- Ask the group if the purpose of the activity is clear and hand out the “field diaries.” Ask the group to think of some forms of violence or images of violence that they recall seeing around them. You may want to add a few

suggestions on the format for the diary, for example: (1) What did I see?; (2) What did I feel when confronted with this violence?; (3) What can I do?

3- The following week, ask the participants what it was like keeping the diary and what kind of violence they observed.

4- Divide the participants into smaller groups of 4 or 5 participants and ask these groups to present their diaries, telling the whole group about the images and acts of violence they have seen.

5- On forming the groups, ask each group to choose a rapporteur or spokesman who will present the findings of his group to the others.

6- Allow between 20 and 30 minutes for the groups to discuss their diaries and findings.

7- Join everyone together again and ask the spokesman of each group to give a short presentation to the whole group (2 to 3 minutes at the most).

8- When all the groups have presented their findings, discuss the following questions.

## Discussion questions

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-  What are the most common types of violence that we see around us?
-  What images of violence do we see in the media? Why does the media show so many images of violence?
-  What are the places where we see or observe the most violence?
-  Observing this violence or images of violence, were the violent persons generally men or women? Young or adult? And the victims?
-  How do we feel on observing this violence, whether in real life or in the media?
-  What do you think are the effects or consequences for us of so much violence in our daily life?
-  What do you think are the effects and consequences of seeing so much violence in the media?

## CLOSING

 To close the session, the facilitator may want to use a video with various images of TV violence recorded in one’s own country, followed by comments on these images. Resources permitting, one can also close this activity showing a recent movie that includes images of violence. There are, unfortunately, thousands of films and videos that include numerous scenes of violence. Using a film

can also stimulate the discussion with young men about the type of image, the type of character, etc. For example, a Brad Pitt/Edward Norton film - “Fight Club” portrays a club where a group of young males practice “free fighting” and where each new member has to go through an initiation ritual. Codes of honor, the demonstration of physical strength and the capacity to take punishment without showing pain or fear are an integral part of the story of the film.

This activity uses role plays to imagine what it would be like if we were other people living in different conditions and realities.

# Activity 5

## Diversity and Rights: Me and Others

**Purpose:** To encourage empathy with persons from different realities and discuss the origin of violence associated with persons from different ethnic groups and/or sexual orientation.

**Materials Required:** A4 paper sheets. Felt-tip pens. Tape.

**Recommended Time:** 1 hour and a half

**Planning tips/notes:** This activity generally causes considerable laughter as the participants have to play the role of persons of different sexual orientations and

social realities. Try to keep a light touch during the activity, without censoring anyone and seeking to foster respect for the differences that exist. Using this activity with a number of groups of young men, they asked for more phrases and we used this activity twice. Using it a second time allowed other themes, which they had doubts about and which needed clarification, to be dealt with: HIV and STIs, substance abuse, suicide, domestic violence - themes included in this manual and in the others in this series. In this way, this activity is a way of integrating the themes dealt with in the five manuals included here.

### Procedure

1- Before the group begins these activities, choose phrases that you consider to be most appropriate according to the list below. Write these phrases on a sheet of paper. Select a suitable number of sentences for each participant. If you like, create other phrases, other examples or repeat some, as required.  
2- Ask the participants to sit in a circle and close their eyes. Explain that a sheet of paper will be placed in their hands containing a word or phrase. After receiving the paper, the participants should read the phrase without making a comment and reflect personally on

what they would do if they were in that situation.

3- Ask each person to take a piece of tape and stick the paper on the front of his shirt.

4- Ask everyone to stand up and slowly walk around the room, reading the phrases of the other participants, greeting each other, but without speaking.

5- Afterwards ask the participants to form a circle and look at each other. Explain that each one should impersonate a character and invent a story that has something to do with the phrase they have received - a story that talks about the situation or reality of their character. Allow some time (5 minutes or so) for them to come up with their story.

I am HIV-positive  
I am a criminal (member of a gang or a drug trafficker)  
I am bisexual  
My father is in jail  
My girlfriend cheated on me  
I am heterosexual

My mother is a sex worker (a prostitute)  
I can't read  
I am an executive  
I have had sexual relations with another man, but I am not gay  
I have AIDS  
I am a Native American

- 6- Ask if someone will volunteer to begin. Then, each one, at random or going round the circle, talks about his story until everyone has had their turn. In some cases, one can allow participants to exchange their "case" with another participant.
- 7- Once everyone has told their story, ask them to return to their places, with the paper still stuck to their shirts.
- 8- Ask the participants, while still retaining their characters, to ask the others questions about their lives, their present situation, their problems and their realities. You may want to use the talking stick (see activity 1) to facilitate the discussion. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for this.
- 9- Discuss the following questions.

