The M-group Meeting Guide contains an abbreviated outline of the M-groups. It is a helpful tool to use while actually running the M-groups.
mPowerment
Welcome to the Mpowerment Project

Facilitators introduce themselves.

What is the Mpowerment Project?

- Guys meeting guys
- Building a strong young gay/bisexual men’s community
- Protecting and supporting each other
- Inclusive of all gay/bisexual men, ages 18 - 29
- Having fun

Purpose of group session  [Say:]  “These groups focus on sex and relationships among young gay men today and how we can get what we want and help each other through these challenging times”.

Ground Rules  [Say:]  “We want to create a safe space tonight for us to talk about things we may not often get to talk about, especially with a group of guys we don’t know very well”.

Confidentiality  [Say:]  “While we encourage you to talk with your friends about what happens at this group, we ask you not to attach someone’s name to anything being said tonight. Identities of who is in the meeting should not be revealed outside the group.

Use “I” Statements  [Say:]  Try to speak from your own experience. Be as personal as possible and feel free to say whatever is on your mind. That’s how we can learn from each other.

Mutual Respect  [Say:]  “We’re here to support and learn from each other. Please don’t judge anything you hear someone else say, even if you disagree with him. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions and their own experiences.

Have a Good Time!  [Say:]  “Be creative and playful. Try to participate as fully as you can with each other.

[Facilitator Notes]  This section is very important in setting the tone for the group. We have found that groups run most smoothly when facilitators are enthusiastic in describing the Project and the M-group. Since you are likely to be somewhat nervous at the start of the M-group, it is a good idea to have your opening comments very well-prepared and basically memorized so you aren’t stumbling for words. Ground-rules should be presented as guidelines for creating a comfortable, safe space for all participants—not as authoritarian, strict rules of behavior.
Introduction of participants

Objectives

- To introduce participants to each other.
- To help participants feel comfortable talking in the group.

Icebreaker exercise

[Say:] “Okay, we have a little game now to find out a little more about each other.”

- Pass out ICEBREAKER FORMS to all participants. Ask them to complete the forms, if they have not done so already. Remind the participants that one of the 3 statements should be false.

- Participants put forms into hat. Shake the hat so papers are mixed up. One at a time, ask participants to pick out one form and read the name. That person then identifies self. (Make sure to point out each person as they are introduced).

- The three things are then read and the group decides which item is false. Pass the hat to the person whose name was drawn and repeat.
Interpersonal issues

Objectives

- To provide an opportunity for participants to share their thoughts about problems meeting other guys.
- To bring the focus of the group to a more personal and self-disclosing level.

15 minutes

[Say:] “I’ve heard from friends that meeting other guys is really important to them and that they wonder what’s the best way to do this. They say that it is hard to meet guys and develop relationships.”

“One of the goals of this meeting is for us to help each other come up with ideas and options for us.”

“What are good ways to meet other guys?”

“What issues come up for you in trying to meet other guys and get involved with them?”

Group Discussion

[Say:] “It might be helpful to take some specific situations and hear from each other about how we might handle them. Since the club is a major meeting place for young gay/bisexual men, this first situation is about meeting someone in a club.”

“You’ve been in a club for about 30 minutes and you’ve had your eye on this very hot guy across the room from you. You notice that he also has been looking at you. It’s obvious that there is mutual attraction.

“What would you do?”

“How would you handle the situation?”

“How would you like someone to approach you?”

Ask for volunteers to role-play the situation in front of the group. (If the group seems reluctant to volunteer, the facilitators may do the first role-play).

After each role-play, ask the group these questions:

[Say:] “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

“What seemed to work well?”

“How would you have responded?”

“What might you have done differently?”

[Say:] “Okay, let’s try another situation. Can we get two more volunteers for this next situation?”
Objectives

- To clear up any misconceptions participants may have about what’s safe and what isn’t.

Read scenario to group. Assign roles to each volunteer.

[Say:] “You are Mark and you have started chatting with Kevin in a gay chat room. Nearly every time you log on, you see Kevin online. Mark always chats briefly with Kevin and it seems like the two of you get along really well. Mark is very attracted to Kevin and would like to get to know him better. Kevin has just signed on, and you want to meet him. What does Mark do?”

