



#AFTERMETOO

REFLECTIVE GROUPS FOR MEN



FÖR JÄMSTÄLLDHET. MOT VÅLD.
REDEFINING MASCULINITY.

Why Arrange Reflective Groups for Men?

After #metoo there's a strong feeling that men want to help fight gender inequality, but many don't know where to start. One way has been that men have shared their own roles as perpetrators of sexual harassment or sexual assault using a variety of hashtags. Men have begun to question themselves, asking themselves how they have been a part of the suffering that #metoo highlights?

Maybe you've started reflecting over your own actions and remembered occasions where you've said something or done something that you regretted afterward? Or the times where you didn't intervene and in retrospect felt that you should have done something? Feelings of guilt and shame might pop up. You may also feel angry over the situation and want to do something – to once and for all put an end to the suffering that so many women go through, suffering that #metoo has now brought to light and made public. Now when the time has come to do something, you may be afraid of not knowing what to do and not knowing how to do it. You want to speak out but hold back because you don't want to say the wrong thing.

The Organization MÄN Invites #allmen to Start Talking to Each Other

We've organized reflective groups for many years, both in Sweden and internationally. By creating safe spaces where we can talk about our own experiences, feelings, emotions, and will to improve ourselves and the society we live in, we hope that we can create a platform that enables change. We believe that these reflective groups are a way to make this change happen.

MÄN is a nonprofit, feminist organization founded in 1993 as a platform for men to act against men's violence toward women. We work to change destructive masculinity norms and reduce male violence. Our vision is an equal world free from violence. We can see that men's violent behavior originates from and reproduces a world that is not gender equal and where men have more power and privileges. Therefore, all our work is grounded in a feminist perspective and with close links to the women's movement. Our goal is not to stand in the way of the women's movement and make the question of men and masculinity the only objective. We must work to be a part of the movement and make sure that we can strengthen it. In doing so and following the feminist perspective, we believe that men also will benefit. This all comes down to the equal world that we want to create and that we all will benefit from.

“ After #metoo there’s a strong feeling that men want to help fight gender inequality, but many don’t know where to start.

With its open and friendly atmosphere, the reflective group invites all participants to start reflecting on themselves in a new way. The reflective group is an important cornerstone in the work men can do to create a more equal world, but it’s not the sole answer. MÄN as an organization tries to work with different ways of engaging men – lectures/workshops, advocacy, and so on. We believe that in creating a safe space where we can talk openheartedly and with vulnerability, our vision of a more gender equal world without violence is possible.

About this Guide

– For International Readers

This guide was made in the fall 2017 in response to the #metoo campaign. The purpose of the guide is to make it easier for men to have group conversations about questions of masculinity. Our material is based on five meetings with different themes.

We in the Swedish feminist organization MÄN have extensive experience in using conversations to get men to initiate change. The material you're holding in your hand is built on tested methods that we've used for over 20 years in different forms, and it has many times led to positive results. Simultaneously, the package in its whole is something entirely new. We have tried to gather MÄN's knowledge on how to build safe groups and conversations by gathering feedback from fathers groups, voluntary groups, education groups, and reflective groups. Many men have seen how these groups have changed their lives, improved relationships, and made other actions in everyday life better as well.

This guide is a direct translation from Swedish into English and is not adapted for international contexts, i.e. references mentioned in the guide are all Swedish, but they can serve as inspiration to look for similar references in your context.

The English version of the guide is based on an update of our guide from the fall 2018.

If you try to use the material described here, you will notice which parts works well and which parts needs some adjustments in order to work well for you, your group and your context.

We would very much appreciate to receive feedback on this guide - both if you will use the guide in your own context or if you will draw inspiration from it by reading it. Please feel welcome to visit www.mfj.se/en/resources (where you downloaded the guide) and give your feedback.

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How to Start and Facilitate a Group

This material provides information on how to arrange five sessions. Of course, you're free to arrange them however you like, but these general guidelines are what we have found to be the best way of conducting the sessions. This is based on the experiences that we have built up during the years.

Who Facilitates the Group?

It's preferable if one person is in charge and facilitates the sessions. This brings structure to the meetings and increases the chance that the sessions are followed through. No prior knowledge is needed to facilitate the sessions, though it is ideal if the facilitator takes some responsibility to make the rules of the session clear prior to the meeting and during. The facilitator should also remind everybody that there's a time limit for every round and person. It is important that the facilitator read through the material thoroughly.

There might be times when people want to support each other and facilitate a group together. Of course, you can create a group where the responsibility of facilitating is shared. Remember to make clear at the end of each session who will facilitate the next time. Maybe even make a schedule prior to the start of the first session.

So, What's the Basic Setup of a Session?

- Time-wise, a session last about 1.5 hours, and your conversation is based on a specific subject. Our experience is that these kinds of conversations work best if they follow a specific structure so that everyone can participate in an open and safe way.
- There are rules that stipulate what's OK and what's not in the group.
- The session is based on rounds where you take turns speaking. By passing a small object along to the person whose turn it is, you make it clear who the speaker is and thus eliminate misconceptions and interruptions from other participants.
- You always start and finish with a round so that everybody gets to check into a session and check out from it.

Who Can Participate?

