THE REPRESENTATION PROJECT PRESENTS

THE MASK YOU LIVE IN

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR COACHES
SUMMARY

Coaches, use these tools to examine how American cultural beliefs and attitudes about boys and men can perpetuate limiting stereotypes. These tools are designed so that you can talk to your student athletes about what it means to “Be a Man” and support them in becoming their whole selves.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

These tools are designed to allow you, coaches of student athletes in grades K-12, to consider the ways society shapes their beliefs about gender roles. We hope to empower you to engage your student athletes in both discussions and hands-on activities that explore the harmful stereotyping that limits possibilities for boys and men. It is our intention that these activities bring about real dialogue and introspection.

We have also provided a list of references to national organizations that you can use as additional resources. Please feel free to let us know how these activities worked for you and your student athletes. For more information and additional resources visit our website, therepresentationproject.org.

Please also share your thoughts and photos of your projects with us on Instagram using @MaskYouLiveIn.

ABOUT THE REPRESENTATION PROJECT

Using film and media as a catalyst for cultural transformation, The Representation Project inspires individuals and communities to challenge and overcome limiting stereotypes so that everyone, regardless of gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, or circumstance, can fulfill their human potential.
CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR COACHES

GROUP AGREEMENTS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED
Easel paper, markers

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
WRITE the phrase “Group Agreements” on the easel paper.

INFORM your student athletes that “group agreements” are the ground rules to create a safe space for your discussions. The agreements should be positive rather than negative. For example, rather than saying “don’t talk,” suggest that students actively listen to one another.

REMIND them that they should only suggest agreements that they are willing to follow during the meeting.

ASK each of them to suggest one agreement.

WRITE down their suggestions. If no one suggests the following, ask them to agree to actively listen and keep each others’ confidences.

REMIND them that each of you will hold each other accountable to the group agreements.

PLACE the list somewhere visible (like the wall of your gymnasium) to reference as you facilitate the conversations.

OBJECTIVE
The purpose of this activity is to create a safe space for dialogue about gender norms.
WHAT YOU WILL NEED
Paper, pen

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
INFORM your students they are going to write a gender autobiography.

EXPLAIN to your students that they should tell their own life stories through the lens of how they came to understand their gender identities.

ASK them if they know the definition of the term "gender identity?" If they say no or are unable to provide the correct definition, inform them that "gender identity" is a person's private sense of and experience with being a boy or man, girl or woman, or any other gender (all of which may or may not correspond with the individual's biological sex).

ASK them to consider the following questions:
1) When was the first time the student athletes became aware of gender differences? Ask them to think about some of the ways gender may have been expressed in their childhood. For example:
   - What was their favorite color when they were little? What is it now? Was this color influenced by societal norms?
   - Are there specific household responsibilities or chores in their home that are only for boys? For girls?
   - How did this knowledge make your student athletes feel?

2) When was the first time they heard the phrase “be a man” or “act like a lady?” What are some of the other phrases they have heard that are specific to gender roles? How did these phrases impact them?

3) How do their parents, caregivers, and/or peers respond to them being athletes?

SHARE the gender stories:
• After your student athletes have written their gender autobiographies, have them share what they wrote with you and their teammates.
• Discuss the autobiographies. Ask your student athletes to reflect on the process of writing their autobiographies. Did they learn anything about how they see gender in the process? Do they see gender differently? Do they feel the same or differently about gender roles? If so, why? If not, why not?
• Remind your student athletes that you are an available resource for them.

MY GENDER STORY

OBJECTIVE
The purpose of this lesson is for student athletes to begin to learn how gender identities are shaped by society and culture.
REDEFINING SUCCESS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED
Magazines, construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, internet, computer, printer

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
INFORM your student athletes that they are going to create a collage that redefines what it means to be successful.

EXPLAIN to them that they are going to select images from magazines or download pictures from the Internet.

INFORM them that in *The Mask You Live In*, Joe Ehrmann explains that there are three lies that every male is taught. These are that athletic ability, economic success, and sexual conquest lead to success.

