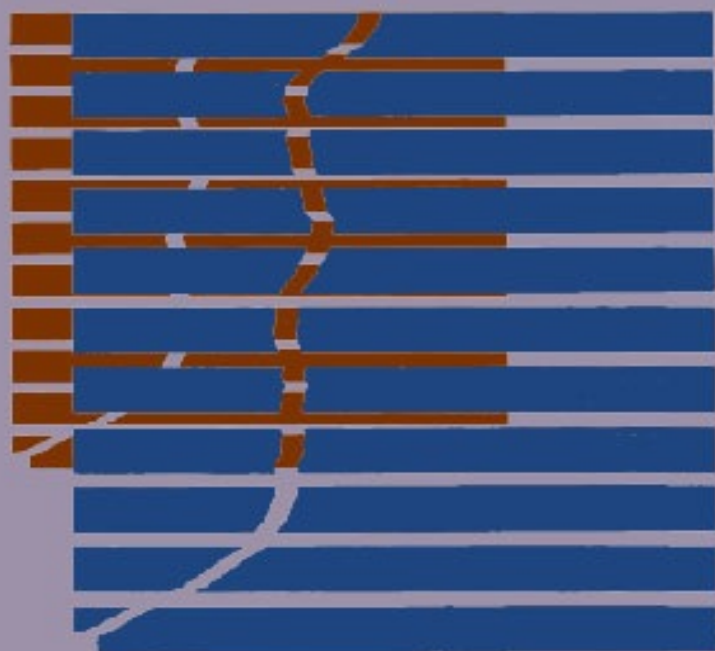


Training Others to Counsel Men



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Training Others to Counsel Men

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Within the last 10 years there has been a steady increase of articles written in the area of male socialization and the male experience (Doyle, 1986; Fasteau, 1974; O'Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1981; Pleck & Sawyer, 1974; Solomon & Levy, 1982). How this information has been utilized in terms of training psychotherapists to counsel men has not been documented in the literature. This chapter will attempt to incorporate some of the existing literature on men into a multifaceted training program utilizing both experiential and didactic training approaches. The didactic information is drawn from various academic disciplines such as social psychology, feminist therapy, and clinical/counseling psychology; the experiential component of the training program is designed to increase personal awareness and professional competency.

We recognize that training others to counsel men can occur over a variety of time frames and using different methods. For the purpose of discussion the format used here will be a full-day (e.g., eight hours) training program. We believe that this format can serve as an excellent beginning—to be expanded (or reduced) depending on the training

needs and resources of the training system.

There are many ways to train individuals to improve their counseling skills. One such method is to immerse trainees in a certain therapeutic style or theoretical orientation. Another method is to look at presenting problems as the issue of focus (e.g., depression, bulimia, chemical dependency) and provide materials and training seminars on the specific issue. A third method is to look at specific populations (e.g., blacks, Asians, gay/Lesbian, male/female) and focus on specific therapeutic issues that may involve the subpopulation. The particular model presented in this chapter will not focus on theoretical orientation or presenting problems but rather on the population of men, and will look at the trainee’s prejudices and levels of awareness of men’s issues. Specifically, this chapter will concentrate on a training program that seeks to increase awareness and knowledge of gender as a factor affecting treatment and thus seeks to increase competency in counseling skills.

TABLE 8.1 *Workshop Outline: Training Others to Counsel Men*

1. Review of expectations, goals, and norms of the day	Time: 15 minutes
2. Getting to know men or “Our Learned Myths of Masculinity”	
a. Experiential exercise	Time: 60 minutes

b. Didactic integration	Time: 60 minutes
3. How male clients “do” therapy; or dealing with process and countertransference issues	
a. Brief didactic presentation about the process of men entering therapy	Time: 10 minutes
b. Experiential exercise about experiences of doing therapy with men	Time: 90 minutes
c. Didactic integration of above material	Time: 30-60 minutes
4. Working with male clients on a feeling level	
a. Didactic background	Time: 10 minutes
b. Experiential exercises	Time: 30 minutes
c. Observing a trainer work with a male client or trainee	Time: 60 minutes
d. Didactic integration of above material	Time: 30 minutes
5. Case presentation by the trainees Experiential and Didactic	Time: 60 minutes
6. Evaluation of the program	Time: 20 minutes

We recognize that training others to counsel men happens in both formal and informal modes. Supervision (group and individual), seminars, and workshops are all formal ways to do this training. Equally important are the informal modes of training such as modeling agency behavior for dealing with women’s and men’s issues, and personal growth groups or support groups that emphasize men’s and women’s

roles. These areas will be discussed in the latter part of the chapter.

