

Interagency Gender Working Group Male Engagement Task Force

Building Bridges: Promising Strategies to Improve the Health of
Boys and Men by Promoting Social Connection and Support

June 11, 2023



IGWG Male Engagement Task Force (METF) Team



Myra Betron
(she/her)
USAID MOMENTUM Country
and Global Leadership,
Jhpiego



Kendra Davis
(she/her)
Breakthrough ACTION,
Johns Hopkins Center for
Communication Programs



Ann Gottert
(she/her)
Population Council



Eva Roca
(she/her)
Agency for All, Center on Gender
Equity and Health | University of
California San Diego



Lily Shorney
(she/her)
USAID MOMENTUM
Country and Global
Leadership, Jhpiego



Julie Pulerwitz
(she/her)
Population Council & George
Washington University



**Dominick
Shattuck**
(he/him)
Breakthrough ACTION,
Johns Hopkins Center for
Communication Programs



Danette Wilkins
(they/them and she/her)
Breakthrough ACTION,
Johns Hopkins Center for
Communication Programs



Lenette Golding
(she/her)
Agency for All,
Save the Children

IGWG Male Engagement Task Force (METF)

The METF is an information, advocacy, and knowledge exchange network that:

- Explores how to better reach and engage men and boys in health promotion and gender equality.
- Focuses on diverse health areas such as: family planning and sexual and reproductive health (FP/SRH); maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH); HIV/AIDS; and infectious diseases (e.g., malaria, tuberculosis).
- Engages with research and programming to improve behaviors and outcomes across diverse health areas.

Objectives

- Examine established and emerging linkages between social connection and support and health outcomes among boys and men, as well as emerging and effective programmatic responses.
- Consider potential linkages between social connection and support and gender equality outcomes among boys and men.
- Disseminate the latest METF knowledge product *Building Bridges: Promising Strategies to Improve the Health of Boys and Men by Promoting Social Connection and Support*.
- Explore current programming with primary and secondary students that addresses issues linked to social connection and support among boys and men.
- Gather inputs across diverse country contexts on (1) conceptualization of social connection and support, (2) linkages between social connection and support and health outcomes (and gender equality outcomes) among boys and men, and (3) emerging and effective programmatic responses.

Agenda and Speakers

8:00–8:10 EDT	Welcome and Introduction
8:10–8:20 EDT	Resource Spotlight: Building Bridges: Promising Strategies to Improve the Health of Boys and Men by Promoting Social Connection Support – Dominick Shattuck
8:20–8:30 EDT	Program Spotlight: Sources of Strength – Jarrod Hindman
8:30–8:40 EDT	Program Spotlight: Futures without Violence – Leila Milani
8:40–8:50 EDT	Panel Discussion
8:50–9:15 EDT	Small Group Exercise
9:15–9:25 EDT	Large Group Report Out
9:25–9:30 EDT	Acknowledgements and Closing

Resource Spotlight: METF Knowledge Product



Building Bridges

Promising Strategies for

**Improving the Health of Boys and Men by
Promoting Social Connection and Support**

Male Engagement Task Force
Presenter: Dominick Shattuck, PhD
June 11, 2024



Wonderland Trail
Mt. Rainier
Washington, USA

Length of my relationships with the guys in this photo
at the start of the hike.