## Discussion questions

- Do you know any young person who has faced a similar situation to that described on your paper?
- What was it like for you to impersonate this character? How did you feel?
- In many places a young man that is "different" or who represents a minority is a target for discrimination and violence. For example, in Brazil and in the USA, there are groups of skinheads that beat up gays and blacks. Where do you think this hate comes from?
- How can the fact that someone is "different" from us lead to violence?

### CLOSING

You can conclude this activity by asking the participants about other examples of different persons or even of minorities that were not included. Sometimes examples of persons perceived as being different or minorities about which we have not thought provide more material for the activities and the work with young men.



### LINK

This activity is also very useful for discussing the question of persons living with HIV/AIDS in the section 5.

I am of European descent (or I am white)  
 I am gay  
 I am of African descent  
 I hit my girlfriend once  
 I once tried to kill myself  
 I am a cocaine addict  
 I am deaf

I am a street kid  
 I am a millionaire  
 I lost my arm in an accident  
 My girlfriend hit me  
 I am a father and I take care of my children  
 I am an alcoholic  
 I am unemployed

This activity consists of discussing certain cases in which young men run risks or are dared by their peers to take risks.

# Activity 6

## Risk and Violence: Tests of Courage

**Purpose:** To reflect on “tests of courage” and exposure to risks to demonstrate courage, virility and masculinity, as a way of gaining acceptance by the peer group.

**Materials required:** A space to work and creativity.

**Recommended time:** 1 hour and a half

**Planning tips/notes:** Frequently, to be accepted by a group of friends, young men tend to place themselves in risky situations as a test of courage and virility. Anyone who refuses to do so, is accused of being weak, square or a coward. Sometimes, the desire to experi-

ence a new emotion, facing dangerous and challenging situations, also induces young men to expose themselves to risks. Some of these incidents have a tragic ending, resulting in injury, sometimes serious and irreversible, if not in death. Why do young men feel they have to prove their courage? This activity seeks to encourage a discussion on the question, since often young men are too embarrassed to talk about it, or simply do not want to talk about the subject. The examples included here should be adapted to each setting, as “tests of courage” vary from place to place, depending on the country, town, social class, urban or rural environment, etc.

### Procedure

- 1- Explain that the activity aims at talking about tests of courage and exposure to risk and danger.
- 2- Ask the group to divide themselves into smaller groups of 4 to 5 participants. Each of the groups will receive a sheet of paper with the start of a story which they will have to complete in any way they like and then present to the others, preferably by staging a short skit based on the narrative of the story.
- 3- Allow each group about 20 minutes to complete this task.
- 4- Ask each group to present their skit or ideas and then open up the discussion using the dis-

### Discussion questions

- What tests of courage have we performed?
- What did we want to prove and to whom?
- What is it like to experience danger?
- How did we feel?
- Did you ever think something might have gone wrong?
- And what if it left a mark on your body (a scar or something like that)?
- And if we refused to perform one of these “tests of courage,” where would that leave us?
- Does anyone know of a case like this that had a tragic end?

## Cases for Discussion:

Gabriel used to go to a dance with his friends every weekend. Some of them always rode on top of the bus (which they called "bus surfing") just for the thrill of it. They were always saying that Gabriel was a wimp because he never wanted to go on top with the rest of the gang. One day, coming back from the dance, Gabriel decided ...

Chico loves the beach, but he doesn't know how to swim properly. Last weekend his oldest brother with his group of friends decided to go to the beach when the sea was rough and treacherous. Everyone rushed into the sea but Chico was too afraid to go in. Egged on by his brother's oldest friends, Chico dived into the sea and almost drowned. Chico was called a real loser by his friends and he ....

Victor was new at the school. He had a large scar on his forehead. Everybody asked him what had happened. Victor was proud of his scar, saying that he had had a real adventure. He began to tell his story ...

Mauro was already a senior at his school. When the new term began he and his group were preparing the initiation ritual for new students. Only this time, they wanted something a little more radical for the newcomers. So they decided to ....

Luis is crazy about motorcycles. After he bought his motorcycle, that was all he could think about. He was invited by some school friends to go watch some guys playing "chicken" in a nearby neighborhood. When he got there, Luis was challenged by another guy who was performing wild antics on his bike to see who was the best. Luis refused and then ....

