

The University of North Carolina System 2021 Virtual Behavioral Health Convening

College Men During a Pandemic: Connection Through Group

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College Men During a Pandemic: Connection Through Group

- **What we will be talking about today...**
 - Mental health trends for men
 - Why men's groups can help
 - How to develop/enhance a men's group

College Men During a Pandemic: Connection Through Group

- Acknowledgement:
 - Gender (“men” and “women”)
 - My identities
- Men are diverse in race, ethnicity, culture, migration status, age, socioeconomic status, ability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, etc. - Each of these identities contributes in intersecting ways to shape how men experience and perform their masculinities.

(e.g., Arellano-Morales, Liang, Ruiz, & Rios-Oropeza, 2015; Kiselica, Benton-Wright, & Englar-Carlson, 2016)

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Resilience

- “The theme, RESILIENCE, identifies the challenging experiences of 2020 with the impact of COVID-19 and the effects on the mental health of students, faculty, and staff; intertwined with a spirit of hope, encouragement, and a will to endure.”
- “Above the Line” – Urban Meyer



Connection With and Among Students During Pandemic

- Virtual Therapy
- Virtual Groups / Workshops
- Instagram

- Spartan Men group (Spring Semester 2021)
 - Why?
 - Men are at-risk
 - Men do not seek mental health services as often
 - Men's groups can help!

Men Are an at-Risk Group

- Men completed more than 70% of suicide deaths in the U.S. between 2000 and 2012.
(American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, 2015)
- Gender socialization and masculinity pressures can be associated with substance abuse.
(de Visser & Smith, 2007; Iwamoto, Cheng, Lee, Takamatsu, & Gordon, 2011; Peralta, 2007)
- Boys and men commit roughly 90% of violent crimes in the U.S.
(United States Department of Justice, 2011)
- Investigators report that nearly every school shooter in the past 30 years has been an adolescent male.
(Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Kaufman, Hall, & Zagura, 2012; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003)

Men Seek Services Less

- “A disparity exists between the occurrence and severity of men’s mental health problems and the disproportionately low number of men served by psychological services.”
(Englar-Carlson, 2014)
- Many studies have shown that men have less favorable attitudes towards help seeking, including counseling services.
(Hammer & Vogel, 2013; Kakhnovets, 2011)
- Black and LatinX men seek mental health services less frequently than white men.
(Chandra et al., 2009; Hammer et al., 2013)

