Adaptation of the Mpowerment Project to Young Black MSM

Sue Kegeles
Greg Rebchook
John Peterson
Robert Williams
Dave Huebner
Scott Tebbetts
Introduction

This document discusses how the Mpowerment Project (MP) has been adapted to meet the HIV prevention needs and socio-cultural context of YBMSM’s lives. When we first developed the MP, our intention was that it would be a “generic” program that would be tailored by each community that adopted the MP for its own unique culture, target population, and location. Some community-based organizations did just that. They examined the core elements and principles that underlie the MP and adapted the MP for their populations (including YBMSM). Many other CBOs, however, wanted specific guidance about how to adapt the MP for their group, particularly for YBMSM. There was a strong feeling among many people wanting to implement the MP that it needed to be broadened to include a focus on social forces and structural issues that affect YBMSM’s vulnerability to HIV transmission.

This adaptation document represents the results of three research projects. Through these projects, we were able to incorporate input and experience from staff at a number of community-based organizations that focus on YBMSM (all of whom were Black gay/same gender loving men) and researchers at the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS) at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), the University of Utah, Georgia State University, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Input was also obtained from two advisory boards comprised of gay/same gender loving men. In addition, we were also able to obtain the input of young men themselves through six focus groups of YBMSM.

Rather than being a theoretical discussion, this document focuses on how to operationalize the issues that need to be addressed in the intervention by focusing on the various core elements of the MP, as well as on the additional themes that arose. We discuss how to adapt each core element to make it more appropriate and relevant to the needs of YBMSM, and discuss the YBMSM-specific psychosocial and life context variables that we believe the adaptations address. We also discuss here some broader issues about how to approach behavior change with YBMSM using culturally relevant methods.
This document should be used in tandem with the MP implementation manual (see mpowerment.org). We do not review here all parts of the MP, and many of the discussions here are based on the assumption that the reader already has an understanding of the core elements and guiding principles of the original MP (for more information about the core elements and guiding principles of MP, see Module 1: Overview of the Mpowerment Project manual at www.mpowerment.org).

The first study we conducted was the Translation Project, which involved collaboration between researchers at the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS) at the University of California, San Francisco; staff from three Black community-based organizations (CBOs) and two advisory boards comprised of Black gay/same gender loving men. First, they considered if the MP, with its core elements and guiding principles, was relevant for YBMSM. Second, they reviewed each core element and guiding principle to give input about how to adapt them for YBMSM. Third, they gave advice about what issues they felt needed to be incorporated into the MP that had not been included thus far, including if new core elements and guiding principles were needed. CAPS researchers also conducted six focus groups of YBMSM on adaptation issues, and the advisory groups reviewed the results of these. The State of California and the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP), which required that the research all be conducted within the state, funded the study.

The second research project was our TRIP Project (Translating Research into Practice). This is a study on how to translate an evidence-based intervention (MP) into practice in diverse settings. In order to learn more about adaptations that CBOs were making to the MP, the CAPS team-members visited four Black CBOs that were running African American implementations of the MP around the country and studied their adaptations. The CBOs were located in Detroit, Michigan; Newark, New Jersey; Atlanta, Georgia; and Orlando, Florida. We consider the adaptations that were consistent with the MP’s guiding principles and seem most successful to be “best practices.” They have been incorporated into this adaptation document. This study was funded through a grant from the National Institute for Mental Health.

The third research project involves implementing an adaptation of the MP and testing its efficacy through a randomized, controlled study. The first part of that study involved taking the themes and issues that had emerged in the Translation Project and operationalizing them so that they could be incorporated into the implementation of the intervention. This was done through numerous conference calls among the research team that involved CAPS, Georgia State University, and University of Utah investigators. The project was then implemented in Dallas, Texas. There, as in all MP implementations, the Core Group developed the name of the project. The Core Group named the project, “United Black Ellument” (U-BE) to represent the strength that comes from weaving together the diversity of the YBMSM community into a strong, cohesive element. The unusual spelling is because the program is located in a historically Black Dallas neighborhood called Deep Ellum. As we pass this adaptation on to others, we decided to name the Black adaptation the same, except we changed the spelling to “Element” so as not to create confusion henceforth. The U-BE Project was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

It should be noted that we intentionally use the term young Black men who have sex with men (YBMSM) throughout this document. However, a high proportion of the young men in U-BE and other MP implementations for young Black men self-identify as gay. Some, however also identify as bisexual, and others identify as same gender loving (SGL). Some of the men who identify as gay also have sex with women. As long noted, identity and sexual behavior do not necessarily match. But U-BE does not usually attract MSM who identify as heterosexual. They may be reached indirectly through interactions with and having sex with men who do identify as gay, bisexual, or SGL. U-BE does attract many young men who are not “out” to family, friends, and in the workplace.
The goals of MP are to address community building among YBMSM, increase safer sex among men infected and uninfected with HIV, and increase regular and frequent HIV testing. It is important not to simply promote “getting tested”, because the majority of YBMSM have been tested before. Instead, the frequency of testing is important to promote. We do not specify here the frequency of HIV testing since recommendations from the CDC are in flux. In 2012, we are recommending that YBMSM get tested at least every six months. But it may be recommended in the future to obtain HIV testing more frequently. Hence throughout this document, where we discuss “frequent testing,” the message to MP participants should be more specific as to frequency.

U-BE can be described in various ways. It is a risk reduction program, aiming at both HIV-negative and HIV-positive men. Men of both HIV statuses comprise the YBMSM community, and both need risk reduction messages. This is why the messages should not be “protect yourself from HIV.” Instead, it should be “protect yourself, protect your brothers, protect your community.” It is a community-level intervention, striving to reach all YBMSM in diverse social networks in a community through multiple channels and with different HIV prevention messages. It is a multilevel HIV prevention approach, since it aims at issues that exist within young men themselves (attitudes, beliefs, skills); interpersonal issues (sexual communication, boyfriend issues); social issues (changing norms around safer sex and regular and frequent HIV testing); and structural issues (providing an alternative space for men to come together and create a community that supports each other in many different ways). It is also a community mobilization approach, since it mobilizes YBMSM to build healthy communities, confront HIV, and spread messages to peer networks about the need to reduce unsafe sex and increase regular and frequent HIV testing. It mobilizes young men to take on these goals and spread these messages through their social groups. Finally, it is a condom distribution project since all venue-based outreach involves distributing condoms, social outreach events involves condom distribution, and the space has an abundance of condoms for men to take.

Thus, the MP and U-BE are responsive to the U.S. National HIV/AIDS National Strategy. As previously noted, the intervention is meant to help all young men, regardless of HIV status, to reduce their sexual risk behavior. Specific messages to emphasize risk reduction among HIV-positive men can and should be disseminated throughout the community. In addition, the community mobilization methods that are used in MP, the core elements, can be used to promote HIV-positive men linking into and staying connected with healthcare facilities that provide treatment, and taking medications as prescribed. There is also an emphasis by the CDC to distribute condoms throughout the target community, which is easily accomplished by MP and U-BE since condoms are distributed at every activity that the projects create, via outreach at venues where YBMSM congregate, and at the project space.
Background

HIV among Young Black MSM

Men who have sex with men (MSM) represented 53% of all new infections in 2006¹ and are the only risk group for which the number of new infections continues to increase². Black MSM (BMSM) are especially impacted, comprising 14% of MSM³ but 35% of new HIV infections among MSM. A recent study documented that 33% of BMSM progressed to AIDS within three years of HIV diagnosis, relative to 25% of white MSM⁴. Once diagnosed with AIDS, 19% of BMSM died within three years, compared to 16% of white and 15% of Hispanic MSM. Young BMSM (YBMSM) are at especially high risk. A recent CDC seroprevalence study of 21 U.S. cities found that 21% of YBMSM aged 18-29 were HIV-positive, compared to 9% of young Latino and 7% of young white MSM⁵. Moreover, 71% of the HIV-infected YBMSM were unaware of their HIV status, the highest proportion of undiagnosed infections of any ethnic/racial group. Current HIV prevention efforts for YBMSM are not working. The U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy calls for HIV programs that reduce health inequities among both ethnic/racial and sexual minority populations.

Overview of Findings about Adaptation of Mpowerment to YBMSM

In the Translation Project, CAPS collaborated with the staff of three Black CBOs in California: Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC), the Black AIDS Institute (BAI), and the Minority AIDS Project (MAP), which was part of Unity Fellowship Church. SMAAC was located in Oakland, and BAI and MAP were located in Los Angeles.

CBO staff identified individuals for two advisory groups of older gay or same gender-loving Black men, who were chosen because they were analytical and insightful about issues that they had grappled with when they were younger. One group was formed of participants who lived in
the Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area and the other in Los Angeles. CBO staff were also on the advisory groups. The two groups were called “Boards of Cultural Experts” (BOCEs) to recognize that while they were not scientific experts, they had expertise in their own cultures and had their own life experiences, which they were sharing with the researchers. The groups ranged from 8 – 12 participants.

The project began by the investigators meeting with each person on the BOCEs individually, discussing the goals for the groups, and finding out from them ideas they had about what an HIV prevention intervention should focus on for YBMSM. The investigators then convened the first meeting of both BOCEs in San Francisco and held a mini-training of Mpowerment for them, so that they would understand the core elements and guiding principles of the intervention. The CAPS investigators then met with each BOCE four times to analyze the overall program and the core elements and guiding principles. The researchers made it clear that they were open to reconsidering every core element and guiding principle, including if any should be dropped entirely or new ones added.

The researchers, in collaboration with the CBO partners, conducted six focus groups with YBMSM themselves in Los Angeles and Oakland. The CBOs recruited the participants, who were all between the ages of 18-29. They had not participated in an MP previously, but provided their views on the MP as we described the guiding principles and core elements. Each group contained 6-9 participants. Staff from the CBOs who had been trained in facilitation skills facilitated the focus groups.

Extensive notes were taken during individual interviews with CBO staff and BOCE participants and focus groups with YBMSM were audio-recorded, transcribed, and summarized. Those summaries and the notes taken during the BOCE meetings were the basis for this report. The data from the interviews, focus groups, and meetings with the BOCEs were compared and contrasted to find salient and relevant themes. Emerging themes from the data are presented in this report.

To fully operationalize these themes so that CBOs have specific ideas about how to implement core elements with these themes in mind, the research team discussed what the themes really meant as they related to vulnerability to HIV transmission. For example, it was quite evident that internalized homophobia needed to be addressed. But this first required the team to analyze how internalized homophobia affected YBMSM’s vulnerability to HIV. Once this was established (through lengthy discussions), exercises that might impact that link were identified. These are presented here. We also incorporated successful approaches that the CBOs were using to address these issues. It should be noted, however, that these are not be the only way to operationalize how to affect these themes. We encourage CBOs to mull over the themes and use the ones we propose, or develop some new exercises that address these issues – while keeping the guiding principles in mind.

We have incorporated into this document our ideas about how to address each core element following the guiding principles, to address the issues that arose in our research, and in a manner that is culturally relevant to YBMSM.
The findings from the Translation Project were very clear: the BOCEs indicated that the MP's core elements and guiding principles were relevant and appropriate for YBMSM, although one guiding principle needed to be expanded (the need to support pride in who you are, regardless of specific sexual identity, which needs to be extended to include racial/ethnic pride). Yet it is also clear that many additional issues need to be addressed in the intervention. These are discussed regarding core elements and guiding principles.

In a CDC-CAPS meeting on the U-BE Project, it was discussed if we should drastically change some of the core elements in order to incorporate more attention to these additional issues. After considerable analysis, it was decided that the existing core elements could encompass attention to the additional issues. In particular, it was discussed if the M-groups, which have been 1-time small groups, should be expanded into two or more sessions. The reason that M-groups are only 1-time groups is that it is very challenging to recruit men to them. It was decided that adding additional sessions to the group would make the intervention more complex to implement since it would require substantial effort to retain men for a second session. To do so would mean that staff would have less time for the other core elements of the project. Hence, it was decided that the M-groups should be tailored to be culturally appropriate, and they have been extensively altered. But we did not add a second session. Our experience in implementing U-BE has shown that recruitment to the small groups continue to be challenging. The adapted M-group (called U-BE Connected) is the most challenging core element to conduct because of recruitment issues. Ideas we have about how to operationalize a focus on these issues are in this document.

We have incorporated into this document our ideas about how to address each core element following the guiding principles, to address the issues that arose in our research, and in a manner that is culturally relevant to YBMSM. However, in any locale where U-BE is implemented, CBO staff, in conjunction with their Core Group, should consider the adaptations and how they will work in their community. Hence, the ways we describe incorporating the issues into core elements will ultimately be decided by CBO staff and Core Groups themselves.
Themes or Issues to Address in Adaptation

The following themes about important issues to address in reaching YBMSM emerged from our research. We spent time understanding what the themes each mean, and then how they should be incorporated into U-BE’s guiding principles and core elements. Every core element was analyzed to determine how to incorporate each issue into it. These adaptations are addressed in the rest of the manual.

Internalized Racism/Internalized Oppression

YBMSM may have internalized negative societal messages related to their sexual or racial identities. This internalized oppression can affect YBMSM in a variety of ways, including low self-worth, self-esteem, and self-love. It may also affect their desire to get tested or to avoid contracting HIV. Additionally, internalized oppression may also affect how YBMSM treat each other in sexual relationships, which is relevant to preventing HIV transmission, and prevention for positives. The project should deal with internalized oppression by integrating pride, both in Black heritage and in having same sex desire, into all core elements, as well as exercises that create conscious awareness of internalized oppression.

Whole-man Approach

The project needs to focus on the “total” young man and not just on young men’s sexuality. This is particularly important since Black men are often stereotyped as being overly sexualized. Thus a holistic approach means not solely focusing on YBMSM’s behavior (sexual, or otherwise), recognizing that the participants are part of a larger Black community, and that many are faced with a wide-range of life issues including discrimination; socio-economic challenges; a biased criminal justice system; institutional and/or overt acts of racism; a sense of fatalism, hopelessness, and loss of control over their lives; and a “mainstream” gay community that has not been accepting of or welcoming to them. Additionally, a holistic approach includes supporting YBMSM to take on adult responsibilities and think about the future; a focus on wellness, such as exercise, diet, prayer; and
supporting a connection to religion and spirituality. Yet the BOCEs were also adamant that HIV prevention should not get lost in conducting these activities, and that HIV prevention should be woven into all activities.

**Diverse Sexual Identities**

YBMSM have a wide variety of sexual identities (gay, bisexual, “down low”, same gender loving (SGL), heterosexual, “just me”). Many men may be reluctant to join an overtly “gay” project and attend activities marketed “for gay men.” Yet in Dallas we have found that many men do want to attend a program that is described as “for gay men.” This should be explored in any new community implementing U-BE.

**Creating Young Black Gay/SGL Community Amidst Great Diversity**

The project needs to help YBMSM envision and create for themselves a healthy, supportive community that recognizes and accepts the tremendous diversity among YBMSM. There are many diverse social networks that young men are involved in, which includes having their own clothing styles, activities, music, communication patterns, and slang. The project needs to facilitate a process wherein YBMSM consciously build a broader community in their own vision that encompasses diverse social networks, as well as men who are isolated. Yet class divisions in particular are likely to be challenging, and the BOCEs expressed concern about building a YBMSM community in which many life experiences of lower-income and middle-class YBMSM are very different.

**Bisexuality**

Many YBMSM have concurrent sexual relationships with women and men, regardless of how they identify. Thus sexual risk behavior with women is also important to address. Yet most of the YBMSM who attend this program are unlikely to have sex with women since the intervention is most likely to attract men who are more “out” about their same sex attraction, and therefore, most activities should focus on sex with men.

**Lack of Role Models**

Many YBMSM have had few adult men in their lives. This sometimes results in YBMSM having a lack of information about how to handle adult responsibilities. In addition, since many older Black MSM are not completely “out” in the Black community, many young men do not have a vision of how older MSM live, have long-term relationships, financially support themselves, deal with their families, have children, and so forth. Group mentoring activities at the project space, with older men serving as role models and being sources of information to younger men, may be helpful.

**Privacy Concerns**

Many YBMSM are very concerned about “sharing their business” with others, feeling that too often people in the Black and Black MSM community gossip about each other. It was felt that out of concern about not “spreading my business,” people often do not share their private issues with others until they are quite comfortable and familiar with them. Activities that involve disclosure of personal information may need to include the development of trust and rapport building, as well as continual reminders about not gossiping with others about what is heard at the project.
High HIV Seroprevalence among YBMSM, Many of Whom Do Not Know

While the MP has never been solely a project for HIV-negative men, earlier research was conducted in low seroprevalence communities, and most participants were HIV-negative. In contrast, there are far more HIV-positive YBMSM, some of whom have not been tested or tested recently. U-BE has an explicit focus on: a) supporting HIV-positive men to be safe sexually; b) reducing stigma of HIV-positive men; and c) encouraging men to get tested at least every 6 months so they know their current HIV status.

Religion and Spirituality Must be Addressed

Most YBMSM were raised going to church most Sundays, spirituality and religion are constant themes in many men’s lives, and many phrases sprinkled throughout daily converse pertain to religion. Yet religion has also had a deleterious impact on many men as they continually heard negative statements about homosexuality and gay men preached from the pulpit. Their families often time have repeated these statements at home. Therefore, religion and spirituality must be addressed, both explicitly and implicitly in various ways throughout the intervention.

Stigma (Prejudice) Against HIV-Positive YBMSM

There are considerable negative attitudes about men who have contracted HIV, which are expressed in a large variety of ways. This may cause HIV-positive men to hide their HIV status from everyone, including best friends, lovers, and family. It can cause them to feel quite isolated and marginalized. Feeling ashamed when they learn their HIV-status, they sometimes avoid seeking treatment or drop out of care, and lack emotional support for staying in care or taking medications as prescribed. They may avoid disclosing their HIV status to sex partners out of fear that the sex partner might gossip about them. Some young men do not even tell their boyfriend that they are HIV-positive out of fear of rejection or of it being gossiped about if they break up. Many social networks are close knit, and thus gossip gets around very quickly. Fear of being marginalized if one finds out that he is HIV-positive may even make it very difficult to seek HIV-testing. Instead of believing the adage, “Knowing is power”, many men would say that, “Knowing means you must recognize that you are an awful [dirty, sick] person.”

Using a Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy

It is not only important to focus on what issues are addressed in the intervention, but how they are addressed is important as well. All parts of the intervention need to be conducted using culturally appropriate methods, including visual images, music, and exercises. Scenarios that are presented for role plays need to be tailored, and the use of affirmations, music, and spoken word exercises may prove very useful, with less emphasis on written materials.
**Overall Presentation of U-BE**

There are overarching themes or issues that should be incorporated into the overall presentation of U-BE to increase its cultural relevance. These themes should be incorporated as ways of “positioning” the overall program, and specific events and activities that incorporate these cultural values and approaches to coping and inspiring behavior change are likely to increase its acceptance by YBMSM. The *Nguzo Saba* (seven principles of *Kwanzaa*) speak to many of the ideas underlying the adaptation of the intervention (see Appendix 1). These are mentioned throughout.

**YBMSM are Very Diverse**

It is essential to be mindful of the diversity of YBMSM, in terms of their interests, outlooks, life experiences, and so forth. It seems that the biggest issue to attend to is socioeconomic background/class issues: some men will come from middle class backgrounds and others will be from lower income backgrounds. Young men from different socioeconomic backgrounds may be unwilling or uninterested in socializing together, and different types of activities may appeal to the two groups. Younger aged men and older (or developmentally more mature) men may also vary in what they find appealing. There will also likely be diversity in terms of identity, religiosity, and so forth. A continual awareness of reaching and including YBMSM who are very diverse should be emphasized and continually evaluated. Ongoing process evaluation, conducted by the Coordinators and Core Group, has to continually examine this. This pertains then to the project being culturally competent: there is no one African American culture.

**Creating a Gay/Same Gender Loving Community (SGL)**

Although we acknowledge the importance of reaching diverse YBMSM, we need to make sure we do not “de-gay” the intervention for the purpose of reaching non-gay or non-SGL identified men. Black
men who identify as gay/SGL are at very high risk for HIV transmission. We do not want to alienate men who do not identify with these terms, but might be willing to attend a program that attracts gay/bisexual/SGL men. Hence these should be used carefully and thoughtfully, depending upon community norms. The acceptability of these terms with young men is also changing rapidly. In Dallas, for example, there were discussions at the start of U-BE about whether or not to use the term gay (SGL was largely unknown). The CG intentionally, and thoughtfully, desired to use the term gay in materials describing the materials. We asked them to consider if that term might be offensive, and refer more to the white gay community than themselves. The CG members adamantly stated that they identified with the term, and to them it has no connection to others. Yet not all safer sex, testing or project promotional materials use the term. For them, it depended upon who the project was targeting at the time—men who were out or men who were more closeted. Other projects we observed developed materials that are sexy, homoerotic and refer to “gayness,” but do not necessarily use the term.

The Importance of Friends and Family

There is a strong cultural value that friends’ support and caring are cornerstones in helping you cope with adversity, keep you on track with your life, and make you feel loved. Friends are there for you when you are down, and when you need to be uplifted. Family too is also there for you when you are down – but family can be a mixed bag. Families may be there for YBMSM as long as they remain silent about their sexuality, but this can be a heavy price to pay for that support. And some families of origin are not at all supportive to their gay sons/brothers, or are ambivalent in their support.

Given these cultural values, the intervention should be cast in a way that capitalizes on the value of “relying on your gay/bisexual brothers for support,” but focusing on support regarding having safer sex and getting HIV testing frequently, motivating YBMSM to support their friends about sexual safety and HIV testing (even if it is counter-normative to talk about HIV/AIDS), always being there for your brothers through good times and bad, and the implications of this with respect to being safe sexually with brothers (i.e., having safer sex to protect your brothers, your community, and yourself). Many YBMSM belong to “gay families,” with a gay father, a gay mother (who may be a transgender woman), and gay (adult) children. With respect to family, projects might focus on creating a chosen family (made up of gay/bisexual brothers) – in addition to the family of origin. For most young men, the project should not frame itself as a new family that replaces the family of origin, but rather, as an additional family.

The topic of the impact of family of origin on a person might also be a good focus for some discussions or forums. For example, a project could have a panel discussion at a forum that discusses different ways of coping with families’ reactions to being gay.

The Black Community Comes Together and Celebrates the Beauty of Being Together

Often the Black community can be there, support each other, and lift each other up in times of crisis. Furthermore, it often celebrates the beauty of being together. This focuses on the broader
Community rather than simply family or friends. We need to focus on bringing this value, that the community comes together to support and lift each other up, into the further development of the Black gay community. This can be incorporated into the community-building aspect of the project, for example, talking about how “We as a Black community have always been there for each other; now we as a Black gay community have to be here for each other about this struggle [of HIV/AIDS].” We should emphasize “Black love”—the love that supports each other, dignifies each other, and causes the community to be there for each other. Cornel West writes that, “We need the kind of Black [gay, our insert] love that allows us to criticize as well as embrace, to empower as well as to correct, to listen as well as to speak, and in the end, to ennoble as well as be ennobled by the people.”

This relates to the Kwanzaa principle of Ujima, collective work and responsibility. This is the idea that African Americans should build and maintain the community together and make brothers’ and sisters’ problems our own problems and solve them together. This principle can be emphasized in the project.

Referral to Black love, and Black gay love in particular, is likely to be helpful to emphasize in the intervention and activities that invoke conversation about it is important, as it can easily relate to HIV prevention. For example, an activity can involve getting men to question what Black gay love is, how it is manifested, and how it relates to HIV prevention and supporting each other. This can be done through various exercises, such as a discussion topic on occasion, activities around this at outreach events, having a chalkboard in the larger community space or bathroom wall that asks these questions and asks for responses to be written on the wall.

It is also important to emphasize building a healthy Black gay community, not only in terms of HIV, but also in terms of various sexual health issues (e.g., getting hepatitis A and B vaccines, STI prevention). In addition, health should be discussed in terms of healthy respect and support for each other. This has to be emphasized given the negativity that is sometimes expressed in the existing YBMSM community, in which men often gossip about each other and tear each other down.

