



Friendship



“ I’ve known my friend “A” for over 10 years now. When we first met we mostly hung around aimlessly - we drank a lot, partied and hung out. It was when we were drunk that we became close. We talked about our broken families, life and sometimes - what we felt for each other. I still remember the first time A told me he loved me, and what a rush that gave me.

After a couple of years we learned that we can talk about feelings when we’re sober too. We no longer needed alcohol to tell each other what we meant for one another. Despite all of this I still feel resistance every time that I tell him I love him - it feels like I’m not allowed.

When I feel really bad I shut down. I can’t even talk to “A”. I get isolated and feel lonely. It feels like there’s no way out from the loneliness and that there’s no one that I can talk to. I know that isn’t true. I know that there are a lot of kind people that want to be close to me and support me. It just feels like I’m the only person on earth and that nobody understands me. ”

– anonymous participant

This story shows you how you can open up and speak from the heart in the following conversation. The topic is male friendships and how it differs from friendships with other sexes. You can also talk about what it’s like to get close to friends and how it is to support someone through emotionally difficult things. You can discuss the alcohol norm, loneliness and how men act in general, and what impact that has on people around them.

Warm up statements - answer YES/NO

- When I hug another guy, I finish with a firm pat on the back.
- I show emotions among other men when I’m sober.
- I think that my male friends would like to have a closer friendship with me
- I have spooned with a guy friend
- I’m friends with guys in the same way as those who aren’t guys

Questions

- **What are the positive sides of friendship?**
Possible follow-up question: What do you lack in your friendships with other guys?
- **How do you and your male friends react when you or somebody else brings up a sensitive/difficult subject?**
Possible follow-up question: Are some subjects harder to talk about with them?
- **What makes you feel lonely?**
Possible follow-up question: If you've felt lonely for an extended period of your life, why do you think that was?
- **Think about a situation when you felt strong peer pressure. How did that feel?**
Possible follow-up question: Have you done anything because of peer pressure that you later regretted?
- **If you're new at a job/school/association and meet someone that you would like to spend time with outside of that context - how do you do that?**
Possible follow-up question: What does a friendship need for it to last?
- **Do you ever tell your friends that you love them and that they're important to you?**
Possible follow-up question: How do you nurture your relationships to your friends? Do you take initiative to hang out?
- **How can men in groups act or talk so that others feel unwelcome?**
Possible follow-up question: How can you make everyone feel welcome?
- **If you and a male friend were given the task to lay stomach to stomach and hug, how would that feel?**
Possible follow-up question: Do you show closeness to friends through touch? How?

Questions for further self-examination

- **Are you uncomfortable hanging out with men when without planned activities?**
Possible follow-up question: Are you comfortable hanging out with anyone when you don't have an activity planned?
- **Do you tend to focus on doing activities with men, but can "only talk" with women and others?**
Possible follow-up question: How do you think your non-male friends feel about that?
- **Are you comfortable telling a friend that you're mad at them or disappointed in them? If not, what would it take for you to feel like you could?**
Possible follow-up question: Is it more likely for you to do it if/when you drink alcohol?
- **Do you have a close friend that you can talk to about things that have a stigma on them? Like porn, grief or mental health.**
Possible follow-up question: If not, how do you think that affects you?
- **Does the way you talk change when there's only men present? How?**
Possible follow-up question: Does it change when there's no men present? How?