Each session should have at least three participants and no more than nine, including the moderator. The ideal situation is between five and nine participants. The more people in the group, the more reflections and perceptions you get to hear, but if the group is too large, it gets in the way of a safe space that encourages everybody to open up and share.

The most important step is to find people who are willing to meet on a regular basis. You can choose friends or colleagues who you know from before or find completely new people who are willing to participate.

MÄN can help and be a link between you and other people searching for groups, or we can connect you with people arranging groups in your area.

All groups are unique and have different strengths and weaknesses. General differences in groups tend to be stimulating to the participants, as long as you stick by the given rules of the session.

Stability is a key thing for the group. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you don't bring in new members after the first session.

How, When, and Where?

The session should take place in an isolated place, free of disturbing elements and other people – for example, at the home of someone in the group. To meet every other week for about 1.5 hours is a good way to start. Then it's up to the group to decide how to proceed.

Regarding the Time

Since the material is made for groups of three to nine participants, the length of the session may vary. Large groups naturally take longer time to finish than smaller ones. If your group is large, it might be a good idea to set a time limit for every person during the round.

The Small Room and the Big Room

For a long time, MÄN has worked with a method we call the small room and the big room.

The Small Room

The small room focuses on personal experiences. Here we talk about what you as an individual have experienced – the close and personal stuff that has made an impact on you and your life. We allow ourselves to become vulnerable.

- We do not comment, question, or challenge other people's stories. We focus on being an open and nonjudgmental listener.
- We try to avoid discussing the big question of gender inequality with theories and gender structures – again, focus on yourself and your own experiences. Also try to note whenever you move over to saying something just to make yourself sound smart or someone who is knowledgeable about gender theories. If you do, try to make your way back to the personal and close experiences and focus on them.

The Big Room

The big room is a place where the big discussions can take place. We try to see ourselves in the bigger picture and our role in society. Here we can discuss gender theories and structural analyses and explore each other's thoughts and ideas. If we don't agree with one another, we can try to challenge what's been said and bring a new perspective to the subject. You're also free to be a problem fixer on issues such as how to change a society based on masculinity and also to plan for the future.

The sessions that make up this material are mostly based on the small room. On a number of occasions, we have seen the great impact and power that lies in these kinds of talks where the possibility of change is great.

Sometimes we accidentally find ourselves in the big room, even though our intention was to stay in the small room. This may just be a matter of habit kicking in. It might also originate from a feeling that talking about sensitive subjects in a more general or structural way is easier than getting personal. Therefore, we encourage you to be aware of which "room" you're in during the sessions. Important to note is that you can never force anybody to talk in a specific way or expose themselves in a way that they're not comfortable with. We're all different individuals, and where we are in our process of change might vary. We all have a responsibility to clearly set our own boundaries on how much we want to share, and we should only share something when we're ready. This is a key thing for these kinds of sessions. So try to view this method, and these sessions with the small room, as a suggested guideline to a certain kind of conversation.

The small room Self-reflection	The big room Critical analyses of society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Openhearted - Experiences <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Individual - Gut feeling/intuition - Me and you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critique - Theories - Structures - Mind/reason - Patriarchal society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender - Power - Patterns <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center; gap: 20px;"> ← → </div>	

How to Start a Round and Set a Narrative Norm

Imagine that the person starting the round begins by creating a narrative norm that will be the standard for the content of the stories and how much time it takes to tell them. If the person starting the round dares to be more personal and share something that's deep and touching, he will make it easier for others to also do that. On the other hand, if the person who starts begins by telling something impersonal, general, or theoretical, there's a risk that the others will as well.

If the moderator, for some reason, finds it very hard to begin a round in this way, you can always ask somebody else in the group to kick-start the meeting instead. Make sure to ask this person beforehand, so he has time to prepare.

Ground Rules for the Small Room

So that you can get started in the best way possible, we want to present an approach that enables the participants to feel safe. These ground rules are the foundation of the reflective group. Our experience is that these rules usually are necessary to enable a rewarding exchange in a reflective group.

In session 1, you will go through the ground rules and later go around the group with the question: How do we want to interact with one another in this group? After the round, you might find that you want to add something or clarify the ground rules for the small room – do so! Make the rules accessible to everyone who participates – send them by email or ensure that everyone has a copy of the guide. You could also print copies of the rules and share them with the group. At the beginning of every session, remind the group and yourself of the ground rules.

The rules create a safe space and enable people to open up to each other. For a more detailed description of the impact of the rules, see “More on the Ground Rules for the Small Room.”

- **Share based on your own experiences.**
- **Be an active listener.**
- **Don't comment other people's stories.**
- **Give more of yourself, receive more from others.**
- **It's OK to say “pass.”**
- **Everything said in the small room stays in the small room.**
- **Set a specific time frame for the rounds (usually three minutes).**
- **Agree on an end time for the session.**

Session 1

 2-3 hours



Purpose of the Session

#metoo has, among other things, lifted the perpetrator perspective, and perhaps we think that we should start talking about it. But for such a conversation to take place in a good way, we need to create a safe group where we trust each other. Therefore, we start the series of sessions by getting to know each other. We share our own experiences and difficulties, and perhaps we recognize ourselves in each other's stories. We try to create a safe space where brave and vulnerable conversations can take place. To achieve this, we must talk about how we act toward each other and which rules apply.