[Say:] “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

“What seemed to work well?”

“How would you have responded?”

“What might you have done differently?”

Safer sex guidelines and HIV testing

[Say:] “So far, we’ve talked about meeting and getting to know other guys. And this leads us pretty naturally to our next topic – sex.”

“Let’s spend a little time now seeing if you have any questions or concerns about what is safe sex.”

“We have a list of safe sex guidelines that we’d like to share with you now and see what you think.”

Safer Sex Guidelines

- Give out guidelines.
- Read each guideline, and ask “What questions or thoughts do you have about this guideline?”
- Allow time for people to think about the guideline and voice their questions. If no one speaks up, the co-facilitator should ask questions.
- For intercourse, ask: What about if you’re on top—is that safe? What about if you withdraw before you come—is that safe? What about other issues: piercings—avoid semen on fresh piercings.
- Encourage questions.

Examples you can ask about to get things started: “What if you or your partner is on anti-viral medications and has a low viral load? Does that change what you think about the guidelines?”

“Some people don’t seem to think AIDS is that serious anymore. Do you agree? Why? How does that influence your sexual behavior?”

Have a brief discussion.
HIV testing

[Say:]  “Having safer sex and following the guidelines we just discussed is important, but it’s also important to get tested for HIV. Getting tested is important in preventing HIV transmission because it provides knowledge of one’s HIV status. The current recommendations are that sexually active gay/bisexual men should be getting tested for HIV every 6 months, or more if you have concerns about your HIV status.”

“Can anyone tell me what’s the difference between “getting tested” and “knowing your current HIV status?”

[Say:]  “The current recommendations are that sexually active gay/bisexual men should be getting tested for HIV at least once a year, or more if you have concerns about your HIV status.”

[Say:]  “What are some ways to get tested so that you feel more confident about being able to do it?”
   - go to places that are accepting of young gay/bisexual men
   - go with a friend or a few friends

[Say:]  “I just want to make sure that everyone knows what testing is about. If you get tested for HIV and you find out that you are HIV-positive, that means that you have HIV, or the AIDS virus. It does NOT mean that you have AIDS.”

“If you are HIV-negative, it can mean either that you do not have the AIDS virus – or it means that you may have HIV but it won’t show on a test right away because you just contracted HIV, the AIDS virus. So if you just had risky behavior, then you might have to get retested in a couple of months.”

“You can get tested in a lot of different places, and the places are supposed to keep your name confidential. Sometimes guys are afraid to go to places in their own neighborhood, because someone might see them. Other times guys would rather go to someplace in their own neighborhood than to go to an area where they don’t feel as comfortable. It’s entirely up to you.”

“You just go in, get your test in a private place, and the person who gives you the test will ask you some questions about yourself and what you’ve done sexually. This is just so that they can give you good counseling about how to reduce your risk. Sometimes you get the test results back quickly – say within 20 minutes or so. And other times you have to come back another time for the results. Some guys prefer it one way, and some guys prefer it the other. You can call ahead to the place to find out which way they do it – a rapid test or a regular test.”

[Say:]  “Does anyone know of good places to get tested for HIV?”
   - How much does HIV testing cost?

[Say:]  “You should also call ahead to find out if testing is free. Sometimes there is a charge for rapid testing. We will be giving you a pamphlet about where you can get tested.”
How to have fun, hot, safer sex

Objectives

- To help participants think more creatively about safer sex.
- To give participants specific ideas on low risk sexual activity they can do.

Small Group Brainstorming

- Divide participants into groups of three or four. Give each group a marker pen.
- Each group picks a large sheet of paper with one of the following body parts listed on it: ASS, DICK, MOUTH or HANDS. (If there are only enough people for two groups, give them ASS and DICK and do HANDS and MOUTH as a large group.)
- Ask each group to brainstorm as many safe, erotic things you can do involving the body part. Be creative, erotic, and fun. Make it a hot action statement like “licking someone’s armpit.” Be specific!
- Groups go to separate corners of room and brainstorm.
- Each group selects a reporter who reports to the entire group what their group came up with. The large group may add any new ideas not mentioned on the small group’s list.
- If there are any body parts left over, the whole group can brainstorm about them.