+38 years

+7 years

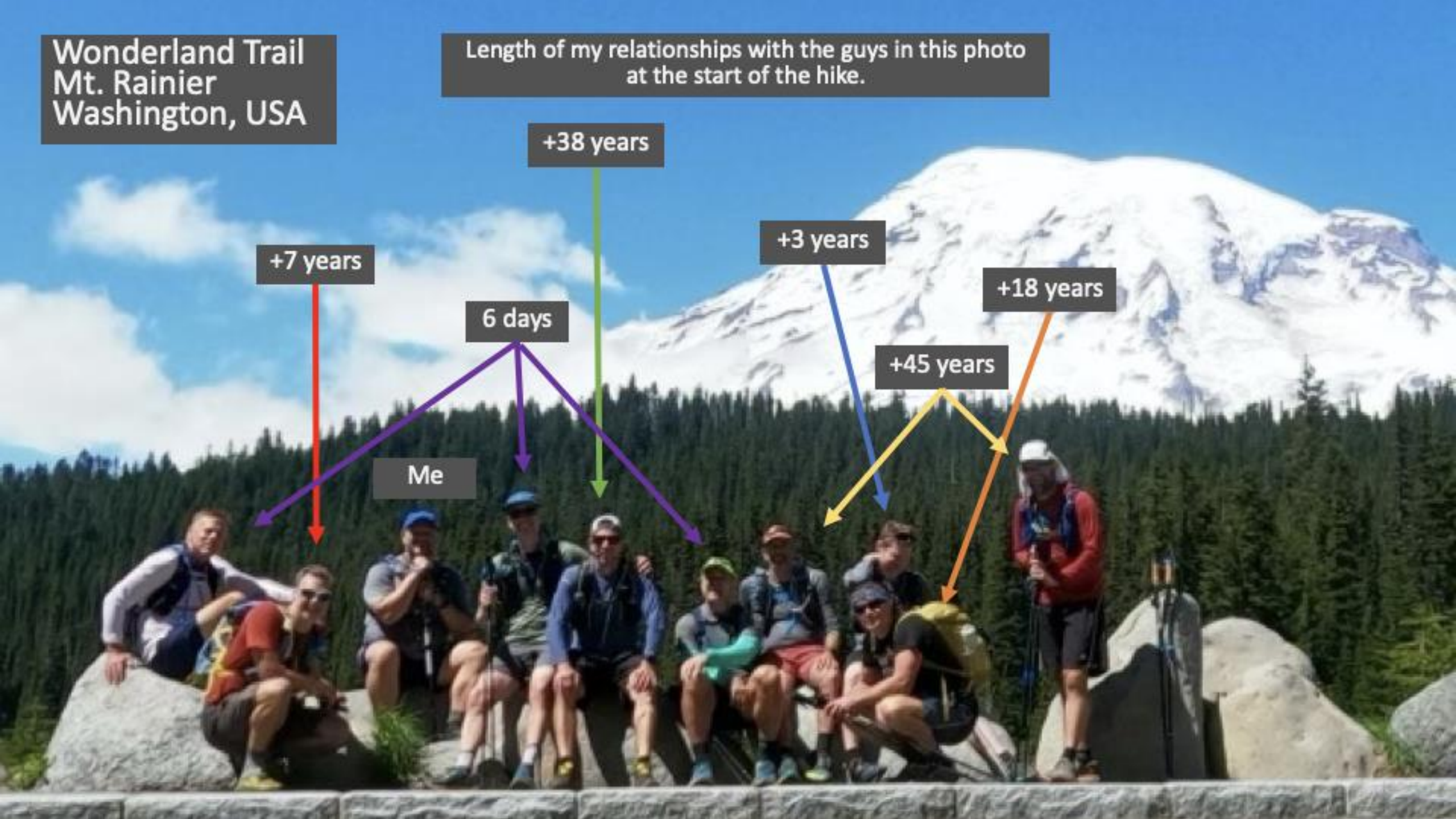
6 days

+3 years

+18 years

Me

+45 years



Before We Dive In!

- Global evidence shows that that unequal social, gender, and power dynamics are often advantageous for men and boys, disproportionately disadvantaging women, girls, and other gender-diverse people.
- This brief addresses the prevalence of traditionally masculine traits that discourage prosocial behavior and is shown to negatively impact social connection and health outcomes among boys and men.
- These same dynamics also generate social and structural disadvantages for men and boys. We need to learn more.
- Most of the published literature and programmatic examples are from high-income country (HIC) contexts. We need to learn more about what's happening across low- and middle-income country (LMIC) contexts.

