

Working with Men – the generative approach

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Talk it over
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Working with men is all about the relationship

Assumptions

- men are intuitive – primarily around safety
- anger is used as a defense to protect men from fear or to maintain control
- many fathers place a strong importance on their relationships with their children
- men need clear rules and expectations that they can rely on and trust that other people will do what they say
- men value feedback



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Principles for working with men

- importance of perceived equality
- existence of 'window periods' where men access support
- the need for fathering services to be distinguished from general parenting services
- the value of personal recommendation about services
- the importance of flexible service delivery
- client involvement in program development
- solution focused approach
- local area coordination (King, 2005)

What do you see?



Generativity: a key to successful aging

- Generativity is 'caring for something outside of yourself' or involves taking care of the next generation
- It is the best predictor for successful aging for men and women
- Is a key motivator in life for men

*'to invest one's substance in forms of life
and work that will outlive the self'*

Vaillant, G. 2002. Aging Well. Little, Brown and Company, New York

Generative fathering

... fathering that meets the needs of children by working to create and maintain a developing valuable relationship with them

Generative fathering is caring for someone external to you or supporting the development of the next generation

Generative fathering is central to men's own sense of self esteem and growth

What works against the generative stage

1. **Self absorption**
2. **Stagnation**
3. **Generative Chill**

Extreme threats to an adult's parental generativity will result in "generative chill", a type of anxiety resulting from a perceived or real danger of losing the child or children one has helped to create (Snarey, 1993).

"It seems likely that brief or extended threats to generativity will have a significant impact on a father's selfhood...".
(Snarey, 1993, p.23-24).

Family breakdown presents separated fathers with a threat that often results in depression.

How the deficit perspective assumption is expressed

- the 'emotionally challenged' men
- under involvement in household activities
- fathers have little interest in professional feedback about their children
- the 'abusing' father assumption (King, 2000)

Deficit assumptions will create little change within men because ...

(Hawkins and Dollahite, 1997; King, 2000)

- it has little recognition of growth and development
- it misconstrues the motives, feelings, attitudes and hopes of most men
- it creates barriers to change rather than its promotion
- it has a narrow standard of good parenting

Developing a non-deficit perspective of fathering

Building on generativity, men can...

- commit
- choose
- care
- change
- create
- connect
- communicate (King, 2000)

Questions that work with generativity

Statement: I would like to find out about some of your experiences with Sam and what those experiences mean to you.

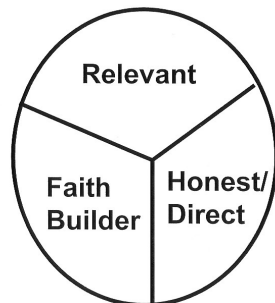
1. Can you tell me about the most enjoyable experience you ever had with Sam ? What meaning does that experience have for you now?
2. Can you tell me about an experience when you felt especially close emotionally to Sam? What meaning does that experience have for you now?
3. Can you tell me about an experience when you cared for and nurtured Sam ? What did you learn about nurturing children from that experience?
4. Can you tell me about an experience when you felt especially distant emotionally from Sam when he/she needed you to be there for him/her? What meaning does that experience have for you now?
5. What was the most painful experience you ever had with Sam? What meaning does that experience have for you now?
6. Are there any particular things that help you to be the kind of father to Sam that he/she needs you to be?
7. Are there any particular things that prevent you from being the kind of father to Sam that he/she needs you to be?
8. Can you tell me about any important sacrifices you have made in your life that demonstrate how much you care about Sam ?

Imagining that *working with men* is all about the relationship

What would you do more of?

Keys aspects on how to engage men (King, 2005)

OH&S Policies



Checklist for organisations working with men (King, 2005)

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- environment
- language
- initial contact/marketing
- service provision

New framework?

Socialisation

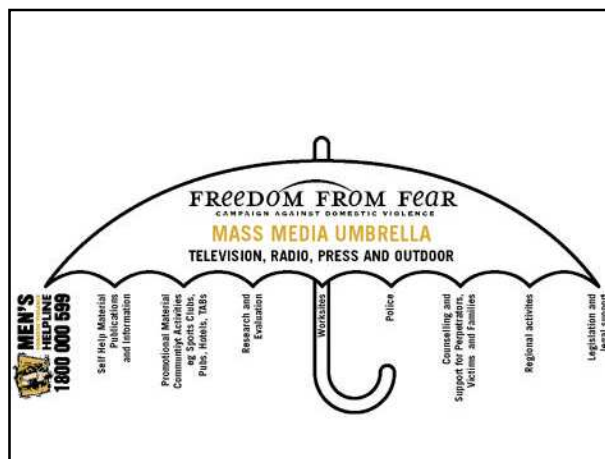
- Privilege vs. Independence
- Learning through choices and consequences
- Legal sanctions
- Responsibilities

Biological

- Testosterone
- Active influence vs. tunnel vision or reactivity
- Role of suspicion
- Responsibilities

Relational

- Child focused practice
- Generativity vs. Self absorption or Stagnation
- Basic Strengths: Production and Care
- Responsibilities



The Freedom from Fear campaign

There was **overwhelming support** for the Campaign, with 91% of 'at risk' males in favour of the government running this campaign.

Other ADTEST results included:

- the ads were seen as powerful and impactful;
- the ads elicited the desired emotions from the target audience, such as feeling sad;
- guilty, angry;
- understanding and acceptance of the message was high across all three commercials;
- the ads had high credibility amongst the primary target audience - almost 90% rated the scenarios as believable;
- there was minimal counter-argument. It is always a risk with a campaign of this nature that the dialogue will provoke an unwanted negative reaction amongst the primary target audience, for example the view that the woman may 'deserve it' in some way, or that the commercial is 'against men'. This was not the case with any of the commercials.