Checklist for the Moderator – What to Do Before the Session

- Determine the location, start time, and end time. At the first session, you are going to need some extra time to get started. You can expect the session to last about two to three hours.
- Read through all the material. Read session 1 an extra time.
- Take some time to think about what you, as a moderator, want to share based on the questions that the session will focus on. Stay within what we call the small room when you share.
- Print a copy of “Ground Rules for the Small Room”.
- Place the chairs in a circle formation without a table or anything else in the middle.
- Print the four presentation questions on a piece of A4 paper. Also print the question “Why are you here today?” on another. Put the questions in the center of the circle with the backsides facing upward, presentation questions on top.

Step 1. Welcome Everybody

When everyone is in place, welcome the participants and briefly explain how it came about that you have taken the initiative to start this reflective group.

Step 2. Break the Ice

Briefly, in one minute, tell the person next to you what you thought and felt on the way here. The listener tries to listen without commenting the other person's story and finishes by saying “thank you for sharing.” When the first person is finished sharing, it's time for the second person to share their story in one minute. The moderator or someone else in the group can keep track of the time.

Step 3. Present the Round as a Way of Conversing

Read these instructions for the round.

The Round

The purpose of the round is to give one person at a time the opportunity to talk while the others listen. The person talking holds a small object (for example, a key, a boll, or a small stone) in their hand; this object symbolizes whose turn it is. The whole point is that the person speaking will not be interrupted. The person next in line should avoid commenting on what the other participants have already talked about and instead try to talk based on their own personal experience. When everybody in the group has shared their stories, the round is over. If someone in the group doesn't want to say something during the round, it's okay to say "I'd like to pass" and let the next person talk. A person who repeatedly skips their turn should consider why he is participating.

Time Limit

If you are a large group (more than five people), it can be good to set a time limit for each speaker to ensure that everyone gets to talk and that the sessions won't be too long. Try to take collective responsibility for the time as a group.

Popcorn Round

A good way to vary rounds is by letting each person talk, but not in a specific order, while the others listen. You let the round "jump around" until everyone has spoken. This is usually called a jump round or a popcorn round.

Step 4. Hold a Presentation Round

Hold a round where you present yourself to each other by saying your first name and answering one of the questions presented below. Put a printed paper with the questions in the center of the circle.

Introduce yourself by answering **one** of the following questions:

- **When are you happy to be who you are?**
- **When was the last time you cried?**
- **Can you tell us about a relative or someone you are close to who has experienced mental problems/illness?**
- **What day in life was it hardest being yourself?**

Example of a dialogue:

Now we're going to introduce ourselves to one another, but we're going to do it in a different way than usual. We're going to start off with a set of four questions. Some of them might be more personal than the questions you are used to answering. You might feel a little awkward answering them but try only to share what you feel is fine.

When you listen, notice which thoughts or feelings that emerge within you as a reaction to what other people are sharing. It is important that this becomes a place where we dare to be open and honest with each other. Before we start, is everyone clear on the premise that what's said in the room stays in the room?

Step 5. Take Responsibility

#metoo might evoke thoughts that remind you of your own part in the suffering that women have brought to light. We are a great number of men who now have started reflecting on our own behavior and might remember occasions where we've said something or done something that we later on have regretted. Our experience is that the reflective conversations we've had in our groups might give you insights about things you need to go forth with and take responsibility for. Inform the participants of the group that there's a text in the end of this guide with thoughts on how to take responsibility and that they should read it. Also inform them that there's a contact list that might be helpful if anyone feels the urge to seek professional help.

Step 6. Determine Some Rules for the Group

Read the eight ground rules for the small room once again, and hold a round based on the question: How do we want to interact with one another in this group? Write down what you come up with. Then hold another round in case something else has come up or something important has been left out. You can skip the extra round if you don't have anything more to add. Write down all the rules that you as a group have settled on and make them accessible to all the participants. Send them by email or print a document to hand out.

Step 7. Hold the Round

Turn over the paper with the question: *Why are you here today?* Remind everybody to respect the rules of the round and that everyone is there to listen just as much they're there to share. The moderator starts the round.

Step 8. Ask: How Have the Other Participants' Stories Affected Me?

Go around the group, and have everyone share a new thought that emerged during the previous rounds from what the other participants have shared.

Step 9. Plan for the Coming Sessions

Talk through how you want to arrange the moderating. Should you take turns, or should the same person be the moderator every time? Our recommendation is that the same person moderates all five sessions. If this has already been determined, skip this section. Does the moderator for the next session want someone to support and guide him? If you haven't set a date, time, and place for the next session, do so now. If possible, schedule the coming three sessions.

Step 10. Ask: What Are You Taking with You from Today?

Go around the group, and let everybody say something about what they will take home from today – lessons, experiences, insights, etc.

Session 2

🕒 1,5 hours

Purpose of the Session

During the second session, we focus on making macho norms visible. We talk about how we as men have expectations on how we are to behave and how we as individuals feel about that. We also try to reflect on how these expectations affect our behavior toward ourselves, other men, and also women, transgender, and intergender people.