Boys' Capacity for Friendship

- Socialization and maturation process emphasizes **traits and behaviors that limit emotional intimacy** with others:

- Autonomy
- Self-reliance
- Stoicism
- Competition
- Aggression
- Risk-taking
- Expected success
- Limited ability to trust



Traits associated with traditional masculinity

- Sometimes, they can help navigate life's challenges and transitions, but...
- ...Over reliance on traditional traits is counterproductive to **healthy functioning** in modern **communities and workplaces** that have expectations of:

- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Trust
- Clear communication



Prosocial behavior

Friendships have the same expectations

Impact of Friendship on Behaviors and Outcomes

Children with High Quality Friendships

- More emotionally secure
- Less anxious
- Have higher self-esteem
- Hold higher psychological capital (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience)
- Display healthier eating behaviors, and
- Show better social adaptability.

Children with Low Quality Friendships

- Prone to experiencing:
 - Loneliness
 - Depression
 - Anxiety, and
 - Displayed aggression toward peers
 - Enact bullying and dropping out of school

Positive (high) friendship quality includes aspects of intimacy, closeness, and companionship (Bukowski et al. 1994), which imply the presence of empathy and understanding the feelings of others.

Social Connection and Health Outcomes

- Limited social connection combined with low levels of emotional intimacy and social support drive loneliness.
- Globally 25% of adults feel “very” or “fairly” lonely.
- Highest rates of loneliness in US among young adults.

Limited social connection places individuals at greater risk for:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Smoking
- Drug & alcohol use
- Physical inactivity
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Cardiovascular disease
- Dementia
- Stroke, and
- Premature death

Elements of Effective and Promising Program Strategies



Cultivate empathy and compassion as lifelong practice.



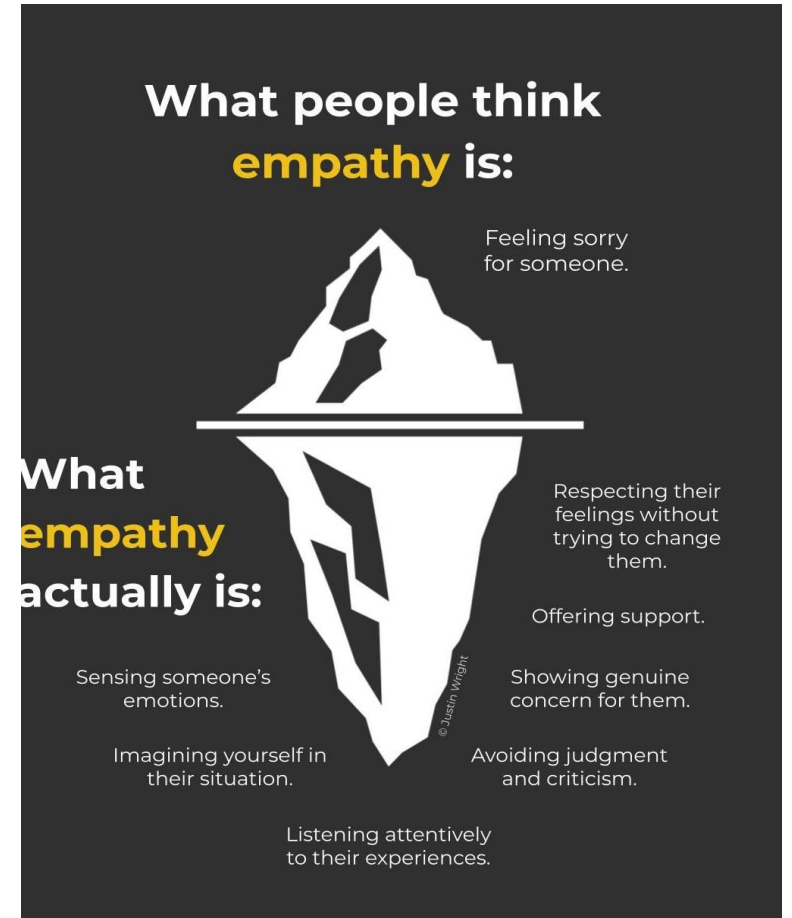
Promote and reinforce communication and interpersonal skills.