Community Building Through Addressing the HIV/AIDS Crisis

We can emphasize how we need to come together and support each other through this time of crisis facing YBMSM regarding HIV/AIDS (high rates of infection, high rates of mortality by comparison with other ethnic/racial groups). However, coming together to support each other during this time of crisis may be a hard sell for many YBMSM, because it is unclear that young men see this as a crisis. So trying to emphasize the need to support each other during “this time of crisis” may not work if the men do not see it as a terrible threat. It may be that we can affect this perception, provide the spark, if we discuss epidemiology in the city where the program is implemented, including mortality rates, since there is likely to be tremendous silence among YBMSM who are HIV-positive, and many positive men are likely not out about their serostatus. We cannot rely on HIV-positive men coming out about their serostatus, because HIV is very stigmatized. Therefore, many YBMSM who are either untested or HIV-negative may not know that their friends and acquaintances (and sex partners) are HIV-positive. So we may need to do something (such as posting information
about HIV rates, having discussions about it, and/or having a community forum on it) that raises awareness of its threat locally.

At the same time as bringing up HIV/AIDS as a threat/crisis, however, we have to build hope. We cannot simply raise the specter of this being a crisis without also men coming to the idea that helping support each other in reducing their sexual risk behavior and obtaining regular HIV testing is a way to address it. This fits in with empowerment theory: we need to have men recognize the issues as a challenge, but then come up with solutions about which they can take charge. It cannot be posed as such an enormous threat that men feel powerless to confront and deal with, but instead, that is it something within their power to address (i.e., “a winnable win”). The issue of “Is this experienced as an emergency in this community?” should be discussed with a Community Advisory Board (CAB) if the project has one, as well as with the Core Group, to help determine how the community is experiencing HIV/AIDS.

**Community-Building Through Celebration of Being Black Gay/Bisexual/Same Gender Loving Men**

This can also bring together the community, much like the celebration of being Black together occurs in churches: we are a Black institution, run for Black men, by Black men. Come meet other guys, be together, have fun, support each other, lift each other up. Position the project so that it is discussed that the community comes together in times of crisis as well as when it is not in crisis. Discuss that we are people who come together to celebrate being with Black people. We set aside time to celebrate with each other. This is not different from what the Mpowerment Project has done before, except that here it is focused on Black MSM (not all MSM). Try to appeal to YBMSM and build community through emphasizing celebration and joy in each other’s company.

The Kwanzaa principle of *Nia*, purpose, relates to this. This is the principle that the collective vocation is of building and developing the African American community (in this case, the African American gay community) in order to restore the community to its greatness.

**Promote Faith that Life Will Get Better if You Aspire and Work for It**

We need to set a tone for the project that supports men to encourage each other, to “keep the faith,” that young men should not give up, but instead, keep going, keep pushing, and being optimistic that better things are ahead if you work at it. Men should be encouraged to set goals for themselves for making their lives better, and enact strategies to achieve those goals. We should not hide from discussing the difficulties and challenges that young men experience in their lives — but we should end discussions on these issues with positive, uplifting notes, encouraging the belief that perseverance will result in positive outcomes at some point, and encouraging men to take action to make their lives better. We need to promote hope that if actions are taken (e.g., reducing sexual risk behavior, getting tested and into treatment, supporting friends to do the same), then “we can beat this problem.” The idea of working hard and having faith that it will lead to good consequences might be equivalent to beliefs about self-efficacy (that one can do a particular behavior) and response-efficacy (that doing the behavior will achieve the desired consequences).

References to ancestors who survived horrendous hardships so that their descendants would have a better life might also be incorporated into the intervention, as a reason to keep working on the issues and having faith that it will have the desired outcomes. With this line of reasoning, we can promote the idea that the young men owe it to their ancestors to keep on going. So “keeping on,” taking on these challenges, are important to do because the ancestors had to do more than this to keep their descendants going and this generation has to do the same by taking on these challenges.
message may not appeal to all YBMSM, admittedly. The idea that “we have to do this for ourselves” and not rely on others to do it for us could also fit in here and with the idea of promoting faith.

It should not be inferred that having faith means that one should be passive (“have faith that it will all work out, and therefore sit back and let it happen”). Instead, the focus should be that men have to be actively involved in making their lives better, have faith and hope that doing these activities will, at some time, result in things getting better, and therefore not give up. For men from lower income backgrounds, having faith that there can be a “better tomorrow” can be encouraged by helping them find and keep jobs, obtain GEDs, learn how to manage their money and survive. This can also be about trying to go to college, finding out about local possibilities, getting college coaching, and/or finding out about scholarship possibilities (this could be something that the community advisory board might be able to help with).

This also relates to the Kwanzaa principle of *Imani*, or faith. This is the principle that it is important for men to believe in African American gay men, their parents, teachers and leaders, and the righteousness and victory in their struggle. That is, we need to promote the idea that African American gay men should keep on going, no matter how difficult the struggle, recognizing that they face more threat, more adversity, and more obstacles than any other population and they are the ones that must survive in the face of it – and yet they must have faith that they can not only endure, but can succeed.

The Core Group can infuse faith in perseverance and striving through every component. This ties in with Hill Harper’s book, *Letters to a Young Brother*, which provides some exercises regarding keeping the faith, and can be used with Core Group (e.g., as a short starting exercise or after the Core Group), during formal outreach events (e.g., as an exercise at movie nights or a weekly social gathering), and with the CAB (who might lead some exercises with the Core Group on occasion). This issue might also be addressed through reading Kevin E. Taylor’s book, *It’s Time for Some Action: 10 Common Sense Steps to Take your Life Back...and then to the Next Level*. An additional book to consider is Keith Boykin’s, *Respecting the Soul: Daily Reflections for Black Lesbian and Gays*. These can be read either in their entirety or via analyzing parts of it (e.g., during outreach social events).

**Promote Attitude: “I am Beautiful, I am the Way I am Supposed to Be, and There is a Purpose to My Life”**

This relates to the other issues, discussed above. African American communities often use this inspirational message to help in coping with hardships and to persevere in the face of adversity. But of course in this project the message is, “I am Black and gay/bisexual and I am beautiful.” It can be helpful to promote the idea that there is a purpose for every person’s life, and it is each person’s job to find out what it is: “I may need to wrestle to find out my true purpose, but God does not make mistakes. Hence, my being created in such a way that I am attracted to other men was also not a mistake.” (This obviously gets into faith issues as well). This then relates to the guiding principle (below) that needs to be adapted: not only of promoting pride about being gay, but pride in being a Black gay man, or a Black man who is attracted to other men. This extends beyond pride

It is important to focus on the “whole man” rather than solely focusing on sexuality.
in being oneself, into a focus on finding one’s purpose, niche, and consequently, recognizing what
to do to fulfill that destiny, and finding the ability to follow through on those plans. This speaks to
confronting passivity.

The following poem, by Valerie Spencer, expresses this sentiment. Some project might want to use
this poem in some way, such as by posting it in the space.

**Affirmation for the Heart**

*Who I am and How I Love is Not Wrong!*
*Nothing about me needs to be fixed.*
*I was created just fine!*
*My Living, My Loving, and My Light.*
*I am a gift to myself and to all creation!*
*I am who I was created to be.*

--Valerie Spencer

**Incorporate the Concept that YBMSM Need
 to Aspire to be Fully Functioning Adult Men**

There is a strong African American cultural value on “being a man.” This is more than simply being
a male, but being a man means that you take care of yourself, you manage your responsibilities,
you manage your life, and you also support your community. Unfortunately, being a man has
traditionally excluded the possibility of being a man who has sex with men. We, of course, want to
invalidate the last concept, but we want to reinforce the other parts and facilitate YBMSM’s sense
that they are being men when they when they have safer sex and get tested, take on the work of
this project, support their peers in having safer sex and getting tested, and when they learn new life
skills, pursue self-improvement activities, and ultimately are able to take care of themselves. We
need to promote the idea that taking care of yourself (being a man), can include seeking services,
getting exercise, eating well – and getting tested for HIV and other STIs, and into treatment if HIV-
positive.

It is important to focus on the “whole man” rather than solely focusing on sexuality. Thus,
throughout the project, the Coordinators should reinforce that everything positive that participants
do as a part of this program is about manhood, including caring about themselves, their friends, and
their sex partners; being a part of the Core Group; volunteering in the program; and following up on
referrals. Exercises can also involve the promotion of this issue, and relating it to HIV prevention
and community support. In the same way that some exercises were discussed earlier that get into
Black gay love, the issue of “what is a MAN” can be pursued (through discussions about it, writing
about it on walls, in outreach materials, etc.).

**Address Religion and Spirituality as They Relate
to Being Gay/Same Gender Loving Men**

Most YBMSM across the U.S. were raised as Christian, went to Sunday services, and their mothers
and grandmothers are religious. There is considerable diversity in which church they were raised,
ranging from Baptist, Southern Baptist, United Church of Christ, AME (African Methodist
Episcopal), Pentecostal, Catholic, non-denominational, and more. Depending upon geographic area
of the country, many young men continue going to church as adults, and may attend Bible Study on Wednesdays as well. Many young men may also be part of church choir. This is especially true of YBMSM living in the South. In the North and West, many young men stop going to church regularly, once their mothers or grandmothers stop forcing them to do so, but are very spiritual, and being Christian remains important to them. Indeed for many young men, being Christian is an extremely important part of their identities.

Unfortunately, a great many young men were raised hearing homophobic statements made by pastors from the pulpit, interpretations of the Bible are made that reinforce homophobia, and their families repeat these statements at home. As a result, many men have internalized these messages and struggle to feel good about themselves as YBMSM. Some men thus consider themselves and other YBMSM to be “sinners” and believe that their sexuality is sinful. Important consequences of these beliefs is having low self-esteem, feelings of low self worth, guilt about sex, self doubt, anxiety, and depression. These can affect the ability of young men to prepare to have sex and thus result in a resistance to carrying condoms and lubes, and a lack of respect for sexual partners. It is important for projects to help men reconcile being an MSM with being Christian. This can be achieved through various means, as are described throughout the discussions about core elements.

It is also important to note that there is considerable diversity in religion as well. The various Christian denominations, and pastors within denominations, differ in their interpretations of the Bible and acceptance of homosexuality. There are also some young men who were raised Muslim, Jewish, Unitarian, or with no religion. In addition, some men who were raised Christian have chosen other religions as adults. Some young men explore other religions, such as eastern religions, new age approaches, and so forth.

The project should not endorse any religion over another, but instead, focus on how religion and spirituality affects young men, if they want to “buy into” interpretations that diminish their feelings of self worth, and how these issues affect their ability to care for themselves and for their brothers in terms of HIV prevention. Possible ways to do this are discussed throughout this manual.

It may be helpful to incorporate spirituality into the project, since this provides a sense that being a proud gay man does not exclude spirituality. Consider including in activities (or some activities) a moment of silence before meals, saying grace before meals, or playing gospel music playing in the space from time to time. In our observations of some projects, we have noticed that they have incorporated this as a way of being culturally in-tuned with the participants.

The YBMSM Community is Comprised of HIV-positive as Well as HIV-negative Men

MP has always been a program for entire communities of young MSM. The intervention has always included men who are HIV-negative and HIV-positive. It is very important to be inclusive of all young men in the community regardless of their HIV status. HIV-positive men continue to feel stigmatized (discriminated against) by their own community. Hence it is important to work to reduce the stigma against HIV-positive men so that they can feel comfortable being part of the project. All activities the project hosts and all materials that the project makes should be reviewed and analyzed to ensure that they don’t alienate HIV-positive men. The CG and Coordinators together should work to reduce gossip about men’s HIV status. It might help to have messages in the project space displayed about this being a space for YBMSM – regardless of their HIV status. Yet, it is also clear that the stigma about HIV-positive men is sometimes used against the project itself. In U-BE for example, we have often hear rumors that men outside the project are hesitant to get involved in the intervention because “it is a place for HIV-positive men” or “everyone who goes there is HIV-positive.” Despite this, the project must reach all men.
HIV-positive men have much that they need to cope with. They have to deal with being positive, in a community in which there is substantial stigma about having HIV. They have to cope with the considerable gossip in the young men’s community. They can feel marginalized if they are out about their HIV status – even to sex partners. Given the frequency that young men’s boyfriend relationships start and end, it can be scary to disclose their HIV status to sex partners since they may be fearful that if they breakup, the ex-boyfriend will spread their business to others in their community. And finally - they need to deal with having sex in a safe way.

**Safer sex messages.** Safer sex messages disseminated in Formal Outreach (see Module 7: Formal Outreach) and Informal Outreach (see Module 8: Informal Outreach) should be inclusive of both HIV-positive and HIV-negative men. The messages should state that it is important to protect yourself, protect your brothers, and protect your community. Messages can also be developed specifically for both by saying, “Whether you are HIV-positive or HIV-negative, having safer sex is important.”

**Consider hosting a separate monthly meeting for HIV-positive men.** This will be for young men to receive and provide ongoing support, and to review many of the concepts/exercises in U-BE Connected, but only a few of them at each meeting. This enables the project to encourage young men to be safe sexually (and can develop skills in this by participating in risk reduction role-plays), discuss STI prevention and their relationship to HIV viral load and infectiousness, but also get support for obtaining and being adherent to medication regimens. Participants can support each other about being “responsible men” by taking care of their health – obtaining and staying in treatment, taking medications as prescribed, eating good food, getting rest, and supporting each other. The group should discuss issues around disclosure to sex partners, as well as telling family and friends about their HIV-status.

It should be noted that this is not a core element, but would be something “extra” for a project to have. It was not part of the MP when the program was tested for its effectiveness in reducing unprotected anal sex. It also may be very challenging to set up and maintain this group. Some projects have successfully held this kind of group, whereas other projects have a more difficult time and this may be because of HIV-stigma in the community. We believe that trying to host this group more than once a month is too frequent for most men to want to attend.

Where and when the group is held needs to be carefully considered. The group may need to be held at a time when few or no other men are at the project space in order to preserve confidentiality. Even as it is, a group just for HIV-positives, it may be difficult to get men to show up for it because of their discomfort that others (albeit, HIV-positive men) will now know that they have HIV. In addition, the group may need to be held in other locations than the project space (e.g., in a church basement) because of men’s fears that others will see them. A safe space away from the project may be required.
Guiding Principles

Guiding principles serve as the foundation and are key to the intervention, and were initially developed for the MP from research literature on community and behavior change, and from formative research including focus groups and individual interviews. The guiding principles inform and guide all aspects associated with the implementation of the model. The guiding principles should be infused into MP throughout all the core elements and operationalized in as many ways as possible.

Social Focus

Since HIV prevention is not very salient to YBMSM they are not drawn to HIV prevention programs. Therefore, a successful HIV prevention intervention for YBMSM needs to relate HIV risk reduction to the satisfaction of other more compelling needs, such as the development of social networks, enjoyment of social interactions, and enhancement of self-esteem. It can be challenging to incorporate this guiding principle into the program because there is often the desire to add a focus on other issues, which leads us to want to have many meetings/forums that focus on an array of topics. But at least one of the CBOs visited indicated that when they had forums on more serious issues, young men did not attend (but, it is possible that the events might not have been conducted effectively). What seems clear is that the primary motivation for YBMSM to come to the project and be involved in it will continue to be social concerns, and in all likelihood, in having fun together. We should not lose sight of this in our desire to focus on other issues, most of which are not “fun.”

An implication of this may be that to incorporate a focus on some of the issues we want to address here requires that exercises/activities should be relatively brief additions to social events (e.g., Sunday afternoon gatherings, in which the primary focus is social, but an hour is spent on something deeper). Or there could be a mixture: some deeper conversations/forums on important issues, and other times primarily social in flavor, while briefly tackling some other, deeper issues.
It is important to stay open, however, to the possibility that men will enjoy activities that involve thoughtful analysis – though the amount of time spent on exercises should be monitored carefully for its impact on the participants (i.e., do they leave early, does it dissuade men from coming to the project).

Community-building
A primary goal of the program is to create healthy friendship and supportive social support networks. Many YBMSM report significant isolation and a lack of support for being gay and yearn for a sense of connection and belonging with similar others. U-BE creates settings where YBMSM can express their identities, form positive linkages with similar others, draw support and band together to take action on issues of importance to them. Community building must occur across different subgroups of men, as well as within subgroups. Building a young gay men’s community can be related to the Kwanzaa principle of *Umoja*, or unity, that African American men should strive for unity in the community.

Peer-based
The intervention attempts to mobilize men to support and encourage their peers about having safer sex. The project relies on peers as change agents because they exert tremendous influence at this stage of life. Peers are among the most credible and influential sources of information.

Empowerment Philosophy
The project is designed to serve an empowering function within the YBMSM community. When individuals are actively involved in finding and implementing solutions to their problems, their behavior change is more lasting. Providing a mechanism for designing and running the intervention activities fosters a sense of personal commitment to and ownership of the prevention activities. Building skills is necessary, both for the Coordinators as well as for Core Group members and other volunteers. Every opportunity to build skills should be utilized, including development of computer skills so that men can create their own safer sex materials, learning how to think through finding speakers on particular topics of interest to young men, organizing social events, and infusing safer sex and testing messages into them, and so forth.

It is particularly important to work on empowerment issues with YBMSM. Especially among young men from lower income backgrounds, many do not have a strong sense of “agency” to control their lives. Many have encountered considerable challenges in their lives, and have had relatively few opportunities to feel that they have the ability to take charge of their lives, to be able to set goals and follow through on doing the activities needed to reach those goals. Having opportunities to do so in this program will give them a greater sense that they have the capability of directing their own lives.

Consider having more educated men (depending upon the age of the target group, perhaps college-educated men) help out with this. It may be helpful to pair young men who have skills with men who do not have these skills. As a consequence, it would be important to recruit to the Core Group men who have skills, as well as men who have fewer relevant skills. So we always need to focus on facilitating the empowerment of the Core Group men.

Diffusion of Innovations
U-BE’s design draws from Diffusion of Innovation theory, which posits that members of a social system are most likely to adopt a new behavioral practice (i.e., safer sex, testing every 6 months)
based on favorable evaluations of the innovation conveyed to them by similar, respected others. The U-BE thus seeks to develop a process by which YBMSM actively communicate with each other about and encourage each other to practice safer sex so that safer sex becomes the mutually accepted norm.

This guiding principle is particularly important for YBMSM since considerable evidence is mounting that indicates that they are vulnerable to HIV infection because of the high prevalence of HIV within their social and sexual networks. Each episode of unprotected sex puts YBMSM at higher risk than other young MSM because of the considerable prevalence of HIV in the young black MSM community. Hence, spreading safer sex and testing messages throughout social networks is a very important strategy for YBMSM.

**Gay, Sex, and Black Positive**

U-BE attempts to enrich and strengthen YBMSM’s pride in being gay/bisexual/same gender loving and nurture their exploration and celebration of their sexuality, focusing not just on condom use but including the variety of sexual activities that are safe. The intervention should also strengthen YBMSM’s pride in being Black and being gay/having same sex attraction. This means supporting Black love, Black gay love and pride in being part of Black gay community. Men who are more out may want to address homophobia, whereas men who are more closeted, may feel uncomfortable doing so. Men who are completely closeted and do not have an identity related to their sexual activities with men may feel completely uncomfortable addressing homophobia, because they may have internalized it to a large extent (and it is unclear how many of these men will participate in the project anyway, though hopefully they will be reached through informal outreach). The most out men may want to confront homophobia from their families and society, as well as internally felt, by reading and discussing books such as Keith Boykin’s books, read poetry, write poems, write music and so forth. For men who are more closeted, these activities may not appeal at all. Some projects may want to have some discussions about being on the “DL.” It also could be of interest to have discussion group session or a panel discussion on this issue, or a speaker who used to be a “DL man” and who then came out and is now more of a “Noah’s Arc man.”

The issue of positive sexuality is likely tied to the issues of sexual identity, and self-acceptance as a man who is attracted to and has sex with other men. Projects should strive to increase views that sex can be both pleasurable and safe. But to the extent that men have internalized messages from the church that sexuality is “dirty” and shameful, and is only acceptable within monogamous heterosexual relationships (and preferably for procreative purposes), this may be a challenge. Men who are more out may be more able to receive and promote messages about sex with men being
healthy, pleasurable, and natural, while also being safe. This can be achieved through informal outreach and in the development of promotional materials regarding safer sex. We need to strive to reach all groups of YBMSM with these messages.

**New Guiding Principle: Cultural Competency and Culturally Affirming**

The Project Coordinators as well as the organizations running MP need to be culturally competent about African American issues in order to effectively implement the intervention with YBMSM. While cultural competency is an important implicit issue for any MP to be relevant and accepted by a particular population of MSM, the implementation of different MPs targeting YBMSM has focused on making the intervention not only gay and sex positive but also Black positive and culturally relevant for YBMSM. Those projects have integrated into their activities and themes issues and values relevant to African American culture, such as the importance of the family that YBMSM will identify with and will promote community building and acceptability of the project. Cultural competence includes taking into account that there is not one Black community but considerable diversity among African Americans. Thus, making the intervention culturally relevant includes considering diversity among YBMSM, such as socioeconomic backgrounds, education, and ages of the participants, in order to implement and deliver an appropriate intervention and messages that will be appealing to many different men. For example, the way sexually related messages are approached and delivered likely differ for Black teenagers and men in their late twenties.

Thus, successful implementation of U-BE calls for implementing agencies that are culturally competent regarding YBMSM. While a CBO could already serve the Black community, it is important that the agency understands the needs of YBMSM as well as the rationale for MP and what will be required to implement it. Agency buy-in is essential. If that is not the case, lack of understanding and clarity could ensue when the MP Coordinators are not allowed to follow the MP guiding principles and core elements because they do not coincide with the strategic planning or even the philosophy of the organization.

Because the project will be run by and for Black men, they are likely to bring a certain level of cultural competency and affirmation from the start. In addition, every opportunity there is to have the project emphasize cultural affirmation should be used. Both the content and the presentation approaches need to be culturally affirming. If the project staff, including supervisor, are not well versed in African American culture, then learning this area is extremely important.
Core Elements

Core elements are the essential components that need to be in place to work synergistically for MP to be effective. The next section describes each of the U-BE core elements and issues to consider when implementing it with YBMSM.

COORDINATORS — The Paid Staff Who Run the Project

**Need for skills-building to conduct the intervention.** It is necessary to find Coordinators who represent diverse parts of the YBMSM community. This may mean that some of the Coordinators will have less education than traditionally expected. In particular, some program Coordinators may not possess group facilitation skills, may not know sufficient information about HIV/AIDS 101 and HIV/STI prevention training, and may need help with computer skills.

*Provide additional training on facilitation skills.* In most communities, an expert facilitation skills trainer can be brought in to teach the Coordinators how to facilitate meetings effectively. There are also various groups funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who can provide such training (called “capacity building”). There are also nonprofit organizations in many cities that help other nonprofits in such skills building. This should be done early on so that there are norms established for running meetings from the outset. This may need to be repeated over time.

*Provide additional HIV/AIDS 101 training.* It is critical that all Coordinators for a project are fully trained in HIV/AIDS 101, in order to be clear about the state of the field regarding HIV prevention, recommendations for frequency of HIV testing, how to get access to treatment, the importance of taking medications as prescribed and so forth.

*Provide additional computer training.* The Coordinators need to be competent with a variety of software programs, including word, excel, graphic arts programs, and the use of the Internet. If they are not sufficiently familiar with these, the implementing agency can arrange to teach them
themselves, can arrange for them to take local tutorials on them, or use Lynda.com, which is an online service using tutorials. The Coordinators need to become sufficiently competent in them that they can teach others as well, and if this is not the case, it may be necessary to bring in tutors for the Coordinators as well as for the Core Group.

*Provide training on government roles and responsibilities.* It is helpful for Coordinators to know about city, county, and state elected officials’ roles and responsibilities and as well as the roles and structure of city, county and state offices and government, including state and city or county health departments. This will help Coordinators know how to access them in time of need, for example, what city officials to contact when trying to organize block parties, events in city parks, and so forth. With respect to health departments, it is helpful for the Coordinators to know about what these agencies do with respect to HIV prevention and treatment so that they can make referrals to them, learn about their HIV/AIDS funding priorities, and easily collaborate with them on such issues as HIV testing. For more information about Coordinators, see *Module 4: Coordinators* in the Mpowerment Project Manual.

**Supporting participants who have needs beyond a community-level intervention.** Based on formative research and discussion with CBO staff, it has become clear that many participants come to projects with a wide range of life challenges and are likely to need support in various areas (e.g., with job training, temporary housing, mental health counseling). Many projects are situated within agencies experienced in providing a range of services, and some of the projects have in-house counselors, life coaches, or prevention case managers. But not all do. So here are some ideas about what to do.

