

Special topics like fantasy, goals, dad stories, work life, or any other men's issues can get work through in a support group.

TO GET BETTER CONNECTED

When you have tried this form of sharing and listening and you'd like to get better connected to others doing and developing this, get in touch with the Sydney Men's Network office, look at the end of this booklet for the address and phone number, and ask if there are any men's groups doing this form of work near you.

If you are definitely interested in learning this approach and involving other men in building a group to do this work in, it may be possible to organise a class or workshop for your group or bring you to one of our workshops.

Men who have figured out how to use another's attention to let themselves and others "discharge" in this way find that it gets easier to have a full life, know where they are going with their life, have intimacy, respect and warmth in their relationships, have more friends, peace of mind, stick up for what is right and have a lot more fun. Men doing this work become more openly themselves as they continue and find their work with men easier and more powerful. They teach both women and men and in some places run classes, workshops and gatherings to learn from each other.

We are using the guidelines developed in Re-evaluation Counselling (www.rc.org) which spell out the ground rules we have found necessary to keep the network both friendly and well organised.

Sydney Men's Network PO Box 2064 Boronia Park NSW 2111 Australia
Phone +61-2-9879-4979 Fax +61-2-9817-0650 E-mail
paulwhyte@gelworks.com.au Web site at
<http://www.peerleadership.com.au/smn>

The work of the Sydney Men's Network is developed from and based in Re-evaluation Counselling.

The International Re-evaluation Counselling Communities 719 Second Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA Phone: +1-206-284-0311 FAX: +1-206-284-8429 E-mail: ircc@rc.org Web site: <http://www.rc.org>

Getting Peer Counselling Started With Men

Working through your issues and feelings with men and getting a bigger life can be easier than you suspect. You can make a start by trying out the following approach.

At the start, emotional discharge work with men is about making it safe to talk and listen to each other. We are used to talking and listening but to be able to work through emotions with men, more care than we usually give is needed.

A man needs time and attention to be able to discover the full range of his emotions on his own terms. Most men are not used to being listened to carefully. It's a discovery process for quite a while. Just getting used to the "idea" of safety takes time. Being able to "use" safety to discharge emotions can seem even more unusual.

It's a more aware, useful kind of listening that's needed with men. It is not only the words that he is saying that you listen to but everything about how he is with you as you listen. You will need to listen as completely as you can and not interrupt or give advice. How well you can think about him and understand what he is showing you about himself is important and can change his life.

URNS AT LISTENING AND TALKING

It only takes a friend (work mate or men's group) who's interested to make a start. Decide how long you have together and that you will take a turn, of equal time each to talk. Then choose who is going to talk first. The listener or group just pays attention and doesn't interrupt to give advice, comment or give other thoughts or feelings.

When each man's time is up the man who has not yet spoken has a turn to talk as he wishes. There is no obligation to do this in a particular way or at a particular depth. It is just a fair swap of time. You usually notice that life is easier after doing this. The tension is at least a little lighter. It can be the most interesting or fun thing that you do all day. Anytime that work does not need to be done, is a good time to spend like this. Your

the part of the fantasy that had the client laughing or going through emotions can allow the tension to drain off. As the tension drains out of fantasies long lost ways of being and relating can become available.

If this process of allowing emotions to discharge from fantasies is repeated at great length, deep long occluded memories become easy to remember and able to be worked through in a safe way. The draining of tension from dreams, fantasies or longings lets the goals that direct one's life become clearer. You need to have your dreams to be able to set your goals. Some men need lots of encouragement to dare to have wild dreams. Some men need encouragement to have dreams at all. We have all had big wild dreams as a child. We need them clarified as adults to give us the best direction for a full life.

Goals

Most men get to have some goals. Often to do with work. It helps your life go better to re-assess the goals you have already set. Also thinking of all the different parts of your life and finding goals for each, can help you move towards a bigger life. Taking time when you are client in a session is a good way to do this.

Imagine how you would like all the parts of your life at periods into the future. What do you want it to be like tomorrow, next month, this year, in the next five years, in the next twenty years, in your lifetime. When you bring all these goals to mind in a session the steps that will need to be taken can be developed.

Making the time to go over these goals and work through the tensions connected to them can bring you closer to having the life that you want.

Allowing Discharge to Continue

The emotional discharge process has been suppressed in men beginning soon after birth. The discovery period, rediscovering the discharge process can be as long as you need, to figure out what your and other peoples emotions are about. As you talk in sessions there will be times when you laugh, yawn, talk in an interested way, cry or have another form of emotional discharge. Good, keep going. As this gets more familiar it happens more easily. This is a good thing and not to be fussed about or inhibited. You will notice as client that repeating what you just did that let you discharge will often let the discharge happen again. You can repeat this as often as you like to drain off the tension. An inherent and spontaneous benefit occurs after these discharges. Tensions are resolved and new ways of thinking and acting become available.

Ending a Session

this kind of emotional release you can reassure them that it's a good thing that is happening and to keep letting it happen.

WHAT MAKES SENSE TO YOU?

Emotional discharge work is simply the allowing and developing of this release process. By exchanging turns sharing and listening with your friends you can become very effective at allowing changes and discharging past tensions.

If you're reading this with a friend or group now is a good time to swap some minutes each at listening and sharing. What have you found with these exchanges? What has been enjoyable. If you want to continue with this process, the rest of this article gives you a way to develop it.

WHAT TO DO IN A SESSION

Talking personally with a listener who stays with you and does not interrupt the process is called a "session". Sessions work best for men when the man is in complete charge of his time. As we gain confidence in talking and listening there are many approaches that can be used to expand how we can assist each other.

"Making Good Contact"

Sometimes men can get very deeply isolated and not even notice it. At the start of any group or session the warm contact that we give each other can let men begin to take in safety. Sometimes just the ease that you make eye contact and show you like your friend with a smile can make the difference between really getting to show feelings and just thinking out aloud "on your own". With the heaviest issues just simple warm eye contact, a solid shoulder to lean on, or a tone of voice that's gentle or at ease can be all that's needed to show it's safe to let emotions "discharge."

"News and Goods"

A positive tone can be set by starting a session with things that have gone well recently. It can be anything in your life at all. A smile that a friend gave. A little child's glee in climbing on you. A piece of work that was finished well. It's a chance to notice the good things in life. An occasional session spent remembering everything that's going well can have a guy bouncing through the rest of his day.

Recent Irritations

It helps men leave our isolation to share little irritations as they happen or soon afterwards. A session is a good time to do this. You can get to come out of yourself by mentioning what's happened or repeating it as much as you like. Many things in a man's life can get to be made easier by this