Facilitate access to opportunities for social connection.

Element 1: Cultivate Empathy and Compassion as a Lifelong Practice

- Essential to developing and maintaining health, supportive friendships.
- Linked with feelings of support with and from peers.
- Assists in conflict management and driver of prosocial behavior.
- Increased emotional intimacy with friends.
- Reduced conflict in social contexts (bullying, disciplinary action, violence).
- **Emotional intimacy** is the closeness between individuals who can safely and securely disclose their personal feelings, emotions, and concerns
- **Prosocial Behavior** is voluntary behavior that is intended to benefit another.



Element 2: Promote and Reinforce Communication and Interpersonal Skills

- Active listening facilitates emotional intimacy and social support.
- Encourage the use of verbal and non-verbal cues so the speaker knows you are invested in them.
- Increased satisfaction across relationships (speaker and listener)
- Elevated sense of belonging and sense of community.
- Increased agency to connect with and understand others.
- Reduced rates of attempted suicide and suicidal ideation.



Podcast: @allblackmenneedtherapy9616

Element 3: Facilitate Access to Opportunities for Social Connection

- People with stronger social bonds have a 50% increased likelihood of survival than those with weaker social bonds.
- Virtual engagement is not the same as in-person interaction.
- Facilitating opportunities for boys and men to be together periodically can reduce:
 - Feelings of loneliness and isolation
 - Chronic stress
 - Feelings of insecurity and fear
 - Risk of anxiety and depression
 - Improved ability to form and maintain social bonds



