

Unpacking the Man Box

A close-up photograph of two hands, one from a lighter-skinned person and one from a darker-skinned person, both holding and pouring bright red soil. The hands are positioned one above the other, with the soil falling from the top hand into the bottom hand. The background is a blurred natural setting with green foliage and a clear blue sky.

Acknowledgement of Land

We would like to acknowledge the traditional Custodians of the Land(s) we are meeting on today and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Support

Employee Assistance

Lifeline 13 11 14

1800RESPECT

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Objectives of session

- I. Identify the 'Man Box' and its impacts
- II. Identify benefits of healthier masculinities
- III. Explore strategies that encourage students to consider healthier forms of masculinities

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Our experience

- Jesuit Social Services have more than 40 years' experience working with boys and men.
- Each year, we work directly with over 5,000 male participants across a range of programs.
- Too many boys and men are struggling to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.
- More needs to be done to **support boys and men to be their best selves.**

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



We believe....

- How people act is often a result of what's going on around them
- Trauma, neglect, or super supportive?
- How you respond can make a difference to them... and you!

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Before we get started...

- We all have ideas / beliefs about what it is to be a boy/man/girl/woman (we are all conditioned)
- Relevant for all people because women and girls also reinforce the stereotypes
- People are at varying levels of understanding about gendered stereotypes / gender equality etc.
- No blame here. We don't want to create resistance and defensiveness – we just want to share the pressures that society imposes and inspire people like yourselves to help people break free from stereotypes.
- Women also perpetrate violence and abuse on men...however the overwhelming statistics of violence perpetration is by men and therefore that is our focus