Alex was an office-boy who took the train downtown every day from the suburbs where he lived. He loved to "surf" on top of the trains, dodging the high voltage cables. One day Alex was distracted for a moment and....



### LINK

In the "Reasons and Emotions" section, there are references to the question of the body, self-care and self-esteem. Activity 5: Caring for Oneself: Men, Gender and Health, in the section on "Fatherhood and Caregiving" also connects well with this activity.

### ▼ CLOSING

Ask the group what their impressions are concerning the stories related, as well as their own personal stories, establishing a link between tests of courage and exposure to risk with the question of being a man and different masculinities. The facilitator can conclude this activity presenting data from the World Health Organization which shows that the level of morbidity and mortality among

young men is related, among other factors, to accidents caused by their exposure to situations of risk. The facilitator can also reflect on the fact that, if to be a real man, it is necessary to submit to tests of masculinity which involve risk and violence, this ends up constituting an act of violence against oneself. Concern with physical integrity, with your own body, represents an important point in discussing the development and health of a young man.

This activity presents various situations involving sexual violence, where young men are asked to determine what is and what isn't sexual violence.

# Activity 7

## Sexual Violence: Is it or isn't it?<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** To discuss what sexual violence is, what conditions foster it and how we can reduce it or prevent it.

**Materials required:** Flip-chart. Felt-tip pens. Tape.

**Recommended time:** 1 hour.

**Planning tips/notes:** Before presenting this activity, it might be useful for the facilitator to look for data in his/her community or country concerning different forms of sexual violence, information about the laws in force, as well as information about organizations that offer support to persons who have suffered sexual violence. This information can be useful when replying to questions that the participants might ask during or following this activity. Also before applying the activity, the facilitator should revise the phrases to see which he/she thinks relevant, and add other examples appropriate to the local area. You may encounter some resistance in discussing the theme of sexual

violence. In other places, there are already campaigns about sexual violence, and the examples included here might seem a little too obvious. In the same way that talking about other forms of violence might cause discomfort, in view of possible connections with the personal stories of the participants, in the case of sexual violence there might be young people in the group who have suffered some type of sexual violence in childhood or adolescence and who might need help. On various occasions, we have come across young men who have suffered sexual violence (from men and women), but have never spoken with anybody about the matter out of shame - they were convinced that nobody would believe that a man could be the victim of sexual violence (particularly when the perpetrator was a woman). Others, on some occasions, knew of female friends that had been victims of sexual violence. The facilitator should be prepared for such sensitive cases and even for participants that might need special help, even if this does not always occur.

## Procedure

1- Before starting the activity, write the following phrases, one on each sheet of paper:

It is sexual violence

It is not sexual violence

I don't know

2- Explain to the participants that you are going to read a series of cases and you want them to think about whether the situation described represents sexual violence or not. Tell them if they do not know or are not sure, they can say so.

3- Stick the three "posters" on the wall leaving a good space between them. Explain that you are going to read a case and are going to ask the participants to decide which poster, in their view, fits. "It is sexual violence". "It is not sexual violence". "I am in doubt (or I don't know)".

4- Explain that once they have made a decision, you will ask one or more members of the group

<sup>1</sup>The format of this activity was adapted from the activity "Choice of Values" from the curriculum, "Life Planning Education", Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC, USA. For more information, consult the Advocates for Youth website, [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org).



of each category to defend their point of view.  
5- Before starting the activity consider what is most appropriate and, of course, include and invent others. Read out one of the following paragraphs.

6- Allow each group about 5 to 7 minutes to discuss each case.

7- After presenting the number of cases that you think fit, discuss in groups according to the three categories of opinion. The facilitator can make use of the legislation on sexual abuse or sexual violence in his/her country. The attached Resource Sheet can also be used if helpful.

8- Discuss the following questions.

Felipe begins to work as an administrative assistant in a well-known firm a few months ago and is enjoying the work and the job. One night, his boss, Roberto, says that he likes Felipe very much, finds him attractive and wants to have sex with him. He says that if Felipe agrees he will help further his career in the firm. Is it sexual violence?

Pablo and Maria Helena have been married for two years. Sometimes Pablo gets home late and Maria Helena is already sleeping. He wakes her up to have sex with her. Sometimes she does not want to, but even so, Pablo insists and they have sex. Is it sexual violence?

Ricky is 15 years old and is still a virgin. His group of friends are always laughing at him for this, saying he is not a real man. One night, they take him to a whore house and pay a sex worker to have sex with him. He doesn't want to, but ends up having sex with her, because he feels under pressure from his friends. Is it sexual violence?