Photo from: Almy.com

Effective and Promising Programs



Roots of Empathy
1996–Present

Source: Roots of Empathy



Equimundo: Program H
2002–Present

Source: Equimundo



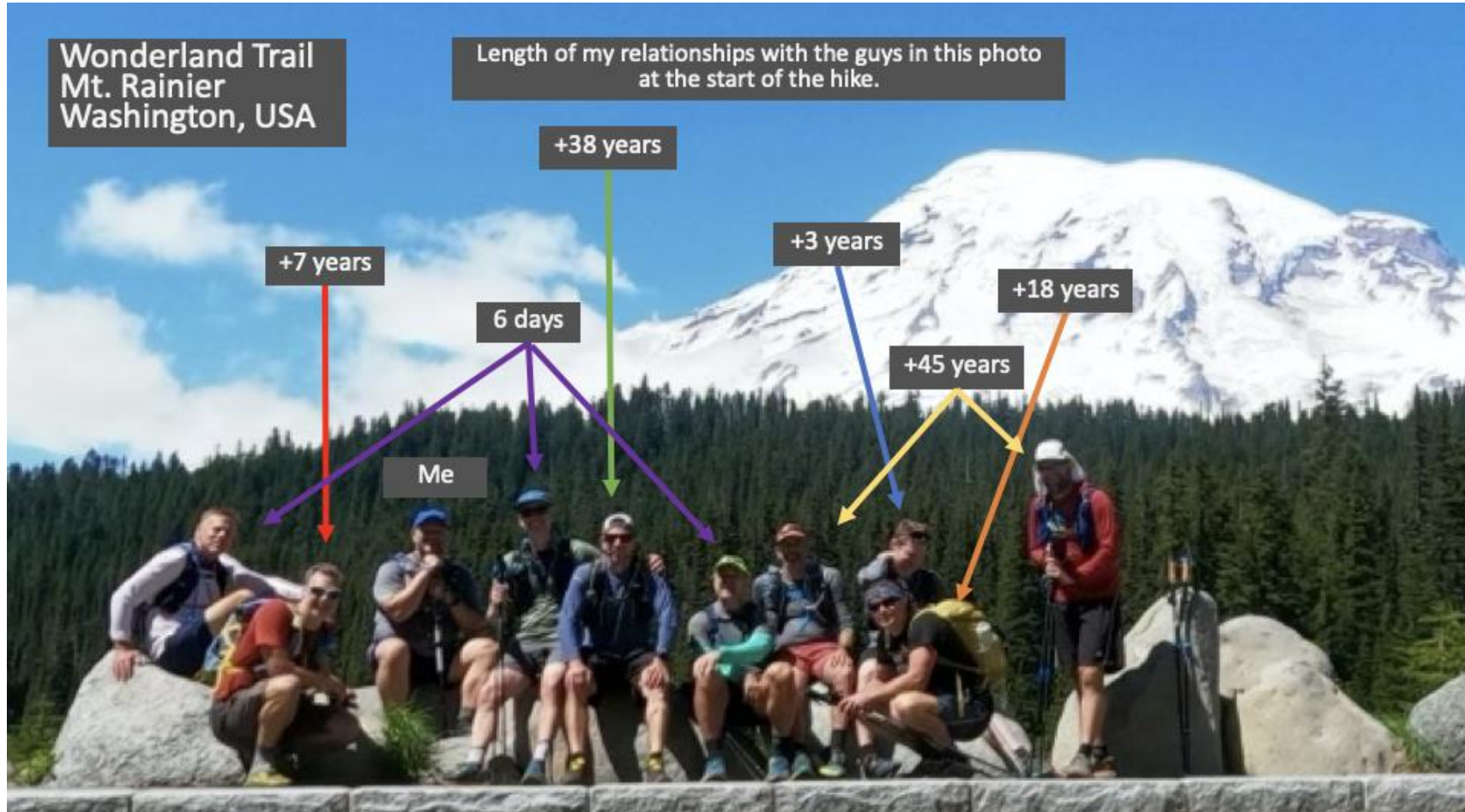
Global Associations: Men's Sheds
1990s–Present

Source: International Men's Sheds Association

Recommendations for Programs

1. Integrate content on relationship building into existing programs.
2. Develop and implement school- and community-based programs focused on relationship building and friendships.
- 3. Design and implement activities that provide opportunities for boys and men to learn about healthy relationship building and friendships.**
- 4. Encourage open and honest dialogue about normative masculine traits and behaviors that discourage prosocial behavior.**
5. Support and expand existing community-based strategies and programs that provide spaces for men and boys to come together. Create such spaces where they don't already exist.
- 6. Advocate for policies and initiatives that promote boys' and men's health and well-being.**

Thank you!