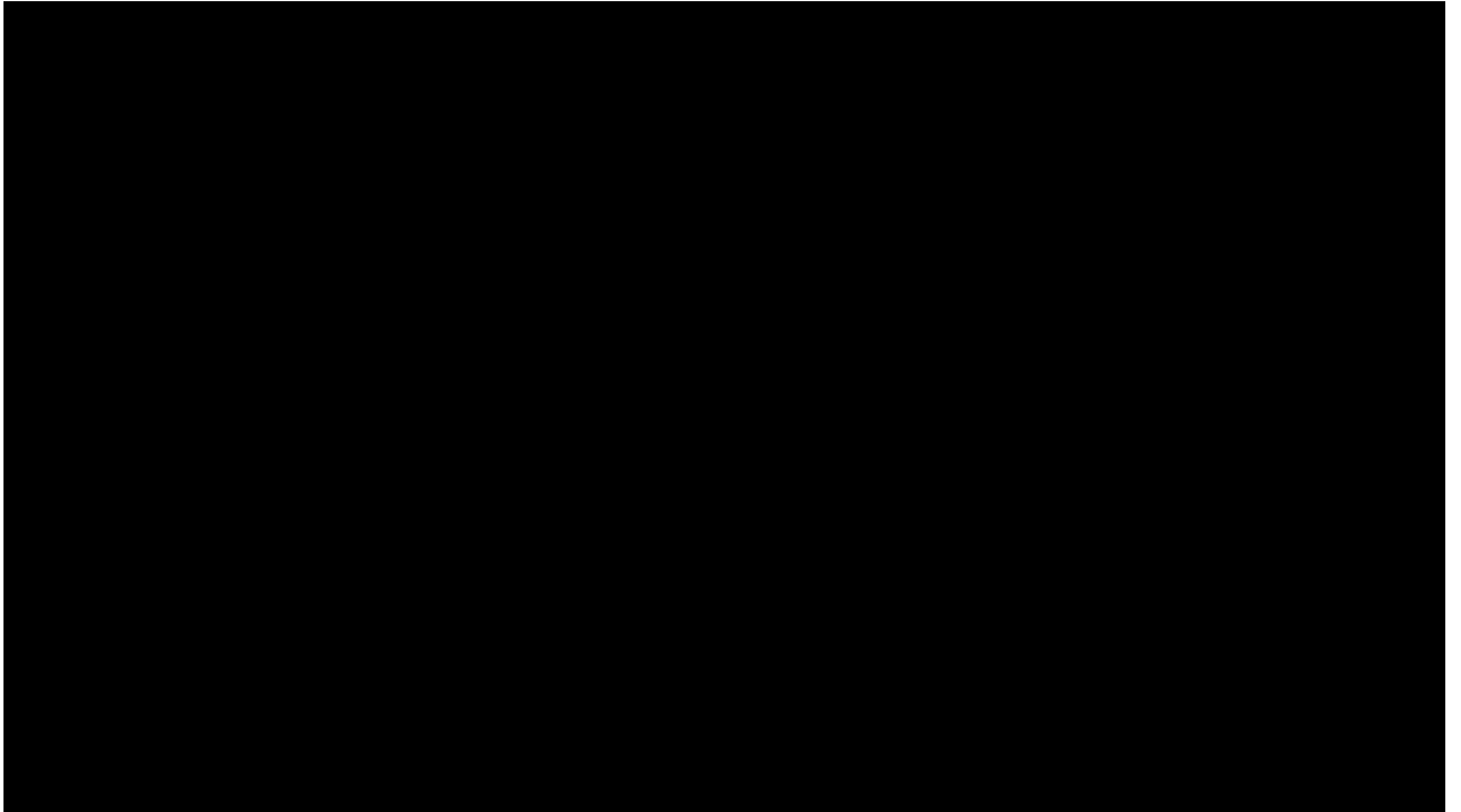
Warm Up Activity



**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative

Representation