Discussion

[Say:] “Do you see anything new you want to try out?”

“How do you feel about seeing so many fun, hot ways of having safe sex?”
Fun with condoms

[Say:] “As we’ve just seen, condoms are important toys for making many sexual activities safer, so now let’s spend some time focusing on all the things we can do with condoms — and make sure you know how to use them correctly.”

Ask participants to divide into pairs. Bring out the “Mystery Bag.” Ask each pair to reach into the bag and pull out an object.

Pass out a bowl of condoms and ask the pairs to pick a condom to put on their dildo as you describe the proper way of putting it on.

Encourage people to ask questions while you’re explaining the order of things to check and do:

- Check expiration date...
- open package carefully;
- unroll condom slightly;
- squeeze and remove air from tip;
- put at least one drop of lube in tip;
- if foreskin: pull it back before rolling on condom;
- roll condom down so that it covers the whole penis;
- apply water-based lubricant; (coordinators may want to mention not to use lube with non-oxynol-9 here)...
- have anal sex.

After orgasm, hold base of condom and pull dick out before it goes soft; never reuse condoms.

[Say:] “Does anyone have any questions?”

Pass out condom/lube gift packages to participants. Have them open them and look at the contents. Describe the different types of condoms and lubes in the packages. Encourage them to experiment with the different shapes/types and see what they like best. Encourage them to try them out while masturbating.

[Say:] “Do any of you have any special tips or ideas on how to get the most pleasure with condoms?”

Some points to make:

- Condoms do slightly decrease sensation but that means sex can last longer, and one drop of lube in the tip will increase sensitivity;
- Point out the condom/lube pamphlet (example attached) in the gift package and encourage them to read it.
**Objectives**

- To have a brief time of relaxation.
- To provide a time so participants can get to know each other.
- Remember to turn on music!
- Mingle with participants. Make sure no one is left out.

**[Facilitator Notes]**

We have found that turning on the music right away really helps relax people and definitely changes the atmosphere of the room. Mingle around with the participants. The break period can be very uncomfortable for people who don’t know anyone in the group or have insecurities about being gay/bisexual. If someone seems left out or uncomfortable, give them extra attention: offer them refreshments, make small-talk with them, make an effort to draw them into conversations, etc. Resist the temptation to let the break go for more than 15 minutes - we have lots more to accomplish before the night is over! Encourage and engage. Don’t leave anyone out.

**Take a break!**

15 minutes
Negotiating safer sex interactions

Objectives

- To discuss problems participants might face in trying to have safer sex with partners.
- To provide strategies participants can use in negotiating safer sex.
- To give participants practice in negotiating safer sex with partners.

Scenarios and Discussions

Scenario 1

[Say:] “Now that we've talked about all these hot ways to have safer sex, let’s talk about how we can get someone to do them with us.”

“OK, here’s the scene:

[Say:] “You’re really excited because tonight is your first date with Jerry. You’re at home getting ready. You’re going to a movie. After the movie you’d like to invite him back to your apartment. You’d like to really get to know him better, and you’re also very open to the possibility of having sex with him if the chemistry seems right. But you want to make sure that if you have sex, it’s safe. What can you do before going out to make it likely that you will have safer sex?”

Possible ideas:

- Have condoms readily available next to your bed.
- Carry condoms with you.
- Avoid getting too drunk or too high.
- Put some condoms in your glove compartment when you go out but don’t leave them there to bake during the day!
- Have condoms in fun places; under your pillow, on the coffee table, in the kitchen, in the bathroom.
### Scenario 2

**[Say:]** “Here’s another situation. This is a scene about having safer sex. Any volunteers?” (Use a different set of volunteers for each situation if possible)

**[Say:]** “You’ve had two dates with Matt and you like him a lot. You’ve kissed but have never had sex. Tonight you and Matt had dinner at your house and then watched a video. You’ve been cuddling and kissing for awhile. He’s starting to unbutton your shirt, and you’re both getting really turned on. He whispers to you that he wants to get fucked. You’d like him to and you want to use a condom. What do you do?”

