

Foundation for Positive Masculinity

2023 Conference

Working with Positive Masculinities:

Professor Matt Englar-Carlson



What's working and what can we do?

- ▶ Promotion of positive masculinity
- ▶ How do you view the work?
- ▶ Connected: Challenges and opportunities
- ▶ Authentic: Challenges and opportunities
- ▶ Motivated: Challenges and opportunities

Setting the stage: Masculinities are changing... as they often have

- ▶ Boys and men [and gender norms] have routinely adapted to the culture and times around them
- ▶ Dramatic shifts in gender roles in past 50 years that impact: vocation, family, relational landscape
- ▶ Work: Lives of men shifted to changing global economy
- ▶ Yet the “policing” of masculinity is a constant which makes it hard to figure it out [and hard for men as well]
- ▶ There is power for men to conform to gender stereotypes and it impacts their health and wellbeing

Promotion of positive masculinity

- ▶ Highlighting healthy manhood broadens the notion of masculinities beyond toxic or monolithic
- ▶ Understanding the role of adaptability and responsiveness
- ▶ Being intentional, careful, and effortful in expressing one's masculinity
- ▶ Prioritising the primacy of relationships & connection
- ▶ The data suggests correlates between aspects of positive masculinity and positive human adaptation: meaning it is healthy

Boys and men are not problems to be fixed...rather they are potential active agents in their health promotion and harm prevention

- ▶ Gender norms are tough to break
- ▶ Understand the challenges so you can tailor your approach and outreach
- ▶ Beware of the single story (incomplete narrative)
- ▶ Deficit-perspective to strength perspective
- ▶ For those engaged in this work: parents, teachers, adults, coaches, boys and men themselves:
 - See boys and men for who they are
 - Empathic connection
 - Listening
 - Meet them where they are

Connected: where boys and men have and keep positive friendships and relationships

- ▶ The challenge is how to stay authentically connected in world that pushes for disconnection
- ▶ From a health and happiness perspective, arguably the most critical factor
- ▶ For boys, positive relationships with adults matter
- ▶ The role of belonging in institutions: Reach before you teach

Authentic: where boys and men are kind and compassionate in their sense of self

- ▶ The challenge is how to embrace one's authentic self in a world that promotes rigid adherence to gender norms
- ▶ Authenticity is a direct challenge to male gender norms
- ▶ Authentic is flexible and adaptive and to oneself
- ▶ If boys and men are authentic, are there teachers, institutions, helpers there to meet them?

Motivated: where boys and men know how to be, and are a good people

- ▶ The challenge is to maintain healthy motivation toward self and others in world that is shifting thus requiring adaptation
- ▶ The strength and support to be who you are?
- ▶ Can you align values and purpose in a rapidly changing world?
- ▶ The role of social interest