Project – Rewriting the Story



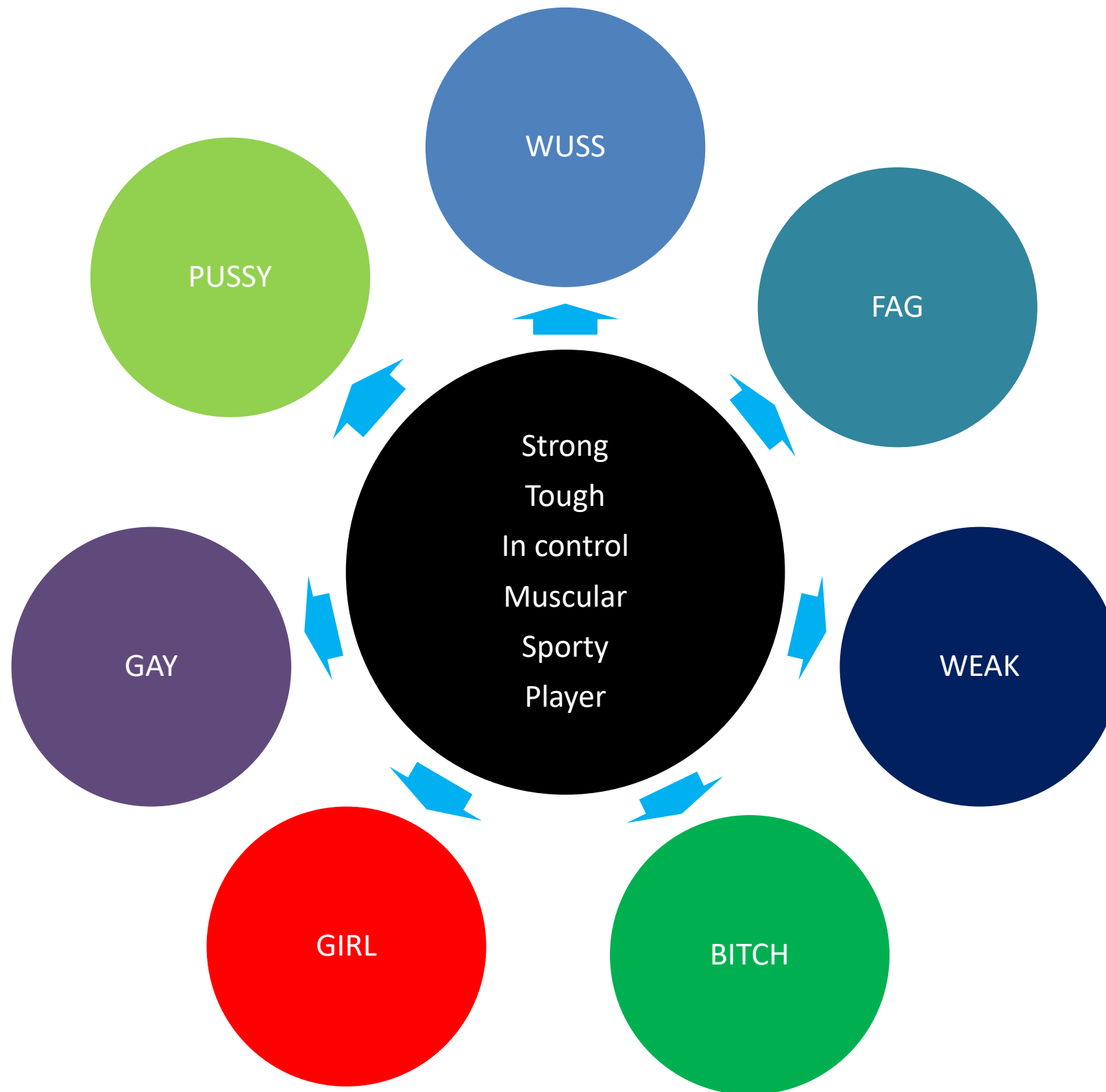
Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPAmjWtHHYs>