*Be able to provide community referrals.* Projects will need to refer participants to other parts of their own agency, or to other community agencies (possibly including churches that will accept them as young, Black gay men), so Coordinators will need to be familiar with resources available to project participants, and be willing and able to provide these referrals. Thus it is important to find out about all the different potential organizations that provide services (e.g., where YBMSM can receive mental health counseling, financial assistance, housing assistance). Ways need to be set up to promote accessing these services, given that an abundance of research indicates the reluctance of African American men to seek services even when in need. During training and orientation, Coordinators should visit other agencies to learn about their services and to assess their ability to provide appropriate and non-judgmental services to project participants. If a project has a Community Advisory Board, its members may also be able to provide referral sources for various types of services. Perhaps the Coordinators could sponsor an open-house for community providers to visit the Project Space and learn more about the Project.

*Have community agencies come to the project and make presentations about their services, or help sponsor some activities.* Some community agencies are willing to come to projects and provide services there. For example, there may be agencies (or individuals) that will come to the project and provide computer skills-building, information about getting into local colleges, how to write resumes, how to apply for and keep jobs, and so forth. U-BE in Dallas worked in collaboration with DFW Pride, one of the national Black pride organizations, to provide trainings on how to apply for jobs, resume building, appropriate attire for work and applying for jobs, attitudes to have on the job, and so forth. It was a four-week workshop, and graduates were recognized at a local awards ceremony. After a break for a few months, the workshop was conducted again for new young men wanting to gain these skills. The workshops were all held at the project space.
CORE GROUP (CG) – The Decision-Making Body of YBMSM

Skills building with CG. The CG is comprised of volunteers and the Coordinators, and serves as the decision-making body of the project. Some CG members may come from backgrounds in which they have not had sufficient education or experience necessary to have the skills to design publicity materials and safer sex and testing promotional materials and to facilitate groups, which are important when they help to lead meetings. They may need additional HIV and STI prevention information, beyond the U-BE Connected (the small group core element), so that they can design appropriate materials and outreach events that focus on these; and skills about how to run groups. They may also need direction about appropriate behavior at meetings (e.g., being respectful at meetings).

Create formal opportunities for CG members to develop skills and specialized knowledge. Sponsor computer and/or graphic design trainings for CG members so they can assist the Coordinators with the design of publicity materials and other tasks. Involve CG members in facilitation skills training to cultivate new leaders for the program. Perhaps conduct HIV 101 trainings to further educate CG members about HIV—especially focusing on HIV among BMSM and YBMSM. Discuss what behaviors are most conducive for well-functioning groups, and so that they are good role models for other young men.

Develop stable CG in which CG members learn leadership roles. It is important to organize and build a strong CG, including men from diverse parts of the community, since this will help to bring diversity of participants to the project, which will then help with diffusing HIV prevention messages throughout diverse social networks. The CG functions best when men are familiar with the goals and methods of the intervention; are willing and able to analyze the project’s functioning in an ongoing way so that they can make adjustments, such as creating new activities to attract men to the project and determining new ways to address HIV prevention; and are responsible and able to carry out activities. Hence, the initial part of the program requires accepting anyone who is willing to be part of the CG. But as the project continues, it important to begin building a CG that takes on greater responsibility—without excluding newcomers or making the CG into a clique.

Start with an “all folks can serve on the CG” approach, and consider moving towards a “tiered” approach over time. Start the CG by simply recruiting men who are popular and influential, are from different parts of the community, and are interested in participating in it. As time goes by, but early in the project, continue to include in the CG anyone who wants to be a part of it even if they are brand new to the project. Importantly, however, attempt to get all CG participants to attend a U-BE Connected (the small group component of U-BE, which is similar to the M-groups in MP).

As the CG becomes more invested and trained, then some organizations have found it helpful to move towards having only men who are familiar with U-BE’s mission and methods to be voting members. It can be very disruptive and frustrating for CG members who thoroughly understand the
project and have been very involved in running it to have newcomers who do not understand the project make decisions about it. The point is not to exclude anyone or to create the CG to be a clique, but rather, to have the best decision-making about the project’s activities and directions, which is made by men who understand the project.

Therefore, after CG has been established for some time, projects may consider if it would be helpful to use a tiered approach. That is, after the CG has become well established, trained, and experienced in the implementation of U-BE, consider if there are some experiences and knowledge about the project that men should have in order to join the CG or be voting members of the CG. It is also important not to make it difficult to join the CG, since there is always the need to have different segments of the community represented on the CG and CG members cycle in and out. Therefore, it may be helpful for CG to include only those men who have made a significant commitment to the program, have attended a U-BE Connected (small group component) and have received training and experience in various issues (described previously), and bring new YBMSM to the project.

**Promoting sexual safety and HIV testing with the CG.** It is important to recognize that the CG members themselves may be risky in their own sexual risk behavior and may not get tested sufficiently often. Sometimes it is assumed that the CG is “just fine”, and do not need to address their owns risks. But this is not the case. It is also not the case the Coordinators are always safe in their sexual practices or get HIV testing frequently.

*Conduct HIV prevention activities/exercises with CG members and encourage them to get tested regularly themselves.* Periodically conduct some of the supplemental formal outreach activities listed below with the CG members to address their own HIV risk and testing behavior instead of solely using them for other project participants. Since they will be role models for other men, it is important that as role models, they are being safer themselves.

*Conduct exercises to increase informal outreach among CG members and from CG to other peers.* Since the CG will be role models for others, not only does their encouragement of others help to spread the message about HIV prevention and testing, but it also serves as a role model about doing informal outreach. Therefore with the CG, periodically conduct formal outreach activities described below. If men are doing it themselves within the Core Group, this gives them more impetus for others to do so as well. For more information about CG, see Module 5: Core Group in the Mpowerment Project manual.

**PROJECT SPACE —**
**The YBMSM Community Center**

Having a good space for the project is very important for the success of the project. It is where most project activities should be held, serve as a drop-in center for men, and be the central locale for community building and promotion of safer sex and frequent HIV testing.

**Supporting HIV prevention, including risk reduction and regular and frequent HIV testing.** It is critical that the space be used to focus on HIV prevention issues. The goal is to affirm the connection between pride in being Black and gay, and addressing HIV prevention. Don’t turn the space into a sole focus on HIV prevention or it will be off putting for men attending the space.

*There should be an abundance of condoms and lubricants around the space.* Condoms and lubes of various types should be in every room of the space, including the bathroom, where men can pick them up without feeling worried that others might judge them. The type of condoms should be ones that YBMSM especially like. There are some types of condoms that many men do not like, and
these should be avoided. New condoms that come out can be especially attractive to men. But also, condom manufacturers market specific condoms to YBMSM and these can be used as well. Although health departments sometimes feel that it is unnecessary to have specific types of condoms, the focus should be on providing the kinds of condoms that young men want and will use. Condoms can be placed in bowls, or in other attractive containers. Various lubricants should also be distributed, and are important since they can reduce the likelihood that condoms will break, as well as helping them feel more comfortable.

Sometimes projects are concerned that men are taking “too many” condoms, but this concern is misplaced. They are highly unlikely to be used for something other than sex, and if they are distributing to their friends, that is great!

Provide HIV testing. Offer HIV testing in the space on a regular basis (once/week or more frequently). Because of the on-going stigma of HIV-positive men and the ever-pervasive gossip in the YBMSM community, provide testing during low attendance/non-peak periods, or when the space is closed for other purposes. You don’t want to create a situation where a young man finds out that he is HIV-positive and has to walk out into a roomful of men who are watching him for signs that he might have just received bad news.

Provide referrals to community services, including HIV testing, in several places in project space. It is helpful to have written materials available, such as pamphlets, that give referrals to culturally sensitive locations to obtain HIV testing, but also for other services, such as for emergency housing, employment, where to obtain GEDs, for mental health services/support, and so forth. Since many YBMSM may feel stigmatized if they take pamphlets on these, also have the information hung up in the bathroom, included on public computer terminals’ lists of bookmarks, and on the project’s website, if we have one, so that men can obtain the information on referrals in privacy.

Specifically address risk reduction among HIV-positive and HIV-negative men. As stated before, the messages about risk reduction should not be stated as “protect yourself from HIV” since we are also trying to address men who already have HIV. Therefore, you can have posters hung up that discuss “protecting yourself, protecting your brothers, protecting your community.” But also, it maybe helpful to have some messages that specifically focus on prevention with positives (PwP). Such messages should not be shame inducing, as is consistent with all the MP’s messaging.

The project space must be in a suitable location. There are a number of different issues to consider in finding a space. Please be sure to look at the MP manual for information and ideas about this. But in addition, there are other considerations in choosing a space for YBMSM.

The project space should be in an area where YBMSM are unlikely to be harassed when they are there. That is, the space should be in a locale where people will not be overly concerned that young Black men are congregating somewhere. One project had a space that was located in a white neighborhood, and the locals continually called the police when there were “too many” young Black men attending events.

The project should not be located in heart of the Black community. Many young men do not want to be seen at an HIV prevention project for YBMSM, and if they are seen going into such a space they might be seen by others in their community. There is simply too much chance of gossip, and as noted before, not all men attending U-BE are out to their families. In Dallas, for example, U-BE is in a historically Black neighborhood, but which has transitioned to be an artsy, alternative area where there are many nightclubs. The benefits of this is that it is not a deserted area at night, when activities are held, which could make the young men leaving activities more vulnerable to bashing, and that gatherings of YBMSM are not “strange” in the neighborhood.
The project space should also not be in a gay neighborhood. That kind of place can be racist since such locales usually cater mostly to white gay men, some of whom can be quite negative towards black men, or eroticize Black men (while not wanting Black men as boyfriends). Additionally, many young men do not want to go to an overtly “gay” area. In addition, such a locale can draw the attention of straight men who want to harm gay men of any race. Hence, young men may be at increased risk for being gay-bashed if the project is in such a location.

It is also very important to consider how young men can access the place. In many locales, many YBMSM do not have cars, and instead rely on mass transportation. Therefore, the project space should also be where mass transit is most likely to be available for those men who do not have access to cars.

The project space must look and feel culturally affirming. There are many different ways to make the project space feel comfortable for YBMSM. There are ways that the project can also help young men to develop more pride in themselves and in YBMSM in general.

The space should be decorated with up-lifting messages about being Black and gay. Visuals should be used of Black gay men together. Young men must feel like the project is a sense of home for them. The project should welcome them in and let them know that they are not alone. Every image, poster, message that is hung up in space should be scrutinized for the underlying message it conveys, and it should be culturally affirming, supportive of Black gay (or possibly bisexual as well) images. Visuals of men loving and/or socializing with other men are very helpful, as are depictions of groups of YBMSM together. In addition, of course, there should be posters that are supportive of safer sex and frequent and regular testing.

Post visuals of black gay leaders, such as activists, artists, and writers. The project can have a monthly series, in which pictures and biographies of Black gay leaders are posted. Put up quotes or posters or other visuals that all have a “Did you know” tag line: “Did you know that this painting was created by a Black Gay Artist?” “Did you know that this rapper is a Black gay man?” “Did you know that this book’s author is a Black gay man?” Little “factoids” in the Did You Know series could be posted in “quiet” places in the house. A series of “Did You Know” cards each highlighting a different Black gay leader can be produced and distributed in the space. There could also be text messages about the series.

Display photos of the Core Group. To promote the importance of the CG and to provide healthy, positive role models, it can be wonderful to have photos of the CG displayed prominently. It makes it clear that the program is run by the CG (including the Coordinators), and because all of the CG members will be African American men, it will help to give the program a culturally affirming feel. Having photos of the CG men looking friendly (versus stern, serious) will increase the feeling of the project being welcoming.

Display photos of YBMSM that are not just sexual. This goes back to the “whole man” concept. Yes, of course, YBMSM are having sex with each other, but we also want to promote that young men can love each other in other ways than just sexually. There is beautiful photography depicting men
embracing each other, for example, which could be used in the space. These can also reinforce the idea that YBMSM are beautiful and worth supporting to avoid HIV transmission, and one should care about the community as a whole.

**Making the project space into a “safe place.”** The project space is, in most places where U-BE or MP are implemented, is the only place that young men can congregate other than at bars or clubs, or occasionally coffee shops or pizza parlors that might be in a gay area. Having a safe space for YBMSM is urgently needed, a place where young men can just be themselves. The space may also attract Black transgender women, which is fine, as well as youth who are still exploring who they are. In any case, young people should be accepted as they present themselves, whether their presentation changes over time or even every day.

*Men should be greeted when they come to the space.* We have often heard from different projects that when YBMSM enter the space for the first time, if they are not greeted and made to feel welcome, they often do not return. It can be a bit “scary” to enter into a project space for the first time. If there are men there who are not welcoming or appear to be a clique, this can be a real turnoff for new men coming to the project. They can feel awkward and uncomfortable. Therefore, it is important that every new man entering the space be approached by a Coordinator or a CG member and welcomed, introduced to others, and shown around the space.

*HIV-positive men must feel safe when they are in the space.* Given the high prevalence of HIV within the YBMSM community, there will be many young HIV-positive men there. But sadly, YBMSM who are HIV-positive are often discriminated against, or stigmatized, by other men. HIV-positive men can feel badly when they hear other men make negative comments about HIV-positive men, which makes it difficult for them to tell others about their HIV status, which means that they are denied the support that they might need in order to enter into and stay in treatment and take their medications as prescribed by their health care providers. Therefore, the space must be supportive of all YBMSM, including young brothers who are HIV-positive.

There are several ways to deal with this. The Coordinators and the CG members must be reminded of these issues. Discussions must be held with the CG about the importance of the project in being supportive of positive young men. Posters might be put on the walls featuring or supporting men of different HIV-statuses. Both Coordinators and CG members should be encouraged to talk to others about accepting HIV-positive men and not making negative statements about them. Informal outreach, texting, and tweeting can focus on acceptance of HIV-positive men.

*Establish and maintain ground rules for appropriate behavior in the space.* Ground rules should be posted in the space (See Module 6: Project Space in the Mpowerment Project manual. Also see Figure 1: Setting up the Space and the Tone in the Appendix to this document), and reviewed at every meeting. These can, of course, be restated in terms that YBMSM would find most meaningful. Include in the ground rules the specification that the space is a safe and welcoming environment for both HIV-positive and HIV-negative men; that confidentiality needs to be followed; and that men should use “I statements”, which means that they speak from their own views and
experiencing without imposing them on others. Very importantly, the rules also include respect for diverse opinions and life experiences.

Make sure that ground rules are consistently enforced from the very beginning of the project, whether at meetings or just at times when young men are hanging out at the space. Consider having all newcomers read through the ground rules and sign a paper indicating that they have read and understand the rules of the house (especially, “What is said in the house stays in the house”).

There is tremendous concern about gossip, and therefore about disclosing personal information within group settings that will then be spread around the community. When the project is “messy”, that reputation gets around the community and serves as a disincentive for young men to come to the project. There is also tremendous concern about judgment, that is, of young men being terribly judgmental about each other. Referring back to the ground rules is helpful, as is discussing how this hurts and alienates many men, causing them not to want to return to the project. One of the Coordinators’ jobs is to monitor this in the space, and talking with young men who are gossiping, spreading others’ business, and being judgmental. We have heard many a case that people in the community hear about these occurring, and then deciding never to attend the project.

Increasing participants’ analysis of why YBMSM are vulnerable to HIV. One of U-BE’s objectives is to stimulate young men to think more deeply about why they do various behaviors, or get themselves into challenging circumstances where it is difficult for them to follow the intentions they have (i.e., being safe). Using the space in a way that “gets men thinking” is helpful. There are many possible ways to do this, but it is especially important to use “interactive methods.” What this means is that having young men write something on a wall (think about the issue) is likely more effective than simply having statements around (which would be more passive). Here are two ideas about this. The third method listed below is not interactive, but may spur men to think about being gay.

Create a Private Confessional Wall. Paint a wall in the space or hang up a large dry erase board in a private place – the bathroom can be a great place – where questions are posed to the reader and he can then respond back in privacy. For example, the wall can be used as a “confessional” – where men can write about what they’ve done that they feel concerned about. Or a question can be posed such as, “Why do young Black men throw attitude at each other?” or “Why do you like masculine men or feminine men?” Men can see others’ responses, think about them, and write their own responses.

Create Response Posters. Hang up a large blank piece of paper or large dry erase board in the open space in the project space, and write up provocative statements for men to respond to. Being out in the public space can result in men discussing the responses. For example, one issue to address pertains to “whole man” issues, posing the question: “What does it mean to be a Black gay man?” This will hopefully stimulate thoughts about cultural responses to this issue – that to be an adult man means that you are responsible for yourself, for taking care of “your business,” and that you take care of your family. Often YBMSM are uncertain that they “qualify” as adult men since it is often inferred that to be a Black man you have to be heterosexual, have children, be masculine – assumptions the project wants to challenge. You can be an adult man, be gay or bisexual, and still be a responsible man who takes care of himself.

At U-BE, we have also posted photos of YBMSM together in various ways, with a sheet next to the poster asking, “what does this mean to you?” Again, activities such as this can cause men to analyze issues about themselves and their community.

Another provocative statement that could be listed could promote thinking about conducting informal outreach. The statement could read, “Am I My Brother’s Keeper? If yes, how? If not, why not?” If responses do not come out mentioning informal outreach, then Core Group members
The manual for U-BE Connected can be found on the Mpowerment.org website. Look for the “Adapting Mpowerment” link.

Be thoughtful about what films to play at the space, whether at Movie Nights or simply at the space for whomever might be there in the afternoon. We once visited a project that was running an old film that depicted Black men and women as sex workers and drug users. There was no plan to challenge these stereotypes shown in the film, nor to discuss it in anyway. This is not helpful. Films need not solely focus on gay/SGL men, but can also be about issues facing black men. Any number of Spike Lee films, for example, would be relevant since most analyze issues about being Black in America. Try to find films that have messages of relevance to the project and men the project reaches.

U-BE Connected – One-time Small Group

U-BE Connected introduces the project as a whole, focuses on personal risk behavior, and strives to motivate men and teaches them how to conduct informal outreach with their peers through their social networks. U-BE Connected focuses on issues that have been revealed in prior research to be the most immediate reasons for risky behavior, including dispelling misconceptions about what is safe and unsafe, poor sexual communication skills, hooking up with partners met on the Internet, low condom-use skills, challenging boyfriend issues, and so forth. It is based on MP’s M-groups (See Module 9: M-groups in the Mpowerment Project manual), but has been substantially adapted.

The research team was aware that there are potentially numerous other issues to address as well, but to do so would require that it need to become a multi-session group to address more issues or to examine issues more deeply. It was felt that turning it into a multi-session group would require considerable time and effort to ensure that men came to the additional sessions, and thus would take considerable time and effort on the part of a Coordinator to keep reminding men to attend the groups. A few exercises and issues have been added, which results in slightly lengthening the group.

The manual for U-BE Connected can be found on the Mpowerment.org website. Look for the “Adapting Mpowerment” link.

The manual is NOT meant to read aloud, it is a guidebook. The exact language to use in facilitating
the group should be developed by Coordinators, and perhaps a volunteer team. If it is read just like it is in the manual, it will sound very strange and stilted. Hence, feel free to rephrase it into local lingo, while being careful to make the same points and follow the same format.

U-BE Connected starts with reading an affirming poem. We reprint it here because we like it so much. One of the coordinators should read a poem that affirms Black MSM. The poem should be read slowly and purposefully, before introductions, in order to set the tone for the group. The participants should be provided a copy of the poem on an attractive paper to bring home.

**Brothers Loving Brothers**

> Respect yourself, my brother,  
> for we are so many wondrous things.  
> Like a Black rose,  
> you are a rarity to be found.  
> Our leaves intertwine as I reach out to you after the release of a gentle rain.  
> Your precious gem,  
> Black pearl that warms the heart,  
> symbol of ageless wisdom,  
> I derive strength from the touch of your hand.  
> Our lives blend together like rays of light;  
> we are men of color, adorned in shades of tan, red, beige, black, and brown.  
> Brothers born from the same earth womb.  
> Brothers reaching for the same star.  
> Love me as your equal.  
> Love me, brother to brother.  

-- Lloyd Vega

**Formal Outreach**

Formal Outreach has several components, including:

- Social outreach events
- Venue-based outreach
- Development of written materials promoting safer sex and frequent and regular HIV testing

**Social outreach events.** There are several goals of social outreach events. First, they are designed to attract YBMSM to the project. Second, once the young men are at an event, various issues relating to having safer sex and increasing HIV testing can be addressed. Social outreach
events are a part of the project because YBMSM are more likely to attend these than HIV-focused prevention activities. Activities are social in nature (versus focusing explicitly on sexual risk reduction, HIV testing, or STIs) because social events attract young men to them – which is one of the intervention’s guiding principles. Third, social outreach events are also used as a way of building a sense of community: they bring young men together so that they have a sense of camaraderie, while also shaping the community to be men who support each other about being safe sexually and getting tested frequently and regularly. Fourth, and very importantly, all social outreach events are also used as a way of attracting men to the project so that we can get the names and contact information of new men in order to recruit them to attend U-BE Connected and volunteer with the project. Fifth, the phone numbers that are obtained can be used so that the men can be texted with various HIV prevention messages, as well as receive publicity for upcoming events. Therefore, there should be a team of volunteers who collect contact information from all men attending events. At the same time, the team can greet newcomers to the project.

Use MP manual for ideas about events to use for U-BE in addition to this document. Only events that are specifically aimed at YBMSM are discussed here. But U-BE also hosts various events that can be used for any population of young MSM, and such ideas are in the MP manual. For example, U-BE also has Pool Parties, Outings to the State Fair, Bowling Parties, Halloween Parties, and Holiday Parties, and most MPs have:

- Weekly discussion groups that focus on whatever topics men want to discuss
- Weekly sporting event (e.g., basketball)
- Large dance parties
- Community Forums that focus on issues of importance to young men – either large ones held at a separate venue or small ones that are conducted in the project space

Therefore, it is important to read about all of these in the MP manual. In addition, the manual has important information about how to plan events.

Issues to address in social outreach events (and in outreach materials). An enormous variety of issues can be addressed, including those listed below. Even though these issues should be addressed, it is important to recognize that most often they can only be addressed using relatively short, interactive activities (rather than stopping activities and having talks), or else young men will stop attending.

- Having safer sex regardless of your HIV status
- Getting HIV testing frequently, knowing your current serostatus, and why it is important to know your HIV status
- Getting STI (sexually transmitted infection) testing
- Developing pride in being gay and Black (dual identity; self-acceptance)
- Developing pride in being Black
- Addressing issues about being a whole man
- Addressing how faith and religious values and beliefs relate to being gay/SGL, being safe sexually, and stigmatization (discrimination) of people with HIV/AIDS
- Clarifying what are safe/unsafe sexual behaviors
- Understanding sero-sorting and sero-positioning
- Striving to move up by socioeconomically by getting more education, getting better jobs, knowing how to apply for a keep jobs, etc.
• Developing leadership skills
• Addressing masculinity and femininity issues and how these relate to sexual risk
• Understanding boyfriend issues, including gaining a shared understanding of the meaning of monogamy, and what to do if relationships agreements about sex are broken

We first discuss here what types of events can be held that will likely attract YBMSM. We then describe ideas about how to address HIV prevention at the social outreach events.

Weekly social outreach events. The project can host regular social gatherings late afternoons or evenings during the week or weekend. The main focus of these events—such as TV nights, movie nights, card nights, sports activities, and discussion groups—is to draw men to the project. Once there, they can be recruited into other activities over time. Having them regularly helps because men then know that this event will occur a particular time of the week and can plan their own schedule accordingly. Hence, monthly calendars that are developed and promoted through Venue-based Outreach or at the project’s Facebook page can list them.

Thus, what will be promoted will be the social nature of the activities, but in fact, nearly every gathering should include something that relates to HIV prevention. Some ideas for activities follow. A short HIV prevention activity can be done following, during or after these activities, and we have proposed some in this document. These activities can touch on a huge variety of issues (listed previously), always bringing the discussions and/or activities back to HIV prevention in some manner. Some events will directly focus on these issues, but often the issues will be woven into the event (even if that isn’t the main point of the event). It should be noted that HIV prevention at large activities should be greatly expanded at large social outreach events, but are not covered here. Please see the MP manual for ideas for larger events.