Everybody says that Linda is a bit of a slut. She goes around saying that she has slept with lots of guys and that she loves sex. She goes to Pedro's party, drinks a lot, and passes out. Pedro has sex with her while she's still unconscious, and invites several of his friends to have sex with her too. Is it sexual violence?

Luisa says that she wants to go to bed with Fred. She takes off her clothes and is in bed with him when she decides she no longer wants to have sex. He forces her. Is it sexual violence?

When Leonardo was 13, a female friend of his mother, Alice, sometimes stayed over to look after Leonardo when his parents went out at night. Alice is the same age as his mother. One night, when Leonardo went to take a shower, Alice got into the shower with him. Leonardo did not know what to do. He stood there paralyzed in front of her. She said to him: "What are you standing there for? Be a real man and make love to me". Leonardo had sex with her. Afterwards he felt strange, but was not sure if he could talk with anyone about it. Is it sexual violence?

## Discussion questions

- ✎ Are these situations realistic?
- ✎ What is sexual violence?
- ✎ What is gender violence?
- ✎ Is all sexual violence a crime?
- ✎ What can we do to prevent sexual violence?
- ✎ Who is more subject to sexual violence, men or women? Why?
- ✎ Can a man also be a victim of sexual violence?
- ✎ What do you think are the consequences of having suffered sexual violence ?



## LINK

The question of sexual violence also brings to light the question of abortion and emergency contraception, which is included in the section on “Sexuality and Reproductive Health”.

## ▼ CLOSING

 After commenting on the discussion questions, and depending on the level of knowledge, it might be worthwhile to talk with the group about the meaning of gender violence and its various forms as presented in the Resource Sheet that follows. If it seems useful for the group, someone from their community who is a specialist in the theme of gender violence or sexual violence can be in-

ited to talk with the group. It might be worthwhile to consult other sources of additional information that talk about the consequences of sexual violence. It is known that many adult men who are sexually violent were also victims of some type of violence in their childhood or adolescence. Demonstrate the importance of identifying cases of sexual violence and other acts of violence against children and adolescents in order to interrupt the cycle of sexual violence.

# Resource Sheet: Defining Gender Violence

-  **Incest:** sexual relations between blood-related persons (fathers/daughters, mothers/sons, brothers, etc.).
-  **Sexual abuse:** refers to any type of intimate (sexual) physical contact between an adult and a child.
-  **Rape:** the use of physical force or threat in order to obtain sexual relations with penetration (oral, vaginal or anal).
-  **Sexual Exploitation:** taking advantage of or involving children or adolescents in the sexual satisfaction of adults, including activities such as child prostitution and pornography.
-  **Sexual Harassment:** is manifested through indecent proposals, obscene words and pressure to have sexual relations, which the other party does not want.
-  **Emotional Violence:** is violence manifested through insults, humiliations, threats, lack of affection, etc. The consequences for men and women may be low self-esteem, distrust and emotional insecurity.
-  **Physical Violence:** is violence which is expressed through punching, kicking, shoving and other acts which can provoke injury, endangering the health of a man or woman.

This activity uses role plays to present couple relationships showing violence and respect.

## Activity 8

### From Violence to Respect in Intimate Relationships<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** To discuss how we use violence in our intimate relationships and envision and identify intimate relationships based on respect.

**Materials Required:** Flip-chart. Felt-tip pens. Tape.

**Recommended time:** 1 hour and a half

**Planning tips/notes:** This activity uses role plays with female characters. If you are working with a male-only group, some of them may be reluctant to interpret a female character. Encourage the group to be flexible. If none of the young men want to interpret a female character, you can ask them to describe the scenes using the flip-chart, for example. What is very apparent, in the Brazilian context where we work and developed this activity, is the impotence that

young men feel in responding to the violence that they see other men perpetrating. Many are afraid to talk about domestic violence, repeating a common saying in Brazil that in a husband-and-wife fight, no one should stick their nose in. Through this activity the facilitator should try to talk about the silence and impotence which we feel in witnessing domestic violence. Another thing we notice in using this activity is that the young men in the setting where we work have little contact or knowledge of intimate relationships - whether courting or adult couple relationships - based on mutual respect and dialogue. The degree of conflict in daily, intimate relationships where we work is extremely high, showing the need to work with men and women and get them to think about the question: How can we form relationships between men and women based on respect? What does a healthy intimate relationship look like?