Program Spotlight: Sources of Strength



Male Engagement Taskforce Webinar

Jarrold Hindman, MS
COO, Sources of Strength

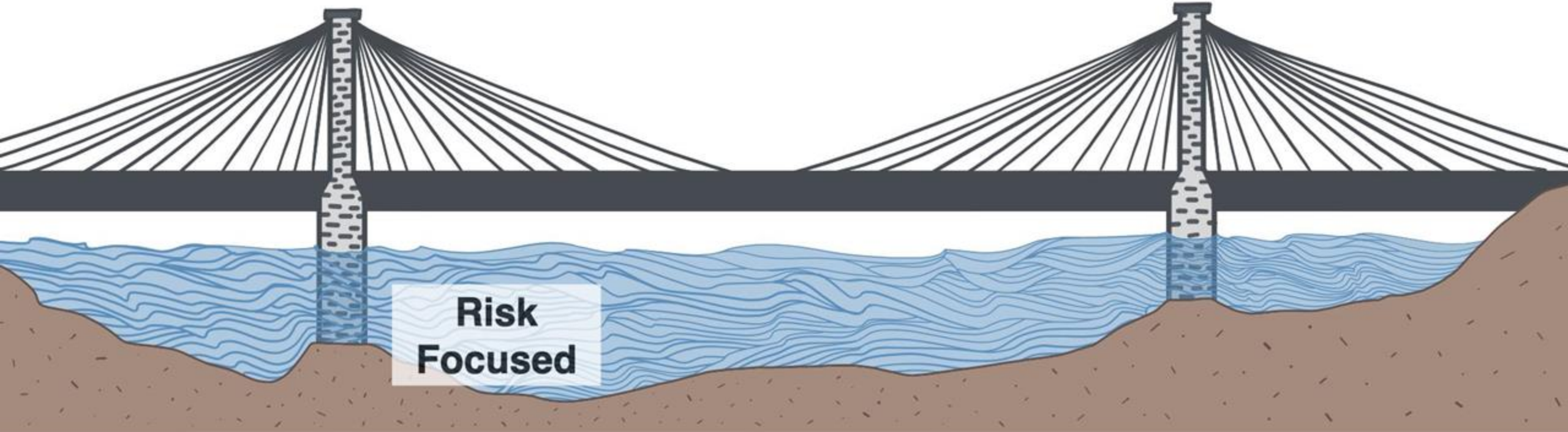


Our vision is:

A black and white line drawing of two hands holding a heart-shaped sign. The hands are rendered with simple outlines and some hatching for shading. The heart-shaped sign is the central focus, containing the text 'TO EMPOWER A WELL WORLD'. The sign has a thick black border and a white interior. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font, with 'TO EMPOWER A' on the top line and 'WELL WORLD' on the bottom line in a larger, bold font.