At the bare minimum, as smaller or mid-sized events attract men to the project, their names and contact information should be collected for recruitment into other activities such as U-BE Connected, CG, and volunteer opportunities, as well as for texting them.

Weekly discussion groups. Every project that we have observed has hosted weekly discussion groups, with various names. For example, in U-BE in Dallas, the group started off being called “Coffee and Convo”, and later began being called, “Hot Topics.” These topics can cover a wide range of topics, such as “Finding Your Man”, “Online Relationships”, “Making Relationships Work”, “Monogamy”, “What Makes a Man Attractive”, “Pros and Cons of Dating non-African American Men”, “Coming Out to Your Family,” “Who I am as a Gay/SGL Man,” “Ins and Outs of Balls”, etc. The Coordinators can come up with ideas, or CG members, or both. Both Coordinators and CG members can facilitate these meetings, once both receive some training on developing questions to ask, considering where you want the conversation to go (or at least end up), what issues you desire are considered, and how to weave some aspect of HIV prevention into the discussion.

What will be promoted will be the social nature of the activities, but in fact, nearly every gathering should include something that relates to HIV prevention.
**Weekly TV or Movie Night.** There may be a popular TV show that young men enjoy watching together, or reruns of earlier shows. For example, watching Noah’s Arc weekly (available on DVD) could be a part of a social event series. There are many issues that come up over time in the TV series that are relevant to the issues being addressed in the project, but can’t be shown as a short clip because the story line about the issue goes over several shows. But if shown as a part of a weekly event in itself, then they could be analyzed over time. TV programs that don’t get into HIV-related issues can be watched as well, and then some activity about sexual risk reduction (or any number of issues) can be done subsequently.

It can be helpful to watch positive movies about African Americans, and Black gay men in particular, to help increase self-esteem and fight internalized homophobia. Depending upon the movie, a facilitated discussion about the movie afterwards can be held, including analyzing how it relates to U-BE’s goals. Films can also be shown that pose challenging questions for viewers.

A list of classic movies (pre-2000) can be obtained from www.blackclassicmovies.com. Other movies can be added to this list, such as Spike Lee’s films, Tuskegee Airmen, and specific gay-themed/related movies, such as Looking for Langston, Brother Outsider, Tongues Untied, and James Baldwin’s The Price of the Ticket. For a more comprehensive list of gay themed movies as well as films that deal with culture and HIV/AIDS, look at the following sites:

http://cart.frameline.org/SearchResults.asp?Cat=23
http://newsreel.org/
http://www.blackpublicmedia.org/
http://whyusmovie.com/

Other noteworthy films include:

- Boyz N’The Hood (1991)
- Menace II Society (1993)
- Remember the Titans (2000)
- Juice (1992)
- Lean on Me (1989)
- Malcolm X (1992)
- The Great Debaters (2007)
- Ali (2001)
- Soldier’s Story (1984)
- Cooley High (1975)
- Glory (1989)
- The Skinny (2012)

**Weekly cards or games nights.** Consider hosting a weekly card-playing event that brings a segment or several segments of men together. This may include playing hearts, spades, or bid whist. Watching a short clip on TV, doing a role-play, doing one of the activities described in later will be done as well. The project can also have card tournaments, for example. Games nights can include dominos, monopoly, uno, or x-box game such as Madden and tennis. Having these card or games nights in various areas of large cities can be useful in order to reach young men with transportation difficulties.

**Weekly book club.** Some projects have enjoyed having a weekly book club to read relevant books. We’ve seen these draw men for brief periods of time, but usually no longer than 1 – 2 books and
then they fizzle. Many young men may have low reading skills, and therefore book reading is not very pleasurable. Be careful not to focus exclusively on political books, since not all young men are motivated to be involved with political issues.

**Weekly Sunday afternoon/evening social gatherings.** These can be held late on Sunday afternoons, at a time after men have gone to church and, possibly, spent time with their biological families. This provides them a chance to also spend time with their gay brothers. The gathering often involves a light meal, and a 45 – 60 minute focus on a topic following dinner.

**Occasional social outreach events or one-time events.** There will be occasional gatherings or one-time events that occur at the center, such as the regular social outreach activities. While these kinds of events may not have HIV prevention as their primary focus, it is still possible to include an exercise or activity that addresses safer sex, testing, or other issues that relate to why YBMSM engage in unsafe sex.

**Hip Hop Music Night(s).** These can involve the “deconstruction” of hip hop music to understand and reflect on underlying messages about Black men, Black gay/bisexual men, women, men and women’s roles with each other, attitudes about masculinity, Black pride. Have men bring music that they might want to examine (or have Coordinators identify some), or play music videos, and deconstruct the messages inherent in them. Your group may want to discuss what images are used in the video, or what the lyrics connote about women’s and men’s relationships, perceptions of women (and how this relates to attitudes towards gay men), expressed or inferred homophobia, masculinity images, and images of men in general. Men can discuss what these messages mean to them, how they react to the messages, how they think the messages affect the Black community or the Black, gay community, and of course, how these messages affect them, if they have internalized them, and if they want to accept, reject, or modify them. They can also discuss some hip hop music that is affirming to them or created by LGBT artists (“homo hip hop” or “homo hop”), and/or develop some themselves. They can also discuss hip hop musicians such as Frank Ocean, who openly revealed that his first love interest was a man.

**Project Gospel Choir.** Men who enjoy singing gospel music may join together to have a choir that meets periodically. Having a choir may provide some young men a way of expressing spiritual feelings, but do so in a gay-friendly and supportive environment. It would also be of interest to develop a project choir that regularly gets together and rehearses, or perhaps not so formal an activity and instead, host an occasional “sing along” group.

**Spoken Word Events.** Have evenings or weekend events where men can come and read to each other things they have written on issues related to the project. Perhaps have competitions. Topics to address could include Black gay pride, Black pride, Black heroes, sexuality, dealing with homophobia or racism, etc. It might be that the Core Group would decide to have themes to address in different spoken word events. For example, the theme for one evening could be “Being Black and Gay: Pride and Prejudice.”

**Spirituality Events.** There are a variety of possible activities that could involve analyzing spirituality and/or religion and its connection to being YBMSM, as well as sexual risk behavior. For example, one option would be to work with a local pastor (who is accepting of YBMSM) to come to the project to lead discussions about spirituality, and its place in your life as a Black, gay man. This might be able to help young men resolve messages that they have heard at church that have caused them to avoid going to church, or have caused them to feel uncertain about accepting themselves as gay/bisexual men. Afterwards, a meal often associated with Sundays can be had by attendees (e.g., chicken and waffles).
Another option is to have an entire event held elsewhere such as at a church, run by a gay or gay-accepting pastor in which a sermon discusses the idea of receiving God’s love and acceptance as a gay/SGL man. U-BE has held several of these over the years, which have been entitled, “Sweet Tea in the Spirit.” We have also considered forums on these issues involving pastors from different churches discussing their views on homosexuality. We would advise only inviting pastors who aren’t already at least somewhat accepting of LGBT people. It would not be terribly beneficial to hear yet again about how you are sinning if you have sex with men!

**Mini-balls.** The ball scene is quite popular in many cities. Hosting small balls (rather than large extravaganza events), which are sometimes called “kiki balls”, complete with competitions, may attract young men to the project. Typically men “walk” representing houses. A project might consider developing it own houses, and the competitions might include how safer sex is addressed. Another option is to have a ball, but include one category that relates to HIV prevention. At the same time, we suggest being careful about the ball scene. Compelling as it is, the competition can be quite difficult to cope with, such as when you are summarily dismissed “chopped” with some short, choice, and negative words. If a project develops its own ball, then perhaps the judge’s chopping can be done more sympathetically.

**Jay-setting competitions.** Jay-setting has been popular in various cities for many years, and is a certain kind of coordinated dance style. Again, HIV prevention can be incorporated into these events via competitions, or doing one of the brief activities described below. Jay-setting teams can be encouraged to practice at the space as well. They may be willing to provide entertainment at a large social outreach event.

**Monthly Unity Events.** These are the same as the weekly Sunday events, but held only monthly. This can be easier to hold than the weekly events, since it does not require that Coordinators have to work every Sunday. In U-BE, the monthly events have been called “Unity Events” or “Unity Sunday.”

**Older YBMSM events.** We found in Dallas that there was a separation between the younger men and the older men in the 18-29 year old range. Many of the older men were more sophisticated, and aspired to be more financially secure than the younger men. The older men also sometimes found the younger men to be “louder”, “messy”, and “wilder.” The older men wanted some events for themselves. So U-BE began having, every few months, events that were held at bars or clubs and involved R & B music or jazz.

**Gay families or Houses.** Gay families are commonly found in YBMSM communities, and include gay mothers (who may be transgender women), gay fathers, and gay children. Someone can be a father to several young men, while also having a mother or father himself. The Houses, which center around the ball scene, can have the same family structure. The gay families or Houses can be a group for which small events can be held, and can include discussions about how families/Houses can support each other about sexual safety and frequent HIV testing. Having gay fathers and mothers endorsing the project can be very helpful as the project increases its credibility to young men.
Many young men enjoy watching TV events. You can make a party out of them, with young men (who can afford it) bringing food to a potluck, for example.

Again, these can be social outreach events which can be a draw for young men. Ideas for a Holiday Party can be found in the MP manual. Thanksgiving can be especially important for some young men who are poor and/or homeless, but also a draw for men in rejoicing in their “additional” family. Being able to provide food for a “real” Thanksgiving can be a wonderful treat for them. It can be a bonding experience for men to cook together to create a nice dinner.

**Brief HIV prevention activities that can be incorporated into social outreach events.** The following are activities that can be conducted when men are attending weekly or occasional events. These activities either address safer sex and testing directly, or get into issues that are related to why YBMSM are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

**Analyzing Video Clips.** Any activity that involves men getting together at the space could involve watching short video clips and then analyzing them, before the activity, afterwards, or as an activity in and of itself (e.g., at a Discussion Group, at a Movie or TV Night, at a Card or Games Night, or even at a CG meeting).

1) **The DL Chronicles.** This was a TV series, and can be obtained through NetFlix. Discussion questions for *The DL Chronicles* are below. There are four vignettes in this film, although one is not very relevant.


Questions to ask in a discussion after viewing Robert’s vignette

- How do you feel about gay guys who act “butch” to try to pass? Does it matter if they are in a relationship?
- Does ones self-acceptance depend on acceptance from others, such as family or friends?
- What do you think is meant when family or friends say, “It’s not that I have a problem with gays, it’s the fact that you are.”
- When guys lie about their attraction to men are they trying to protect the people they care about or trying to protect themselves? What can they do to avoid lying?
- What do you think a guy means if he told another guy “I want to be with you but I don’t know how?”
- Can you be attracted to other men and still feel like a real man?
- Does it take being a man to admit who one is and not care who knows it?

Questions to ask in a discussion after viewing Mark’s vignette

- How do we get beyond the fear of losing the respect and love of the people in our lives if we “come out”?
- Is there less stigma (discrimination) toward masculine guys who have sex with men?
- How do we get over the stigma toward effeminate guys?
- Is homophobia different toward men in relationships than that toward men who just have sex but don’t want to be in relationships?
Questions to ask in a discussion after viewing Boo’s vignette

- How can we deal with the rejection and condemnation of the church in the Black community?
- Is promiscuity condoned more for straight men than for gay men in Black culture? And is it viewed as safer?
- Are guys as “tops” in gay sex more accepted as men than those men who are “bottoms”? If so, how do you feel about this double standard in Black culture?
- If being a bottom is the worst thing that Black men can be, how does this impact your feelings about those men are bottoms?
- While it is not easy being gay or bisexual, can it be better than being someone else who is really not us?

2) Tongues United, by Marlon Riggs. This movie can be purchased through Amazon. Discussion questions to short clips are presented below. Showing the entire film might be of interest too, but of course would take longer. The clips identified below are very short. It is important to note that we are unsure if the film will be perceived as too old for young men. It was created in the ‘80s and addressed many important, still-relevant issues. However, young men may not be able to get beyond the way men dressed and the language they used at the time to see its relevance now. It is a very powerful film.

Clip regarding punks, fags, sissy etc.
Essex Narrative Scene: 29:14-29:11

Issues addressed: homophobia/self-hate, masculinity/femininity

- Discuss/dissect language and its meaning. What does each of these terms mean - punk, fag, bitch, bottom?
- Do these terms refer to stereotypical gender roles, misogyny? What does it mean to be called a woman?
- How are feminine men treated in our community? What can be done so that receptive partners aren’t stigmatized?
- If being a bottom is the worst thing you could be, how does this impact how you look at your own sexuality? How do you internalize this and act on it?
- Is liking to be a bottom or a top always related to being more feminine or masculine? Do men feel stuck by sex role expectations?

Clip regarding feeling excluded from (mostly white) gay community

Issues addressed: Black gay pride, self-love, racism, objectification

- This is an old film – are Black gay men still excluded?
- In what ways do Black gay men feel excluded?
- How have Black gay men responded to this? How do you personally respond to this?
Clip regarding how I feel among other African Americans
Riggs Narrative Scene: 52:39-53:06

Issues addressed: Black gay pride, dual identity, homophobia, self-acceptance

• This is an old film - do gay/bisexual men still feel excluded?
• What are the ways that we are excluded now?
• What are ways that we can respond to this?

Clip regarding how the church responds to African American gay men.
Religious Condemnation Scene: 25:08-29:11

Issues addressed: intolerance, religion

• Does this still occur at churches here?
• How have men responded to this?
• How do men cope with this here? What are some ways you can respond to it?

3) Noah's Arc. This was a TV series that showed for a few years. It can be downloaded on I-Tunes or can be purchased on Amazon. Discussion questions are below.

Clip from Noah's Arc regarding HIV testing, Season 2 Scene with Ras B about testing HIV+.

Issues addressed: HIV Testing

• Why it is important to get tested and with what frequency?
• What does an HIV test for?
• What does it mean to test positive? How would you feel if you tested positive?

Clip from Noah's Arc regarding dating the hip hop music star, Season 2

• What do you think about dating a guy who is totally closeted?
• What do you think about dating a guy who is having sex with women, but they do not know?
• Is it reasonable to expect someone to accept being the silent second partner?
• How does internalized homophobia, self-acceptance as a gay man, enter into the two guys’ relationships? Should Noah have accepted his role when his boyfriend was spending time with women?

Black History Games. If you look on the Internet, you can find some Black history games. These are two that we located.

1) Black history game. This Jeopardy-type question and history game about Black History/Black Culture, geography, astronomy, world history, and American history. It can be used to address Black pride. This URL will bring you to a set of questions and answers. Some time would need to be spent on considering these issues beforehand.

http://wbac.tamu.edu/Files/2012%20Game%20Show%20Study%20Guide.pdf

2) Another Black history game. You can also purchase use the game, “Brain Quest Black History,” on Amazon, which has 850 questions. There is also a website called “Mapping the African American Past” that has information on it, if it is needed for devising other activities.
Other activities relating to issues about being YBMSM.

1) “Two Questions” exercise. Ask 10 members of the group to come up with two questions they would like answered for the night. They could be about HIV, relationships, family, community. Put all the questions in a hat and have different members of the group pull the questions and that person attempts to answer and others from the group could agree or disagree and the discussion goes on from there.

2) What do faith and spirituality mean for us? Have each participant write down one word that describes faith or spirituality for him. Then the words are all put into a bag and mixed up, and each man draws a word out of the bag. Each person then discusses why he thinks that someone decided to put that word into the bag. From that word, each participant should speak about why he chose that word. That way, people do not have to be quite as self-revealing at the beginning of the discussion, and it help to learn to take someone else’s position. So, someone in the group does not necessarily have to reveal that he is religious if he does not want to reveal this (or vice versa). A discussion should then be facilitated for group members to speak about the role of the Black church and/or spirituality in their lives, their family and community. This can get into spirituality, religion, safer sex, and men’s feelings about themselves.

Possible questions regarding these issues:

- Do participants feel that the Black church as a social institution has a place in the fight against HIV?
- Do participants feel connected to/alienated from church?
- Does this connection affect their sexual decision-making?
- What are participants’ beliefs regarding sin and how do these beliefs relate to their behavior?
- Can participants integrate religious messages with their own feelings of spirituality and sexuality?
- How does an individual sense of spirituality affect life and behavior?

3) Four corners exercise. This activity can get into issues regarding serosorting, relationships, drug and alcohol use, HIV testing, treatment optimism, strategic positioning, and bisexuality. We create a series of statements that can be answered strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Each response choice is posted in one corner of the room. Then, you have a bunch of statements and you ask people to move into the corner that best represents their opinion You then ask the group to explain why they voted the way they did. (Or, you can switch the answers between groups, and make the people who strongly agreed explain why they think the people who said strongly disagree answered that way). Some of the statements could be:

- Two guys meet on BGC (Black Gay Chat). They both have “bug free” in their profiles. It’s OK for them to have anal sex without a condom. [Or, maybe “they end up fucking without a condom. They made a mistake.”]
- Two HIV-negative men have been dating for 4 months and they’ve been using condoms all the time. They decide to stop using condoms with each other, but they agree to use condoms with other guys. This is a good way to prevent them from getting HIV.
- Smoking pot makes it more difficult to have safer sex.
- Drinking makes it more difficult to have safer sex.
- If someone decides to get an HIV test here, no one else will find out.
- Going back for your HIV test results is the hardest part about testing.
• An HIV-negative guy and an HIV-positive guy are dating. It’s safe for the negative guy to suck the positive’s guy dick.

• Two men are dating. One’s positive and one’s negative. It’s pretty safe for the negative guy to fuck the positive guy without a condom.

• If an HIV-positive man is getting treated for HIV, he doesn’t have to worry about using condoms with guys who might be negative.

• Two HIV positive men don’t need to use condoms when they have sex with each other.

• It’s wrong for a bisexual man to have sex with a woman, unless she knows that he also has sex with other guys.

4) Addressing racial disparities in the HIV epidemic. The rates of HIV are substantially higher among YBMSM than other ethnic/racial groups. It is important for young men to realize that given these high rates, extra precautions need to be taken, and to generate ideas about what solutions they might enact to counter these problems.

Create 8-10 different statistics, facts, or issues relevant to HIV in the Black gay community (e.g., seroprevalence and seroincidence of HIV among YBMSM, African Americans are diagnosed with HIV later than other groups, less likely to get tested for HIV, lowest decline in AIDS death rates, less likely to be on HAART, disproportionate representation among new HIV and AIDS cases). The facilitator would pass around a bowl filled with slips of paper, and each group member would take one, and read the message aloud to the group (the facilitator might say “Do you want me to read it for you, or do you want to read it yourself?”).

• The participant tacks the message up on the right side of a piece of flip chart paper (each participant will stick his message on the paper below the previous one, so at the end of the group there would be a column of messages about HIV and Black gay men on the right side of the paper).

• Next, there is a brief discussion about these factoids. (You will need to come up with a list of questions to help guide the discussion).

• The facilitators then pass around a second bowl of paper, but these slips all contain a message about a concrete action that participants can take to help address HIV in the Black gay community (e.g., use condoms when having anal sex, talk about HIV testing & risk history with potential partners, get tested for HIV, get tested/treated for STDs, take meds if HIV+, get involved in MP, invite friends to MP, assume every potential partner has a different HIV status than you do). Each participant reads the “solution” message aloud to the group and tacks his message up on the left-hand side of the flip-chart paper.

• The facilitator then asks for a volunteer to draw lines between the first solution and which of the “problems” the solution addresses. Then, the volunteer passes the marker to someone else in the group who then draws lines between the second solution and whatever issues on the right side that he thinks the second solution would address. This activity continues until each solution has at least one line connecting it to an issue on the “problem” side of the paper.

• Next, the facilitator asks the group about other potential solutions that exist, and he writes those up on the paper as well and connect them to the statistics on the “problem” side of the board.

• Finally, the group has a brief discussion about the problems and solutions.

5) Racism and HIV discussion. Each participant will be given a blank sheet of paper. Ask participants to write down their definition of racism—one statement each. Ask participants to turn the paper over and write down any ways in which they have experienced racism in the past. This
exercise was borrowed from the VIBES curriculum. The goal is to address racism, and consider how to deal with it constructively. Discuss as a group:

- What were their internal or external responses to the situations of perceived racism?
- How did they feel?
- What are healthy ways to address perceived racism?
- How does perceived racism affect hearing HIV prevention messages from individuals, agencies, media or other entities?
- Are there ways to still extract positive messages even if not given in culturally competent ways?

6) Manhood panel. A panel of Black, gay community elders present their different perspectives on manhood – what “being a man” means to them. We will want to have diversity among the men in terms of what kind of work they do, their relationship status, and their educational background. The men can talk about diverse things such as their feelings about how masculine/feminine they have to act in diverse settings, how they take care of themselves (e.g., through exercise, prayer, watching their diets).

7) Forum on being a Black gay man. This involves analyzing a series of different video clips portraying different ways of being a Black man. After watching these clips, move to a facilitated discussion about stereotypes of men wearing different types of clothing: tight pants=person who engages in receptive anal sex (“bottom”), baggy pants=man who engages in insertive anal sex (“top”), and different words that describe them: butch, fem, DL guy. Address internalized sexual prejudice (including homophobia and heterosexism), internalized racism, and internalized homophobia.

8) Stereotypes about Black gay/SGL men. The goal of this exercise is to become more conscious of the stereotypes and stigma that is associated with being gay, and whether we want to buy into it, or do we want to challenge those ideas.

- Do an exercise where a group generates names/slang for gay men and for straight men; write on flipcharts
- Rate each slang word for how positive/negative/derogatory they are (using colored dots that put next to words – red = good; pink = so-so; white = negative). Reds = 3 points, pink = 2 points, and whites = 1 point.
- Add up points next to each word.
- Discuss which one is more valued and why, and do we accept these ideas? How can we challenge them?

9) Envisioning a life for Black gay/SGL men. The goal of this exercise is to be more conscious of the stereotypes and stigma that is associated with being gay, and our acceptance of cultural images of what men’s lives are like depending upon their sexual orientation.

- Break the men into two groups (or four groups if too many people for two groups)
- Each group will be assigned a character – the character in each group is the same, but one is described as gay and the other as straight (or two groups are assigned a gay man, and two groups are assigned a straight man). Keep the groups from hearing each other’s story.
- Each group should write a story together about the man (can have each person in turn add a part of the story as you go around in the circle), including things like descriptions of the man, his relationships with others, the gender of the others, his profession.
• Perhaps have CG men add some sexual activities to each man’s descriptions as it comes by them.
• Analyze why the story lines went the way they did (discussing stereotypes, sexual practices, social expectations), and how they diverged – especially according to if they were gay or straight.

10) **Masculine vs. feminine men:** What are our stereotypes? The goal of this exercise is to explore stereotypes about masculine and feminine men, including assumptions about sexual orientation and behavior, and social expectations of each.

• Develop 2 posters – each one with same young man, but one face is posed to look masculine (dress, stance) and other man is posed to look feminine.
• As group, ascribe personality characteristics to each.
• Ascribe sexual activities to each, including if one is gay, bisexual, or straight (and for both if they are usually the insertive or receptive partner).
• Discuss why make those assumptions.

11) **Masculine vs. feminine men:** What are their relationships like with their families, with their community? The goal of this exercise is to explore stereotypes about masculine and feminine men, including how their families and community relate to and accept them.

• Take posters developed above.
• Develop “life stories” about them (in circle, adding to them, as before, but now particularly focusing on family and community reactions to them).
• Compare stories that were generated regarding the different men.
• Describe why have these assumptions, how they feel about these stories, and what could be changed or challenged

12) **Self-acceptance as a Black gay man exercise.** Start with Black gay role models, and discuss their history (as much as is known). Then analyze how being gay affected their lives. Analyze if these men benefited by being out about being gay or not being out (and trying to pass as being straight), and what were the costs of being gay rather than straight. Did they have a partner? Did they create a family in their life? Were they able to be accomplished in their careers? What were the ramifications of being out or not?

Then analyze whether the same costs and benefits occur in the young men’s own lives, as a consequence of being out; the issue is not about coming out as much as trying to pass as being straight. What do you gain by being gay? What do you gain by being straight? What do you lose by being straight, gay? What’s important for you? How can you obtain some of benefits accorded to heterosexual men? For example, can you still have a family if you are gay and out?