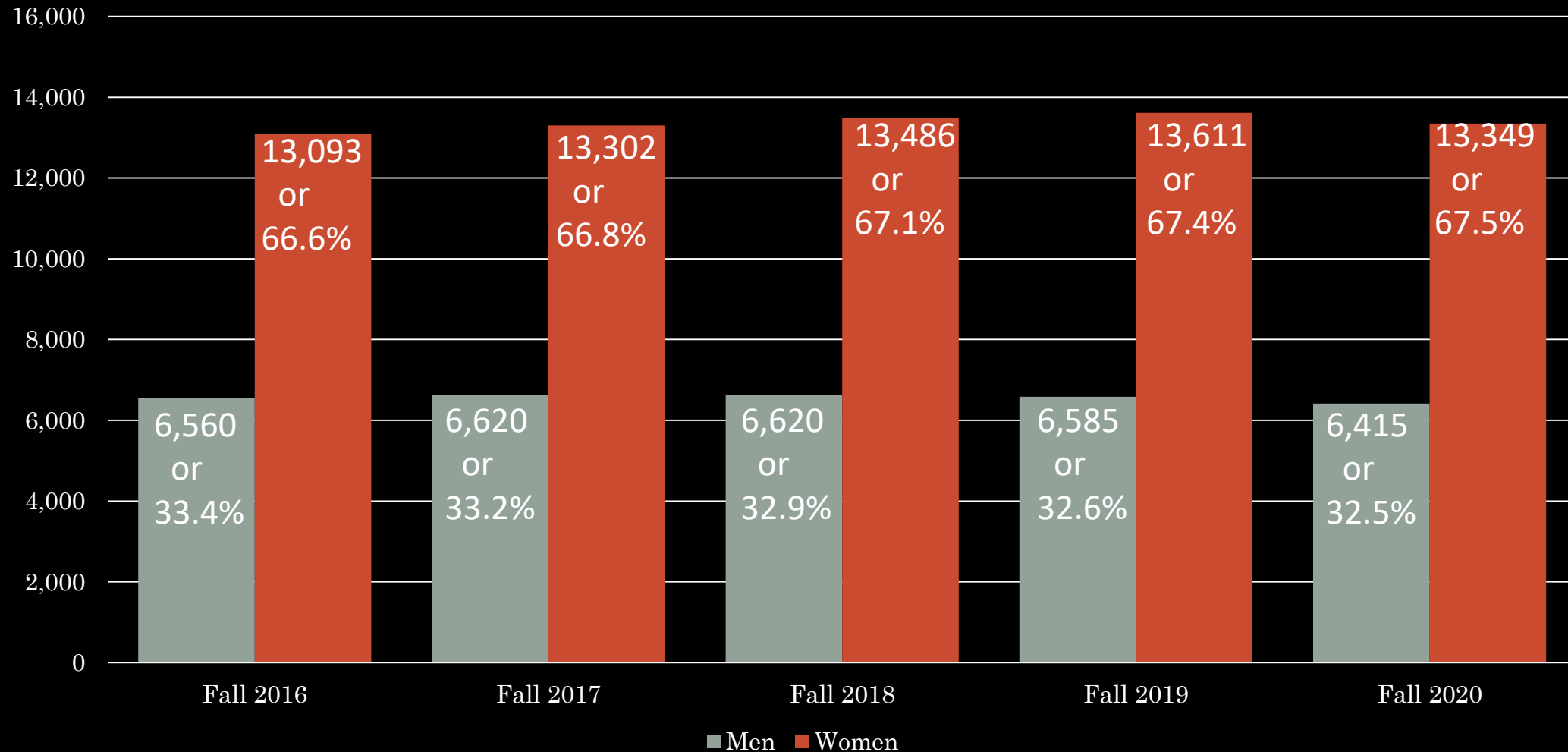
Men's Groups Can Help

- Adolescent men may benefit from humor, self-disclosure, and groups rather than traditional psychotherapy.
(Kiselica, Englar-Carlson, & Horne, 2008)
- Clinicians are encouraged to engage male clients in men's groups to promote relationships, support, and recognizing dysfunctional notions of masculinity.
(Hiton, & Grant, 2007)
- Most men who come to group are isolated. Ultimately, the main benefits of men's groups are acceptance, validation, companionship, respect, and support.
(Englar-Carlson, 2014; Rabinowitz, 2005)