## Procedure

1- Explain to the group that the objective of this activity is to discuss and analyze the various types of violence that we sometimes use in our intimate relationships and discuss ways of demonstrating and experiencing intimate relationships based on respect.

2- Divide the participants into 4 groups (or less, depending on the total number of participants in the group), with 5 or 6

members in each group, and ask them to invent a short role play or skit.

3- Ask two groups to present an intimate relationship - boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife or boyfriend/boyfriend - which shows scenes of violence. Explain that the violence can be physical but does not necessarily have to be. Ask them to try to be realistic, using examples of persons and incidents that they

<sup>1</sup> When we refer to intimate relationships and intimacy, we are seeking to emphasize courting/dating and "casual" relationships, that is to say, those with amorous, affectionate/romantic involvement which might or might not include sexual involvement. We prefer not to use "couple relationships" because young people do not always associate "casual"/dating relationships with a stable "couple relationship."

have witnessed or they have heard about in their communities.

4- Ask the other groups to also present an intimate relationship but based on mutual respect. There may be conflicts or differences of opinion, but the presentation should show respect in the relationship and should not include violence. Allow 15 to 20 minutes to develop the story or the scenes and then ask them to present it to the group.

5- Each group should have around 5 to 10 minutes to present their skits, with the other groups being allowed to ask questions at the end.

6- When all the groups have had their turn, using the flip-chart, make a list: what are the characteristics of a violent relationship? Encourage the participants to reflect on the different forms of violence in intimate relationships (control, coercion, shouting ...) as well as physical violence. Use the stories as an example and ask: what are the characteristics of the individual or of the relationship itself, in the cases that were presented, which demonstrate violence?

7- Placing the list on the wall, begin to list the following: what characteristics make a relationship healthy? Ask the group to think about what is necessary to achieve a relationship based on respect.

8- Discuss the following questions.

## Discussion questions

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-  Were the examples used in the skits realistic? Do we see these things in our daily life?
-  What for you are the causes of the domestic violence or the violence in the relationship?
-  Do only men use physical violence against women, or are women also violent toward men?
-  When you see this type of violence, what do you normally do? What could you do?
-  Are the examples of a healthy relationship that were shown in the stories realistic? Is it possible to construct an intimate relationship based on respect? Do we see it in our daily lives?
-  What can we do individually to construct healthy intimate relationships?

### CLOSING

 This activity seeks to encourage young men to discuss the realities of domestic violence, using examples from their own setting. Depending on the group, you can encourage the participants to look for additional information on domestic violence in their communities. The facilitator can also invite some-

one who works with women that has been the victim of domestic violence or who works with perpetrators of violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign, started in Canada and now adopted in various countries in Latin America, offers a series of materials for dealing with this theme in schools or communities and is designed to put an end to violence against women

This activity seeks to make the participants aware of the need to respect the sexual preferences of each person, making use of case studies.



## Activity 9

### Homophobia: Can a Man Like Another Man?<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** Promote reflection about homosexuality and homophobia, seeking to make the participants aware of the need for greater acceptance of sexual diversity.

**Materials required:** Flip-chart. Felt-tip pens. Tape.

**Recommended time:** 1 hour.

**Planning tips/notes:** This activity promotes a discussion on themes that are considered taboo in much of the world, or that are denied or which arouse anger and rejection. The facilitator who is going to discuss these themes should himself/herself examine his/her opinions and attitudes toward sexual diversity and

sexual orientation. The facilitator should seek to maintain a position of advocating respect toward people of every sexual orientation without, however, censoring the participants. The facilitator should listen to the young men's comments - even when homophobic - and question them, but without judging them. As we mentioned in Module 1, there are countless examples of the use of violence against gays, bisexuals and lesbians in various parts of Latin America. Homophobia is widespread and is a fundamental aspect of machismo, which is used to encourage young men to be violent so as not to be labeled as gays. Even when physical violence does not occur, many gay or bisexual-oriented individuals are the target of ridicule, taunting or discrimination.

<sup>1</sup> This activity was adapted from the activity "La historia sin fin," from the manual "Esto es cosa de hombres o de mujeres?," by MEXFAM, Mexico.

## Procedure

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- 1- Explain to the group that the purpose of the activity is to discuss and analyze homophobia. Ask the group to define homophobia.
- 2- Explain to the group that you are going to discuss examples of young men and women of different sexual orientations and practices.
- 3- Form a circle with all the participants. Explain to the group that you are going to start

a story and then they can invent the rest. Introduce the first case and then go round the group asking each person to add details to the story. You can stop after each story and ask the group: is this a realistic fact? Why do you think that the group conducted the story this way (in view of the nature of the themes it is preferable not to dramatize the story but in some groups one can construct a story and act it out). The idea is for each person to add details to the initial story.