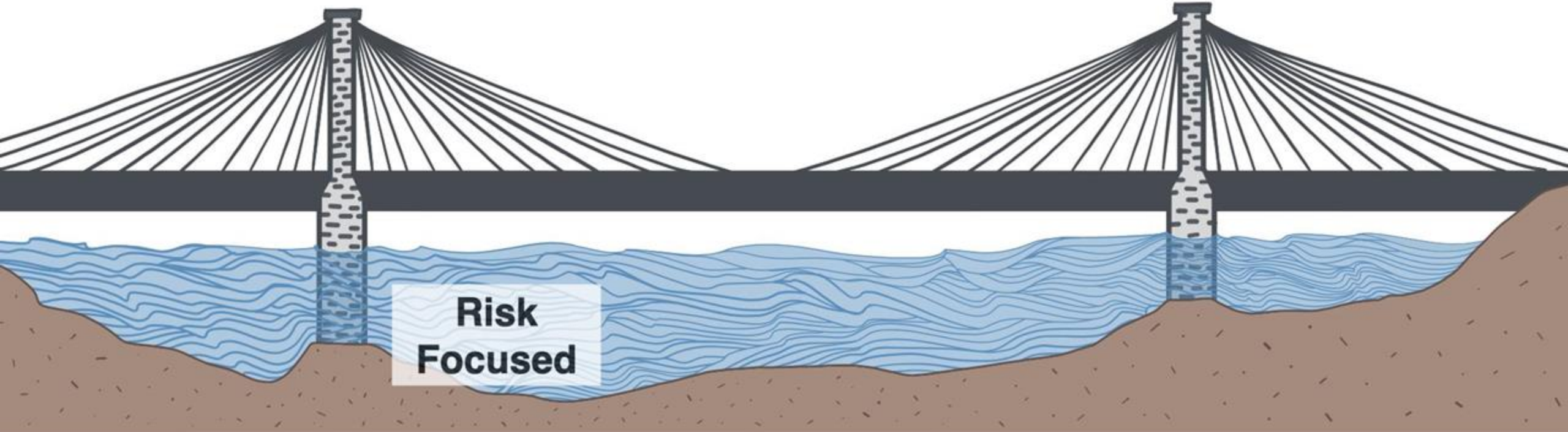
TO EMPOWER A
WELL WORLD

Bridging the Gaps in Prevention



Bridging the Gaps in Prevention

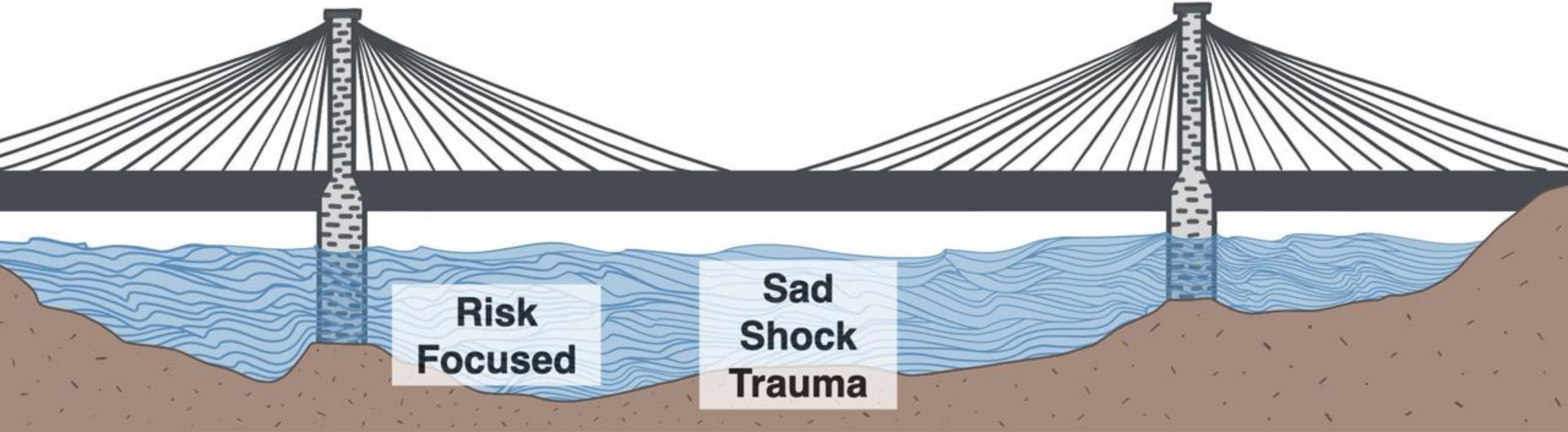
**Strength
Focused**



**Risk
Focused**

Bridging the Gaps in Prevention

**Strength
Focused**



**Risk
Focused**