UNCG Student Enrollment Data

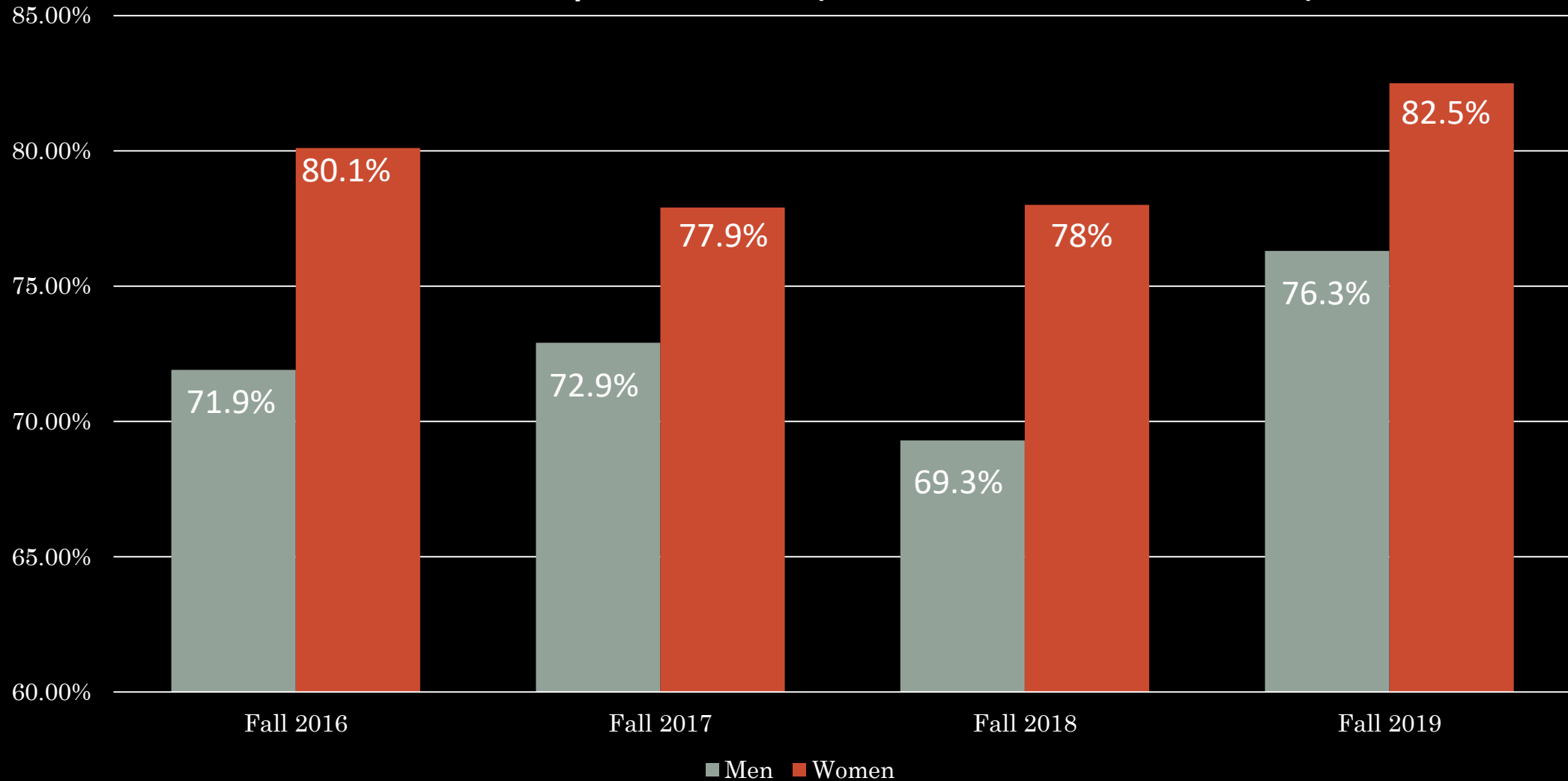
Enrollment by Gender



UNCG Retention Data



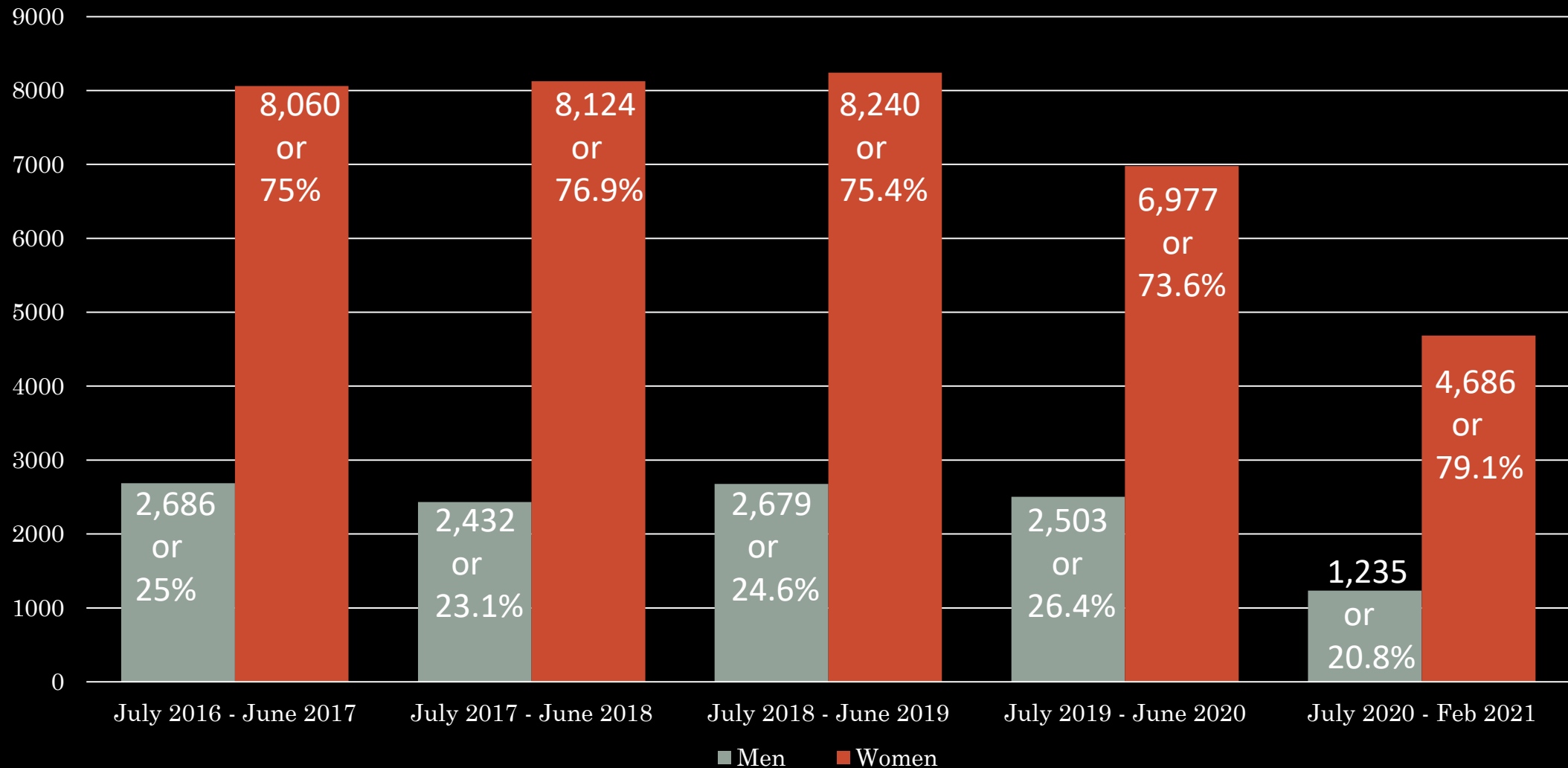
Retention % by Gender – (First Fall to Second Fall)