The Man Box

- The Man Box is essentially a construct about the types of qualities, beliefs and attitudes a “Real Man” should embody
- These messages about manhood are received from his first breath. They are gradually absorbed by the young brain and incrementally adopted over time.
- Man Box attitudes hold ideas, not only about a man’s role but that of women’s roles also
- Rigid ideas about gender roles have hazardous outcomes for men, as well as society at large.



Understanding the Man Box



Examples of the Man Box

How do we learn these attitudes, behaviours and language?

Is this relevant to women and girls?
Absolutely!

Our culture is impacting, and impacted by, both men and women.

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



The Man Box Message



Oppositional Student



Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwvqCIAAd-M>

**Two thirds of young men have been told that a
“real man” behaves a certain way.**



The Men's Project Research Video

**the
men's
project**

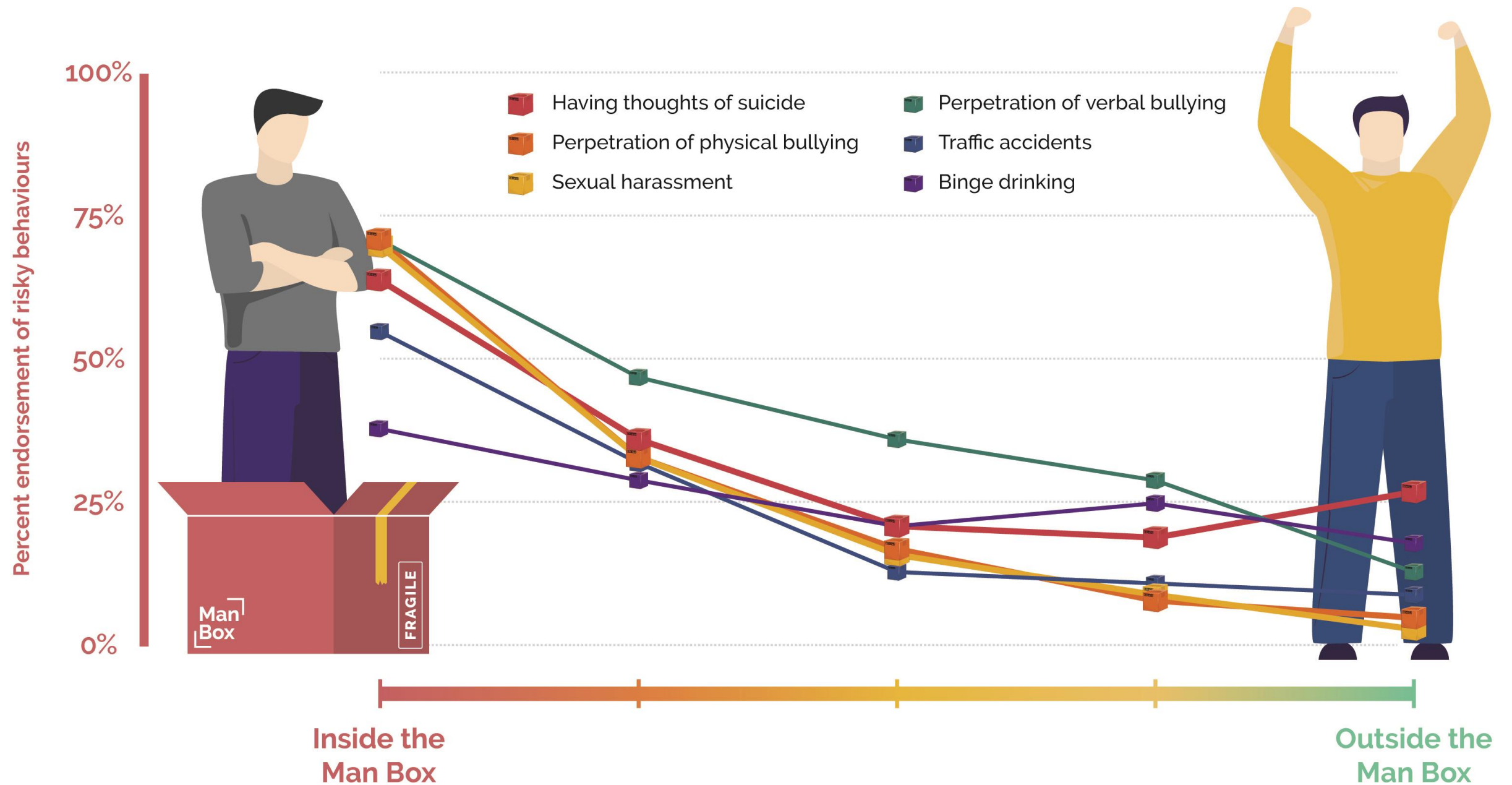
A Jesuit Social Services initiative

Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdRrjCOqzZY>

The Man Box rules

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “ <u>Society as a whole tells me that...</u> ”	Man Box Rule	Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that “ <u>In my opinion...</u> ”
69%	Acting tough: E.g. Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.	47%
54%	Self sufficiency: E.g. Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.	27%
35%	Aggression and control: E.g. Men should use violence to get respect if necessary	20%
56%	Hypersexuality: E.g. A “real man” would never say no to sex.	24%
56%	Rigid gender roles: E.g. Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.	35%
48%	Physical attractiveness: E.g. A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.	32%
47%	Heterosexuality and homophobia: E.g. A gay guy is not a “real man.”	28%

The impact of the 'Man Box'



The impact of the 'Man Box'



Our reach

Our *Man Box* research findings have been shared with thousands of people with coverage in mainstream media, influencing community understanding of the impact of stereotypical masculine norms.

We have also conducted our world first Adolescent Man Box study with over 1,100 boys to explore the attitudes to manhood of boys aged 11 to 18.

We have engaged with over 500 boys and men across schools and workplaces to raise awareness of the Man Box rules and their impact on behaviours including the use of violence and mental health.

The Man Box research has informed VicHealth's Healthier Masculinities framework and featured prominently in OurWatch's *Men in Focus* report.

How is this relevant to you and your students?

The Men's Project will soon release data on the **adolescent Man Box**.