DISCUSS the concept of success with your student athletes by asking them:
1) How would they describe success?
2) Were your student athletes ever taught that success was dependent upon athletic ability, money, or physical attractiveness? If so, by whom? Do parents, teachers, coaches, and/or the media send these messages? How did learning these things inform the ways they think about themselves?
3) What are some of the traditional ways that boys are taught to think about success? What about girls?
4) How do their ideas of success influence their concepts of what it means to be a boy or man? What about what it means to be a girl or woman?
5) Ask them if they agree with this definition of success? Why or why not?
6) What are their own ideas about what it means to be successful in their lives regardless of gender?

CREATE the collage:
• After the discussion, have your student athletes select images from magazines and the Internet that illustrate what it means to be successful to them personally.
• Ask your student athletes to paste their images onto the construction paper.
• Encourage them to share their collages with you and the group. Ask them if their ideas of success changed or are different than how Joe Erhmann describes success in *The Mask You Live In*.
• Display the final collages somewhere visible (like the wall of your gymnasium).

OBJECTIVE
The purpose of this lesson is for student athletes to begin to understand how beliefs and gender norms are shaped by society and culture. Students begin to recognize the ways that the larger culture limits possibilities available to boys and men. They will also make positive and empowering gender representations.
“BEYOND THE MASK QUIZ”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED
“Beyond the Mask Quiz” (see supplementary materials), pens

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
PROVIDE your student athletes with the “Beyond the Mask” Quiz (see supplementary materials).

REMEMBER your students that media often teaches us about gender identities.

INFORM your students that the purpose of this activity is to better understand what media teaches about what it means to be a boy or a man.

ASK your student athletes to complete the quiz.

FACILITATE a discussion with your students about their quiz responses:
1) Ask your student athletes to share what character they selected and the score their character received.
2) Have your students think about the ways their male character is represented and how that informs gender identities. For example, ask them the following questions:
   • Is the male character you selected a leader?
   • How did he obtain his leadership position?
   • Does he have a family? Children?
   • Is he the sole provider for his family?
   • Is he affectionate towards his children? His spouse or partner?
   • How does he overcome difficult experiences that occur in his life?
   • Who does he go to when he experiences difficulties?
   • Does he solve the problem alone or with the help of others?
3) Are there commonalities in the ways these male characters address difficulties?
4) What does the character teach them about male norms?
5) How are men and boys to behave if they follow the character’s example?
6) Ask your student athletes if they know the definition of the term “stereotype.” If they say no or are unable to answer, inform them that a “stereotype” is a generalization – usually exaggerated or oversimplified and often offensive – that is used to describe or distinguish a group or an individual from that group.
7) Did your students find any of the characters’ actions to be stereotypical? If so, why? If not, why not? If they found characters to be stereotypical, did this make them feel uncomfortable? Why or why not?
8) Share the attached resources with your students.

OBJECTIVE
The purpose of this lesson is for students to identify representations of male characters in film, television, and video games. Students begin to understand that when stereotypes of boys and men are repeated over time, they can become normalized and accepted as reality.
UNDERSTANDING THE BOYS WE SEE

OBJECTIVE
The purpose of this lesson is for student athletes to begin to understand how beliefs and gender norms are shaped by society and culture. Students begin to recognize the ways that the larger culture limits possibilities available to boys and men. They will also make positive and empowering gender representations.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED
Copy of “What Are Little Boys Made Of” Poem, chalk, chalkboard

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
REVIEW the “What Are Little Boys Made Of?” Poem with your student athletes and then explain that you’re going to rewrite the poem together.

FACILITATE
1) Ask your student athletes if they agree with the poem that little boys are made of “snips and snails and puppy dog tails” and little girls are “made of sugar and spice and everything nice.” If so, why? If not, why not?

2) Ask them what they think boys are really made of. Brainstorm words to describe what boys are really like. Write the words or phrases on the chalkboard. If your students are unable to come up with adjectives that describe boys, ask them if boys can be friendly, nice, and caring.

3) Ask your student athletes what they think girls are really made of. Brainstorm words to describe what girls are really like. Write the words or phrases on the chalkboard.

4) Work with your student athletes to narrow the list of descriptors down to the ones they would like to use in the revised poem.

5) After your student athletes have selected the descriptions of boys and girls, write the revised poem on the board.