The goal will be to help men recognize that gender non-conformity brings you something, regarding your awareness of the world, your insights into other people. It helps you to see the world differently. But you need not be excluded from the benefits of society: you can create family, have meaningful relationships, have a meaningful job.

13) **How are you different in different settings?** This exercise focuses on the differences in how men identify in different ways and act differently in different social settings, and explore why this is the case. How do they act when they are with their family, at church, at the bars/clubs, around white gay men, around Black gay men, and around heterosexuals?
They then will analyze the differences and why they feel the need to act differently in these settings, with different people, and how they feel about that. This could be handled in different ways. One option could be to come up with a basic scenario of a social interaction, and men will role-play how they would act if following the same scenario in different situations. Or they could go to different groups and then each group would be asked write up characteristics of how someone acts in different social situations on flip charts to compare and contrast.

14) Discussion regarding relationship issues. At the start of the session, men are asked to write a question about relationships and put it in a hat/ or a jug. Men should be encouraged to talk about things like, “how to find a man,” “how to keep a relationship going,” and “how do you deal with having safer sex when you’re in love.” The questions should be mixed up, and then the container is passed around the room.

When the container comes to a man, he reaches in and takes out a question and reads it out loud. Then a discussion should ensue about how people respond to these issues. If some of the questions are applicable, they could be turned into role-plays as well (for example, how do you negotiate with a partner about having safer sex).

If any opportunities come up to talk about informal outreach, this should be done; for example, if someone talks about how in relationships men sometimes have sex with someone else. A friend might speak with the one he knows who’s having sex outside the relationship and suggest that it is important to be safe sexually. Alternatively, this exercise might be a good time to get into prevention with positives, discussing what happens when someone is HIV-positive in a relationship.

Venue-based outreach. This is the second component of Formal Outreach. There are few differences in how venue-based outreach is conducted in U-BE by comparison with the approach by MP. Therefore, it is important to read the MP manual.

Outreach team and costumes. The only difference that we have noted is that some groups of men (including Coordinators at times) feel uncomfortable wearing costumes based on the theme of outreach. Dressing in a costume is important because then bar- and club-attendees can recognize that the men are part of a team, and are part of U-BE. So therefore, they stand out. While some YBMSM feel just fine wearing some sort of a costume, others feel anxious about looking silly or effeminate. It is important to realize that simple costumes that are plainer also work. For example, the team can all wear T-shirts with the name of the projects and the logo, or outfits that make them look like construction workers, or policemen or firemen, or lifeguards. They can also all wear light-colored button down shirts with red ties, or all wear a similar hat. For other ideas, look at mpowerment.org for photos from a variety of projects.

Making announcements at bars/clubs. Often when the outreach team goes to a bar or club that caters to Black gay men (or has a night for Black gay men), there is a show, which involves having an MC. The MC is often a transgender woman, or a man in drag. Regardless, sometimes the MCs have the Coordinator in charge of outreach make an announcement about U-BE, or sometimes the MC makes the announcement him/herself. In either case, it is important to develop what we call “the cheat-sheet”, which is a sheet of paper with some bulleted points to make. This can be very helpful for either the Coordinator or the MC, to ensure that they stay on point. It is very important that U-BE not be called, “an HIV prevention program”, but instead is called “a community building program.” As pointed out in one of the guiding principles, if it is called something connected to HIV/AIDS, many young men will not attend it. Hence, play up the fun social aspect of it, that young men coming to an event will meet a lot of other young men, and that you can make new friends, or meet the guy who might become their boyfriend.
Safer sex and testing promotional materials. This is the third component of Formal Outreach. These written materials encourage men to have safer sex and get tested, as well as addresses issues underlying risk-taking and test avoiding behavior. These materials are distributed by the outreach team at venues where young gay/bisexual men congregate, such as bars or clubs, as well as at medium and large-size social outreach events that the project implements.

Ideas for safer sex and testing promotional materials can be found on the Mpowerment.org website.

Develop materials that are explicitly for HIV-positive men. Given the high prevalence of HIV in the YBMSM community, it is important to specifically address HIV prevention among HIV-positive men. As with all aspects of U-BE, it is important not to use shame-inducing messages, but instead, they should be uplifting and positive. In addition, we have heard that some HIV-positive men believe that messages about “HIV-prevention” are not meant for them since they already “have” HIV. Such messages can use various appeals. First, it is okay to mention on the materials that “this is for brothers who are HIV-positive and those who are HIV-negative” so as to draw attention of HIV-positive men. Messages in materials can also talk about “being responsible to not spread HIV to others.” But the messages should not be vague, such as “be your brother’s keeper” because they may not be understood. Research has also shown that a major motivation for HIV-positive men to reduce their sexual risk behavior is altruism—doing it simply to help others. That is a message that fits in well to U-BE given its emphasis on creating a caring, supportive community. The risk reduction message can also be tied into the whole man approach, such as discussing that a “whole” or “real” man takes care of his community by not spreading HIV.

Materials should look culturally affirming and depict black men. As these materials are used, be sure to consider how to make them relevant to the YBMSM community. Men need to be able to relate to materials and see their community in the materials that are disseminated so they don’t think, “that doesn’t relate to me.” One way to do this is to use photos of men involved in the program, the Coordinators and the CG members. Making it clear that this is a social project is achieved by showing photos of men together. It is also helpful to have local men because this essentially endorses the project when people recognize the individuals in the photos. But then do not always show the same men in the photos. Remember that the project is trying to reach men who hang out in diverse crowds, so make sure to use a variety of men in the photos.

Sexy versus not sexy images. Sex sells. Sex attracts attention. So, on the one hand, we have described above that local men should be used in materials—but we also realize that a gorgeous, sexy man on a material can cause men to take a second look. Outreach teams that hand out such images in publicity materials, for example, are often asked, “Will HE be there?!?” So use a mixture of images. Some Coordinators have felt that images that are “too sexy” can objectify Black men, and disagree with the seemingly constant eroticization of men in such photos. That concern should be taken seriously, and indeed it is a problem in our society. It is important to pay attention to such concerns. It is also important to pay attention to community norms about portrayals of Black men. If the project is in a very conservative area of the country, perhaps using sexy images is too much. A good way to approach it is to ask the CG about imagery to use.
Use language on publicity materials that men can relate to. Use culturally affirming or at least culturally relevant slang in some of the materials about project and social outreach event promotion. It is important to vary this however, because different slang is used by different groups of men, often relating to their socioeconomic backgrounds. Hence, in order to make sure that diverse men are reached, diverse language should be used.

Create materials that address deeper issues about having safer sex and getting tested. You can make materials that talk about many different issues that underlie why men might be risky or might not be tested. For example you can address boyfriends issues, including trust and love, or being fearful about losing confidentiality at testing sites, or being willing to have unprotected sex with someone who tells you he is HIV-negative online, or having unprotected sex because the other guy is so hot and beautiful that you’ll do anything to be with him, or assuming that someone else is HIV-positive just because he does not mention HIV status. There are many issues that can be discussed.

Develop supplemental materials to disseminate in the community. Consider creating written materials that supplement all of the important issues we are addressing in the project, such as dual identity or whole man issues. Perhaps information that comes up during group discussions can be used to produce written materials on particular themes. For example, if the project is trying to encourage racial pride by having a forum on Famous Black Gay Leaders, then the project could create a series of “trading cards,” each with a different Black Gay Leader on it, and a brief description of the person on the back. Or, if the facilitators hear consistently during U-BE Connections that men do not want to talk to their friends about HIV-testing, create a small material with 10 helpful hints about how to bring up testing with a friend.

These materials can be disseminated in a number of ways: through the outreach team handing them out at local venues where YBMSM congregate (e.g., bars, clubs), at medium and large social outreach events the project conducts, and through the Internet (on a facebook site or via some other listserv to men).

Safer sex & testing messages of particular importance for YBMSM should be addressed in materials, as well as throughout the project. Don’t simply write these up and hand them out. That is terribly boring and no one will look at your materials again after that! Also, as always, put them in the language that young men use or enjoy using. For example, in Texas instead of using the word “ejaculating” or “cumming”, it is called “to nutt,” as in “he nutted in me.” Seeing the slang put into written words is provocative and causes men to pay attention.

The issues that are important to address include the following:

- **If you’re sexually active, get an HIV test every six months** – more often if you have concerns about your HIV status.
- Don’t assume that your partner’s HIV status is the same as yours. Someone might say he is HIV-negative without realizing that he is actually HIV-positive. Many men with HIV infection do not know that they are infected. Or, you might think someone is HIV-positive when he is actually negative.
- Men who have been infected very recently (before they even know they’re infected) are most likely to pass the virus to others during unprotected sex. When they first catch the virus, it is called “acute infection.”
- Having unprotected sex with a boyfriend isn’t necessarily safe. In some studies, over half of newly infected men got HIV from their boyfriends.
- Get checked and treated for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), like herpes, gonorrhea, syphilis, Chlamydia. Having an STI likely makes it easier to spread or catch HIV.
- If you are HIV+, seek medical care to find out about your treatment options. People in care, and who take their HIV medications as prescribed, do much better than people who are not.
Today’s HIV treatment regimens are much easier to take than they were just a few years ago. Medications are effective these days. No young man in the U.S. needs to be dying of HIV anymore, the medications are that good. Starting treatment early may have health benefits (and public health benefits), so we recommend that people get linked to care as soon as possible after testing HIV+.

- Remind men that safer sex behaviors can be enjoyable and hot. Use examples.

Publicity

Publicize project activities to YBMSM community in multiple, novel ways. Publicity is absolutely imperative, and we have occasionally seen in projects that great events are developed, innovative ways to address HIV prevention are developed to do at the activities – but few men attend them because they simply do not hear about them. There are few newspapers that reach the YBMSM community, and many men do not attend bars and clubs (or are too young to do so). There are also relatively few venues to conduct publicity “zaps” (quickly running into a space, distributing pamphlet or fliers, and then running back out). Hence, alternative means that are more likely to reach young men need to be used. Please see Module 10: Publicity in the MP manual to get other ideas. We do not cover here in-depth ideas about doing publicity at bars and clubs, for example, but that is of central importance.

Lists of every gay bar/club that caters to Black MSM should be generated (including places that only have single nights for Black MSM), and relationships should be built with club owners, managers and bouncers so that easy access is obtained. Then there should be regular and frequent visits to such venues to distribute materials about upcoming events.

Use online publicity. At the time of this writing, Facebook remains one of the social media methods that reaches a relatively large number of young men. Even websites are becoming less popular for young men, and relatively few men want to use e-mail to send or receive information. Although U-BE has a website for example, few people visit it regularly. Hence, have a Facebook fan page. Many projects are doing this, and it is a speedy way to find out what projects are doing. They mostly have Facebook fan pages. The Facebook page can contain announcements about upcoming meetings, upcoming events, activities happening in the community, and so forth. It can be used to promote informal outreach.

Make sure that the project’s Facebook page always has a current calendar on it in order to promote social outreach events. Review the project on Yelp and other popular sites. Make a project entry in Wikipedia. Link your project’s website to the websites of other local service providers. Other publicity for the project can occur by posting materials on Adam4Adam and Black Gay Chat (BGC) in the form of banner ads.
Use text messaging and Twitter as means of publicizing the project. For example, Coordinators could ask Core Group members to “blast” their address books with text messages about up-coming project events. There are some mass texting approaches. Tumpia for example is one. You have to input every phone number that you might want to send information to about the project. Projects can also send out messages by text or Tweeting, and ask project participants to retext or re-tweet messages to their friends.

Text messaging could also be used as a way to follow-up with every M-group participant. Ask everyone at the end of U-BE Connected, in the informal outreach section, if they are willing to sign up to receive conversation reminders. Then, they can receive a monthly message from the project saying something like “Don’t forget that HIV is a major issue for YBMSM in our community. How many friends have you talked to about safer sex in the last month?” Then, the recipient could reply to the message, and it could be possible to keep track of the data. Or, a text message about supporting friends to have safer sex and get frequent and regular HIV testing could be sent, with young men being encouraged to pass them on to their friends.

Distribute project promotional materials at all possible venues that might reach YBMSM. These can be quite varied. If the community where the project is implemented has a commercial “gay area,” be sure to have stores, restaurants and bars/clubs hang up posters about upcoming events or the project in general. If there are housing complexes where many YBMSM live, work with managers to hang up posters. Make sure to go to all clinics that provide HIV testing and treatment, as well as STI testing clinics, and have them hang up posters and have pamphlets in the waiting rooms describing the project. There may be men who do not frequent any of these areas, and other ideas about how to publicize the project there should be pursued. For example, many lower income people do their wash at laundromats. Often such places have bulletin boards that can be used to post materials (be aware, though, that materials may be torn down often, and thus have to be replaced frequently).

YBMSM want to see themselves in the project.

Show the diversity of the YBMSM community in photos. This includes issues such as depicting men who vary with respect to body size, color, hair style, clothing styles, femininity-masculinity that are used on project promotional materials. Use photos of men in CG, if they permit.

Use language on publicity materials that men use locally. Use culturally affirming slang in some of the materials about project and social outreach event promotion. It is important to vary this however, because different slang is used by different groups of men, often relating to their socioeconomic backgrounds. Hence, in order to make sure that diverse men are used, diverse language should be used on different materials.

Informal Outreach

Stimulating the process of promoting safer sex and testing messages to friends. It is important to focus on propelling informal outreach by program participants in order to reach the various social networks that comprise the YBMSM community with HIV prevention messages. CG members, other volunteers, and men who attend U-BE Connected should be reminded of the importance of conducting informal outreach with friends about reducing sexual risk behavior and increasing regular HIV testing. In order to stimulate informal outreach, it is necessary to address concern about loss of confidentiality and the desire to respect people’s “boundaries” about revealing information about themselves.
Informal outreach has already been discussed in earlier parts of this document: 1) with respect to a poster in the project space regarding, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (on which men write responses), and 2) in U-BE Connected where there is a discussion about not spreading people’s private information (also known as “spreading people’s business”). But gossip is such a prevalent problem that participants need to be reminded about it in an ongoing manner throughout the project.

Be sure to promote “Support your brothers & encourage them to be safe and get tested – but don’t spread their business.” Conversations with friends about HIV prevention do not need to involve inquiring about what friends are doing sexually and what their HIV status is. However, these might come up as a young man might disclose these issues to a friend expressing support about them. It is extremely important that if such information is learned, it not be gossiped about to others. Men have reported in many core groups and in our focus groups that having their business spread around the community is of major concern to them. The YBMSM community can be very “gossipy.” When you add to this that there are small social networks and considerable stigma against HIV-positive men, many men are very worried about the consequences of disclosing information to peers, even to friends. It must be discussed often at the project that gossip tremendously harms the community and must be stopped.

Texting and tweeting friends about being safe sexually and getting tested frequently. Texting and tweeting are common ways for young men to communicate these days. The project could come up with some messages that men would be encouraged to re-text or re-tweet to their friends periodically. The men could, of course, also come up with their own statements to make to their friends. Men should be encouraged to text, and make a commitment to do so, a certain number of friends who are not a part of the project, on certain intervals of time. For example, it could be that once a month it is “text your buddies day: show your caring for your friends and community.” They could also be encouraged to tweet their followers about the same issues. The suggestion to do this could go out to the listserv once a month, with ideas about messages to give friends. Subsequently, men could be asked to write the number of safer sex promotional text messages they made on a chart in the space, so it would be seen how much the project is reaching out through the community.

Distributing condoms and lubes to friends.
The young men attending any event hosted by U-BE, including social outreach events and U-BE Connected, should be given condoms and lubes to give to friends. This can be a very important part of informal outreach, and may help in initiating a conversation that shows support to a friend about having safer sex and getting HIV testing.

Community Advisory Board (CAB)
As stated in the MP manual (see Module 11: Community Advisory Board), a CAB is not a required core element for the project, but it can be very helpful. The MP manual discusses this in more depth. The CAB can be helpful in numerous ways, including understanding community dynamics (politics), serving as liaison to other organizations or the local health department, helping
with resources such as locating spaces for holding events, and so forth. They can also help YBMSM with personal issues as described below. It is important for the CAB to know, however, that they are to be supportive people to the project, but the Coordinators and CG members remain the decision-makers for the project.

**Use the CAB as a way of addressing life/job skills training.** Tap into the CAB’s expertise to do this. CAB members might provide workshops or talk at forums about various topics, such as resume building and writing, interviewing skills, how to look for and keep a job, applying for school (college or technical school), and where to go to find help/guidance on professional development. Role-plays on some of these could be done as well (e.g., how to apply for a job), with a CAB member providing guidance. A project can have CAB members or professionals come in and give a brief workshop about what they do for work and how they got to these positions.

**The CAB can address YBMSM’s ideas of what adult Black gay/bisexual men’s lives are like.** Many YBMSM have little idea of what it is like to be an adult gay man since they have known very few older gay men. Many have heard negative stereotypes (“you’ll be lonely”) and this can cause them to feel somewhat fearful about what happens as they age. Therefore, it can be helpful to have gay or SGL men who serve as CAB members discuss their own experiences about what an adult man’s life is about, how being gay is related to this, and how they live their lives in accordance with this vision. The goal will be to help to instill hope that it is possible to grow up as a Black gay man and have a satisfying life as an adult. The talks should be structured to help give young men an image of how you can be a “responsible man” regardless of your sexual orientation, and what you need to do in order to achieve a good life. Perhaps in these discussions, the CAB members can discuss how they have coped with homophobia from their families and community, how they came out to their families, how they have coped with being Black in a racist society, and finally, how they have dealt with HIV/AIDS.

**CAB members as mentors and potential resources.** There are occasionally people on CABs who can serve as “coaches” to the Coordinators or the CG. This is not to say that CAB members should hang out at the project space and arrange meetings one-on-one with CG members and Coordinators very often. But they can sometimes be helpful because of their own experiences in holding jobs, dealing with time management skills, interacted with health departments, being church-involved while also being gay/SGL, and more. Sharing these experiences can be very helpful.

**Condom Distribution**

This is a newly identified U-BE core element. As stated earlier, the project does a great deal of distribution of condoms to YBMSM. In the CDC’s approach to reducing new infections, called HIP (High Impact Prevention), condom distribution has been identified as an important component of HIV prevention. U-BE should strive to distribute large quantities of condoms and lubricants to young men. This is key to several of the existing core elements, including the Project Space, Formal Outreach, and Informal Outreach. One of the reasons that YBMSM sometimes do not use condoms and lube is because of their costs. Hence, having condoms throughout the community is very helpful. Men should be encouraged not only to take many for themselves, but also take them to provide to their friends.
Bibliography


Appendix 1
The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

**NGUZO SABA**
(The Seven Principles)

**Umoja** (Unity)
To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

**Kujichagulia** (Self-Determination)
To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

**Ujima** (Collective Work and Responsibility)
To build and maintain our community together and make our brother’s and sister’s problems our problems and to solve them together.

**Ujamaa** (Cooperative Economics)
To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

**Nia** (Purpose)
To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

**Kuumba** (Creativity)
To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

**Imani** (Faith)
To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

— Maulana Karenga
Appendix 2
The Black Gay Pledge of Allegiance

I first pledge to love myself unconditionally even if it may be hard to see why I should do so, but I pledge to love me.

I pledge to remove myself from the shackles of self hate and mental slavery.

I pledge never to consider my sexual orientation a sin.

I pledge never to consider my sexual orientation a choice.

I pledge never to consider my sexual orientation an abomination.

I pledge to question those who claim to not agree with my sexual orientation, as that is as preposterous as disagreeing with someone for being born left-handed or with hazel eyes (something you have no control over).

I pledge to reject any notion that my mere existence as a gay man will result in me burning in hell.

I pledge to question, challenge, and reject any religious belief system that preaches my condemnation and persecution for being a gay man.

I pledge not to internalize homophobia.

I pledge not to internalize heterosexism because although heterosexuality may be the dominant sexual orientation that fact alone does not make my sexual orientation or myself deficient.

I pledge to learn about Bayard Rustin is if I haven’t already.

I pledge not to allow people to consider my sexual orientation a “lifestyle” as a lifestyle is something that you can give up or stop doing such as gambling or going to church.

I pledge to educate myself on Sex, Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation because with education comes empowerment.

I pledge to use condoms with sexual partners when I have anal sex.

I pledge to respect the dignity, personhood, and humanity of all men and question anyone who would deny it to someone on the basis of Race, Gender, or Sexual Orientation.

I pledge not to create hierarchies in the gay community that pit Masculine gay men against Feminine gay men, because there is no right or wrong way to be a gay man. We all come in many shapes and forms.

I pledge always to recognize that it was our transgender sisters who started the Gay Rights Movement and as such they should not be maligned in our community.

I pledge never to consider homosexuality a “more sexual” sexual orientation. Sexual activity is unique to all sexual orientations, not just homosexuality. There are promiscuous straight women, straight men, gay men, and gay women.

I pledge to challenge society in order to help change society if not for myself but for future generations of gay black men.

I pledge to be the change I want to see in the world.

— Written by Derrick.
A gay brother who is a senior history major at Florida A&M University, 2011
Appendix 3: Information about being safe with your boyfriend/partner

This material should be inserted into the bags that U-BE Connected participants receive. In addition, the Coordinators should follow this approach when discussing HIV prevention with men in the project who are in couples and seek information about sexual safety and monogamy versus using condoms and having safer sex with their boyfriends.

As with all U-BE materials and discussions with young men, this can be rephrased into language that feels more familiar and comfortable for YBMSM.

Couples

Lots of guys in same-sex marriages or other committed relationships eventually confront the question: “Can we, should we have anal sex without condoms?” Some research has shown that over 50% of men who contract HIV catch it from their boyfriends. So these are very important issues to consider.

What if one partner is HIV-negative and the other HIV-positive? The obvious answer is that if the negative partner wants to remain uninfected, you can’t have unprotected anal sex, no matter which man is the top or the bottom. Both tops and bottoms can contract HIV. There are other considerations as well.

It is important for the HIV-positive guy to be taking HIV medications, and taking them as prescribed, not missing doses. If he is doing that, then his HIV viral load (that is, how much HIV virus is floating around in his blood and semen) will likely be very low. However, viral loads sometimes increase unexpectedly – such as when men are about to get sick from a cold or flu and may not have any symptoms yet, or if he has an STI (sexually transmitted infection). So you can’t trust that if his viral load is low, it means he can’t pass HIV to his HIV-negative partner.

One option might be for the HIV-negative partner to use the prescription drug Truvada, also called “PrEP” (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis). This medication, when taken every day, has been shown to significantly reduce the chances that an HIV-negative person can contract HIV from someone who is HIV-positive. To reduce the risk of contracting HIV the most, condoms should still be used. Discuss the possibility of starting PrEP with a health-care provider—ideally someone very familiar with HIV treatments and the latest HIV research. Some insurance companies will cover the expenses related to PrEP.

What if both men are HIV-positive? If either man is having sex outside of the relationship and contracts an STI, he could pass it to his partner. The problem with that is that getting an STI can result in an increased viral load, which isn’t good, so condoms can help you take care of your immune system.

What if both guys are HIV negative? Anal sex without condoms is an option some long-term couples are choosing. It’s an important option for gay men to have. But it’s definitely not for everyone. For many couples, continuing to use condoms is the best choice. As we stated above, some research has shown that half of all men who get HIV get it from a boyfriend. So there are real risks, and it shouldn’t be taken lightly. At the same time we realize that it’s important for gay and bi men...
to be able to build trusting, lasting relationships. Ultimately, you have to weigh the risks and the benefits and decide what is best for you.

If you do want to stop using condoms in a long-term relationship, here are some ways to reduce your risk:

**Step 1** Coming to this place in your relationship often means that you have been together for years, not months, and certainly not just days or weeks! This has given both of you time to REALLY get to know each other through the good times and bad. Talk about this decision and what it means for your relationship. Why does each of you want to do this? What do you need from your partner to feel secure about eliminating condoms?

**Step 2** Both of you get tested for HIV together. Make a date of it. If you both test HIV-negative, keep using condoms with each other and in any sex outside the relationship. Keep talking about how you’re going to make this decision a success. If one of you tests HIV-positive, then there are lots of things you can do to keep healthy – you might want to seek out support for how to deal with this emotionally, and you need to be supportive of each other while you or your partner meet with a health care provider to find out about treatment.

