Some of our boys’ most important ideas about masculinity are born from the male influencers in their lives. Be they fathers, coaches, teachers, pastors, etc. - these men are role models for the younger males around them. Let’s give them the tools they need to show our boys how to have healthy masculinity. The following questions are great for one-on-one time, but can be used in a group as well.

To start conversations with the boys in your life about healthy masculinity and what it really means to “be a man,” ask some questions from the categories below. We think you’ll be surprised with how much they have to say.

Exploring Youth Culture
To explore with male youth what it is to be a young man, and then to understand the role of social spaces in shaping male youth attitudes and behaviors around masculinity.

-------- How do male youth spend a typical weekday? A typical weekend day?
-------- How does a typical week or weekend day for male youth differ from a typical day for female youth?
-------- Where do male youth go to socialize with other male youth? What happens in that space? What role does that space play in influencing local male youth culture? How do you and your friends experience being left out of male circles?
-------- Where do female youth go to socialize with other female youth? What happens in that space? What role does that social space play in influencing local female youth culture?
-------- Where do male youth and female youth go to socialize together? How do these spaces overlap and interact?

Gender Norms
To understand what attitudes and behaviors are expected of men and women in society.

-------- Do men have certain physical characteristics?
-------- What is expected of typical men? What attitudes and values do typical men have…towards family? Children? Other men? Women?
-------- How are men expected to show they are powerful?
-------- If I were going to ask these questions about a woman, would the answers be very different? How? Why?

Socialization of Masculinity
To explore with male youth what it is to be a young man, and then to understand the role of social institutions in shaping male youth attitudes and behavior around masculinity.

-------- Who (e.g., family, peers, teachers) and what institutions (e.g., schools, religion, media) do male youth identify as influential in shaping who you are as a young man?
-------- Which attitudes, values and behaviors are rewarded and which are punished?
-------- In your opinion, which expectations for masculinity are beneficial and which are damaging?
-------- When have you been able to make your own choices about how to stray from the expected attitudes and behaviors?
Power and Influence
To discuss how power is constructed and exercised in our society; how young men feel and react when they “have” it and when they don’t.

-------- What kinds of power do you have over other people? How do you express it?
-------- What kinds of power do other people have over you? How do other people express it?
-------- What are the benefits of power for those who use it over others?
-------- What are the costs of power for those who are subjected to it?
-------- What can we do as men to challenge and change the way others use power over us?
-------- What can we do as men to change the way we use our power over others?

Attitudes about Violence
To explore young men’s attitudes towards gender equity and violence.

Please be mindful that some of these relationship statements do not speak to members of the LGBTQ community.
We encourage you to still discuss our society’s gender norm stereotypes and also open up the conversation to include those who may not identify with male-female relationships to see what their relationship experiences are.
For each of the following questions, ask the youth if they agree or disagree and then why or why not.

-------- A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.
-------- It is a woman’s responsibility to avoid getting pregnant.
-------- Women should be ready for sex when men are.
-------- A man should have the final word about decisions in his home.
-------- Men should decide when their partners should or should not have a baby.
-------- Men are always ready to have sex.
-------- A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.
-------- If someone insults me, I will defend my reputation, with force if I have to.
-------- I would never have a gay friend.
-------- It is important that a father is present in the lives of his children, even if he is no longer with the mother.
-------- It is important to have a male friend that you can talk about your problems with.
-------- It disgusts me when I see a man acting like a woman.
-------- A man always deserves the respect of his wife and children.
-------- Men can take care of children just as well as women can.
-------- Women have the same right as men to study and to work outside of the house.
-------- I think it is ridiculous for a boy to play with dolls.
-------- If a man sees another man beating a woman, he should stop it.

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