**After the scenario, have the following discussion:**

**[Say:]** “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

- “What seemed to work well?”
- “How would you have responded?”
- “What might you have done differently?”

### Scenario 3

**[Say:]** “Same situation. This time you want to fuck Matt but Matt resists the idea of using a condom. What do you do?”

**After the scenario, have the following discussion:**

**[Say:]** “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

- “What seemed to work well?”
- “How would you have responded?”
- “What might you have done differently?”

### Scenario 4

**[Say:]** “Same situation. Except now you’re on the bottom and Matt wants to fuck you and he doesn’t want to use a condom. What do you do?”

**After the scenario, have the following discussion:**

**[Say:]** “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

- “What seemed to work well?”
- “How would you have responded?”
- “What might you have done differently?”
Scenario 5

[Say:] “Okay let’s focus on the situation that is actually the most common for young men to have unprotected sex—with a boyfriend. Since this is such a common situation, we’d like everyone to practice dealing with it. This time, we’d like to pair you up and have each pair go off and role-play, then we’ll come back as a group and talk about our experiences.”

“To pair you up, I’d like each person to reach in this box and grab a condom. It’s kind of like Noah’s Ark—there’s two of each kind of condom. Whoever picks the same type of condom as you is your boyfriend for the role-play.”

Pass around condom box. Read scenario:

[Say:] “Sean and William have been boyfriends for five months. They’re totally in love and have a very active sex life. They’ve agreed that it’s okay to occasionally have sex with others but don’t do this very often. They have never used condoms with each other. Sean is beginning to worry about this.

How could Sean suggest to William that they start using condoms?”

Ask pairs to go to separate parts of room.

When everyone has finished the scene, ask the group: “Does anyone want to tell us what their conversation was like?”

“What are some reasons that boyfriends may not have safe sex?” (e.g., fear of losing boyfriend’s affection, denial that HIV is relevant to them, pressure from boyfriend, feeling invulnerable, etc.)

“How can these be dealt with?”

Make the point: “Just because they have had unsafe sex for a while, all is not lost...you can start having safer sex at any time.”

Encourage the participants to be specific in describing sexual behaviors (e.g., “licking his armpit” versus “licking”).
Encouraging friends to have safe sex

[Say:] “Up to this point, we’ve been talking about issues related to our own behavior. Now let’s focus a bit on how we can help our friends and our community. We’ve learned a lot about how to protect ourselves and how to protect others. However, we probably all have friends that we care about and we may not be sure that they are always being safe. We don’t want to lose them. Now that we’ve attended this meeting, we have an opportunity and the power to help our friends, so they don’t have to deal with the difficulties of being HIV positive. We can help save our friends’ lives.”

“It is extremely important that we do this because our friends will listen to us. And, unfortunately - as all the anti gay propaganda, gay bashing and battles over gay rights in our society show - not everyone cares about what happens to young gay and bisexual men, so it is up to us to protect our community.”

[Ask the group:] “What can we do to really encourage our friends to practice safer sex?”

[Ask the group:] “What are some good ways to approach our friends?”

1 Emphasize positive benefits of safer sex

2 Emphasize that being safe is “cool,” expected nowadays, and best for the entire young gay/bisexual men’s community

3 Use yourself as an example — don’t preach or be judgmental

4 Say “how to do it” — use yourself as and example

   Group discussion/brainstorming of ways to encourage friends.

   Facilitators may suggest specific things they could do or say to encourage friends.

   Group problem-solving

[Ask the group:] “Can you think of any problems or difficulties that might arise in talking with your friends? What might those be? How can you deal with these?”

Objectives

1 To help participants see the importance of talking with their friends about safer sex.

2 To communicate the most effective ways for participants to talk with friends.

3 To give participants practice in talking with friends.
Encourage the group to really discuss the issues raised.

Scenarios and discussion

Scenario 1

[Say:] “It might be helpful for us to try acting out some ways we can talk with our friends. Would anyone like to volunteer?” (Role-play in large group).

