

TALKING MASCULINITY WITH BOYS & YOUNG MEN

Tips for Everyday Mentors



For boys and young men, understanding masculinity and gender identity is an important aspect to forging successful pathways into adulthood. In today's world, how does one navigate power, privilege, identity, and relationships to become a mature adult? What does it mean to become a man? The following tips help mentors support boys and young men as they define and experience their gender identity.

STEP 1: ASK YOURSELF

Get to know you first by asking yourself these guiding reflection questions:

- ▶ How do your attitudes about masculinity shape your speech and actions?
- ▶ In your life, what parts of masculinity have been harmful? Which have been beneficial?
- ▶ What expressions of masculinity were you encouraged to engage in or avoid?
- ▶ Repeat these questions in thinking about femininity and sexual orientation.

STEP 2: MODEL BEHAVIOR

Model and celebrate healthy behaviors:

- ▶ Interrupt all forms of bullying or harassment, both physical and verbal.
- ▶ Practice and normalize asking for help and expressing care for others.
- ▶ Demonstrate how to disagree without using offensive comments or aggression.

STEP 3: ENGAGE YOUTH

Engage the young men in your life:

- ▶ Build authentic relationships with people of diverse cultures, races, genders, sexualities, and abilities.
- ▶ Discuss power and privilege. What advantages or disadvantages do you navigate given your gender identity?
- ▶ Strategize how to hold each other accountable in being an ally to girls, women, and individuals of all gender identities.
- ▶ Ask young men how they can be an asset to their community.



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MENTOR is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. MENTOR's mission is to close the mentoring gap and ensure our nation's young people have the support they need through quality mentoring relationships to succeed at home, school, and ultimately, work. MENTOR develops and delivers best practices, training, research, and tools for the mentoring field.