- 4- Discuss the following questions.

## Possible Stories:

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One night, Beto went out with a group of friends, all from the same class at school. One of them, Rogerio, said: "Let's go and beat up some fags. I saw some transvestites in the square. Come on!" And then ...

One night, when he was down at the beach camping with a group of friends, Luis found himself in the same tent with his friend, Guillermo. They had had a few beers before going to the tent. Luis always considered himself to be heterosexual. He was thinking about sex with his girlfriend and became excited when he went to the tent. When Guillermo saw that Luis was excited, he began....

When he was 18, Tomas had his first sexual experience with another man, and from then on he knew he was gay. He had many partners before he met Jose. They were together for a long time and finally decided to tell their families and move in together...

At 17, Fernando thought he was bisexual. He liked sex with girls and with boys. One night his father saw him embracing another boy and when Fernando got home his father started shouting at him....

Joana is a lesbian and does not hide the fact. She makes it clear to all her friends, boys and girls, that she is a lesbian and often wears pins and T-shirts that talk about gay rights. She was going home one night and found a group of boys waiting for her near her house. One of them said: "It's her. It's the dike". Then ....

Miguel has a friend called Sammy (a young man his own age) to whom he is attracted. Miguel is always by himself and has no girlfriends. Although he has been to bed with girls, he has never fallen in love. He is not really sure what this means...

## Discussion questions

- ✎ Are these examples realistic? Do we see these facts in real life?
- ✎ What is the difference between lesbian, gay and bisexual?
- ✎ Can a person have sexual relations with someone of the same sex and be heterosexual?
- ✎ Why is it difficult for many people to accept homosexuality or homosexual behavior?
- ✎ What type of violence against gays or lesbians have you seen or heard about?
- ✎ What do you think about this type of violence?
- ✎ Have you ever been called gay by some of your friends for not doing something, such as fighting? What do you think about this?



### LINK

This activity is included in this section because homophobia is a form of gender violence. However, it is also relevant for the sections on “Sexuality and Reproductive Health” and “Preventing and Living with HIV/AIDS”.

### ▼ CLOSING

✎ Some groups of young men might deny the existence of homosexual behavior or gay or bisexual persons in their community. Explain to the group that homosexual behavior has been recorded around the world (and throughout history) and that between 10 and 15% of male adults and adolescents interviewed in various countries in Latin America said that they have had sex at least once with another man - including those

that consider themselves to be heterosexual.

✎ You can also provide examples of organizations or campaigns or even legal mechanisms found in some part of Latin America which deal with homophobia and which promote the acceptance of sexual diversity or the rights of gay or bisexual persons. The facilitator can also consider the possibility of inviting a member of one such group or organization to make a presentation or to suggest that the group visit one of these organizations. Finally, you can also go back to the theme of how homophobia forms part of male socialization.

This activity seeks to enable young men to recognize when they are angry and how to express their anger.



# Activity 10

## What Do I Do When I am Angry?<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** To help the participants to think about how to identify when they are angry and how to express their anger in a constructive and non-destructive way.

**Materials required:** Flip-chart. A4 paper. Felt-tip pens. Tape. Copies of the Resource Sheet for each participant.

**Recommended Time:** 1 hour.

**Planning tips/notes:** In general, boys and men are socialized not to talk about what they feel. When we feel frustrated or sad, we are encouraged not to talk about it. Very often by not talking, the frustration or anger builds up until it is expressed through physical aggression or shouting. This activity can be useful and can be a reference for the rest of the process, since there will always be conflicts in the group. In the event of conflicts, the facilitator should remind them: "Use words, but don't offend."

### Procedure

1- Begin the activity with a short introduction to the theme, as for example:

*Many adolescents and men confuse anger and violence, thinking they are the same things. It should be stressed that anger is an emotion, a natural and normal emotion that every human being feels at some point in life. Violence is a way of expressing anger, that is to say, it is a form of behavior that can express anger. But there are many other ways of expressing anger - better and more positive ways - than violence. If we learn to express our anger when we feel it, it can be better than allowing it to bottle up inside us, as many times when we allow our anger to build up, we tend to explode.*

2- Explain to the group that in this activity we are going to talk about how we react to anger.