6) Share your final version of the poem by posting it somewhere visible (like the wall of your gymnasium).
WHAT ARE LITTLE BOYS MADE OF?
WHAT ARE LITTLE BOYS MADE OF?

Snips and snails
And puppy dog tails,

That’s what little boys are made of.

WHAT ARE LITTLE GIRLS MADE OF?
WHAT ARE LITTLE GIRLS MADE OF?

Sugar and spice
And everything nice,

That’s what little girls are made of.
#BEYONDTHEMASK
A QUIZ GRADING MALE CHARACTERS AS ROLE MODELS

CHARACTER’S NAME: ____________________________________________________________

FILM OR TELEVISION SHOW HE IS IN: __________________________________________

QUESTIONS [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

Each question is worth one point and there are ten points possible.

☐ The male character is open about his feelings.

☐ The male character nurtures those around him.

☐ The male character is affectionate.

☐ The male character does NOT use violence to solve his problems unless it is in self-defense.

☐ The male character does NOT use drugs and/or alcohol to numb his pain.

☐ The male character does NOT pressure, coerce, or intimidate his sexual partners.

☐ The male character does NOT get his sense of worth from dominance or aggression.

☐ The male character is a person of color or underrepresented minority and is not reduced to a racial stereotype.

☐ The male character has a disability but isn’t defined by that disability.

☐ The male character is gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender and is not reduced to a stereotype.

Urban Dictionary defines to “man up” as to “take control of a (the) situation, be strong, rise to the moment.”

At The Representation Project, we define “Beyond The Mask” as an action or behavior that exposes and expands the narrow definition of what it means to “be a man.” Join us and take the #BeyondTheMask Quiz!
#BEYONDTHEMASK

SCORING GUIDE

Point Tally

Congratulations! Your character received an A! This male character positively represents manhood because he is caring, affectionate, and doesn’t use violence to solve problems.

7+ POINTS

Good work. Your character received a B! This male character does a good job of positively representing men.

5 OR 6 POINTS

Your character received a C. He has some work to do to positively represent manhood.

3 OR 4 POINTS

Sadly, the character got a D. Although he may be entertaining, he probably needs to be less violent or stop using drugs and alcohol to solve his problems.

1 OR 2 POINTS

Unfortunately this character gets an F because he fails to positively represent masculinity. He probably relies on aggression and dominance to accomplish his goals.

0 POINTS

Therepresentationproject.org
A Call to Men
acalltomen.org
Founded by Tony Porter, A Call to Men is a leading national violence prevention organization providing training and education for men, boys, and communities. The aim is to shift social norms that negatively impact our culture and promote a more healthy and respectful definition of manhood.

Coach for America
couchforamerica.com
Founded by Joe Ehrmann, Coach for America is an organization that informs, inspires, and initiates individual, communal, and societal change that will empower men and women to be their very best – personally, professionally, and relationally.

Common Sense Media
commonsensemedia.org
Founded by James Steyer, Common Sense Media is an organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology. They empower parents, teachers, and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in all kids' lives.

Ever Forward Club
facebook.com/everforwardclub
Founded in 2004 by Ashanti Branch, The Ever Forward Club is a youth development and mentoring program that supports the emotional development of African American and Latino young men, so they can become motivated learners and connected community members.

Futures Without Violence
futureswithoutviolence.org
Founded by Esta Soler more than 30 years ago, Futures Without Violence is providing groundbreaking programs, policies, and campaigns that empower individuals and organizations working to end violence against women and children around the world. Futures Without Violence’s vision is a future without violence that provides education, safety, justice, and hope.

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)
mvpnational.org
Founded by Dr. Jackson Katz, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) provides the leadership necessary, within sport and beyond, to address the global issues of sexism – especially men’s violence against women. In their advocacy efforts and training programs, they educate, inspire, and empower men and women to prevent, interrupt, and respond to sexist abuse.

Positive Coaching Alliance
positivecoach.org
Founded by Jim Thompson, Positive Coaching Alliance is a national nonprofit developing, “Better Athletes, Better People,” by working to provide all youth and high-school athletes a positive, character-building youth sports experience.