Checklist for the Moderator – What to Do Before the Session

- Read the instructions for the session.
- Take some time to think about what you, as a moderator, want to share based on the questions that the session will focus on. Stay within what we call the small room when you share.
- Take Post-it notes and pencils.
- Make sure to have a small object to pass to the person whose turn it is.
- Place the chairs in a circle formation without a table or anything else in the middle.
- Print the three questions that are connected to “man box” on three different papers. Put the questions in the center of the circle with the backside facing upward so that the first question is on the top.

Step 1. Hold a Check-In Round

Go around the group, and ask everybody to repeat their first name and answer the question: What’s new and good? It can be something that’s happened in their life or something that makes them happy right now. The purpose of this is to start the session in a positive way and to make it easier later on to get into the subjects that might be hard to talk about.

Step 2. Remind the Group of the Rules and the Method of Conversing in Rounds

Step 3. Introduce the “Man Box”

Present the question:

“What are the expectations that boys/guys/men are supposed to live up to?”

Team up two and two, and try to come up with different expectations and write them down on Post-it notes. Put the Post-it notes on an actual box or a normal paper that you put in the center of the circle. Read all the notes aloud to the group.

Step 4. Continue with the “Man Box”

Present the question:

”What have you felt regarding these expectations through life?”

(When you show this question to the group, make it clear that it’s the *feelings* you have experienced that are in focus). Team up two and two, and discuss the question.

Step 5. Hold A Round

First remind the group of the ground rules. This is to make it clear that we are now entering a more reflective part of the session. Remind everybody that it’s an exercise in listening. Present the question by turning over the paper that reads:

“In what way have expectations affected your behavior as a boy/guy/man?”

Finish off with a round where everyone can share a new insight, feeling, or experience that has arisen as a result of the other participants’ stories.

Step 6. Plan for the Next Session

Remind everybody about when and where the next session will take place. Also make sure there are no uncertainties on whom the moderator will be.

Step 7. Ask: What Are You Taking with You from Today?

Go around the group, and let everybody say something about what they will take home from today – lessons, experiences, insights, etc.

Session 3

🕒 1,5 hours

Purpose of the Session

Examine your relation to pornography and sex, and listen to other people's stories.

Checklist for the Moderator – What to Do Before the Session

- Read the instructions for the session.
- Take some time to think about what you, as a moderator, want to share based on the questions that the session will focus on. Stay within what we call the small room when you share.
- Take Post-it notes and pencils.
- Make sure to have a small object to pass to the person whose turn it is.
- Place the chairs in a circle formation without a table or anything else in the middle.
- Print the questions that are connected to this session's rounds on different papers. Put the questions in the center of the circle with the backside facing upward so that the first question is on the top.

Step 1. Hold a Check-In Round

Remind the participants that when we hold a round discussion, we don't comment on another person's story, and first and foremost we never judge anyone. The main focus is to listen to other people's stories. Start by going around the group, and ask: What's new and good?

Step 2. Hold a Round

Go around the group, and ask: How have your experiences of pornography affected you?

Step 3. Hold Another Round if Time Permits

If there's time, go around the group again, and ask the question: How have the expectations on you as a man affected how you have sex and how you feel about sex?

Step 4. Ask: How Have the Other Participants' Stories Affected Me?

Go around the group, and have everyone share a new thought that emerged during the previous rounds from what the other participants have shared. This can be in the form of a "popcorn round" if you're comfortable with it.

Step 5. Plan for the Next Session

Remind everybody about when and where the next session will take place. Also make sure there are no uncertainties on whom the moderator will be.

Step 6. Finish with an Appreciation Round

Finish the session by holding a round where you say something appreciative to the person next to you. When everybody's had something appreciative said about them, the round is over.

Session 4

⌚ 1,5 hours

Purpose of the Session

During this session, we try to clarify and raise awareness if you might have had a roll in the suffering that #metoo has brought to light.

Checklist for the Moderator – What to Do Before the Session

- Read the instructions for the session.
- Take some time to think about what you, as a moderator, want to share based on the questions that the session will focus on. Stay within what we call the small room when you share.
- Make sure to have a small object to pass to the person whose turn it is.
- Place the chairs in a circle formation without a table or anything else in the middle.
- Print the questions that are connected to this session's rounds on different papers. Put the questions in the center of the circle with the backside facing upward so that the first question is on the top.

Step 1. Remind the Participants About the “About Men and Responsibility” and “About Seeking Help” Sections at the End of the Guide. Also Remind Everybody About the Balance Between Being Brave and Respecting Our Own Boundaries

Remind the participants that in the back of this guide there's a text about how we as men can take responsibility. There's also a list with contact information to services that can help you if you feel that there's a need for professional help.

Also remind everybody that sometimes we need to challenge ourselves and share something that's hard to talk about. On other occasions, we might have to be more aware of our boundaries and be restrictive in what we share. Here's a text that you can read aloud to the group as an example:

“By having the courage to be brave and share something that you find difficult to share, we can start to work with our feelings and thus learn more about ourselves. It's here, with this action, that change can prosper. But each and every one has to take responsibility for their own boundaries and only share what they are ready to share and feel OK with – nothing else.”

