



## **ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, INC**

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### **KEYS TO EFFECTIVE CLINICAL WORK WITH MEN**

Developed by Nate Terrell, LCSW

- 1) Develop a “gender lens” which allows you to concurrently take into account relevant gender issues in therapy and view all men as unique individuals.
- 2) Identify and change any erroneous assumptions, beliefs, etc. about men which limit your effectiveness such as they need to get more “in touch with their feelings,” they do not feel deeply, they should be more like women, they have all the power, etc.
- 3) Understand that therapy is ideally designed for women and represents what men have been socialized to avoid (emotional vulnerability, self-analysis, etc.).
- 4) Reframe the context of therapy as an example of courage rather than failure.
- 5) Encourage male clients view you as a coach who can teach them some new strategies rather than a detective trying to get “inside their head.”
- 6) Help men understand how the “man code” has impacted their lives and how they might benefit from changing their perception about how to be a “real man.”
- 7) When appropriate, discuss your own challenges, failings, etc. to help connect with men on a deeper level and increase their comfort level with therapy.
- 8) Assume that therapy is going to be short-term and based on the accomplishment of specific goals.
- 9) Avoid asking men how they feel since it generally makes them uncomfortable. Instead, ask them more action oriented questions such as, “How is that working for you?” or “What could you do differently?”
- 10) Be active and directive in finding out specifically what men want from therapy and/or their lives and engage with them in collaborative brainstorming, problem-solving, etc. Appeal to men’s desire to fix things (including themselves) rather than the reasons they are broken.
- 11) Use Socratic questioning and dialogue to enable men to identify and change their dysfunctional behaviors, cognitions and beliefs. Encourage them to “try out” their new behaviors, cognitions and beliefs to see how well they work.

12) Provide men with the guidance and support they need to become healthy and live their lives with a sense of integrity, responsibility, balance, etc.

13) If you are a female therapist, be careful not to be overly protective of men since they usually respond well to “straight talk” delivered in a caring, non-judgmental manner. If you are a male therapist, allow men to express their deepest fears, vulnerabilities, etc. and cry if they need to.

14) Appeal to men’s desire to be a better father than their own, take great care of others and be gallant, courageous, etc.