Toxic Masculinity Breakdown Handout

**Toxic Masculinity**
- Toxic masculinity is a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It’s the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly “feminine” traits — which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being hypersexual — are the means by which your status as “man” can be taken away. - [The Good Men Project](https://www.thegoodmenproject.com/)
- It is crucial, however, that students understand some key ideas: Talking about toxic masculinity is not about vilifying boys, men or any of the particular qualities society has deemed “masculine.” Rather, it is an opportunity to begin to reconstruct a more positive model of masculinity that makes room for the many different ways to be a boy or man and allows all individuals to feel secure in their masculine identity. - [Boys to Men (NYT article)](https://www.nytimes.com/)

**Toxic Masculinity in the school**
- 7.1 percent of boys drop out of school, compared to 5.1 for girls.
- Girls average a 5% lead over boys in degree attainment.
- Boys are more likely to be subjected to physical types of bullying
- Boy are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school. - [National Center for Educational Statistics](https://nces.ed.gov/)
- Refusal to seek help
- Homophobia
- Misogyny - [Bustle](https://www.bustle.com/)

**Positive Masculinity**
- Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010), lay out their framework for Positive Psychology/Positive Masculinity. This framework is a strength based approach, focusing first on the positive aspects of masculinity when working with men and boys. Examples include; Male ways of caring (generally action oriented), use of humor, and self-reliance.
- While there are aspects of masculinity that hold some level of positives within them, there are others that do not. Positive masculinity is a great starting point and useful as a strengths based approach. But it needs to be paired with something that better challenges the toxic aspects of masculinity.
Authentic Masculinity

- “This masculinity is individually defined and allows each person who identifies as a man to decide what is really authentic and genuine for him about his masculinity.” - Keith Edwards
- This ideology targets the cognitive dissonance that boys and men can feel when they don’t live up to the expectations set for them by seeking to change those very expectations.
- “Maleness” is defined by the individual and is not set by the society around him.
- Creates and more inclusive and comprehensive definition of “masculinity”.

Breaking down Toxic Masculinity put into Action

- Toxic masculinity is a deeply ingrained social construct, yet it is a construct all the same. This means that we can deconstruct it, break it down. Like all social constructs, dismantling it is easier said than done.
- Making this change requires a continual effort to challenge the messages society sends to our students. Call out toxic behaviors and ideas. Praise and model authenticity.
- In the school, provide professional development opportunities around this topic, discuss masculinity and its impact on students. Get your teachers involved in making cultural changes.
- In groups and individuals, discuss their experiences as males. Use the Frayer model to talk about masculinity. Challenge what the messages they have received about being a man. Discuss authenticity and the freedom that it allows.

Resources and References

- The Good Men Project - https://goodmenproject.com/
- 6 Harmful Effects of Toxic Masculinity - https://www.bustle.com/articles/143644-6-harmful-effects-of-toxic-masculinity