There are several variables and approaches that must be considered when designing a training program intended to increase counseling skills. These variables include: current level of counseling skill, theoretical orientation, number of trainees, previous knowledge of subject matter, expected training opportunities in the future (e.g., opportunities to work with male clients), expectations as to the method of training (e.g., didactic versus experiential) and trust level of trainees.

This particular training program/workshop is designed for advanced students and practicing professionals in psychology, social work, or marriage and family counseling. It can also be adapted for paraprofessionals. Because of the content of the program, it is recommended that there be a near even distribution of men and women. If that is not possible, process attention should be given to the underrepresented group (e.g., five male trainees and one female trainee). It is also strongly recommended that at least one of the trainers be a male. Experiential exercises are a major factor in this particular training program; therefore, the trust level among those involved should be considered an important variable and promoted. The facilitator/trainer skill level is also important. In this type of program we have found that trainers who are flexible, non-defensive, self-disclosing, encouraging of

dialogue, knowledgeable about men's and women's issues, and are not stuck on a "right" way to do therapy help make this program/ workshop on counseling men most useful.

Table 8.1 provides the outline of the workshop.

Description of the Workshop

REVIEW OF GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM

Goals

1. Increase awareness of male socialization and men's issues as it relates to their socialization.
2. Increase knowledge of why men seek counseling and their expectations of counseling.
3. Increase knowledge of how men are as clients and ways to best deal with the therapeutic process of men in counseling.
4. Increase self-understanding related to male socialization and counseling males.

Norms

1. Participate at your own pace.

2. Listen nondefensively.

3. Be open to new ideas.

GETTING TO KNOW MEN, OR “OUR LEARNED MYTHS OF MASCULINITY”

After reviewing the agenda for the day, we recommend that the initial introduction to counseling men be done through an experiential exercise that focuses on male socialization. A few examples of experiential exercises that can serve as a catalyst to talk about male socialization will subsequently be presented.

Option 1. Listening to music by Geof Morgan (Morgan, 1984), who writes in a clear, thought-provoking and humorous manner about the male experience. Songs such as “American Male,” “Good-bye John Wayne,” “It Comes with the Plumbing,” “Homophobia,” “Penis Song,” and “Stop It” address different men’s issues such as male violence, male role models, men’s health, male competition, male sexuality, and male relationships with women. The music/lyrics allow the participants to relate their experiences of growing up male or watching other males grow up. Small group discussion can be helpful to increase self-disclosure. (We suggest passing out lyric sheets in advance to assist in the discussion.)

Option 2. Much of male socialization is learned through the models or male heroes that men seek to live up to (Gerzon, 1982). Ask the trainees to brainstorm a list of male heroes that influenced their conceptualization of what a “real man” is like. The list usually includes athletes, movie stars, and movie roles. Ask the trainees to list beside each hero/model attributes (physical and psychological) that they associate with that person.

Option 3. A more personal and self-revealing exercise includes a reflection of how and from whom in their family trainees learned about the roles of masculinity. Discussion usually will focus on fathers, grandfathers, and the patriarchy of their family.

Option 4. There are several excellent (and short!) films about men that serve as a starting point to discuss male socialization. These films include: *Stale Images and Tight Buns* (1984), and *Like Men* (1986). Given more time, the full-length movie *Stand By Me* (1986) can also serve as a discussion catalyst.

With each of these exercises, the task of the trainer will be to keep the discussion on a personal level, encouraging the trainees to share their own stories and powerful memories about childhood and how they learned about their concept of masculinity. Trainees’ powerful feelings

about significant men in their lives are frequently revealed. Integrating the experiential exercise into a working theoretical and conceptual framework of male socialization can now be accomplished. Stevens and Hershberger (1985) outline a framework of how male socialization affects the behavior and attitudes of men. In this work, which has been influenced by O'Neill (1981), Pleck (1981), and Scher (1981), Stevens and Hershberger first identify basic sex-role stereotypes of how men have learned to conceptualize masculinity and femininity. This framework then identifies attitudes toward self and others that may have been introjected by this sex-role stereotyping. Based on those introjected attitudes, behavior outcomes for men are highlighted. Finally the framework identifies symptoms (presenting problems) that men bring to therapy that are extensions of their introjected attitudes and subsequent behaviors.

