Improving Male Help-Seeking Behavior

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Free Write

Take the first few minutes of this program to reflect on the male gender code on your specific campus. Write what comes to mind when you visualize "the code" on your campus.

Additional Questions that May Help:

- What messages are sent to men regarding behavioral expectations?
- What messages are sent to men regarding campus involvement?
- What messages are sent to men regarding help seeking behavior?
- What are the "man laws" laws on your campus?

Common Themes of the Male Gender Code

Examples:

- Cognitive - "Man Up"

- Behavioral - "Drink Like a Man"

- Affect - "Real Men Don't Cry"

- *Additions from the "free write exercise"*

Question:

- *How might "the code" challenge the help seeking behavior of males?*

What Does the Research Tell Us?

According to the United State Department of Education, males are underrepresented on U.S. college campuses where "thirty years ago men represented 58 percent of the undergraduate student body . . . now they're a minority at 44 percent" (Tyre, January, 2006, p. 46).

Why:

Many suspect this underrepresentation is, in part, due to men believing that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that do **_NOT_** meet the male gender code are taboo making it difficult to create connections and engage in help seeking behaviors.

(Bergman, 1995; Coleman, 1981; Kimmel & Messner, 2004; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999).

What Does the Research Tell Us?

When men are not able to access environments that allow them to authentically express and explore their understanding of self they often:

- struggle with emotional expression
- have difficulty creating meaningful relationships
- establishing one's own identity
- and act out in ways that do not align with personal values.

(Englar-Carlson, 2006, Pollack, 2006, & Kindlon & Thompson, 1999)

What Has Worked to Enhance Male Help Seeking Behavior?

Transtheoretical Model of Change

PROGRESS

Precontemplation

Contemplation

Preparation

Action

Maintenance

RELAPSE
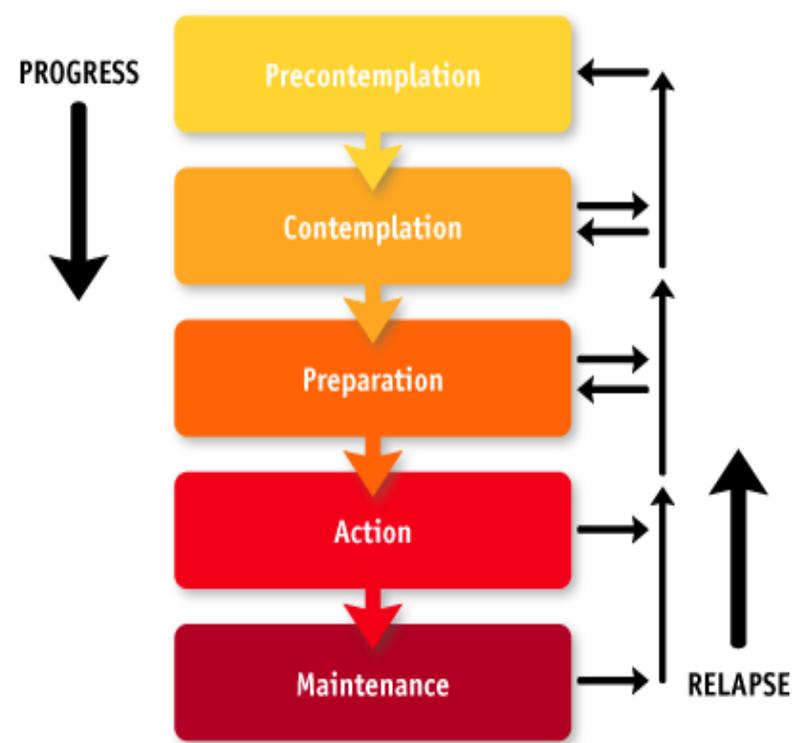
Source: Adapted from DiClemente and Prochaska, 1998

Tools to Increase Help Seeking Behavior (MI)

- Express Empathy
- Develop Discrepancy
- Roll with Resistance
- Support Self-Efficacy

Source: Miller, 1991

Gender Informed Tools

- Joining / Appropriate Self-Disclosure
- Emotional Menu
- Praising intention moving toward behavior, when possible
- Acknowledging "the code" including positives (i.e. courage)

University of San Diego

What Has Worked to Enhance Male Help Seeking Behavior?
Challenging the Gender Code

- *Personal Behavior Changes*
  - Modeling and challenging "the code" with various university stakeholders
  - Marketing and creating comfortable spaces for intentional interactions
  - Advocating for unit specific program or environmental changes

- *Peer Challenging of "the code" and Normalizing Help Seeking Behavior*
  - Peer education / understanding & accountability for bystander / upstander behavior
  - Sharing personal successful help seeking behaviors (an opportunity to normalize)

- *University Collaborations and Systemic Changes*
  - Intentional collaborative interventions
    - » 3rd week check-ins
    - » Men's groups (Guy Talk and AOD Behavior Change Group)
    - » Unit or multiple office collaborations, consultations, and referrals
  - Seeking omnidirectional support from upper administration

Benefits of Interventions

- Increased awareness of gender codes

- Increased understanding of how to challenge "the code"

- Enhanced acceptance (normalization) of help seeking behavior

- Progress recognized, by multiple stakeholders, through the stages of change

- Increased omnidirectional community support

- Ecological / environmental changes are occurring

Challenges

- Progress can be thwarted easily by bystander behavior

- Perceptions are informed the larger gender codes in society

- There may be hesitation on your campus to challenge the gender code and you may have to address challenges related to this being the work of a specific unit or a specific departmental responsibility; we need to change the environment

- Recognizing change is slow – moving toward all seeing gender awareness as a basic competency

- Creating clear measurable learning outcomes can be a challenge

- Ensuring awareness of own reactivity around issues of gender and diversity (i.e. biases, assumptions, blind-spots)

Closing

- What are the "Red Threads"?

- What can you implement when you return to your campus? (Personal, collaborative, or systemic)

- Questions?