Step 2. Listen to Stories from #metoo

This is an exercise in listening. The moderator reads stories from the #metoo campaign. SVT (a Swedish television broadcasting network) has a selection of the many stories from the #metoo campaign on their web page svt.se (in Swedish), and they can be used during this exercise. The rest of the group listens and pays attention to the thoughts, emotions, and feelings that you're experiencing when you hear the stories.

Step 3. Ask: What Happens When I Hear These #metoo Stories?

Team up two and two, and share with one another based on the question:

”What are your thoughts, emotions, and feelings when you hear these #metoo stories?”

Divide the time so that both of you have equal time to share and equal time to listen.

Step 4. Hold Another Round

Show everyone the question:

”Is it possible that I, by doing or not doing something, might have contributed to the suffering that #metoo has brought to light?”

Go around the group and ask everybody to share something. Listen to the other participants’ stories, and remember to not comment on someone else’s story.

Step 5. Plan for the Next Session

Remind everybody about when and where the next session will take place. Also make sure there are no uncertainties on whom the moderator will be.

Step 6. Hold an Appreciation Round

Finish the session by going around the group and asking everyone to say something appreciative to the person next to them. When everybody’s had something appreciative said about them, the round is over.

Session 5

⌚ 1,5 hours

Purpose of the Session

During this session, we focus on what's to come and explore whom we want to be in the future.

Checklist for the Moderator – What to Do Before the Session

- Read the instructions for the session.
- Take some time to think about what you, as a moderator, want to share based on the questions that the session will focus on. Stay within what we call the small room when you share.
- Take Post-it notes and pencils.
- Make sure to have a small object to pass to the person whose turn it is.
- Place the chairs in a circle formation without a table or anything else in the middle.
- Print the questions that are connected to this session's rounds on different papers. Put the questions in the center of the circle with the backside facing upward so that the first question is on the top.

Step 1. Hold a Check-In Round

Start by going around the group and ask: What's new and good?

Step 2. Come to Terms with Yourself as an 80-Year-Old Man

This exercise is about confronting yourself as an 80-year-old man. This exercise works best if you don't read through the material before the session, which is why it's included in the appendix.

The moderator reads the exercise to the rest of the group. Use a calm, soothing voice, and notice where there are intentional pauses in the text. If the moderator wants to participate during the exercise, record it on a phone and play it back during the session.

When the exercise has been read, split into groups of two and briefly discuss:

- What are your thoughts and feelings after completing this exercise?

After that, go around the group and start off with the question:

- What does this exercise tell me about what kind of a man I want to be in this world?

Step 3. Be Guided by Your Values in Everyday Life

Present the question:

”What would happen if you, in the future, were to live according to your values? How would this be reflected in your actual behavior? What would you do/express/show more often? What would you do/express/show less often?”

Step 4. Ask: How Have the Other Participants’ Stories Affected Me?

If there’s enough time, go around the group and have everyone share a new thought that emerged during previous rounds from what the other participants have shared. This can be in the form of a “popcorn round” if you’re comfortable with it. If the group has many participants, skip this part and move on to the next step.

Step 5. Ask: How Have These Five Sessions Impacted Me?

Go around the group and have everyone share what these sessions have meant to them – the impact, insights, and general experience of the sessions.

Step 6. Consider Next Steps

If there’s interest in continuing the sessions, make sure to discuss how the sessions would be organized and moderated.

More on the Ground Rules for the Small Room

So that you get started in the best way possible, we want to present an approach that enables the participants to feel safe. These ground rules are the foundation of the reflective group. Our experience is that these rules usually are necessary to enable a rewarding exchange in a reflective group.

The rules create security and give the participants the means to open up to each other. In this section, you can read more on why there are rules and why we think it's crucial that you follow them. We'll also talk about which experiences have led us to this belief.

Share Based On Your Own Experiences

The purpose of the small room is to create a space where you can share your feelings and emotions on your own terms. It's not a place to make smart analyses, or to debate and make comparisons.

The key is to keep the reflections, and what you share, focused on *your own* thoughts, *your own* experiences, and your own feelings and emotions. Try to gather what you share from the heart and gut more than from the brain and reason.

By starting your sentences with "I have..." or "I feel..." rather than talking in a general manner, you can more easily stay within the small room.

Be an Active Listener

Listening is just as important as sharing in a reflective group. In everyday life, we rarely think of listening as an active deed. Our experience from the reflective groups is that being an active listener and being present in the moment are in fact a way of giving something to another person. When you feel others are listening to you, that often makes it easier to open up and share something personal. It might also lead to new insights and new thoughts that emerge while you're sharing – insights and thoughts that emerged only because you felt you were being listened to. The act of being an active listener is founded on – and conveys – a trust that the person who is sharing also has the answers to his own questions. Actively listening to someone makes it easier for him to find both the questions and the answers.

Don't Comment Other People's Stories

We recommend that you don't comment or refer to other people's stories. The reason is that both positive and negative comments might ignite thoughts about how we are being perceived from the outside – something that in turn counteracts the purpose of the group.