**Step 3** If you both test HIV-negative, **after 3 months get tested again.** If both of you are still negative, you’re good to go on the final step.

**Step 4** **Come to a clear understanding** about sex inside and outside your relationship. Having a clear understanding means that you have talked about it a lot, and you’re certain you agree on the exact same rules. You can’t be guessing about the agreements you have with your partner. Some agreements include: (a) no anal sex outside the relationship, or (b) no sex outside the relationship. Again, this has to be a real discussion about what you both agreed to do.

Simply saying, “we’re going to be faithful to each other” or “we’re monogamous” isn’t enough. Men have different ideas about what “faithful” and “monogamous” means. For some guys it means, no anal sex outside the relationship. Other guys mean no unprotected sex outside the relationship. Others mean nothing in town, but out of town is okay. And still others mean no falling in love with others. So you have to talk about what each of you means by monogamy.

The next thing that has to be figured out is what happens if one of you does slip up and have unprotected anal sex with someone else. You have to have an agreement about what you will do – and of course what you have to do is to tell each other, and then get retested. Even if this could make troubles for your relationship, it is still necessary to tell each other.

Admittedly, these are not easy conversations to have, but they are necessary to come to a clear understanding of what you each mean.

**Step 5** **If you slip up, and have unprotected sex with someone else, then you must follow through on telling your boyfriend about it immediately.** Not everything always goes as planned, and one or both of you may slip up. If this happens, it doesn’t necessarily mean the relationship is over. But you’ve got to be honest about it. Your partner’s health depends on it. If the slip involved unprotected sex, you’ll definitely want to start using condoms again and go back to step 1 and get retested for HIV. For some couples, seeing a counselor can help prevent future slipups. Or maybe you will decide that it’s better for your relationship to keep using condoms. That’s a good choice for many couples. Your relationship can still be strong and fun and sexy, but by using condoms with each other you’ll know you’re keeping yourself and your partner safe.
Exercises about Homophobia

FIGURE 2.1 – CROSS THE LINE
(ESTIMATED TIME 30 MINUTES: 10 MINUTES FOR EXERCISE + 20 MINUTES FOR DISCUSSION)

Objective: The goal of this activity is to explore the impact of participants’ experiences of acceptance and/or denial of their sexuality, with a focus on self-esteem and their identity as gay men. It is essential to explain the concept of internalized homophobia.

FIGURE 2.2 – FROM REJECTION TO CELEBRATION (ESTIMATED TIME 45 MINUTES)

Objective: The object of this activity is to explore how certain life events may affect one’s self-esteem and even become a source of internalized homophobia. At the same time, this activity provides an opportunity to consciously celebrate our present lives. Another objective is to emphasize how often we ask for mere tolerance instead of demanding a celebration of our sexuality. Developing self-esteem and pride in who we are is another objective, as is an exploration of the coping skills and survival strategies that participants have used and found helpful.

Exercises about normalizing talking about safer sex

FIGURE 3.1 – SHAKE your BooTy (ESTIMATED TIME 10 MINUTES)

Objective: To create a setting that facilitates the expression of ideas and beliefs about sex and sexual experiences in a lighthearted way.

FIGURE 3.2 – EXERCISE AND DISCUSSION ON SEXUAL VOCABULARY (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)

Objective: The goal of this activity is to become aware of sexual matters that we wish to talk about but that we find it difficult to express. Elicit as many opinions as possible about the reasons why we do not openly discuss sexual tastes and preferences.

FIGURE 3.3 – NEGOTIATIONS WITH A CASUAL PARTNER-STORY TELLING (ESTIMATED TIME: 20 MINUTES)

Objective: The goal is to get participants to actively and collectively engage in creating a sexual fantasy involving safer sexual behaviors.

FIGURE 3.4 – FOUR CORNERS (ESTIMATED TIME 5-45 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON HOW MANY STATEMENTS YOU CHOOSE)

Objective: To get into issues regarding serosorting, relationships, drug and alcohol use, HIV testing, treatment optimism, strategic positioning, and bisexuality.

Appendix 4
List of Suggested Exercises in Appendix 4
Exercises about sexual relationships among couples

**FIGURE 4.1 - EXERCISE AND DISCUSSION: SEEKING MR. PERFECT (ESTIMATED TIME 45 MINUTES)**

**Objective:** The goal of this activity is: (a) to identify what we expect from our (casual or regular) sexual partners; (b) to explore the risks involved in mistaking the real men in our real lives for the ideal man of our dreams; and (c) to help participants recognize what happens when our idealized expectations of sex do not match the reality of sex.

**FIGURE 4.2 - GROUP DISCUSSION ABOUT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)**

**Objective:** To get guys to discuss romantic relationships as a group in an open and safe environment.

Exercise about Faith and Spirituality

**FIGURE 5.1 - ONE WORD - (ESTIMATED TIME 45-1 HOUR)**

**Objective:** Religious beliefs and the influence of churches are controversial, and yet people may embrace them despite the contradictions they pose, especially for African American gay men. By discussing terms associated with religious beliefs drawn at random, participants can choose to remain private about their beliefs. One does not necessarily have to reveal that he is religious if he doesn’t want to (or vice versa). Additionally, since the terms were all put forward by other participants, it helps each person explore what religious experiences might mean for other participants. A group discussion at the end of the exercise will allow for an exchange of ideas about the role of churches and/or spirituality in their lives, their family and communities. This can lead to a discussion about safer sex, and men’s feelings about themselves.

Exercise about racial disparities in the HIV epidemic

Figure 6.1- Matching Problems and Solutions (Estimated time 45-1 hour)

**Objective:** Because the rates of HIV are substantially higher among YBMSM than other ethnic/racial groups, it is important for young men to realize that extra precautions need to be taken and to generate ideas about what solutions they might enact to address this reality.

Exercise about racism and HIV

**FIGURE 7.1 - EXPERIENCES OF RACISM (ESTIMATED TIME 45-1 HOUR)**

**Objective:** To have participants communicate ways they’ve experienced racism and engage in a group discussion about racism, HIV, and coping skills.

Exercises about sexual identity and gender

**FIGURE 8.1 - DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW GAY MEN ARE PORTRAYED (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)**

**Objective:** Lead participants in a debate over their sexual identity, which is different from (and typically rejected by) the social and cultural norms of the dominant heterosexual culture. The debate should also touch on how this experience has affected their lives.
FIGURE 8.2 - CELEBRATING OUT IDENTITY AND IMAGINING OUR LIVES WITHOUT HOMOPHOBIA (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)

**Objective:** To spend time visualizing being free from some of the negative thinking associated with homophobia.

FIGURE 8.3 - GAY OR STRAIGHT? (ESTIMATED TIME 40 MINUTES)

**Objective:** To stimulate a group discussion about sexual stereotypes.

FIGURE 8.4 - MASCULINE VS. FEMININE: CREATING IMAGES (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)

**Objective:** The goal of this exercise is to explore stereotypes about masculine and feminine men, including assumptions about sexual orientation and behavior, and social expectations of each.

FIGURE 8.5 - MASCULINE VS. FEMININE: VALUE AND IMPORTANCE (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)

**Objective:** The goal of this exercise is to explore stereotypes about masculine and feminine men, including how their families and community relate to and accept them.

FIGURE 8.6 - HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS (ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES)

**Objective:** This exercise explores the differences in how men identify in different ways and act differently in different social settings. It will help participants become aware of how they behave differently, allowing them to understand why, and what the consequences are, both in their feelings and their actions.

FIGURE 8.7 - INTRODUCING IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY (ESTIMATED TIME 40 MINUTES)

**Objective:** To lead a group discussion that highlights the positive accomplishments of Black gay role models throughout history and provide participants with an opportunity to recognize in themselves some of the same laudable characteristics.

FIGURE 8.8 - SELF-ACCEPTANCE AS A BLACK GAY MAN (ESTIMATED TIME 30-45 MINUTES)

**Objective:** Analyze the potential costs and benefits of being an out gay man for the young men in the group. Specifically help participants recognize that gender and sexual non-conformity can have benefits, increasing their awareness of social stereotypes and assumptions, giving them an insight into how people who are different may feel. At the same time, while there may be costs associated to being a sexual minority, they need not be excluded from the benefits of society: they can have a loving family, have meaningful relationships, and a meaningful job.
Exercises about Talking to your friends (Informal Outreach)

**FIGURE 9.1 - HOW TO TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT AND HIV PREVENTION (ESTIMATED TIME 30 MINUTES)**

**Objective:** To get guys to role play situations where they talk to their friends about various issues of importance that affect young Black gay men.

**FIGURE 9.2 - ROLE PLAYS (ESTIMATED TIME 45 MINUTES TO 1 HOUR)**

Role plays are about:

- homophobia
- internalized homophobia gay identity
- safer sex and intimacy
- getting an HIV test
- talking about condoms and new relationships
- disclosing that you’re HIV positive
- how to handle a sero-discodant relationship
- supporting a friend who is HIV positive to seek medical care and treatment
- sero-preference and sero-adaptation
Appendix 4
Suggested Exercises Addressing Various Issues

Figure 1 - Setting up the Space and the Tone

NOTE: We recommend conducting this brief opening activity at the beginning of each session of activities below.

OBJECTIVE

- To get participants involved right away by participating in setting the atmosphere.
- Having the statements (see list below) on separate signs and posted throughout the room is meant to more easily catch the attention of the participants, who might otherwise easily disregard a list of items all on one sign.

MATERIALS

- Signs
- Something to easily attach the signs to the walls so they can be removed later and re-used.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

- Ask participants to post the individual signs on the walls around the room
- Convene the participants back to the center of the room and ask them to read the signs silently and take in their meaning

STATEMENTS TO BE POSTED ON INDIVIDUAL SIGNS

- NO QUESTION IS STUPID. ALL QUESTIONS ARE IMPORTANT.
- THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE WITH US.
- JOIN IN!
- YOUR OPINIONS ARE INVALUABLE FOR EACH ONE AND ALL OF US.
- EACH SINGLE ONE OF US IS SPECIAL AND UNIQUE.
- YOUR FRIENDS NEED YOU. SHOW THEM THAT THEY MATTER TO YOU.
- YOUR WHOLE COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU.
- THE WORLD WE DREAM OF IS POSSIBLE. LET’S BUILD IT TOGETHER!
**Figure 2 - Homophobia**

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ADDRESS HOMOPHOBIA IN ORDER TO:**

- Develop awareness and understanding of the experiences of both acceptance and discrimination of different sexual orientations and/or gender identities.
- Understand the impact on the lives of individual participants of internalized homophobia/transphobia and of feelings of shame.
- Explore coping skills (both positive/adaptive and negative/maladaptive) used to deal with homophobia and discrimination, including survival strategies.
- Experience a sense of community through sharing personal stories of oppression, discrimination, homophobia/transphobia.

**Figure 2.1 - Cross the Line**

*(Estimated time 30 minutes: 10 minutes for exercise + 20 minutes for discussion)*

**OBJECTIVE**

The goal of this activity is to explore the impact of participants’ experiences of acceptance and/or denial of their sexuality, with a focus on self-esteem and their identity as gay men. It is essential to explain the concept of internalized homophobia.

**MATERIALS**

- List of statements
- Cushions

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. Have the participants stand in a straight line at the center of the room, all facing the same direction.

2. The facilitators read out loud a set of statements one by one (see list below). Some statements are about positive experiences associated with being gay and one’s sexual identity and others are about negative experiences.

3. Ask participants to listen to each statement. Take one step back if they think it is a negative experience or one step forward if they find it to be a positive experience.

4. If the experience described in any statement feels neither positive or negative, then that participant can stay put and take neither a step forward nor backward.

5. After reading all the statements in the list, the facilitator asks the participants to look around and asses in silence where they stand in relation to other participants.

6. Ask participants to sit down on a cushion in the same exact spot where they landed after taking the various steps during the exercise.

7. Have participants share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the activity they just did. (See below for a list of questions that can be used to guide the discussion.)
8. It is important to NOT initiate the discussion by having the participants who find themselves in the rearmost position with respect to the midline talk first. Instead, the facilitators should open the discussion so as to give participants time to reflect.

LIST OF STATEMENTS

(Feel free to come up with your own statements too. These are examples).

1. If you like being attracted to other men, take one step forward. If you don’t like being attracted to other men, take one step backward.

2. If you feel comfortable talking with your family about things having to do with your sexual orientation, take one step forward. If you don’t feel comfortable talking about your sexual orientation with your family, take one step backward.

3. If you were made fun of or criticized for being different when you were child, take one step backward. If not, take one step forward.

4. If at work or in school you feel respected as a gay man, take one step forward. If you do not feel respected as a gay man, take one step backward.

5. If you have ever been physically attacked for being gay, take one step backward. If not, take a step forward.

6. If you have ever been verbally harassed/called names for being gay, take one step backward. If not, step forward.

7. If you would feel comfortable walking down the street holding hands with your boyfriend, take one step forward. If you would not feel comfortable, take one step backward.

8. If your family would accept your boyfriend and welcome him to family events, take one step forward. If they would not, take one step backward.

9. If coming out to some friends has caused you to lose them, take one step backward. If not, take one step forward.

10. If you have ever felt embarrassed or ashamed to tell a physician or a nurse that you are gay, take one step backward. If not, take one step forward.

11. If you never felt rejected by your family for being gay, take one step forward. If you ever felt rejected by your family for being gay, take one step backward.

12. If you have ever been discriminated against because you are gay, take one step backward. If not, take one step forward.

QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE USED TO FACILITATE THE DISCUSSION

• How did it feel to take part in this activity?
• How did you feel when you took a step backward?
• How did you feel when you took a step forward?
• How do you think the experiences described in the statements used in this activity influence the way you relate to and behave with other men?
WHAT THE FACILITATORS SHOULD ASK (AND SAY) AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION

- Why are gay men mistreated and discriminated?
- How does discrimination affect the way we are?

The concept of **homophobia** refers to the fear (or phobia) of homosexuality. This fear can be expressed as disgust/loathing, hatred, prejudice, or discrimination directed against men or women who are homosexual, or toward any type of sexual diversity.

There is also something called **internalized** homophobia, which refers to the process where we unconsciously accept the homophobia of our families and of society and make it our own, which can leave its mark on our own feelings and thoughts, leading us to feel ashamed, fearful, not confident, even loathing ourselves and others. When we internalize homophobia, we accept being mistreated or rejected as if we thought we deserved it, without questioning it.

All this can affect how much we care for ourselves as well as the way in which we interact with and treat other members of the gay community, including our own friends and even boyfriends.

What the facilitators should say at the conclusion of the activity

We used this activity to facilitate the discussion of how these experiences affect us and how, at times, we may internalize society’s negative attitudes toward us without even being aware of it and of the damage they do to us.

- How did it feel to participate in this exercise?
- What do you think you have learned from it?

**NOTE:** In order to not leave participants feeling down, you should find the time to conduct this activity should be done back to back with the next activity (Figure 2.2-From Rejection to Celebration), which celebrates being gay.

**Figure 2.2 – From Rejection to Celebration**

*(Estimated time 45 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

The object of this activity is to explore how certain life events may affect one’s self-esteem and even become a source of internalized homophobia. At the same time, this activity provides an opportunity to consciously celebrate our present lives. Another objective is to emphasize how often we ask for mere **tolerance** instead of demanding a **celebration** of our sexuality. Developing self-esteem and pride in who we are is another objective, as is an exploration of the coping skills and survival strategies that participants have used and found helpful.

**MATERIALS**

Several days before the activity to prepare for it:

- A stack of blank cards (of two different colors)
- Pencils or pens
- A box for collecting and keeping the cards in
For the activity itself:

- A board with the “Tolerance Scale” (see instructions below)
- Markers of different colors

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

For at least one week prior to the activity:

1. Ask any guys who frequent the Project Space to write brief accounts of powerful memories they have of life-changing situations and/or experiences that had to do with their sexual orientation, or the expression of their masculinity, or of their femininity. (Let the guys know that these cards are anonymous and so they should not name names.)

2. Each person should receive two cards and relate both one positive experience on one card and one negative experience on the other. (Positive experience on yellow cards, for example, and negative experiences on white cards; the color doesn’t really matter as long as you can easily separate positive from negative experience when the time comes.)

3. Facilitators collect all cards in a box and keep them ready for the activity.

For the activity itself

1. During the activity, the facilitators read out loud an equal number of cards from the positive and the negative decks and ask participants to classify the story in one of three columns: Rejection, Tolerance, Celebration. These columns have been previously drawn on a board for all to see.

2. The facilitators will guide a group discussion of what happened in this activity (see below for a list of questions to be used in small groups). The goal is to encourage participants to engage in a thoughtful debate of the impact of oppression and homophobia at various levels: personal, social, and sexual.

3. Participants will be asked to share with the entire group what strategies they have adopted in their lives to confront negative situations similar to those that emerged in the stories read in the course of the activity. But, at the same time, they will also be asked what they have done to move forward with their lives and gain acceptance and celebration from the people who surround them. (See questions below to facilitate the discussion.)

4. Bring the discussion to a close by exploring the ways in which one’s sexual and/or gender identity can be celebrated in everyday life, as well as the ways we can support each other—after this activity and outside of the Project Space—in developing the strength to resist or face negative situations in a healthy manner and to feel good in our skin and celebrate our sexuality and who we are.

QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION

- How have people’s reactions to your sexual orientation (and/or gender identity) affected your life? What strategies have you used to deal with these reactions?
- Which of these strategies did you find useful?
- Do you have any strategies for dealing with rejection and homophobia in your life that you could recommend to others?
WHAT THE FACILITATORS SHOULD SAY AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ACTIVITY

- We all have used different ways to confront different situations. What’s important is how we fight back and react. In order to not let these experiences damage our self-esteem, we should develop a sense of inner strength and ability to resist, which will also help us take care of ourselves in a loving way.

- It is also important to discover ways to celebrate our sexuality and identity, as well as ways to support each other.

- This is truly one of the main goals of these activities, and although we cannot devote much time to these topics here, we hope that we can continue these discussions outside of this Project Space, and use them to initiate conversations on these topics with our friends outside of here.

**Figure 3 - Normalizing Talking about sex**

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES FOSTER SEXUAL COMMUNICATION IN ORDER TO:

- Support participants in thinking about sex in a positive way, learning to communicate about the use of condoms with both casual and regular partners.

- Help participants become aware of the problems that sexual silence can potentially cause in their lives, including negative health consequences.

**Figure 3.1 - Shake your booty**

*(Estimated time 10 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

To create a setting that facilitates the expression of ideas and beliefs about sex and sexual experiences in a lighthearted way.

**MATERIALS**

- Chairs
- Recorded music
- Music player
- List of statements (see below)

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

- With the participants’ help, distribute the chairs facing outward, in a circle in the middle of the room. The number of chairs must be one less than the number of participants (like in Musical Chairs).

- At first, all participants are standing.

- Explain the rules of the game:

  1. When the music starts, all players walk or dance around the chairs.
2. As soon as the music stops, they have to sit in a chair, keeping in mind that one person will remain standing, as there is one chair less than the number of players.

3. The person who is left standing will read out loud a sentence given to him by one of the facilitators.

4. Upon hearing the description, all participants who have either engaged in that action or desired to do so will stand up and shake their booty to the music.

5. The game then resumes with all participants, including the one who just read the card.

   • Explain that the statements on the cards are about sexual situations, positions, activities, fetishes, body parts, etc.
   • Explain that those who have been in those situations or fantasized about the things described in the sentence must stand up and shake their booty to the rhythm of the music, following the instructions of the facilitator.
   • The facilitators must talk about sex and sexual matters in total comfort.
   • Respect the boundaries of anyone who wishes not to talk about his sexual experiences. At the same time, ensure that the environment you create feels safe enough for all participants to feel comfortable talking about these subjects.
   • Tell participants they are free to change the terminology/language or the sentences in the cards whichever way they feel more comfortable, whether formal or colloquial.
   • Unlike in the game of Musical Chairs, no chair is ever removed here. The activity goes on until 10 statements have been read.

**LIST OF STATEMENTS**

1. Shake your booty if you’ve ever fantasized about having sex with Tom, Dick, or Harry [pick one]. – [Coordinators provide a list of 3 names of famous men the participants are likely to know, and the person reading the card picks one of them].

2. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had or fantasized having oral sex.

3. Shake your booty if you’ve ever [participant comes up with his own idea]. – [Facilitators do keep written track of the options created by participants for future activities].

4. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had sex or fantasized about having sex with someone of a different race.

5. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had sex or fantasized about having sex with a woman.

6. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had or fantasized about being in a threesome.

7. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had or fantasized about having sex with an older man.

8. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had or fantasized about having sex in a public space.

9. Shake your booty if you’ve ever had or fantasized about having group sex.

10. Shake your booty if you’ve ever rimmed/been rimmed or fantasized about rimming.

11. Shake your booty if you’ve ever been or fantasized about being tied up while having sex.

12. Shake your booty if you’ve ever used or fantasized about using a dildo.
ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

• Did you hear anything new that you would like to try?
• How would you make sure that all those fun things were safe?
• What did you learn from this exercise?

Figure 3.2 – Exercise and discussion on sexual vocabulary

(Estimated time 20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this activity is to become aware of sexual matters that we wish to talk about but that we find it difficult to express. Elicit as many opinions as possible about the reasons why we do not openly discuss sexual tastes and preferences.

MATERIALS

• Chairs
• Three flipcharts
• Markers of different colors

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

• Lay out enough chairs for all participants to sit in a circle.
• Ensure that this activity moves along fast and lightheartedly, and guide participants to offer responses that are brief and to the point.
• Participants should be encouraged to respond as quickly as possible, without thinking too much about their answers. (Participants are allowed to skip their turn and pass, if they wish.)
• The sentences that the facilitator initiates and the participants have to complete are:
  1. For me, sex is ...
  2. What I like about sex is ...
  3. What worries me about sex is ...
• One of the facilitators writes these sentences at the top of each flipchart. Under each heading, the facilitator will write the answers the participants will provide as completion of the sentence.
• Participants can answer with a single word or a very short phrase. (Discourage long explanations.)
• As participants take their turn stating their answers out loud to the group, the facilitators rapidly write them down on each respective flipchart, using markers of different colors.
• When all participants have provided an answer to complete all three sentences, the facilitators will quickly review what they wrote on the flipcharts and will lead the participants in a thoughtful analysis of what the activity caused them to think or feel.
**DISCUSSION**

The discussion must include an exploration of the following reasons why we do not talk openly about our sexual tastes and preferences:

- Fear of being judged
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of not being accepted

Promote a discussion among the participants of the reasons for not openly expressing sexual preferences and tastes, and of what they expect or fear will happen if they tell their sexual partners about their sexual tastes or preferences.

---

**Figure 3.3 – Negotiations with a casual partner-Story Telling**

*(Estimated time: 20 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

The goal is to get participants to actively and collectively engage in creating a sexual fantasy involving safer sexual behaviors.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

- Tell participants that you’re going to have some fun, creating a story together about meeting some hot guy.
- Let them know it’s going to be fast.
- Read the paragraph below and then go around the room, asking the first participant to add a couple of sentences to it to begin turning it into a story. The participant next to him will then add another couple of sentences, and so on. In the end, the entire group will have contributed to telling the story of a really hot encounter one night, with a very hot guy. Remind participants that all sexual activities should be such as to prevent transmission of HIV.

*Starting paragraph*

*Mr. Perfect and I walked back to the hotel room where he was staying. As soon as we entered his room, Mr. Perfect got his hands all over me and started furiously undressing me...*

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

- What did you like about this story?
- What would you have changed this to better suit your erotic desire?
- How safe do you think the sex the guys had was?
• What did you learn from this exercise?

**Figure 3.4 – Four Corners**

*(Estimated time 5-45 minutes, depending on how many statements you choose)*

**OBJECTIVE**

To get into issues regarding sero-sorting, relationships, drug and alcohol use, HIV testing, treatment optimism, strategic positioning, and bisexuality.

**MATERIALS**

- Flipchart
- Markers

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

*Before the activity:*

1. In preparation for the activity, write down a number of scenarios on flipchart sheets (see suggestions below).
2. Each scenario must contain a statement with which participants can agree or disagree.
3. Write down each scenario/statement on a separate flipchart sheet.
4. Write the following four answers on as many flipchart sheets: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.
5. Post each of the four flipchart sheet with the response choices in the four corners of the room.