HOW MEN “DO” THERAPY: PROCESS AND COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

Using the conceptual material of the previous section as background information, trainees will have the opportunity to learn about the expectations and feelings that men have about entering therapy. Also discussed or highlighted will be the process issues involved while counseling men.

One important way to understand how men “do” therapy is to allow the trainees to share their feelings and thoughts about working with men. There will be obvious differences between how men feel/think about counseling men versus how women feel/think about counseling men. Issues for male counselors usually center on competition, power struggles, and homophobia. Issues for women usually involve feeling objectified, stereotyped, and sexualized.

Asking the following open-ended questions may help facilitate this discussion: (Trainees can choose two or three to answer)

1. How do I respond differently to women clients than male clients?
2. What I like most about working with male clients is . . .
3. What I like least about working with male clients is . . .
4. I am most comfortable with male clients who . . .
5. I am least comfortable with male clients who . . .
6. I would never work with a male client who . . .
7. I find myself wanting my male clients to . . .
8. What most men like best about therapy with me is . . .

9. What most men like least about therapy with me is . . .

How this portion of the program is facilitated will depend on the size and trust level of the group. We have found that asking the trainees to first write down their responses to the open-ended questions and then to discuss their responses in large or small groups is most productive for processing this experience.

There are several themes that may emerge from the above discussions. Following are themes that occur often:

TABLE 8.2 Stevens and Hershberger's (1985) Framework: How Male Socialization Affects the Behavior and Attitudes of Man

A. Sex-Role Stereotypes

<i>Men^a</i>	<i>Women^b</i>
Competitive	Passive
Strong	Dependent
In control	Emotional
In charge	Illogical
Achievement oriented	Naïve, gullible
Intelligent	Beautiful
Non-feeling	Sensitive
Don't cry	Nurturing
Mechanical	Neat
Dominant	Patient

Protective	Good mothers
All knowing	Soft, warm
Logical	Fickle
Stud	Romantic
Breadwinner	Seductive
Initiator of sex	Artistic
Independent	Crack under pressure
Authority	Physically weak
Athletic	Sex = love
Sex = Accomplishment	

a. If man is not like this, he is a sissy, queer, or gay.

b. If a woman is not like this, she is a bitch, dyke, or women's libber.

B. Men's Attitudes

<i>Toward Self</i>	<i>Toward Others</i>
Must be on "top" to be O.K.	Homophobic
I'm nothing if I'm not providing.	Homosexist
Things won't be O.K. until I've taken care of . . .	You need to be wrong for me to be right
I need to be right.	Don't show weaknesses to others.
I need to manage (control) myself, my environment, and all the people around me.	Relationships are a lesser priority.
Future goals are more important than present desires.	Relationships are useful for accomplishing tasks.
	Misogynistic

C. Behavioral Outcomes for Men

Emotional restrictedness

Aggression

Isolation

Rape: Confusion of violence with sexuality and sex behaviors

Lower life expectancy

Objectify women

Lack closeness with men, except in socially acceptable ways

Advice givers

Low satisfaction with self

Hard time receiving

Give in the form of protection, money, possessions, and financial security

Lack closeness with women and children.

D. Symptoms brought into Therapy

Low self-esteem

Depression

Sexual dysfunction

Alcoholism

Stress related physical problems

Don't feel close to anyone

Relationships don't work

Fear of failure

Performance anxiety

Suicidal because girlfriend broke up with me

Midlife crisis

Confusion about gender-role expectations

Don't experience joy

Suicidal, but don't know why

Don't know who I am

Problems with anger

NOTE: By presenting this material and soliciting personal anecdotes and examples, trainees gain an understanding of the emotional and physical toll on men who buy into these "myths of masculinity."