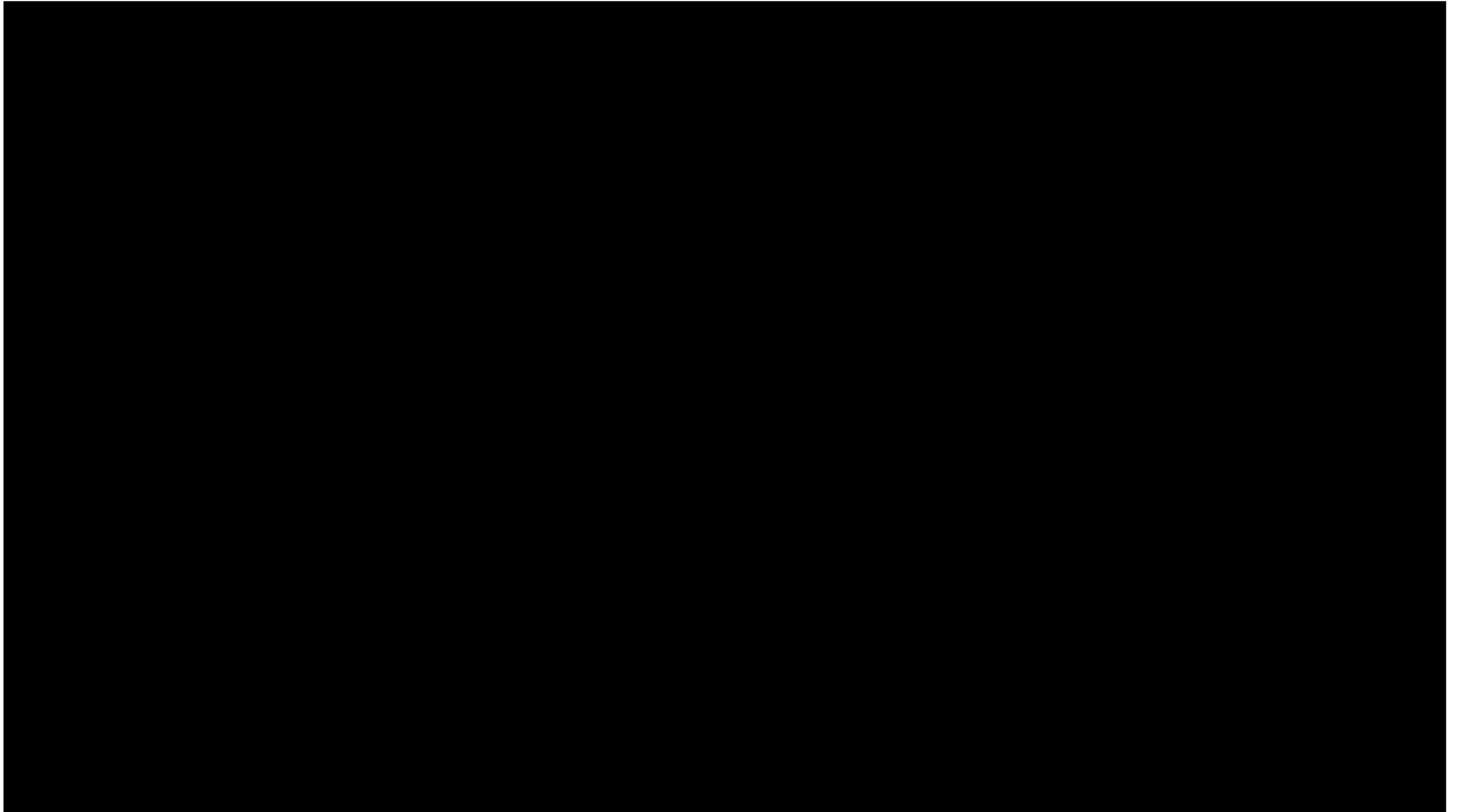
Here's what we've learned...

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Mask You Live In



Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc45-ptHMxo>

Constant Effort



Constant Effort

Belief that to be masculine, one must constantly, and without interruption, maintain one's tough, confident and strong public persona.

Emotional restriction



Emotional Restriction

Assumption that to be masculine, boys must be emotionally stoic and refrain from sharing their feelings with others.

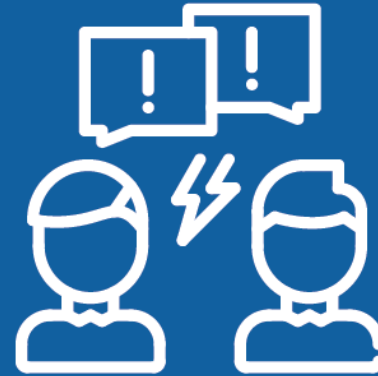
Heterosexism



Heterosexism

Norm that masculinity is defined in opposition to homosexuality and femininity, and that one must distance oneself from behaviours and attitudes traditionally thought as “girly” or “gay”

Social teasing



Social Teasing

Assumption that to be masculine, one must be able to both dole out and stand up to teasing and taunting in the peer context

Healthier masculinities

A strengths-based approach to encourage men and boys to choose masculinities that are good for them and others.

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Healthier Masculinities Activity

Birthday speech



**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative

Examples of Healthier Masculinities

What examples have you seen in your community of men demonstrating healthier forms of masculinities?

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Student activity 2: Redefining words