*For the activity itself:*

1. Have participants take turns reading one of the scenario/statements at a time.
2. After reading each scenario/statement, ask participants to move into the corner with the answer that best represents their opinion.
3. Ask members of each group to explain why they voted the way they did.

**SAMPLE SCENARIO/STATEMENTS**

- Two guys meet on BGC (Black Gay Chat). They both have “HIV-negative” in their profiles. Is it OK for them to have anal sex without a condom.
- Two men who believe they are HIV negative have been dating for four months and using condoms every time they fuck each other. They decide to stop using condoms with each other, but they agree to use condoms with other guys. This is a good way to prevent them from getting HIV.
- Smoking pot makes it more difficult to have safer sex.
- Drinking makes it more difficult to have safer sex.
- Using meth (or GHB, or Ecstasy) makes it more difficult to have safer sex.
• Using poppers makes it more difficult to have safer sex.
• If someone decides to get an HIV test here at [fill in name of local Mpowerment program], no one will find out except for the testing counselor.
• Getting your HIV test results is the hardest part about testing.
• An HIV-negative guy and an HIV-positive guy are dating. It’s safe for the HIV-negative guy to suck the HIV-positive guy’s dick.
• Two men are dating. One of them is HIV-positive. It’s pretty safe for the HIV-negative guy to fuck the HIV-positive guy without a condom.
• If an HIV-positive man is getting treated for HIV, he doesn’t have to worry about transmitting HIV to guys who might be negative.
• HIV-positive men don’t need to use condoms when they have fuck each other.
• It’s wrong for a bisexual man to have sex with a woman, unless she knows that he also has sex with other guys.
• It’s wrong for a bisexual man to have sex with another man, unless he tells him that he also has sex with women.

**Figure 4 - Couple Relationships**

The following activities address the issue of sexual relationships in order to:

• Support participants in learning to communicate about the use of condoms with both casual and regular partners.
• Help participants develop an understanding of why they have sex and of what they hope to obtain by having sexual relationships.

**Figure 4.1 - Exercise and discussion: Seeking Mr. Perfect**

*(Estimated time 45 minutes)*

**Objective**

The goal of this activity is: (a) to identify what we expect from our (casual or regular) sexual partners; (b) to explore the risks involved in mistaking the real men in our real lives for the ideal man of our dreams; and (c) to help participants recognize what happens when our idealized expectations of sex do not match the reality of sex.

**Materials**

• Chairs
• Flipcharts
• Markers

**Instructions for the Facilitators - Activity 1 Part 1**

• Each participant gets assigned a number from 1 to 3, by going around the circle with each
person counting out loud in order—beginning again from 1 after 3, until all participants in the circle have a number.

- Divide the participants in three small groups according to the number they were assigned at the previous step (all those that said 1 will be in group 1, and so forth).

- Give each group a flipchart and markers.

- Ask each group to make a drawing of their “Mr. Perfect.”

- Then each group will write a description of “Mr. Perfect” on the flipchart. It is essential that the description include details about how the partners in the couple relate to/interact with each other. The participants in each group don’t have to come to consensus on everything, each one of them can contribute something to the list’s various items.

- On another flipchart, the facilitators will write a set of questions, which each group of participants should address in their description of Mr. Perfect. (The facilitators will later ensure that all of these items are identified and discussed.)

- Let each subgroup know that, after making a drawing of Mr. Perfect, they will be asked to describe him to the larger group as if they were describing him to their best friend, addressing at least two positive and negative aspects in response to the following eight questions:

  1. What do you talk about with him?
  2. What don’t you feel comfortable talking to him about?
  3. What makes you trust or not trust him?
  4. What do you like about having sex with him? What don’t you like?
  5. How do you decide what type of sexual activities you’re having?
  6. How do you show love for each other?
  7. What do you do when you disagree with or are angry at each other
  8. How do you decide what you want to do or where you want to go when you’re together

- When each subgroup is ready, they will introduce their Mr. Perfect to the larger group first by showing the drawing and sharing a description of what makes this man Mr. Perfect.

- As each subgroup of participants present their Mr. Perfect, the facilitator will query them about their description, keeping track of the answers that he will want to probe further.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS – ACTIVITY 1 PART 2**

- Have the participants sit in separate circles by sub-group.

- Ask them to imagine this scenario: “You and Mr. Perfect have fallen in love and become a couple. Now, try to imagine what will happen one year later.”

- The facilitators then assign a different scenario to each of the three subgroups

  Group 1. After one year together, you and Mr. Perfect break up.

  Group 2. After one year, you and Mr. Perfect are still together.

  Group 3. After one year together, you and Mr. Perfect are in crisis.

- The facilitators ask each sub-group to explain what happened—“Why did it happened?”—by telling a brief story as if it were as soap-opera, describing the events that led to each of the
outcomes. Group participants must analyze what happened in each of the three situations.

- Each sub-group must create a story describing the events that led them and Mr. Perfect to break up, still be together, or be facing a crisis, respectively.
- Have each sub-group come up with a title for the soap-opera and tell its story to the larger group.
- At the end of each of the three presentations, the facilitators must elicit a discussion on the following themes:
  1. Expectations from the relationship.
  2. Communication between the partners.
  3. Trust, loyalty, and faithfulness (these may be part of the expectations). Is it realistic to expect a relationship to be sexually (or emotionally) exclusive?
  4. Discussions and agreements made between the partners regarding fidelity and sexual monogamy; including HIV testing, and knowledge of each other’s serostatus.
  5. How can we talk to our partners to negotiate safer sex within the couple? (Is it harder to use a condom at the beginning of the relationship or after a few months? Why?)
  6. Dealing with violence (physical and/or psychological) between partners in a relationship.
  7. Barriers and difficulties faced in long-term relationships.
  8. What characteristics of a relationship make it easier or harder to have safer sex with each other? (Is it harder to use a condom if you really love and trust each other? Why?)

- The facilitators will keep track of the various ideas that are generated by the participants. Later, the facilitators will attempt to conclude the activity with a discussion of the problems and negative consequences resulting from sexual silence between sexual partners.

**Figure 4.2 – Group Discussion about Romantic Relationships**

*(Estimated time 20 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

To get guys to discuss romantic relationships as a group in an open and safe environment.

**MATERIALS**

- A box, or hat, or bowl, or bag
- Enough paper and pens for every participant

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. Give each person a piece of paper and a pen.

2. Ask them to write a question about relationships, then fold the piece of paper and put it in the bag/hat/bowl. (Give participants examples of topics to ask about, such as finding a partner, keeping a relationship going, and dealing with HIV risk when having sex when you’re in love.)
3. Mix the questions up in the bowl.

4. Pass the container around the room, and each person takes out a slip of paper and reads the question out loud.

5. Before the bowl gets passed on to the next person, lead a brief group discussion of how people in the group would respond to these questions. (Role-plays can be used if applicable—for example, how do you negotiate with a partner about having safer sex?)

   NOTE Take advantage of any opportunities to talk about Informal Outreach. For example, if someone talks about how some men aren’t monogamous, emphasize the importance of talking to your friends about the need to have safer sex with casual partners. Alternatively, this exercise might be a good time to discuss HIV prevention where one partner is HIV-positive and the other one is not.

---

**Figure 5 - Faith and Spirituality**

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY FOCUSES ON PERSONAL FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY IN ORDER TO:**

- Develop an awareness of each other’s understanding and experience of spirituality, faith, and religious beliefs.
- Understand the impact of religious beliefs/institutions/communities on the lives of individual participants and their peers.
- Explore what type of support one can expect from religious beliefs/institutions and/or spirituality.

**Figure 5.1 - One word**

*(Estimated time 45-1 hour)*

**OBJECTIVE**

Religious beliefs and the influence of churches are controversial, and yet people may embrace them despite the contradictions they pose, especially for African American gay men. By discussing terms associated with religious beliefs drawn at random, participants can choose to remain private about their beliefs. One does not necessarily have to reveal that he is religious if he doesn’t want to (or vice versa). Additionally, since the terms were all put forward by other participants, it helps each person explore what religious experiences might mean for other participants. A group discussion at the end of the exercise will allow for an exchange of ideas about the role of churches and/or spirituality in their lives, their family and communities. This can lead to a discussion about safer sex, and men’s feelings about themselves.

**MATERIALS**

- A stack of blank cards
- Pencils or pens
- A box or bag for collecting and keeping the cards in
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

1. Have each participant write down on a card one word that describes religious faith and/or spirituality for him.

2. Put all the cards in the bag/box and mix them up.

3. Have each participant draw a card.

4. Each person then discusses why he thinks the word on the card is associated with religious beliefs or spirituality.

5. Ask if the person who wrote this word wants to say anything about it?

QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION

- What is it like to be out as a gay man to one’s church community?
- How connected do you feel to the church? Why?
- Is there a difference in the feelings of connection/alienation you have depending on what type of church you belong to?
- Can you have religious beliefs without belonging to a church?
- Can you be spiritual and have no religious beliefs?
- How do churches affect the lives of young men who do not belong to a church?
- How do beliefs about sin affect your behavior?
- How do your religious beliefs affect your life and behavior?
- Do churches have a role to play in preventing HIV infections?
- Do your religious beliefs celebrate or conflict with your sexuality?

WHAT THE FACILITATORS SHOULD SAY AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ACTIVITY

- Spirituality is an important part of so many of our lives that it’s important to talk about and share and remember to be respectful and that many people don’t have spiritual beliefs and that’s OK too. It isn’t a good idea to attack someone’s spiritual beliefs.

Figure 6 – Racial disparities in the HIV epidemic

- The following activity deals with racial disparities with respect to HIV in order to:
  - Increase participants’ awareness of HIV problems in their community.
  - Help them understand potential solutions.
  - Build social support around preventive norms.

Figure 6.1 – Matching Problems and Solutions

*(Estimated time 45-1 hour)*

OBJECTIVE
Because the rates of HIV are substantially higher among YBMSM than other ethnic/racial groups, it is important for young men to realize that extra precautions need to be taken and to generate ideas about what solutions they might enact to address this reality.

MATERIALS

- Flip chart
- Markers and pens
- Note paper (approximately 4 x 6 inches)
- Two boxes or bags

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

Before the activity:

1. Collect 8 to 10 different statistics, facts, or issues relevant to HIV in the Black gay community. These are “the Problems.”
   - HIV sero-prevalence and sero-incidence rates among young Black men who have sex with men (YBMSM)
   - African American men are diagnosed with HIV later than other men
   - African American men are less likely to get tested for HIV
   - African American men have had the lowest decline in AIDS death rates
   - African American men are less likely to be on HAART.
   - African American men have a disproportionate representation among new HIV and AIDS cases

2. Generate ideas about concrete ways Black gay men can prevent the transmission of HIV. These are the solutions.
   - Use condoms when having anal sex
   - Talk about HIV testing & risk history with potential partners
   - Get tested for HIV
   - Get tested/treated for STDs
   - Take meds if HIV+
   - Get involved in MP
   - Invite friends to MP
   - Assume every potential partner has a different HIV status than you do

3. Write down each Problem and Solution on a separate note.

4. Put all the Problem notes in one bag/box/bowl, and all the Solution notes in another.

For the activity itself

1. Pass around the bowl with the Problem notes and have each participant pick one note at random.
2. Each person reads the description of the Problem aloud to the group. (Offer to read the note for the participant, if necessary).

3. After reading a Problem note, each participant tacks it along the right side of a flipchart. (Every person will stick the note below the previous one, so at the end there will be a column of Problems down the right side of the paper.)

4. After all Problems have been read and posted on the flipchart, lead a brief discussion about each of them. (sample questions for facilitating the discussion are found below)

5. After briefly discussing all Problems, pass around the bowl with the Solution notes and have each participant pick one note at random.

6. Each participant reads the Solution message aloud to the group and tacks his note along the left side of the flipchart. (At the end there will be a column of Solutions down the left side of the paper.)

7. Ask for a volunteer to draw lines between the first Solution and any of the Problems the Solution addresses.

8. Then, the volunteer passes the marker to someone else in the group who then draws lines between the second Solution and whatever Problems he thinks this Solution would address.

9. Continue until each Solution has at least one line connecting it to a Problem.

10. Next, ask the entire group about other potential solutions that exist.

11. As new solutions are generated, write them up on the flipchart and connect them with lines to the Problems as appropriate.

12. Finally, lead the group in a brief discussion about the Problems and Solutions.

**QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION**

- What other problems do you think exist, and what other kinds of solutions have you thought of?
- Which of these solutions can we try to do today?
- What has to happen to address some of these issues?
- If the solution is to get tested and treated, what would you need to do to do that?
- Where would you go, or how would you get your friend to go?
- What logistics do you have to think about? How long will it take?
The following activity addresses the issue of racism and considers ways to deal with it constructively.

**Figure 7.1 – Experiences of Racism**

**MATERIALS**
- Blank sheets of paper
- Pens

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**
1. Give each participant two blank sheets of paper and a pen.
2. Ask participants to write down, in one sentence, their definition of racism.
3. Ask participants to then use the second piece of paper and write down any ways in which they have experienced racism in the past.
4. Have participants pin or tape the two sheets of paper on the wall so that there are two sets of paper together on the wall.

**QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION**
- How did you respond to a situation when you experienced racism?
- What did you do or how did you behave?
- What did you think about the situation?
- What are healthy ways that you can address experienced racism?
- How does racism affect how Black gay men hear HIV prevention messages?
  - Does it make a difference if HIV-prevention messages come from individuals, agencies, media or other entities?
  - How and why?
- What do you do if the HIV prevention message isn’t given in a culturally appropriate way? Do you ignore it? Do you try to learn from it and move on?
- What did you learn about racism growing up?
- What did people teach you about how to deal with racism?
Figure 8 - Sexual identity, gender, and the lives of Black gay/same gender loving (SGL) men

The following activities address sexual identity and gender in order to:

- Promote self-awareness and generate a debate on gender and sexual identity
- Promote self-empowerment.
- Develop awareness of the stereotypes and stigma that are associated with being gay, and our acceptance of cultural images of what men’s lives are like depending upon their sexual orientation.
- To question stereotypes in order to envision life as a Black gay/SGL man against negative social expectations.

Figure 8.1 - Discussion of how gay men are portrayed

*(Estimated time 20 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

Lead participants in a debate over their sexual identity, which is different from (and typically rejected by) the social and cultural norms of the dominant heterosexual culture. The debate should also touch on how this experience has affected their lives.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. Explain to participants that this activity is about the representations and stereotypes of gay men.
2. Ask participants to sit in a circle, with the facilitators as part of the circle.
3. Tell participants that you will read a statement and they will have to reply with the first thing that comes to their minds, without thinking about it.
4. Provide an example and make sure that at least 3 participants answer. For instance, say “What people eat for Thanksgiving,” or “What people do on the Fourth of July.”
5. This activity must be performed very rapidly, with one facilitator reading the statements and the other writing the answers quickly on a flipchart.

**FIRST ROUND (DO IT QUICKLY BUT REPEAT THE ACTIVITY TWICE)**

Ask participants to name the first thing that comes to mind when you say: “Negative things and myths about gay men.”

- After doing the exercise twice, the co-facilitator quickly reads all the answers written on the flipchart but without lingering on any of them.
- The activity then continues with a group discussion of the answers given, identifying negative characteristics and stereotypes.

Questions to facilitate the discussion

- Do we feel that these characteristics and stereotypes are true or false?
- What does it mean that some people, or even ourselves, believe these things about gay men to be true?
WHAT THE FACILITATORS SHOULD SAY AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ACTIVITY

• These are some of the stereotypes and negative things that people say of gay men. In reality, many of these are exactly that, stereotypes and things that people believe, maybe we ourselves sometimes believe them to be true either of ourselves or of our gay brothers. What is important is to keep in mind that there is a great diversity of gay men.

• Now we’re going to take a 5-minute break to set up some equipment and, when we come back, we’ll talk about some people, situations, or historical events that may give us quite a different view of gay men.

Figure 8.2 – Celebrating our identity & imagining our lives without homophobia

(Estimated time 20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE
To spend time visualizing being free from some of the negative thinking associated with homophobia.

MATERIALS
• List of celebratory statements to be distributed to and read by the participants

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS
1. Have the participants either stand or sit in a circle.

2. Ask them to answer the question “What is it like to be gay for you?” with the first thing that comes to their mind.

3. Comment on each reply and talk about the real difficulty of being gay (if that is what emerges in the replies) or the advantages of being gay (for those that indicate so in their answers).

4. After this initial round, distribute one card to each participant.

5. Ask one participant at a time to read out loud the sentence on their card. Have each person pause for 30 seconds after the previous participant has finished reading his sentence, before the next one takes his turn.

6. Ask them to use these 30 seconds between each statement to visualize/imagine how they would feel if they lived in a place where those statements were true.

7. After all have read their cards, the facilitator will pause to assess the participants’ reactions, ask them how they feel and whether they have anything they want to say.

LIST OF SENTENCES TO BE WRITTEN ON THE CARDS AND READ BY THE PARTICIPANTS
(distribute only one card to each participant)

• I am proud to be gay because I am free to be me.

• I deserve to be loved and respected by the people around me.

• I will feel free when I can display affection for my boyfriend in public.

• I will be happy when I can speak freely about my sexual orientation.

• I will strive to create a world where people are not discriminated against for their sexual orientation.
• My friends and family love me and respect me, regardless of my sexual orientation.
• I will be an agent of change in the world around me.
• I will be a leader in my community and achieve progress.
• I have it in me to find happiness in my life.
• I will fight against homophobia in my community.
• I will bust up stereotypes that promote discrimination against gay men.
• I am a unique, valuable, and powerful person.
• I have the right to be happy, and I deserve it.

Figure 8.3 – Gay or straight?

*(Estimated time 40 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

To stimulate a group discussion about sexual stereotypes.

**MATERIALS**

• Paper
• Pens

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. Separate participants into two small groups (four groups if there are too many people for two groups).
2. Each group will have 10 minutes to write a story about a man named Darryl (or any other name), who is XX years old, African American, and lives in [your location].
3. Make sure the groups sit far enough from each other so they can’t influence each other’s stories.
4. Out of every two groups, one will describe Darryl as a gay man and one will be assigned to describe his life as a straight man.
5. Make sure all participants in each group **collaborate** in the exercise. For example, in writing the story of Darryl, pass the sheet of paper around in a circle and have each person write a sentence together about the man.
6. The story of Darryl can include things like descriptions of the man, his relationships with other people, who the people in his life are, his profession, his accomplishments, how others regard him, what he does for fun, etc. — NOTE: You may want to ask any CG members participating in the activity specifically to describe Darryl’s sexual experiences, when it’s their turn to chip in.
7. When all groups are done writing their stories, have one person from each group read the story aloud.
8. Lead a discussion about ways the stories differed depending on whether Darryl was gay or straight. Help participants identify and discuss stereotypes and social expectations that emerged accordingly.

**QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION**

• How does society treat gay people and straight people different from each other?
• How are the stories different according to the straight perspective VS. the gay perspective?
**Figure 8.4 – Masculine vs. feminine: Creating images**

*Estimated time 20 minutes*

**OBJECTIVE**

The goal of this exercise is to explore stereotypes about masculine and feminine men, including assumptions about sexual orientation and behavior, and social expectations of each.

**MATERIALS**

- Flipcharts
- Markers and pens
- Glue and adhesive tape
- Magazine images for collage

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. Get participants to create two images (using any of the materials they need) of a young man. Tell participants that in one poster, the man must be portrayed as masculine, in the other poster he is portrayed as feminine.

2. Let participants decide how femininity and masculinity are portrayed (e.g., clothes, stance, expression, accessories, etc.).

3. Once the images are completed, post them on the wall and, next to each, post a flipchart sheet.

4. As a group, ascribe personality characteristics to each image and, as these characteristics are called out, write them on the flipchart next to each respective image.

5. As a group, ascribe a sexual orientation to each image (gay, bisexual, or straight), and write it down on the flipchart.

6. As a group, list what type of sexual activities the man in each image enjoys (including whether they are usually the top or bottom partner).

7. Lead a discussion about why and how the group decided on the personality characteristics, sexual orientation, and sexual activities. Notice if any stereotypes are made according to how the man in the image is portrayed, whether masculine or feminine.

**QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION**

- How did you decide who was masculine and who was feminine?
- What did you look at in each image to make that decision?
- Do you think that gay men are more feminine than straight or bi men?
- Do you know any fem straight men?
Figure 8.5 – Masculine vs. feminine: Value and importance

*(Estimated time 20 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

The goal of this exercise is to explore stereotypes about masculine and feminine men, including how their families and community relate to and accept them.

**MATERIALS**

- The two posters created in the previous activity.
- Paper
- Pens

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. Hang the two posters created in the activity in Figure 8.5 on the wall.
2. As a group, write down the life stories of the two men portrayed in the images, particularly focusing on family and community reactions to them.
3. Make sure every participant contributes to this activity, by going around in a circle and having each person add one statement to the story.
4. At the end, read the two stories.
5. Lead participants in a comparison of the two stories.
6. Lead a discussion of how and why the two stories are different.
7. Explore the role of stereotypes and assumptions in these stories, and whether challenging the stereotypes could have produced different stories.

Figure 8.6 – How are you different in different settings

*(Estimated time 20 minutes)*

**OBJECTIVE**

This exercise explores the differences in how men identify in different ways and act differently in different social settings. It will help participants become aware of how they behave differently, allowing them to understand why, and what the consequences are, both in their feelings and their actions.

**MATERIALS**

- Flipcharts
- Paper
- Markers and pens
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS (OPTION 1)
1. Come up with a basic scenario of a social interaction.

2. Have participants role-play how they would act if following the same scenario in different situations (e.g., in church, at home with their families present, in a gay club, at the MP, in school, in the street, in a straight club, around people older than they are, around MP Coordinators, around the staff of the agency, in a group where the majority of people are white).

3. Lead a discussion about the differences between how they acted according to the setting.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS (OPTION 2)
1. Break participants down into smaller group.

2. Ask each group to write down on flip charts how someone acts in different social situations (e.g., church, school, gay club, the street, straight club, home, the MP, around people older than they are, around MP Coordinators, around the staff of the agency, in a group where the majority of people are white).

3. Have the entire group compare and contrast the different behavior characteristics listed on the various flipcharts.

QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION
• How do you act differently when you are with your family compared to when you’re here with your friends at the MP? Why? How do you feel about it?
• How do you act differently at church? At the bars/clubs? Around straight people? Why? How do you feel about it?
• How do you act differently around white people? Why? How do you feel about it?
• How do you act differently around white gay men? Why? How do you feel about it?

Figure 8.7 – Introducing identity and diversity

(Estimated time 40 minutes)

OBJECTIVE
To lead a group discussion that highlights the positive accomplishments of Black gay role models throughout history and provide participants with an opportunity to recognize in themselves some of the same laudable characteristics.

MATERIALS
• PowerPoint presentation
• Projector, computer, and a screen or white wall for projecting the presentation on.
• Cards on which to write the positive characteristics that participants will select during the presentation
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

1. Introduce and briefly talk about the people and/or historical events in the images shown in the presentation. You should pick (a) five gay, Black men who did something important, succeeded despite all odds, taught us something, or are good examples (role models?); and (b) three historical events that contributed to defining the gay liberation movement.