UNCG Counseling Center Data



Total # of Appointments by Gender



**How to Develop a Men's Group
or
Considerations for an Already
Existing Men's Group**

Acknowledgement

- Alex Rowell, PsyD
- Kipp Pietrantonio, PhD
- Ed Huebner, LMSW
- Noah Martinson, LCSW
- Will Meek, PhD
- Randy Flood, MA, LLP
- Al Heystek, Mdiv, MA, LPC

UNC System Men's Therapy Groups

- 17 UNC institutions
- 5 of the 17 counseling centers had at least one men's group listed on their website (29.4%)
 - (Black men's group, general men's group, or both)
- 12 counseling centers had no men's group listed
 - 5 counseling centers did not have any groups listed so it was unclear
 - (I apologize if this is not accurate!)

Website Description

- “Feel sad, isolated, angry, stressed? Want to improve relationships and how you talk about your emotions? Spartan Men is a supportive space for men to connect and share about personal experiences.”
- Brief, simple, relatable.
- I no longer mention “Toxic Masculinity.”
- “The term 'toxic' masculinity appears ZERO times in @APA guidelines for psychological treatment of men & boys. It's a term media uses when discussing unhealthy aspects of traditional masculine norms. The guidelines help clinicians promote positive manhood & support healthier men.”

(APA Division 51 Twitter 1/18/2019)

Advertising and Recruiting

- My caseload / referrals from colleagues
- Social media
- Fliers
- Video descriptions
- Tabling
- Calling each referral
- Relationships with offices on campus (Military Affiliated Services, WGSS, residence halls – liaison, Spartan Recovery Program).
 - Chesley Kennedy presents on March 16th at 11am (“Reciprocity of Recovery Relationships”)



UNCG Men: Feeling sad, stressed,
angry, alone? Need to talk it out?

Spartan Men Group



(Zoom)

Tuesdays from 4-5pm

Starting February 23rd

**Interested? Call UNCG Counseling Center
336-334-5874**

First Meeting Outline

Week 1: Intro (to self, members, group guidelines)

- Introductions (Name, pronouns, year in school, major / academic interest, what you like to do, interesting fact, why you came to group).
- Rules / guidelines / format / confidentiality
- What do you want to gain from group?
- (Activity) One thing in common and one unique difference. Discuss in pairs then share with group.
- (Activity) Your personal story. One item/symbol with you that holds significance.
- Wrap Up



General Men's Group Format

- I. Opener (rotate - video, meme, recent event, movie, joke, song, etc.)
~5-10 mins

- II. Welcome and Introduction
Outline of the session ---- Icebreaker: feeling word / question list
~5-10 mins

- III. Check-In
“High and Low of the week” / What’s going on?
~15-30 mins (or more or less – whatever happens)

- IV. Discussion Topic (question or activity)
~15-30 mins (or more or less – whatever happens)

- V. Conclusion (brief summary)
~5 mins

Topics, Activities, & Question Prompts

Popular Discussion Topics from past groups:

- Healthy masculinity, sexual objectification, healthy relationships.

Activities:

- My masculinity was questioned once because...
- Mask of Masculinity.

Questions for Response:

- What does it mean to “be a man”?
- What is your idea of healthy masculinity?
- How were you taught about masculinity growing up?

Bonus Information to Consider

- Food
- 60 Minutes Vs 90 Minutes
- Middle of the week / Later in the day
- When in the semester does group start / end?
 - Start week 4 or 5
- Close the group or keep it open? Benefits to both

Bonus Information to Consider



- Stigma Reduction
- Appropriate self-disclosure
(Rabinowitz, 2005)
- Don't stereotype or make assumptions
- Do group leaders have to be men?
- More likely to attend virtual or in-person?

Thank you!

- What questions do you have?
- Thomas Zigo, LCSW (he, him)
- UNC Greensboro Counseling Center
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