- Powerful
- Strong
- Leader

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Students

1. Reflect
2. Notice
3. Act

Three things you can do

Staff

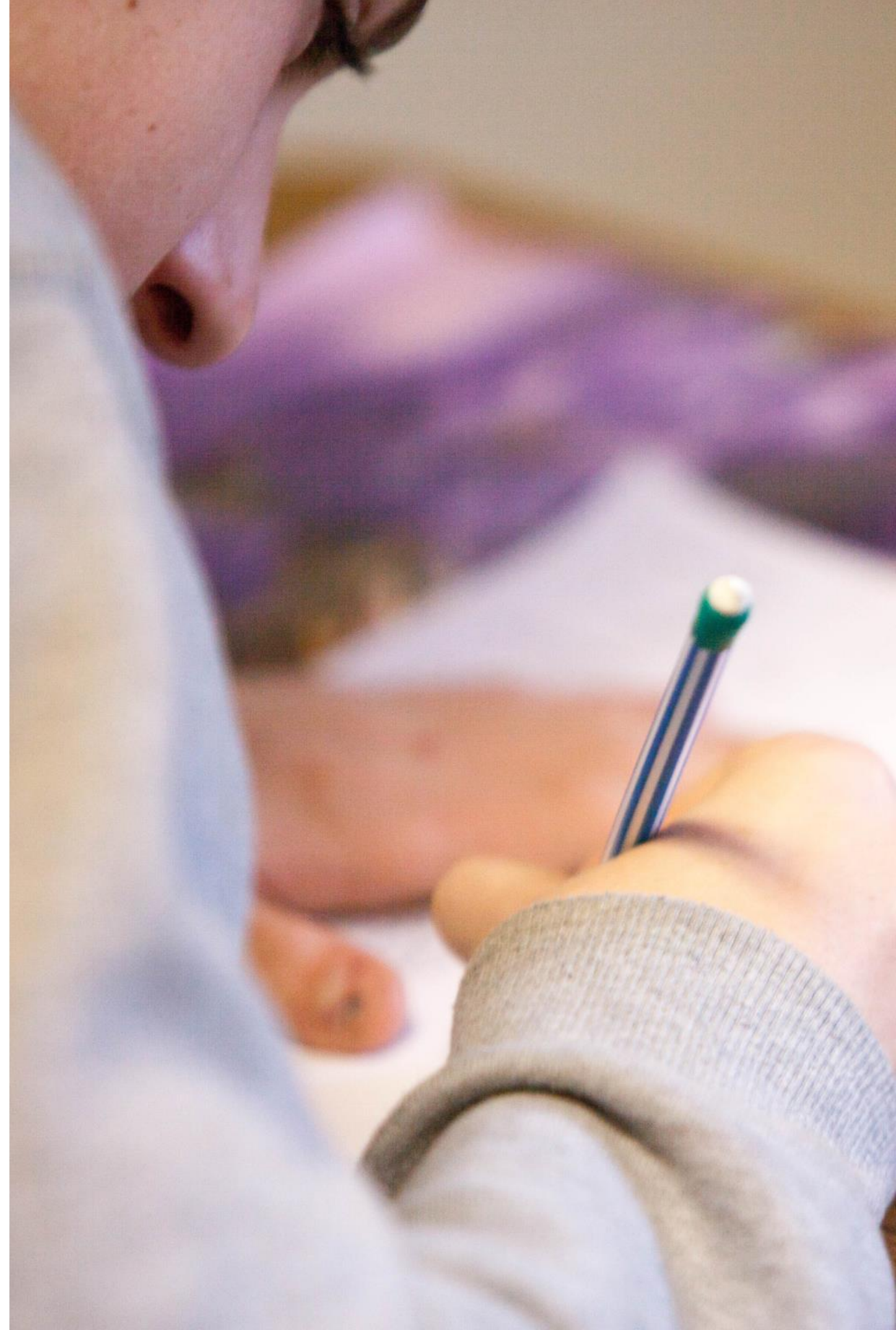
1. Reflect
2. Model
3. Act

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative

Seven Tips for Calmer Classrooms

1. Create a safe environment
2. Model and promote healthy masculinities
3. Establish pre-emptive discussions with students and staff
4. Look beyond disruptive or oppositional behaviour
5. Use responses [consequences] to be compassionate and to create a learning opportunity.
6. Generate class discussion around put-downs
7. Avoid shaming or ignoring Man Box behaviours/language



Summary

Living by the rigid rules of the Man Box can damage your mental health and your relationships.

These rules involve constant effort, emotional restriction, heterosexism and social teasing.

Living outside of the Man Box rules means boys and men are more likely to have:

- Healthy self-esteem
- Supportive friendships
- Great relationships
- More collaborative group work

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Support

Employee Assistance

Lifeline 13 11 14

1800RESPECT

**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative



Feedback

1. What did you enjoy about the session?
2. What could we improve?
3. What are your takeaways?



Thank you

Embracing difference
will free others
and you



**the
men's
project**

A Jesuit Social Services initiative