It might be that the person whose story's being commented feels that the interpretation of the story wasn't right, and a feeling of being misunderstood emerges. That might lead to a situation where that person feels he has to explain the real meaning of the story, and the situation might spin off into other subjects. It may also lead to a situation where the person who shared doesn't respond and just keeps quiet, and the next time he doesn't feel as safe sharing personal stories because they might be interpreted wrong. The whole group's feeling of safety is affected, and instead of being a space where we can practice sharing deep feelings and being active listeners, we end up limiting what we share and start to think of how we are looked upon from the outside and by others.

What other people share might refer to what you yourself are thinking, and maybe you feel the urge to say "It's the same for me" or "That's not the case for me." Though it might sometimes be frustrating to not be able to comment, refer to, or ask follow-up questions, we strongly recommend that you abide by this rule.

In those moments when you feel the urge to make a comment, step even further inward and ask yourself: What thoughts, feelings, and emotions came to me when listening to this story? Later on, when it's your turn, you can share those thoughts, feelings, and emotions that refer to yourself and not to others. This type of sharing focuses only on you and doesn't conflict with the group's joint listening and sharing experience.

Give More of Yourself, Receive More from Others

If you share more of your own experiences, the rest of the group will also feel safe to share similar stories. When you show your own vulnerability to others, it invites them to be vulnerable toward you.

Share what comes to you in the moment. Sharing doesn't mean that you have to fill out the time frame with "the best" vulnerable and emotionally packed content. If you honestly feel that you're having trouble finding the words and a story, your sharing can be to say just that. It's not about being a "good" participant who shares perfect stories. It's about sharing from inside yourself and from where you are right now.

Each and every one has to take responsibility for their own boundaries. Share only what you are ready to share and feel OK with – nothing else.

It's OK to Say "Pass"

If you don't have anything to say, or if you in that moment feel that you don't want to share anything, you can always say "pass." This rule highlights that safety in the group is taken seriously. It's all about practicing how to get in touch with your feelings and share from where you are right now. To say "I'll pass" is also a way of sharing that in this moment right now I don't feel that I can share anything. It's just as honest and contributes to the safety of the group. The opposite – trying to produce a "good" story and striving to be a "good" participant – might do the opposite. A person who has said pass during a round is always given the chance to share at the end of the round. For the most part, the person chooses to take that chance, but not in all cases and that is in no way a failure.

A person who sits quietly during a round can give and receive much more from just being there and listening than we can ever imagine. Having this rule that it's OK to say pass, and clearly explaining why it exists, is often the thing that creates the safe space that's needed to make people comfortable in sharing personal stories.

Everything Said in the Small Room Stays in the Small Room

Let the stories that are being shared stay within the reflective group. Don't share them to anyone outside the reflective group. Avoid spreading the names of the people in the group. You can of course tell other people that you're in a reflective group, and you can also talk about your own stories and reflections to people outside the group. Keep in mind that you have to stay within your own stories and not drift over to what others have shared. A good thing to do is to talk within the group about these boundaries so that you're on the same terms.

Set a Specific Time Frame for the Rounds

We recommend that you have a specific time frame for each participant's turn during the round. You could set a timer with a pleasant sound to mark the end of the time frame. Three minutes is usually a suitable time frame. It's OK to stop before the three minutes are out, but don't go over the three-minute limit too much. Make sure there's someone in charge of setting the timer for each participant.

A specific time frame and a timer provide good structure to the session. It helps not only the one who is sharing but also the other participants. The one who is sharing doesn't have to worry about losing track of time and talking too long, which can happen when you get everyone's complete attention. Listeners give their full attention, since they know there's a specific time frame. The time frame also gives everyone an equal opportunity to speak and is a useful tool in the strive for gender equality.

Agree on an End Time for the Session

Try to end the session at the agreed-upon time. It's preferable if all participants can stay for the whole session. In case one of you has to leave earlier, it's good to inform the group of it in advance. Stop the conversation and say goodbye. If the conversations are taking longer than expected and you want to finish properly, make sure that everyone can stay longer and agree on a new end time.

Some Tips Along the Way

Moderating – Who’s Responsible for the Group?

It’s recommended that everyone in the group reads through this guide and take joint responsibility for the conversations and the practicalities surrounding the sessions. We recommend that the same person moderates the first five sessions based on the fact that in the beginning the group may need a leader who arranges and sets everything in motion so that everything comes together smoothly and works in a functional way. With that in mind, it’s a good thing to relieve the moderator if necessary. If you like the idea of rotating the role of moderator within the group, there’s no downside to this. You need to make sure that the moderator of the session is prepared and knows what the expectations are and what needs to be done before the session starts.

Is It Therapy or “Just” a Normal Conversation With Other Adults?

To participate in a reflective group for men means that you enter a safe place where you can reflect on your life with other people. To put into words what you are feeling and be listened to can be similar to undergoing therapy, and it may also have the same effect. Since no one in the group is there as a certified therapist, it’s important to separate these kinds of talks from the ones that a certified therapist holds with a client. Subjects may arise that you feel would be good to take up in a therapy session. Try to help each other and separate the things you want to share with the group and the stuff that needs to be handled outside the group by professional therapists.

Be Aware of the Difference Between the Small Room and the Big Room

In the sessions, we recommend you stay within the small room. In the small room, we avoid discussing and commenting each other and instead we create an environment where everyone can share their feelings without being questioned. Try to stay within the small room during the five sessions. If you do step into the big room, it might be a good idea to point it out and make everybody aware of it.