- Over a 9 month period in 2000, 6000 men telephoned the WA Men's Domestic Violence Helpline

- 42% (2,543) of men were in the target group

- Call patterns had a strong correlation with the advertising schedule

- 8 month follow-up survey found 80% difference in respondents' lives

Principles for using generativity

- Keep the focus on a balance between the desire and the challenge. This is always in tension
- Refuse to enter into discussing blame/victim excuses, shift the focus on the child's experience if this occurs
- Perel and Peled (2008) avoid allowing men who have used violence to voice their experiences, if the harm they have inflicted on their partners and children remains unspoken.

Focus the discussion on the **yearning** and the individual **challenge** to be a good dad and the impact that this has on their children:

- *“to give your kids everything and be the best possible dad”*
- *“to be a good dad”*

and the tension of

- *exposing the children to violence*
- *how domestic violence impacts on the their children*
- *being the controller*
- *being an absent dad*

Possible issues to discuss when working with power and generativity

- Who or how do you protect others in your life?
- Who do you keep safe?
- What happens when the protection of others is misused?
- What is the difference between keeping someone safe and controlling them?
- When does protecting someone become abusive?
- How do you keep yourself safe?

Using child focused approaches and DV 1

- Bring children's stories into the program – by their experiences of DV and how it affects them. Bring and use the adult's reflections as a child
- Use perspectives of being a child/parent
- Pose the question “how would you feel as a child watching domestic violence occur between your parents”? (present)
- Explore reflections of their childhood – ask the men to write a letter to their fathers; use discussion about what they missed from their fathers and what they would like as fathers/future fathers

Using child focused approaches and DV 2

- Empathy building
- Story telling e.g. the extremes a child will go to, to get love
- Focus on men's strengths, their love for their children
- Set up activities groups for fathers and children
- Use positive images that are displayed on the fridge
- Ask 'will your child be able to come to you in the hard and difficult times?'

Hints about building cooperative approaches

- Establish confidentiality
- Create a safe environment (for individuals and the group)
- Support the development of trust
- Use direct language
- Avoid asking about feelings, use the sharing of stories and 'what impact did that have?'
- Reframe old patterns or behaviours and look for exceptions
- Use goal and boundary setting
- Encourage accountability and ownership of the change process
- Encourage responsibility – use solution focused approaches
- Encourage transparency – reduces suspicion
- Use groups to encourage behaviour change
- Give permission for the men to be honest
- Engage the men regarding issues and brainstorm their ideas
- Develop new tools to deal with anger – assertive tools
- Use homework to encourage integration with the rest of their life

What influences male service users most?

- program/centre environment
- telephone contact
- range of programs provided – choices allowed
- advertising and increased community awareness
- recommendation from other significant people
- *moments of truth – experiences gained when they access a program!*

when was the last time you did something directly as a result of an advertisement?

Promoting effectively to men

Effective promotion involves:

- using action words
- clear outcomes
- identifying impact of workshop/resource
- emphasising the significance of relationships
- being strengths based
- providing options – choices about involvement
- specific description about what is involved
- using metaphors that are familiar – Pitstop, developed in WA and used widely throughout Australia, uses the concept of a 'rego check' to encourage male health checks

Useful steps for fathers rebuilding engagement

(King & Fletcher, 2007):

Fathers who have rebuilt engagement with their children have identified a number of useful steps:

1. Maintain a journal over several months
2. Obtain current information about the child/ren
3. Write a list of positive strengths about themselves
4. Identify a professional support person or mentor
5. Access to a mediation service through the Family Relationship Centre
6. Write a list of the key lessons they have learnt through their life
7. Prepare for the reunion with their children slowly, without having firm expectations of what will occur
8. Show positive regard for the child's mother

Working with men- in a library 1

Reading with dad day

- Cultural story time
- Take home reading pack
- Kid/dad reading time

Craft holiday activities that involve dads – more complex activities – kites or boats

Kids write a story about dad

Display visual images that include men

Working with men- in a library 2

On the photo wall display photos of activities – dads and children

Link activities and allow follow-up – use themes like reading with mum, dad and grandpa/grandma

Fathers' Day focus or International Day for Families – Fathering – responsibilities and challenges

Develop partnerships – use spare room as shared space for other organisations to use

Working with men- in a Child Care Centre

- Hero's of the day – stories of dads dreams when they wanted to grow up. Use a 'My Hero' sheet and paste in photos of kids and dads
- Initiations from the children to their dad for events or activities (written by kids)
- Dads and kids day – excursions out of the Child Care Centre into the community
- Active games and activities (sports, beach games, ball games, swimming lessons, kite making)
- Creating space for dads to communicate with each other – shared issues, discussion groups
- Story times – 'show and tell' about what children did with dads over the weekend – e.g. photos, props, things from their day spent, let dads know about this story time session and when it occurs each week

Mensline Australia

- Mensline Australia, funded by – FaCSIA – only service of its kind in the world - 24/7
- It's a national service for men dealing with family and relationship issues – we talked with over 40,000 men/ women last year



How you can use Mensline Australia?

1. Update your program in the [service database](#). With thousands of men and workers accessing the Mensline Australia database each year – make sure the details about your service are accurate
2. Promote Mensline Australia and the Call-back Service to people in your community
3. Order promotional materials using the [order form](#)
 - Men's Relationships Matter Brochures
 - Mensline Australia Contact Cards
 - Mensline Australia Builders Pencils
 - Mensline Australia Promotional Posters (set of 6)
 - Mensline Australia Tip-sheets (set of 7)
 - Suicide Callback Service Health Professional Brochures (National service)
 - Suicide Callback Service General Brochures (National service)
 - Suicide Callback Service A3 Posters (National service)
 - Suicide Callback Service Contact Cards (National service)

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