1. *Therapy as antithetical to the male experience.* Most men are basically resistant to therapy. Many men are in hiding with respect to their feelings (Scher, 1981) and subsequently are intimidated by therapeutic approaches that emphasize feeling awareness. Men are taught to be independent and "fixers"; therefore, going to see a therapist for help can be perceived as being weak (or less powerful than a man "should" be).
2. *Relationship between counselor and client.* The way in which the male client has bought into the myths of masculinity can be played out in the therapy relationship. Male socialization issues such as intimacy, power, control, objectification, homophobia, vulnerability, and competition can serve as both obstacles to the therapy encounter as well as opportunities for interpretation, resolution, and growth.
3. *What men want from counseling.* Basically, men want to be

taken seriously. They have a need for affection, acceptance and nurturance. Men feel a need for productivity. They want to learn how to be vulnerable while at the same time keeping their sense of dignity, strength, and pride. Men often feel misunderstood and unappreciated, and therefore will respond positively to a genuine, nonjudgmental, and understanding therapist.

4. *Male versus female therapists.* Some differences may occur in counseling men when the therapist is male as opposed to female. The male client with a male therapist may want affection, acceptance, and nurturance—and may fear it (e.g., homophobia). The client may also hold an expectation that the male therapist will (or should) “fix what ails him” (see point 1 above). With female therapists, the emphasis in therapy may be nurturance and understanding, thus challenging the man’s issue of “independence.”

WORKING WITH THE MALE CLIENT ON A FEELING LEVEL

We have found it helpful to have a section of the training program that specifically addresses working with male clients on a feeling level. Two basic assumptions are made: (1) men who seek help are usually in pain (even if they do not show their pain) and

men are (biologically and psychologically) able to feel. At some time in his life, the male client was taught that being a “real man” meant

turning off the emotions and turning on the cognitions. This part of a man's socialization has had a negative impact on his psychological and physical well-being. On a relationship level, feelings can serve as a channel for expressing and experiencing intimacy with others. As a man's option to express and experience feelings gets shut off, so does his ability to feel alive and make contact with others. Many people (and therapists, too!) believe that the only emotion that men are comfortable with is anger. From our perspective it is not that men are comfortable with anger but rather they are highly uncomfortable with expressing the "flip side" of anger—that of being hurt and vulnerable (since these are not "manly" emotions). After a brief lecture and discussion on why relearning to feel is important for men in counseling the trainees are asked to write down one feeling they have difficulty experiencing/expressing. They are asked to share with a partner the answers to the following questions:

1. How did you learn to have trouble with that particular feeling?
2. What intimidates you about that feeling?
3. How long have you had trouble with that feeling?
4. How has the difficulty you have with that feeling gotten in the way of enjoying your life more?

After a brief discussion in a group format about similarities,

differences, insights, and so on that trainees had during the above exercise, the trainer asks for a male volunteer who wants to work on experiencing/expressing feelings more. Drawing on the assumption that all men do feel and that meaningful events are accompanied by feelings that may have been stored away, those feelings can be recalled and re-experienced. The trainer may work therapeutically with the trainee for 20-30 minutes, working in a mode that asks the trainee to recall a significant, meaningful event in his life. Events that involve early loss, embarrassment, or fear are powerful stimuli for accessing feelings. The rationale for this portion of the training is that for therapists to work effectively with their feelings, they must be aware of how they resist experiencing/expressing feelings. Training programs and most theoretical schools of psychology talk about the importance of feelings, yet specific training on how to work with feelings is limited. We encourage trainees to follow some of these guidelines when working with men on a feeling level:

1. Be patient.
2. Be genuine.
3. Expect resistance (reluctance).
4. View men as in pain and wanting relief, yet not wanting to be vulnerable.

5. Check out your comfort level and readiness to deal with a client's feelings that may have been blocked for many years.
6. Be a good role model: Talk and relate on a feeling level with feeling language when appropriate.

After working with the trainee it is suggested the trainer have time to debrief with the group and share support for the male who volunteered. Didactically it is important to analyze and highlight how feelings were accessed in this particular exercise. Another option to train others to work with male clients on a feeling level is for the trainer to bring a video- or audiotape of a session that shows work with a male client on a feeling/process level.

CASE PRESENTATIONS: INTEGRATION OF MATERIAL

Empowering the trainees to utilize the information presented is a useful way to complete the program/ workshop. Ideally the trainees will leave with added insight, confusion, unanswered questions, and enthusiasm to pursue those unanswered questions. Case vignettes of male clients can serve as useful stimulus material for this integration exercise. In groups of three or four, trainees are asked to come up with an assessment of the client based on the male role socialization model presented earlier. They are also asked to design a therapeutic treatment

plan. Another option is to have a trainer or trainee present a male client who could be discussed in a group supervision format. If the trainer has video or audiotapes of sessions, these tapes could also be helpful.

