

Fidelity Elements – Meeting 2: The Man Rules

When listing the Man Rules:

1. Anything and everything goes up on the list of Rules. You may ask for clarification or permission to rephrase/restate, but all the Rules that the dads identify need to be included.
2. The Rules are not universal in how they apply to an individual dad or culture, but there is a common thread we have seen across cultures.
3. If the dads do not identify positive rules, you may need to introduce them or guide the dads to identify the positives.
4. If sex does not come up make sure to pose the question, “What about the Rules that apply to sex?”
5. Point out the “don’ts” and that there is an inherently negative tone to the Rules. Highlight that many men know less about **how** to be and more about how they are **not** to be.
6. Eventually you will want to highlight how the “don’ts” are also connected to traits seen as more feminine. There is an anti-female undertone.
7. The Rules are about safety for most men – that is why they follow them. This is something to repeat many times.
8. The rules are not good or bad. It is how they are interpreted and when they are adhered to in more rigid ways that they become detrimental.
9. Our job is not to tell the men what kind of men or dads they are supposed to be. The power of this exercise is to help them identify the Rules, hear Rules from other men and dads, and then choose which Rules they feel are helpful to them versus ones they are willing to change.
10. The Rules have not been about choice. *Amazing Dads* is about supporting the men in making an informed choice about the men and fathers they want to be while recognizing the consequences of those choices.

11. Make sure to explore the ambiguity of many of the most common cited principles, like honesty. Help the dads identify what this really means as a Rule, versus it just being something that we're told is important.
12. Have the dads be as specific as possible with their answers and ask for clarification as needed.
13. The dichotomy is not about "Man Rules bad" and "Healthy Fathering good" because some of the Man Rules support healthy fathering.
14. Emphasize that when dads enter these types of group settings, we ask them to give up their sense of safety. Asking them to be vulnerable and open is against what many of them learned will keep them safe. If we do not recognize this dichotomy we cannot be trauma-informed because their safety has been so significantly compromised.
15. We are not asking them to give up or change ANY of the Man Rules – it is only for them to decide when they are ready. Emphasize the importance of responsibility and consequences for their choices.
16. If possible, keep copies of The Man Rules and Principles of Healthy Fathering visible for the whole curriculum.
17. The Man Rules should be referenced every session to emphasize their core importance.