2. Each image must serve a specific purpose, so as to illustrate the diversity of Black men who were sexually/romantically attracted to men throughout history, and thus to dismantle the stereotype that there is only one way to be gay. The following is a list of potential candidates to choose from, but Coordinators are encouraged to also add other gay, Black men who the participants may know, especially if they are active in the local community in Dallas:

- Bayard Rustin - leading activist of the early 1947 – 1955 civil-rights movement and prime organizer of the 1963 march on Washington. His friend Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his celebrated “I have a dream” speech, whereas Rustin had to remain in the shadows because of homophobic attacks by segregationists against him.
- James Arthur Baldwin (influential American writer)
- Alvin Ailey (internationally acclaimed, revolutionary American choreographer)
- Essex Hemphill (artist and activist)
- André Leon Talley (influential editor at large of Vogue magazine)
- John Amaechi (former NBA player)
- Sylvester (disco diva)
- Ru Paul (performer and television celebrity)
- Jean-Michel Basquiat (neo-expressionist painter)
- Charles Pugh (television journalist, politician, openly gay elected official)
- Peter J. Gomes (American preacher and theologian, Professor at Harvard Divinity School)
- Darryl Stephens (American actor, portrays Noah Nicholson on Noah’s Arc)

3. The images of historical events should also serve the purpose of illustrating the achievements of the international gay liberation movement, especially in relation to civil rights and social justice. Examples to choose from include:

- Compton Cafeteria Riots (1966)
- Stonewall Riots (1969)
- Harvey Milk’s campaigns against the Briggs Initiative and his work as a coalition builder with organized labor and racial/ethnic minorities (1975)
- March on Washington with display of the AIDS Quilt on the National Mall (1993)
- campaigns to repeal discriminatory legislation, such as state Sodomy Laws prohibiting sex between men (culminating with a defeat for the state of Texas in Lawrence v. Texas)
- California’s Prop 8, which prohibited same-sex couples from marrying
- the Defense Department’s Don’t Ask Don’t Tell policy, punishing gay and lesbian people in the army for coming out of the closet
- Barack Obama, a Black man, is the first sitting U.S. president to unequivocally express public support for extending civil marriage privileges to same-sex couples (2012)
4. Present the PowerPoint slideshow in two parts. Part 1 will introduce five (5) historical figures (past or present). Part 2 will introduce four (4) events that had a gay focus and historical repercussions in contemporary life.

5. In Part 1 of the presentation, simply show each image of the famous people you selected, asking participants if they can identify them (if they cannot, tell them), and explain briefly who they were and what they did. (Begin by showing images of people they’re more likely to identify.)

6. Then ask participants to identify positive characteristics of these people.

7. Use a flipchart to write down the various characteristics named by the participants. Make sure to write clearly and in large characters so everyone can read easily.

8. In Part 2 of the presentation, show images of the historical events and ask participants if they can identify the events portrayed in the images (tell them if they cannot). Then briefly present each of the events shown in the images and their importance in the advancement of the movement for the extension of civil rights to gay people.

9. Ask participants what these events symbolize for the gay communities in the US and around the world.

10. Use a flipchart to write down the characteristics, identified by the participants, that made these events important. Make sure to write clearly and in large characters so everyone can read easily.

11. Finally, explain that the objective of this activity was to show them a variety of people and events throughout history, which demonstrate how there are different ways to be gay, different types of relations, different ways of being, different ways of loving other men. As for the historical events, point out that each one of them was important as a step forward to take us where we are today in terms of civil rights for gay people around the world and in the US.

12. Show the participants the flipchart with all the positive characteristics that they associated with these people and events; and ask participants to read each one of them out loud.

13. Now ask participants to read all the phrases on the flipchart in silence and to pick the one characteristic with which they identify the most, either because it’s a trait that they share or because it’s something that they would like to accomplish in their lives.

14. Finally, after all participants have had enough time to make their selection, ask them to stand up, one at a time, and say out loud the word/phrase they chose for themselves.

**WHAT THE FACILITATORS SHOULD SAY AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ACTIVITY**

With this activity we wanted to demonstrate the diversity of men and ways to be gay throughout history, as well as to show the positive characteristics of these famous people so that we can begin to see and appreciate the positive characteristics that each one of us has, instead of readily accepting the negative stereotypes that are generally presented to us by society.
OBJECTIVE
Analyze the potential costs and benefits of being an out gay man for the young men in the group. Specifically help participants recognize that gender and sexual non-conformity can have benefits, increasing their awareness of social stereotypes and assumptions, giving them an insight into how people who are different may feel. At the same time, while there may be costs associated to being a sexual minority, they need not be excluded from the benefits of society: they can have a loving family, have meaningful relationships, have a meaningful job.

MATERIALS
- Flipcharts
- Markers

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS
1. Have the group list names of prominent Black gay men they know, ideally someone they regard as a role models, and write down these names of flipcharts.
2. Discuss their history (as much as is known) and what they accomplished in their careers.
3. Analyze how being gay affected their lives. For example, were these men out or in the closet? Were they trying to pass as straight or just not publicly gay? How did they benefit from being out, or not being out, or trying to pass as straight? What were the costs of the way they chose to present and live their lives as a result of being gay? Did they have a partner? Did they create a family in their life? Were they respected? Were they loved?
4. As the group discusses the costs and benefits of being gay, being out or in the closet, trying to pass as straight, write down them down on two separate flipcharts, labeled COSTS and BENEFITS respectively.
5. Lead a group discussion of how similar costs and benefits might apply to the lives of the men in the group.

QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION
- What are the consequence of being out?
- What are the consequence of trying to pass as straight?
- What can you gain from your experiences of being gay?
- What are the privileges enjoyed by straight men compared to gay men?
- What experiences/knowledge do you straight men miss that gay men have?
- What’s important for you?
- How can you obtain some of the benefits that straight men enjoy by privilege? For example, can you still have a family if you are gay and out?
THE GOAL OF THESE ACTIVITIES IS TO:

1. Promote the diffusion of prevention messages and healthy sexual norms through the participants’ social networks and, ultimately, the entire community, by supporting participants in having informal conversations with their peers.

2. Motivate participants become agents of change within their social network.

3. Help participants develop communication skills necessary to talk about HIV risk reduction with their peers.

**OBJECTIVE**

To get guys to role play situations where they talk to their friends about various issues of importance that affect young Black gay men.

**MATERIALS**

- Flipchart
- Laminated cards with pointers about talking to one’s friends (enough for all participants to keep and take home)
- Printed scenarios for the role plays (each scenario will need two printouts, one for each character)

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS**

1. On the flipchart, write down various themes, such as those that emerged in the other activities and modules, and those that have come up in the course of other U-BE meetings and activities (homophobia, internalized homophobia, discrimination, stereotypes about gay men, talking about sex, sexual communication with one’s partners, safer sex, getting an HIV test, dating someone who’s of a different HIV status than yours, telling friends if you’re HIV-positive)...

2. Begin the activity by asking participants questions about the themes listed on the flipchart.

3. Ask participants how they think that those themes affect the lives of their own friends.

4. Ask them whether they think that their own friends are aware of how these topics affect their lives.

5. Ask them how they think they might be able to help their friends address those questions.

6. Tell them that there are two things they can do for their friends:

   - They can tell their friends about these meetings and activities at U-BE and invite them to join them in the future, since we really wish that as many guys as possible have a chance to talk about these topics and share their ideas among each other.
• They can talk about these things with their friends themselves.

7. Ask them to think how they might start a conversation on these topics with their friends, and how they might help their friends start thinking about these questions.

8. Ask them if they have ever talked to their friends about those topics. If yes, ask them how it felt to have those conversations. What did they find difficult? What came easy? How did it affect their relationship with those friends?

9. Take your time in completing this activity. Do not rush through it.

10. Ensure that all participants have a chance to practice and participate in role plays.

11. Try to make sure that all participants learn the skills necessary to feel comfortable talking to their friends about these topics.

12. Show participants the laminated signs with the suggestions about how to speak with their friends, and distribute one laminated sign to each participant, explaining that it’s for them to keep and take home.

**LIST OF SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LAMINATED SIGN**

- Do not preach and do not judge
  - Never say “you must.”

- Make “I” statements

  - For instance, “I think that...” or “I feel that...” or “I believe that...” or “It seems to me that...”

- Use yourself and your own experiences as an example of what you want to say

- Refer to the meetings and activities at U-BE to start the conversation

  - You can say: “I attended this meeting, where we talked about...” or “I used to do/think... but after going to that meeting I now feel that...”

- Have a casual, informal conversation, do not give a speech as if it were a sermon.

- Stress the positive aspects of certain behaviors or of changing certain behaviors

  - For instance, “When I feel ashamed for being gay, I think of all these famous Black men who were gay,” or “If you think about it, it is not true that gay men are all the same, there are so many different types of gay men who have done great things,” or “When I use a condom, I don’t need to worry afterwards,” or “If you get tested for HIV every 6 months, you stay on top of your health.”

- Do not scare them or use threats, that **never** works

  - For example, “If you keep being afraid of showing affection to your boyfriend in public, you’re a pussy,” or “What were you thinking? If you had unprotected sex you will become positive.”
Figure 9.2 – Role Plays

(Estimated time: 45 minutes to an hour)

ROLE PLAYS ARE ABOUT:

- homophobia (external and internal)
- gay identity
- safer sex and intimacy
- getting and HIV test
- talking about condoms and new relationships
- disclosing that you’re HIV positive
- sero-discordant relationships
- supporting a friend who is HIV positive to seek medical care and treatment
- sero-preference and sero-adaptation

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATORS

1. Tell participants that you’re now going to do some role-plays to practice talking to a friend.

2. Tell them we have selected different themes and that we will practice scenarios for each.

3. Divide participants into pairs, each participant will play one of the two characters in the scenarios.

4. Give each of the two participants practicing the role-play one card describing the character they’ll be playing and the situation.

AFTER EACH ROLE PLAY:

1. First ask the participants who took part in the role-play what they liked about it.

2. Then ask the other participants who were in the audience what they liked about it.

3. Then ask these questions of the participant who played the friend

   - How did you feel during the conversation?
   - What did you enjoy about the conversation?
   - What do you think could have made it better?
   - What other things would you have liked to hear from your friend?

4. Then, ask the participant who played himself these questions

   - How did you feel while having this conversation?
   - What did you like about what you told your friend?
   - What do you think could have made it better?
   - What other things would you have liked to tell him?
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ACTIVITY:

1. Remind participants that when we talk to our friends we don’t want to just to tell them to use condoms, but that we want to help them to think about the reasons why we sometimes have sex without condoms and sometimes do things that are risky in other respect.

2. Remind participants that it is imperative to respect the confidentiality of what our friends tell us, that we should avoid gossiping or even sharing with other people the names of friends who confide in us.

Scenario 1. Homophobia

CHARACTERS: DUANE AND ALBERT

Duane isn’t out to his family, still lives at home, and secretly has a boyfriend named Steve. While Duane was in the bathroom he got a text message from Steve that he thinks his Aunt read. Duane’s Aunt told him that a text came through from someone named Steve and asked who Steve was. When Duane read the message, Steve had written that he loved and missed Duane. Now Duane is worried that his Aunt will tell the rest of the family and he’s scared. He called his “totally out to everyone” best friend Albert for advice.

POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

• Pretend nothing happened and hope that Duane’s family does nothing about it.
• If Duane’s family asks, just deny that he’s gay.
• Ask Duane how he would like to deal with the situation.
• Ask Duane to imagine how he might talk to his family so that they would still accept him.
• Ask Duane to think about what he will do if his family really kicks him out.

Scenario 2. Internalized Homophobia and Gay Identity

CHARACTERS: RITCHIE AND CRAIG

Ritchie and Craig are good friends. Richie has a lot of gay male friends but Craig only has one, and that’s Ritchie. Craig complains a lot about not being able to find a boyfriend but he doesn’t go out to any gay clubs or visit any community groups for young gay Black men. He thinks all those guys are queens and doesn’t want to be seen with them. Craig also dates women and says that he’s bisexual although he only gets really sexually excited about men. He meets guys for sex by cruising the park or going to the bathhouse but is frustrated because they only want sex and ultimately he wants a boyfriend. He thought he might have met someone he could date at the bathhouse but after a few months of hanging out the guy said he just wanted to be friends or maybe have sex sometimes but he didn’t want a relationship. This depressed Craig and made him angry. He thinks all gay guys just want sex. He texts Richie to see if they can meet at the park to talk.
POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

- Tell Craig about successful gay relationships you know of, or of famous people who are gay and in a relationship.
- Suggest Craig seek out support from a community-based organization for young, gay, Black men, such as U-BE.
- Try to understand what Craig does and where he goes to find a boyfriend, and what he expects from these men. And then ask Craig if he may be picking up the wrong guys given what he wants.
- Suggest that going out with girls would only result in repressing his sexuality.
- Ask Craig what is it that he’s afraid of about being gay.
- Tell Craig what you have done to deal with your own disappointments in love.

Scenario 3. Safer sex and intimacy

CHARACTERS: JARED AND TARIQ

Jared and Tariq are good friends.

Tariq met a guy a while ago at a house party and they immediately hit it off. Now he and Jared don’t hang out much anymore. Jared is OK with this because he spends a lot of time at a fun community center with other young gay Black men. He’s learned a lot by being there, including how common it is for boyfriends to sometimes stop using condoms before they know their HIV status and have a talk about monogamy and what it means to them as a couple to not use condoms.

Recently Tariq and his boyfriend were fooling around and Tariq ended up getting fucked without a condom. His boyfriend was rubbing his dick between Tariq’s butt cheeks and before long his boyfriend was inside him. It was the first time that this had happened. It freaked Tariq out but it also felt so good and they felt so close that he couldn’t help himself. His boyfriend pulled out before he came so he felt better about that. The next day Tariq calls Jared to make a plan to meet for dinner. He wants to tell Jared all about this exciting new development in their relationship.

POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

- Suggest he seeks out advice from a community-based organization for young, gay, Black men.
- Suggest that Tariq discuss with Earl how hot sex was even with a condom, and that Tariq is more comfortable using them again in the future, so that they need not worry.
- Ask Tariq when was the last time he got tested.
- Ask Tariq if he knows Earl’s sero-status and how does he know that.
- Ask Tariq if Earl knows Tariq’s sero-status.
- Suggest that, before doing it again without a condom, Tariq and Earl should get tested together and then make a decision. Also suggest that the decision must be conditional on an honest agreement about having only safer sex with other guys.
Scenario 4. Getting an HIV test

CHARACTERS: CHRIS AND VICTOR

Chris and Victor have been friends since they were both 14. Chris goes to a community center for other young gay Black men to hang out but Victor doesn’t. Victor doesn’t think the center is his thing and says he doesn’t have time. From spending time at the community center, Chris has learned that a lot of young gay Black men are HIV positive but don’t know it. He has also learned that if you know your HIV status and know that you’re HIV positive, going to a Dr. and getting into treatment can keep you from developing AIDS. Chris has talked to Victor about this and has urged Victor to get tested for HIV. Victor is a bit of a player and Chris knows it. However, Victor always puts Chris off about getting tested and insists that he’s careful and knows what to do.

Today, Chris is meeting Victor at the park and has come up with a plan to get Victor tested for HIV. Chris is going to tell Victor that he plans to get an HIV test and that he needs his emotional support. Ultimately he plans on asking Victor to come with him and get tested too so they can do it together.

POINTS THAT COULD BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

- Talk about why it makes you nervous to get tested, and ask Victor if he also would feel nervous and why.
- Tell Victor that at U-BE you’ve seen that guys who get tested regularly are much less worried about HIV and that you would also like to get to that place.

Scenario 5. Talking about condoms and new relationships

CHARACTERS: DARREL AND CHASE

Darrel and Chase are best friends.

Last year Darrel was dating a guy and they talked about moving in together. The sex was amazing, and after a while they stopped using condoms because they were both HIV-negative. One day Darrel found out that his boyfriend was cheating on him. Darrel was devastated but eventually moved on. Except, he realized they had been having unprotected sex and then freaked out about HIV. He went to get an HIV test and then another one a month later. Both came back negative. Looking back, Darrel was amazed that he allowed himself to fuck raw because he believed he and his “boyfriend” were in love and committed to each other.

Now, Darrel and Chase are getting together to talk about Chase’s new boyfriend, Alfred. Chase finds Alfred incredibly hot, smart and fun. They’ve gone on a couple of amazing dates and already Chase is thinking that this is “the one”. He can’t wait to tell Darrel about how he and Alfred are made for each other.

POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

- Remind Donny that love is a wonderful thing but it’s no protection against HIV, no matter how much he and Alfred love each other.
- Suggest that, since they love each other so much, it may be the right time to discuss agreements about sex with other people.
Scenario 6. Disclosing that one is HIV-positive

CHARACTERS: KEITH AND MAURICE

Keith’s best friend Maurice lives in another city. Maurice is a very sweet guy. A few months ago, Keith started telling Maurice about a community center for young gay Black men he started going to and the HIV-positive guys he met there. Keith has learned that all the nasty things people say about people with HIV are not true. One day when Keith and Maurice were talking on the phone, Maurice started crying and told Keith that he was HIV-positive but that he hadn’t told anyone, except for him and his sister. Keith found out that Maurice has been positive for a while, but with treatment and going to the doctor’s regularly he’s been doing OK. The biggest problem is that Maurice is not comfortable telling people he’s HIV positive. Maurice is very afraid of what people will say about him if they find out.

Recently, Maurice has been going out with this guy, Anthony. He really likes Anthony and thinks Anthony likes him, too. Maurice feels they’re ready to take the relationship one step further than dating and become boyfriends. But Maurice is terrified because he hasn’t told Anthony that he’s HIV-positive. Maurice doesn’t want to be rejected and lose Anthony. At the same time, he feels he cannot go into a relationship with such a big secret. Sooner or later, Anthony will have to be told. What then? He asks for Keith’s advice.

POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

- Suggest that Maurice gets some advice from a peer support group for HIV+ young gay men, such as fill in with the right referral information
- Suggest that Maurice tests Anthony’s attitudes by watching together a film about someone who’s HIV-positive or telling him a story about some friend who is.
- Remind Maurice that Anthony, too, may be positive, and that it may be worth finding a way to talk about it.
- Assess what the best time is to tell him, and weigh the pros and cons of telling him.
- Ask Maurice to think about how he will feel if Anthony rejects him.
- Tell Maurice that, regardless of whether he tells Anthony or not, he could adopt the strategy of only having safer sex with him all the time.
- Suggest that some positive guys experience a sense of relief after disclosing their status. It’s a bit like coming-out, which is much less stressful than being in the closet.
Scenario 7. How to handle a sero-discordant relationship

CHARACTERS: JACQUES AND RONNIE

Jacques and Ronnie are great friends. Ronnie is HIV negative. Jacques is HIV-positive and has been for many years. He’s taking HIV medications, sees his doctor regularly and is doing fine. Five years ago he met his boyfriend Alfred, and three years ago they moved in together. Alfred is HIV-negative. At first, Jacques was very worried about having a relationship with someone who was HIV negative, but Alfred had been talking to a counselor at a community center for young gay men and learned how to protect himself, while still having sex with Jacques.

Ronnie called Jacques asking to meet at a coffeehouse to talk. Ronnie just met this wonderful guy, Micah, who disclosed that he was HIV-positive. Ronnie has become very attached to Micah and has been wondering what it would mean to be in a relationship with someone who has a different HIV status. Ronnie has never talked to Jacques about how he handles sex with his negative partner because he was embarrassed to ask, but now he feels he needs his advice.

POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:

• Tell Ronnie to discuss his concerns openly with Micah
• Suggest that Ronnie seek the advice of some HIV prevention organization for gay men, which may know the most up-to-date information about a situation like his.
• Ask Ronnie if he knows whether his date, Micah, is in treatment and his viral load is suppressed.
• Ask Ronnie if anal sex is so important to him that he cannot do without. If he doesn’t care for anal sex, they can have oral sex.
• Tell Ronnie they can use condoms and not have to worry about it.
• Tell Ronnie that even though there is always some risk, if Micah’s viral load is suppressed, the risk of transmission is very low.
• TENTATIVE: Suggestions are welcome

Scenario 8. Supporting a friend who’s HIV-positive to get care and take treatment

CHARACTERS: ALFRED AND TROY

Alfred has a cousin who was recently hospitalized. His cousin is HIV positive but wasn’t on any medication. He thought that if he was on medication, people would find out he was positive and gossip about him. Now he’s doing better because he’s on retroviral medication.

Together, Alfred and his cousin have been going to a fun community center for young gay Black men. While visiting the community center Alfred met a new guy named Troy. Troy had just moved to Dallas and he’s very sweet and they’ve become good friends. In fact, Troy is about to spend a week sleeping on Alfred’s sofa while he looks for work and a more stable place to live.
Alfred noticed that Troy was often very tired and thin. Alfred asked Troy if he was HIV-positive. Troy was taken aback from being asked such a bold question, but after a minute he said that he was and that he had been for a while.

Alfred is concerned about Troy and remembers the experience of his cousin when he wasn’t on medication for HIV. Alfred has decided he wants to find out whether Troy is seeing a doctor and taking meds for HIV, because he suspects he’s not.

**POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:**

- Have Alfred talk a little about what he’s seen with other people he knows who are HIV positive and on medication. It’s important not to “out” anyone about their HIV status, but he can still talk in general terms.
- Alfred can tell Troy what he’s learned from his time at the community center about how seeing a doctor and taking medication can lower your viral load and keep you healthy.
- Alfred might ask his cousin for advice about what to say to Troy. His cousin might have suggestions about where to see a doctor.
- Suggestions are welcome

---

**Scenario 9. Sero-preference and sero-adaptation**

**CHARACTERS: DARNELL AND MALIK**

Darnell has been HIV-positive for a few years. He’s been seeing a doctor regularly and taking medications. His viral load is undetectable and he’s generally healthy.

Darnell hasn’t had a boyfriend in a long time and would very much like to have one. Partly, he’s worried about being rejected when the time comes to tell someone that he’s HIV-positive.

One day, at a party, Darnell met Willie. Darnell found Willie really fun and handsome, and they spent a long time talking together. They exchange numbers at the end of the night.

After texting back and forth, Darnell and Willie agree to go out on a date the following weekend. For days before the date, Willie keeps texting Darnell about things they both like, like certain TV shows. After a while, Willie starts sending Darnell more explicit messages, telling him how he thinks Darnell is hot, and how he’s looking forward to having sex with him. In one text message, he says that he really wants to fuck him. Darnell is very excited about all this.

The day of the date comes. Darnell and Willie meet, grab a slice of pizza and go to the movies. When they come out of the theatre, they look at each other and, finally, Willie asks Darnell if they’re going home together. Darnell is beaming and invites Willie to his place. On their way home, Darnell tells Willie he has something important he wants him to know and tells him he’s HIV-positive. Willie’s face turns to stone, and he only says, “Oh, I see.” When Darnell asks him if that matters, Willie says that of course it does, and that he should have told him sooner. Darnell tells Willie they don’t have to go home together if he doesn’t want to. But Willie insists he wants to go.

Back at Darnell’s place, Willie just sits in the couch and asks Darnell if he wants to watch TV. While they’re watching TV, Darnell tries to sit closer to Willie but Willie is very stiff. Eventually, though, they hug and make out for a while. Darnell feels very uncomfortable as all the passion that Willie
had shown in his text messages seems to be gone. Nonetheless, they even get naked and jerk off together. When they come, Willie gets up immediately and goes to the bathroom to wash. When he comes out the bathroom, he puts on his clothes and says he has to go. The next day, Willie sends Darnell a text message saying he had fun and that they should go out again some time.

Darnell is confused and hurt. He feels he had been very honest by telling Willie about his HIV status, but Willie’s reaction made him feel dirty and unworthy. He’s no longer sure he wants to disclose his status to someone because he hates feeling like that. Plus, he doesn’t understand how all the passion Willie had been showing, and his sexting him about fucking could have disappeared just like that. If Willie was concerned about having sex with someone who’s positive, why hadn’t he brought this up earlier? Was Willie planning to fuck bareback? Is that why he got so cold all of a sudden? But if he was, why had he not asked Darnell about his sero-status to begin with?

Darnell knows that there are many hot sexual things one can do that are not risky for HIV, plus his viral load is controlled so he’s not likely to transmit it. Certainly not via oral sex or when fucking with a condom. Darnell decides to confide in his friend Malik about the situation.

**POINTS THAT MUST BE COVERED, ON TOP OF ANYTHING THE PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH ON THEIR OWN:**

- Suggestions are welcome
- Suggest that, in the future, Darnell does not disclose his status on the first date.
- Suggest that Darnell need not reveal his status as long as he does not have sex that is risky for HIV transmission.
- Ask Darnell if he asked what Willie’s HIV status was and how he knows it.
- Suggest that, in the future, to avoid rejection, Darnell asks the other guy for their sero-status first, before volunteering information about his.
- Suggest that, when Darnell meets a guy, he tell him that he’s only going to have safer-sex because he’s concerned about HIV-transmission, without saying from whom to whom.
Together
creating community
for friendship
for health
for life

mpowerment.org
The Center for AIDS Prevention Studies
University of California, San Francisco
50 Beale Street, Suite 1300
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.597.9306

Download a PDF of Adaptation of MP for YLMSM, at
www.mpowerment.org/downloads/YLMSM.pdf