3- Hand out a Resource Sheet (which follows) to each participant. Read out each question and ask the participants to answer the questions individually, giving them 2 or 3 minutes for each question.

4- After filling in the sheet, divide the group into small groups of 4 or 5 participants at the most. Ask them to comment, giving a short time for each one to say what he wrote to the others in the group. Allow 20 minutes for this group work.

5- With the participants still in the small groups, hand out a flip-chart and ask them to make a list of:

A.) *Negative ways of reacting when we are angry*

B.) *Positive ways of reacting when we are angry*

<sup>1</sup> This activity was adapted from the manual "Learning to Live without Violence: A Handbook for Men, Volcano Press, 1989.

6- Allow the groups 15 minutes to write out their lists and then ask each group to present their answers to the whole group.

7- It is very likely that on the list of "Positive Ways" one will find the tactics of: (1) **take a breath of fresh air, or count to 10**; and (2) **use words to express what we feel without offending**. It is important to stress that to "take a breath of fresh air" does not mean going out and jumping into the car (if that is the case) and driving around at high speed exposing oneself to risk or going to a bar and tanking up on alcohol. If these two tactics proposed here are not on any of the lists presented, explain them to the group. In short:

**To take a breath of fresh air** is simply to get out of the situation of conflict and anger, to get away from the person toward whom one is feeling angry. One can count to 10, breathe deeply, walk around a bit or do some other kind of physical activity, trying to cool down and keep calm. Generally, it is important for the person who is angry to explain to the other that he is going to take a breath of fresh air because he is feeling angry, something like: *"I'm really fed up with you and I need to take a breath of fresh air. I need to do something like go for a walk so as not to feel violent or start shouting. When I've cooled down and I'm calmer, we can talk things over."*

**Use words without offending** is to learn to express two things: (1) To say to the other person why you are so upset, and (2) to say what you want from the other person, without offending or insulting. For example:

*I am angry with you because:*

*I would like you to:*

Give an example for the group:

If your girlfriend arrives late for a date, you could react by shouting: *"You're a bitch, it's always the same, me standing here waiting for you."*

Or then, looking for words that do not offend, you could say:

*Look, I'm angry with you because you're late. I would like you to be on time, if not, let me know that you're going to be late.*

8- Discuss the following questions.

## Discussion questions

- Generally speaking, is it difficult for men to express their anger, without using violence? Why?
- Very often we know how to avoid a conflict or a fight, without using violence, but we don't do so. Why?
- Is it possible "to take a breath of fresh air" to reduce conflicts? Do we have experience with this activity? How did it work out?
- Is it possible "to use words without offending?"

### CLOSING

If there is time, an interesting way of concluding this activity is to ask the group to produce some role plays or think of other examples of situations or phrases that exemplify the difference between shouting or using offensive words and using words that do not offend.

### LINK

The activity on assertiveness in the section "Reasons and Emotions" also deals with the theme of expressing oneself without violence.

## Resource sheet: What to do When I am Angry?

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1- Think of a recent situation when you were angry. **What happened?** Write here a short description of the incident (one or two sentences).

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2- Now, thinking about this incident when you were angry, try to remember what you were thinking and feeling. Try to list here **one or two feelings that you felt in your body when you were angry:**

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3- Very often after we feel angry, we begin to react with violence. This can even happen before we realize that we are angry. Some men react immediately, shouting, throwing something on the floor, hitting something or someone. Sometimes, we can even become depressed, silent and introspective. **Thinking about the incident when you felt angry, how did you demonstrate this anger?** How did you behave? (Write a sentence or a few words about how you reacted, what you did or how you behaved when you were angry).

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This activity seeks to show examples of what the group can do in terms of promoting non-violence in their community.

# Activity 11

## Community Action: What Can I do to Promote Peaceful Coexistence?

**Purpose:** To encourage the participants to think of a joint project to draw attention to violence or reduce it in their community.

**Materials required:** Flip-chart. Copies for all the participants of the case studies.

**Recommended Time:** 1 and a half hours to commence with. The group will decide how long the campaigns will run.

**Planning tips/notes:** This activity tries to create a community project with young men to promote peace or non-violence in their communities. Some of the most promising and successful ways of preventing violence in the world are those created by young people themselves. In the same way as was mentioned in module 1,

young people who have a commitment to their communities and schools are much less likely to be violent or delinquent. Being part of the solution is in itself a form of prevention.

