

simple start to having sessions. It's just right for men to have this place to mention anything irritating. Saying if something was not right starts to ease the tension. There is mostly no need to look for solutions or advice. The tension can be eased enough by good listening that the man can find his own solutions.

Tensions from the Past

It's well worth the time for a man to talk about everything connected to an issue. If you have been talking about a tension for sometime in a session, you can ask yourself "Is this tension like anything that's happened that I can remember?" Your counsellor can also ask "is this like anything that has happened before?" Most of the time a memory of something similar will come to mind. It will be obvious what the connection is and that the earlier unresolved feeling is bringing extra confusion and tension than just what the current situation has caused. When the earlier story is told some of the old feelings can get a chance to discharge. This can give you new ideas, more open views and new approaches to the current situation.

Men's Stories

Men mostly have never talked about their life to anyone. If there is not a more important topic, telling the story of your life is well worth trying. Every man needs many opportunities to tell his full life story. The way you tell the story of your life is going to change each time you tell it. Some things will no longer seem important, others will stand out as areas to return to many times in sessions to let the tensions be thoroughly worked through. You need not be concerned as a client about boring or entertaining your counsellor or men's group. Your time is for you and getting a chance to go over and over an area of your life with very good attention being paid to you can give you a completely fresh approach. The way that you think can be changed or "liberated" from old habits or confusions.

Some of the old tensions coming from past events, can get worked through with each telling of the story. Telling the good stories can allow the old tensions to discharge as effectively as the tough times. When a good listener is paying attention, you may get to laugh, cry (etc. while talking about events that you thought that you had already worked through.

Appreciating Yourself

When males have been injured in some way, we also have often been abused for the effect of that injury. Then the effect of that abuse brings

more attacks and so on. When males do their best there is often blame or criticism. We get told that males are bad, violent, or unfeeling etc. As a result most men don't know what it is like to feel good about themselves. Often the only time some men get to feel better about themselves is if they were able to make someone else feel worse. If a man likes himself, he is treated as if he were opinionated" or "better than others".

This isn't true. Men need to feel good about themselves. When we do feel good about ourselves, we treat other people better, not worse.

In a session when it's your turn to share, tell your counsellor what you like about yourself. Tell this to him in a tone of voice that sounds like you are proud of yourself (not "superior," just proud). Tell your counsellor this over and over. So often men have been raised to show nothing. Appreciating yourself can be a way of reclaiming parts of yourself you may have forgotten about.

You may find it difficult, but stick with it. Don't stop yourself from laughing or crying or any other type of discharge. Try to appreciate everything about yourself (EVERYTHING). When you notice which things feel harder to appreciate (for example, your worth or how good you are), focus on appreciating those things. You will probably remember incidents from your life of being criticised, blamed, or mistreated. These incidents will be good to look at and talk about as many times as you like in other sessions when it's your turn to share.

Dreams, Fantasies and Longings

Our minds come with a powerful ability to bring up dreams, fantasies and longings. From our dreams can come the passion to have a life that frees us from our deepest constraints. Any kind of dream, fantasy, or longing is fine. Often men spend a large amount of their time fantasising about sex. It may take lots of hours to be able to easily share these with others. There can be great embarrassment about the more personal ones.

If it is safe enough these can be very funny. Make sure though that the man sharing is the one who is laughing the loudest. Everyone else will need to take care not to laugh at the man sharing and always stay laughing less than him.

There is no right or wrong with fantasises. That is one of their great strengths. They have no connection with anything except their ability to bring emotions. These are perfect topics to talk about when you are the client in a session. The deepest hurts become available to be healed in the easiest manner through a dream, fantasy or longing in that area. Repeating

friendship deepens and you become more able to both talk about yourself and listen. Between friends or peers, men's emotional work is a form of "peer counselling" where you get to train each other in what works best for each of you.

With peer counselling the way that you have "turns" or "sessions" can be exactly as you need them to be. The time you take or the way you talk, is really up to you. A few minutes can help you think clearer. Swapping an hour with a friend can make quite a difference. You will find that different friends are good at listening and helping you work through different things in different ways.

Talking About Yourself

Men do not necessarily "feel safe" when they talk about themselves. Mostly men can tell they are safe and have learned to use safety to discharge their emotions many years before they have worked through enough to be able to "feel" safe. Fortunately being able to tell that you are safe one way or another is enough. We need not be too concerned about how unsafe a man may feel. Occasional warm encouragement may help him continue.

As time spent talking and listening starts to build safety, men often find that more feelings become available. Laughing, yawning or trembling or crying can happen more easily. This is a sign that the man is able to use safety to discharge these feelings and is a good thing. It's better to just welcome this than make comment on it. It is an inherent way of healing tension to let this happen. Any very young child is a model of this tension release process when they are upset.

We can reclaim our choice to talk about everything about our life fully and work through difficulties as men without needing to find a pretext for our feelings. A man who has reclaimed this ability does not need to adopt the posture of a victim to heal his emotions. Men get to work through embarrassment by laughing, fears with trembling or grief with tears for example. This "discharge" of emotions is a way of becoming un-embarrassed," "un-scared," or "un-sad." Emotions are spontaneous. They are best allowed and not sought after or pushed for. As safety and experience builds so does the range, strength and depth of feelings that you can feel and discharge.

As you get more familiar with working with emotions you can be relaxed with men's emotions and just feel pleased with yourself as a listener when it happens. There is no need to stop or change anything as men's speaking becomes more emotional. If men try and stop themselves from allowing

When you end a session it helps to spend a few minutes distracting your client to different things in the present environment, things that you are planning on doing soon or to any other easy topic without much tension. This helps to defocus his attention to the task of living a full life or to the task of being a counsellor for you.

An agreement not to bring up with anyone what was talked about in the session needs to get discussed and agreed to so that it is safe to talk openly. Any drugs that alter a man's moods like alcohol, cigarettes stop the benefit of the emotional discharge leading to a resolution of tension. At least for the time before and after the session it worth avoiding these substances.

EMOTIONAL DISCHARGE WORK IN GROUPS

Taking turns to talk in groups works very well. The extra focus and attention of the other men adds strength to the experience. You simply divide up the time for each man to talk while the rest listen. They are often called "support groups".

A man can lead the group to help the group divide up the time, set-up the order of sharing with a friendly tone to begin on. At the end of the group all the men can say what they liked about the group or what good thing they are looking forward to in their life.

Any group of people not doing anything can be a good time to ask each person about their life.

Support groups can meet to work together to share and work through issues on any topic. It can help to get people with something in common to meet to talk. Examples are fathers, single men, men at the same level at work, friends, common interest topics. It helps to make it safer and also lets you find out about the common pressures on men to meet in groups with something in common.

The easiest way to bring a friend into emotional work is to bring them along to an open group.

As groups get new men they need to divide and teach the skills of getting the group to work together. The size can vary but a good number for this work is about eight. Three is enough to start a group. It helps to pick who will lead the group before it meets.

Common interest or background support groups are a good place to try a particular kind of approach. Taking pride in the group or commonality, culture, religion, background, job or any other thing men have in common as an example. Also what is hard about being in that group.