[Say:] “You are at a dance with a gay friend. Your friend sees a guy who he thinks is very attractive. He tells you he’s going home with him. You want to encourage your friend to have safe sex.”

Have the following group discussion after the role-play:

[Say:] “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

“What seemed to work well?”

“How would you have responded?”

“What might you have done differently?”

Scenario 2

[Say:] “Okay, let’s try another type of situation. Who wants to volunteer?”

[Say:] “You and your friend are sitting at a cafe talking. Your friend is very sexually active. He’s just finished telling you about the latest guy he picked up. You’ve never asked him what he does sexually with the men he sleeps with, but you’re very concerned about him. What would you say?”

Have the following group discussion after the role-play:

[Say:] “How do you feel about how they handled the situation?”

“What seemed to work well?”

“How would you have responded?”

“What might you have done differently?”
Encouraging friends: giving out invitations and pins

Facilitator asks participants to each make a commitment to talk with friends about having safer sex.

[Say:] “One very helpful thing you can do for your friends is invite them to come to one of these groups. We have invitation packages (with lubricant and a couple of condoms) here that we'd like you to give to several of your friends.”

“Also, we have pins that you can wear to express your support for building a healthy local young men’s community. And this can be the start of building an entire community of young men here in our area—we—all of us who have been here tonight—are in the position of saving lives, and helping our community grow! So, it’s incredibly important and urgent that each one of us commit ourselves to talking with and handing these invitation packets out to at least a few of our friends!”

“Also, we have pins that you can wear to express your support for building healthy local young men’s community. These may also trigger discussions with your friends and other people you meet about this Project and safe sex.”

(Give out pins.)

“If you feel good about what we’re trying to do here with this Project we’d appreciate it if you could wear this button occasionally and let other people know about us.”

Objectives

- To give participants materials to facilitate their talking with friends.
- To elicit commitments to talk with friends and support your community.

Emphasize the fun, social aspects of the Project.
Invitation to become involved

Invite participation in the Project

[Say:] “We’re very excited about the Mpowerment Project and we’d love for each of you to continue being involved. We have lots of different ways in which you can be involved.”

Describe possible ways of getting involved:

- Help create outreach events
- Announce upcoming events and pass out calendar

Volunteer in other ways

- Outreach team (bar zaps, performance skits)
- Community Center (mailings, computer stuff, cleaning)
- Graphic design (materials development)
- Events committee
- M-group recruitment

Join the Core Group - the group that plans and runs the Project activities.

Interest sheets

[Say:] “I have interest sheets here which list these various opportunities Please check those which you’d be interested in being involved in. We’d also like to have a way to get in touch with you, so please also provide your name, phone number, email address, and mailing address (discretion is assured).”

Thank you and evaluations

Thank participants for attending the group. Facilitators express personal feelings about their own experience tonight and what they got out of it.

Invite participants to share their reactions. Pass out the evaluation forms.

Objectives

- To let participants know about the variety of ways they can be involved with the Project.
- To have participants fill out interest sheets and evaluation form.
Informal socializing

Objectives

1. To help the participants form friendships with each other.
2. To encourage men to become further involved in the Project.

Turn on music!

Invite participants to stay and talk, have refreshments, look over materials, hang out and talk, etc.

Make sure no one is left out of socializing.

Give out materials, show guys around the house.

Remember that one of the biggest motivations to come to an M-group is to meet guys and have fun. So, turn on the music and have some fun after all that hard work!
Core Elements

1 Coordinator(s)
2 Core Group & other volunteers
3 Project Space
4 Formal Outreach
   (including Social Outreach Events & Outreach Teams)
5 M-groups
6 Informal Outreach
   (which is a focus on talking with & encouraging friends & acquaintances to be safe & get tested for HIV)
7 Publicity campaign
8 Community Advisory Board
   (optional)

Guiding Principles

Social focus
Empowerment philosophy
Peer Influence of safer sex messages
Multi-level approach
Gay-positive/sex-positive
Community-building
Diffusion of innovations

Together creating community for friendship for health for life
mpowerment

Together creating community for friendship for health for life

mpowerment.org

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