It is up to the facilitator to decide if the group is really in a position or is ready to take on an activity of this kind. This is the most flexible of all the activities in this manual. It is up to the young men and facilitators to decide on the approach. It might also require other people to collaborate on carrying it out. It is important for the facilitator to be realistic in terms of time and resources. Some organizations and facilitators are in a position to implement a community project, others are not. In our experience it is important to engage the young men at least partly in the solution, but we have to be realistic at the same time. It is important to allow the young men to dream, but the dreams need to be sound and well-designed.

### Procedure

1- Explain to the participants that the purpose of this activity is to stimulate them to discuss in groups what they can do in their communities to draw attention to violence or, working

together with other groups, to reduce violence.  
2- Explain to the group that in various parts of the Americas, young people themselves have put their ideas into practice for drawing attention to the question of violence, for example, by elaborating proposals to reduce the level of violence or putting forward solutions.

3- Explain to the participants that they can discuss various case studies of projects that have already been used by other young men in other communities.

4- Hand out copies of one or more case studies or include case studies that were carried out in your country or region.

5- Divide the whole group into smaller groups to discuss the respective cases, and ask the participants to read them. (Depending on the reading level of the participants the facilitator can even read the studies to them out loud).

6- Hold a short discussion on the case studies asking, for example:

*a) What did you think of the case presented?*

*b) What do you think a young person can do about the question of violence?*

*c) Who else can be involved, if young people want to do something about violence?*

7- Divide the participants into groups of 5 or 6 and ask them to brainstorm what they can do as a group (even as a private group), with

other young men in their community or school about violence. Ask them to write down or sketch their ideas on a flip-chart. Tell them that the ideas do not need to be totally finalized, but to simply list a number of first ideas, however "raw" they may be. Allow about 30 minutes for the group work..

8- Ask the groups to return and each one will present its ideas.

9- Ask the participants to help identify the main ideas, dividing them into categories, for example: (1) political/advocacy action; (2) awareness campaigns in the community; (3) development of educational materials and information; (4) implementation of a local plan in their schools and communities, etc.

10- The next step is to establish a priority for the ideas. Which of them seem to be easier to implement at the moment? Which are the most interesting? Work with the group to focus on and give priority to the ideas, but leave the final decision to them.



## LINK

There are various activities on rights included in the other sections which can also provide ideas concerning community initiatives or activities directed at violence.

## CLOSING

 The list of ideas can be presented as "Planning violence prevention activities." This list contains a series of questions which the group can ask when planning this activity. The facilitator can determine during the group work an appropriate time to implement the plan. In other cases

the group may wish to meet on their own to finalize the planning. This activity is probably the final one to be done, because it is up to the participants and the facilitator to decide what and how they will do this. The important thing for the facilitator is to assist the participants in developing a viable plan so that they have a sense of fulfillment and not frustration.

# Resource Sheet

## “Planning a Violence Prevention Activity”

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1- Description (in 2 or 3 phrases, describe your plan)

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2- Collaboration

Who do you need to collaborate with to put this plan into operation?

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How can you obtain this support and collaboration?

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3- Materials/Resources

What resources do you need to carry out your plan?

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Where and how can you obtain such resources?

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4- Time Schedule

How long do you need to execute the plan?

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Steps: list in order the steps required to carry out the planning.

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5- Evaluation:

How do you know if your plan is working?

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What expectations do you have about the result of your activity?

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6- Risks:

What things can go wrong?

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## Case Studies

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### **1- Guy to Guy Project, Instituto PROMUNDO, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

*In many low income, urban communities in Latin America, violence is prevalent in several forms: gang violence, family violence and violence by men against women. In a project involving a community of this type, young men wrote a play about domestic violence and a rap about violence. They have been presenting this play in schools, in youth seminars, to politicians involved in the domestic violence question and health professionals.*

### **2- The Violence Prevention Project in New York (NYC)**

*A high school group in New York City produced a folder and a poster to raise awareness about the causes of youth-related violence. On one side of the folder, there was a drawing of a bomb which said: "What the youth of NYC know about violence," which listed the important data about the causes of violence in the city. The other side of the folder was in the shape of a light-bulb (representing an "idea"), and had the title: "What the youth of NYC know about how to end violence". The folder was stricuted in schools and among local policymakers as a way of promoting a discussion about the causes and possible solutions to the issue of youth violence.*

### **3- Peace Promoters**

*In various schools in many countries in Latin America, young people are trained to be peer mediators or peer counselors to resolve conflicts, promote mediation and promote peace. In some schools the students themselves elect the "promoters". Do you think something like this would work in your school?*