EVALUATION

As with any type of training program or workshop, a written and verbal evaluation of the usefulness of the program is strongly recommended.

Creating a Holistic Training Program for Teaching Others to Counsel Men

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are both formal and informal ways to provide training for counseling men. We have introduced in this chapter a detailed example of a formal method for training. In addition to structured training as detailed earlier, other formal and informal methods of training will be discussed.

FORMAL METHODS

Individual supervision: There are many models for doing individual supervision. We believe that no matter what type of supervision model is

used, the issue of gender can be brought into the supervision process. Ideally, the supervisor is knowledgeable of male socialization issues and of counseling men. Individual supervision can be an ideal learning environment for helping the supervisee increase awareness of countertransference issues in counseling men. Feminist therapy supervisors (Rosewater & Walker, 1985; Schaeff, 1981) discuss the importance of being aware of the processes that go on among the supervisor, supervisee, and client. In addition, the gender-role dynamics between the supervisor and supervisee can serve as a learning opportunity (especially if one or both are male) in the area of gender-role issues and conflict resolution.

Group supervision: Group supervision can be a learning environment where the gender of the client can be discussed as an important variable in the counseling process. How this is accomplished will depend on the leadership style and the supervisor's awareness of men's issues. In a safe learning environment, process issues among group members as they relate to gender-role differences can be addressed and utilized as a learning opportunity.

SEMINARS

Many training agencies do not address the process of counseling

men. An informal survey of counseling training programs reported many seminars on counseling women and few on counseling men. A brief (1-2 hour) introduction to counseling men can serve as a reminder that the gender of a client is an important variable to consider and counseling men is not the opposite of counseling women. Additionally, we recommend that training seminars on such topics as counseling ethnic minorities, incest survivors, substance abusers, gays and lesbians, depression and other populations or clinical issues address gender differences as they relate to the counseling process.

INFORMAL METHODS

Modeling of agency staff: When professional staff members acknowledge and deal with their own gender-role differences, this modeling can serve as a prime training opportunity. Examples include processing differences in communication patterns or decision-making processes among male and female staff members. Competitive and homophobic feelings/ behaviors between male staff members may also be opportunities to encourage deeper understanding of male socialization issues. We have found that trainees are acutely aware of gender-role issues among staff members and subsequently can learn a great deal from a staff that does not ignore conflict in the area of gender-role differences.

Personal growth opportunities: Many counseling professionals have reported that participating in consciousness raising (CR) groups was a useful (although secondary) way to increase their understanding of gender-role differences. Men report that these groups helped them come to a greater understanding of their own concerns about homophobia, competition, isolation, control and power needs, and other male socialization issues. Women report their CR experiences helped them work on issues of unexpressed anger toward men, empowerment, and a deeper understanding of male power and control. CR groups are not designed to increase one's counseling skill level, although insight and personal growth in the area of gender-role concerns could positively influence one's ability to counsel men. Most CR groups are formed outside of the working environment; we do know, however, of counseling centers where CR and gender-role support groups have been formed for staff and/or trainees.

Professional literature: There are only a few ongoing periodicals/newsletters that can serve as resources for acquiring knowledge about men's issues. These include *Changing Men, Brother, Nurturing News*, and the *Men's Studies Newsletter*. Having these and other articles on counseling men available to staff and trainees could be helpful.

PROGRAMMING AND OUTREACH FOR MEN

A way to keep current interest in learning about men's issues and counseling men is to have your agency provide psychoeducational programs for men. Many college campuses and communities show a need for men's programming on such issues as fathering, male friendship, date and acquaintance rape, AIDS, dual-career relationships, and so on. As the agency and its staff become more comfortable and experienced with men's programming, so too will this awareness and training become integrated into counseling strategies with men.

Conclusion

Training others to counsel men is developmentally in its infancy. Writing in this area appears not to exist. Psychology and other related disciplines could pay more attention to male gender and male sex-role socialization issues as important variables of the psychotherapy process. The importance of teaching or training others to expand their understanding of how and why male clients feel/think/ behave is the basis of this chapter.

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