MÄN as an organization sees the value of sticking to the small room. We gain insight into our own relation to masculine ideals/norms that we always are aware of when we engage in advocacy work, actions, and in different ways of building opinion. The method of the small room is a form of activism turned inward that makes us see that masculine ideals/norms affect our own lives. Even though there’s something special being in the small room, we can’t stay there forever. One way of continuing the conversations, but moving them to the big room, is to keep on having sessions/workshops/meetups based on different questions and themes. There’s always a possibility for you to return to the small room to get back to yourself and to find your core values.

Continuing With the Small Room

If you'd like to continue with the small room, it's fine. We can formulate more material for future sessions. If you do continue, we recommend that you don't bring in new members in the original group. If the group needs more members to function, it's better to start from scratch again to create the safe space that's needed.

Rotating the Moderating

If you continue with more than five sessions, it's best to rotate the responsibility of moderating. When the group has existed for this long, it's best that all the participants try to moderate at some point.

Closure of the Group

Sooner or later, there will come a time when the group will stop meeting and end the sessions. Try to be clear on when it's time to end it and when you're ready to do so. It's good to have a proper end where you get a chance to look back at what you've done and see what you've brought with you from participating in the group.

About Men and Responsibility

As we've mentioned before, #metoo might evoke thoughts that remind you of your own part in the suffering that women have brought to light. We are a great number of men who now have started reflecting on our own behavior and might remember occasions where we've said something or done something that we later on have regretted. Our experience is that the reflective conversations we've had in our groups might give you insights about things you need to go forth with and take responsibility for. We would therefore like to take a minute and talk about men's responsibility. As usual it's easier talking about it than finding the courage to take action.

Taking Responsibility for Your Actions

If you've exercised violence or violated someone's personal integrity, it's vital to take full responsibility for your actions, regardless if the violence is physical or sexualized. It's about understanding that your action was abuse and that you crossed the line into someone's personal space.

It's important not to trivialize what has happened and diminish the situation to where someone else is seen as an accomplice to what you've done: "I was provoked ...", "I was drunk ...", "It was in self-defense ...", "If X just hadn't ..., I would never have ...". To some degree, it's about getting to the core of the story: I did this, it was my choice, and it was not okay.

Taking responsibility for what you've done – both internally within yourself and maybe later externally to others – is an important step toward accountability. Having the courage to look at yourself and opening up to support from others during that process can be a way to move forward. Remember that we can condemn the action, but we don't judge the person.

Taking Responsibility in Relation to the Victim

A rightful criticism that has been put forward by a lot of women in relation to #metoo is that there is something problematic with men confessing previous abuse and harassments in unisexual groups or in public while at the same time never having to admit responsibility directly to the victim. If you've crossed the line, at some time you have to convey this reflection to the person who was affected.

It's not certain that this person wants anything to do with you, but that doesn't mean it's any less important to take responsibility. In processes where we try to change ourselves, we can also be supportive and encourage each other to take responsibility for our actions.

When (if) a person in the role of a perpetrator comes to the point where he can look at and talk about what he's done with full responsibility, then that might be the time to reach out to the victim. What is important here is that it's not about being forgiven; it's about letting the victim know that what you did was wrong and that you take responsibility for it.

In general, the perpetrators of sexual harassment or sexual assault have little insight in how they have affected the victim. Even though #metoo has brought a new perspective on this, the stories shared under #metoo may only be a fraction of the real hurt and suffering that the actions brought. One important thing to remember is that you can never, to a full extent, know how it felt or how it feels to be subjected to these kinds of actions. What you can do is to make it clear to the person affected and let them know that “I have realized that I have done something to you, and it was wrong. I can imagine that it has affected you negatively and for that I am sorry.” There is no general guideline for how we handle being subjected to violence, harassment, or assault, but we do know that it’s important for the victim to be trusted in their story and to get confirmation that their understanding of the situation was real. If the perpetrator can assure the victim that it in fact was the perpetrator who crossed the line and did something wrong toward the victim, then the healing process may be a little bit easier. If the victim wants to share their experience of the harassment or assault, you should be supportive and try to be the best listener you can, but to hear a victim’s story can never be a demand from you as a perpetrator. It has to be something that the victim alone comes to terms with, not something you insist on. It is also important that this doesn’t transform into a strategy for you to find forgiveness for your actions or praise for the fact that you’re finally holding yourself accountable for the actions that you have taken.

About Seeking Help

When you participate in a reflective group for men, you get the opportunity to share your story and what you've been through in a safe space. You might share things that you've never talked about before or only to a few. To put into words what is emotional and affects you, and to be listened to, can give you a strong sensation of change and development as a person. To some it might even be reminiscent of therapy. It's important to note that since none of you are there as a therapist you have to make a clear distinction between the reflective group and group therapy. Even if you feel great support from the other participants, they shouldn't have to bear the responsibility if you're in need of help.

Statistics show that men seek help to a lesser degree than women. One of the reasons behind this could be the traditional masculine norms that a man should not be vulnerable and never ask for help. Let's change these norms. If you feel that you need professional help, it's important to acknowledge that. Here are some contacts that you can reach out to.

Rikskriscentrum

Rikskriscentrum (The National Association of Swedish Crisis Centres for Men) is the only nationwide organization in the country representing this field of work. Its function is to act as a central administrative body for Sweden's crisis centers for men. On Rikskriscentrum's website, you can find the nearest center.

Website: rikskriscentrum.se

Preventell

Preventell is a hotline for people who feel they have lost control of their sexual behavior or for someone you are worried about. At Preventell you can get support and guidance from licensed health-care staff who have extensive experience in questions regarding sexuality, and they can help you get any treatment that you might need.

Website: preventell.se

Phone: **020-66 77 88** (work days 12-15)

Killfrågor.se

Killfrågor.se (literally "guy issues") is a chat hotline for guys aged 10–20 where conversations are held that work toward promoting gender equality and preventing violence in young men. You're welcome to chat anonymously with the volunteers who can listen to and support you with matters regarding emotions, feelings, relationships, your body, violence, bullying, and feelings of loneliness.

Website: killfragor.se (Chat is open Monday–Thursday and Sundays, 8 pm–10 pm)

RFSL:s stödmottagning

RFSL:s stödmottagning (RFSLs support group) is aimed at people identifying as LGBTQ, and who have been subjected to threats, violations, or violence. They also provide support to their relatives and friends. You can get advice and support by phone, email, or in-person appointments. RFSL can provide you with information about rights, support when filing a police report, legal process support, and follow-up visits to health-care and government agencies.

Website: [rfsl.se/.../brottsofferjour/brottsofferjouren/](https://www.rfsl.se/.../brottsofferjour/brottsofferjouren/)

Hotline: **020-34 13 16** ((Free of charge and possibility of being anonymous)

Email: boj@rfsl.se

MIND självmordslinje

MIND självmordslinje (MIND suicide hotline) is for people who are thinking about taking their own life. The hotline is open 24/7, and you can call, email, and chat anonymously with trained volunteers.

Website: [mind.se/sjalvmordslinjen/](https://www.mind.se/sjalvmordslinjen/)

Hotline: **90 101** (open 24/7; free except your telephone operator's setup fee)

Email: mejlsvar@mind.se



Read more at www.män.se

Ground Rules for the Small Room

- 1. Start with your own experiences.**
- 2. Be an active listener.**
- 3. Don't comment other people's stories.**
- 4. Give more of yourself, receive more from others.**
- 5. It's OK to say "pass."**
- 6. Everything said in the small room stays in the small room.**
- 7. Set a specific time frame for the rounds (usually three minutes).**
- 8. Agree on an end time for the session.**

Introduce yourself by answering one of the following questions:

- **When are you happy to be who you are?**
- **When was the last time you cried?**
- **Can you tell us about a relative or someone you are close to who has experienced mental problems/illness?**
- **What day in life was it hardest being yourself?**

Why are you here today?

**What are the expectations
that boys/guys/men are
supposed to live up to?**

**What have you felt regarding
these expectations through life?**

**In what way have expectations
affected your behavior as a
boy/guy/man?**

**How have your experiences of
pornography affected you?**

**How have the expectations
on you as a man affected how
you have sex and how you feel
about sex?**

Is it possible that I, by doing or not doing something, might have contributed to the suffering that #metoo has brought to light?

**What does this exercise tell me
about what kind of a man I want
to be in this world?**

What would happen if you, in the future, were to live according to your values? How would this be reflected in your actual behavior?

What would you do/express/show more often?

What would you do/express/show less often?

Exercise: Facing yourself as an 80-year-old man

Instructions:

Try and close your eyes during this exercise. Become aware of your body as it rests in the chair. (Brief pause.) Acknowledge your breathing for a moment. Aim your focus to the place in your body where you can feel your breathing the most.

(Pause for 30 seconds)

Imagine that we fast-forward time, and you're an older version of yourself. Now imagine that you're celebrating your 80th birthday and that your friends, family, and colleagues are there with you. This is in some way a magical event, since you've managed to gather all the people that you actually want to be there – even the people who might have already passed away or people yet to be born. Try to really picture all the people who are present. Also imagine what place you're in and the surroundings.

(Pause for 20 seconds)

Now's the time when all the guests are going to say a few words about you. They will share what you've meant to them and what kind of a man you've been through life. They're going to talk about how you've represented yourself and what guidelines you've had in life over the years. They're also going to talk about the impact that you've had on other people and in the world.

Imagine what you would like them to say about you with regards to what kind of a man you've been. If you were to be truly honest with yourself, what would you really deep inside want them to say when they talk about what kind of a man you've been all through life? What kind of friendships would you have nourished? How would you have acted against others? There are no right answers here. The focus is only about how you want to be as a man in this world.

(Pause for 10 seconds)

Imagine that the first person stands up to say a few words to you. It's someone who's very dear to you. Imagine what you would like them to say about you with regards to what kind of a man you've been. If you would've lived your life according to your values and what you think is important, what would they have said?

(Pause for two minutes)

Now, imagine that you're leaving your own birthday party and heading back to the body that belongs to the younger version of you. Take a couple of deep breaths. (Brief pause.) Now the exercise is over. If you'd like, you can write down a few lines about the things that the people shared about you in their speeches.