**Sad
Shock
Trauma**

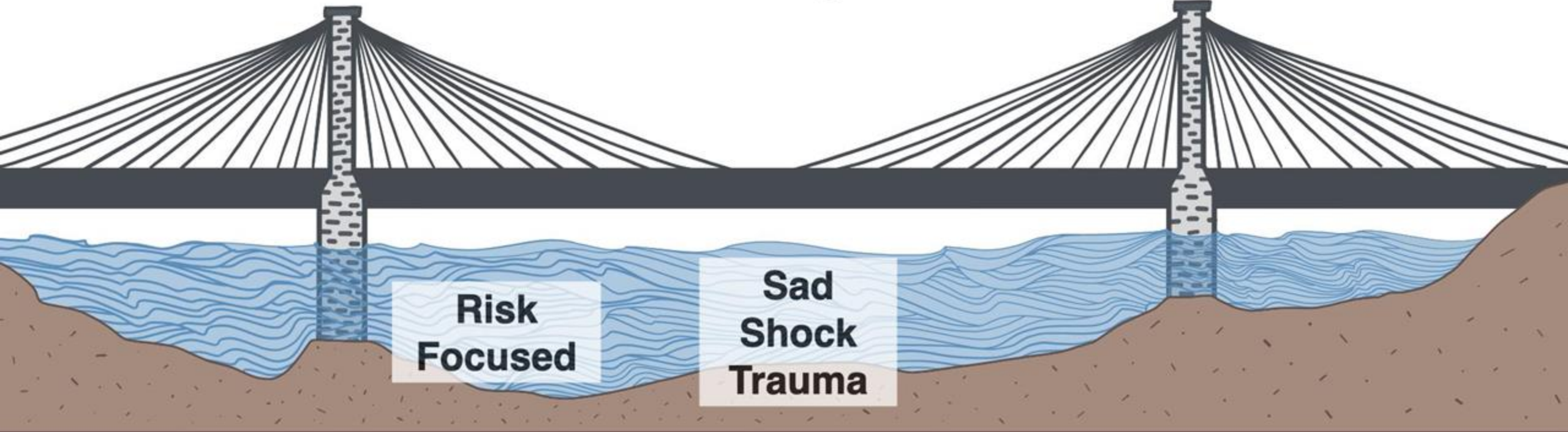
Bridging the Gaps in Prevention

**Strength
Focused**

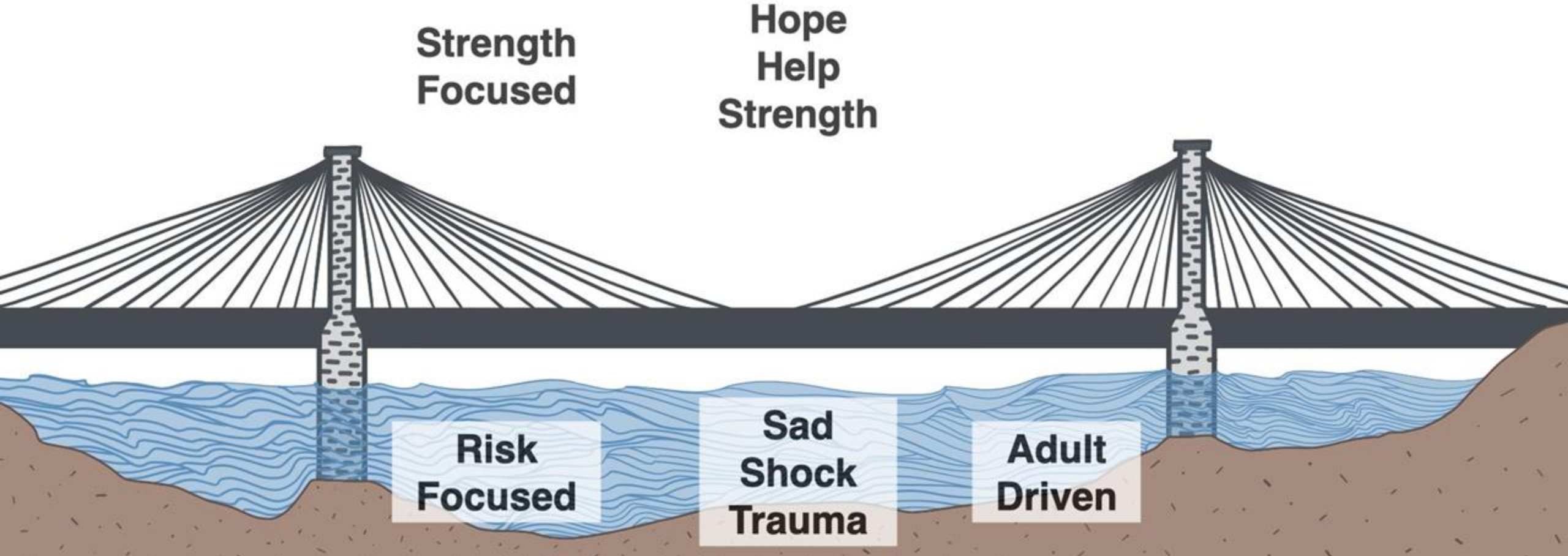
**Hope
Help
Strength**

**Risk
Focused**

**Sad
Shock
Trauma**



Bridging the Gaps in Prevention



**Strength
Focused**

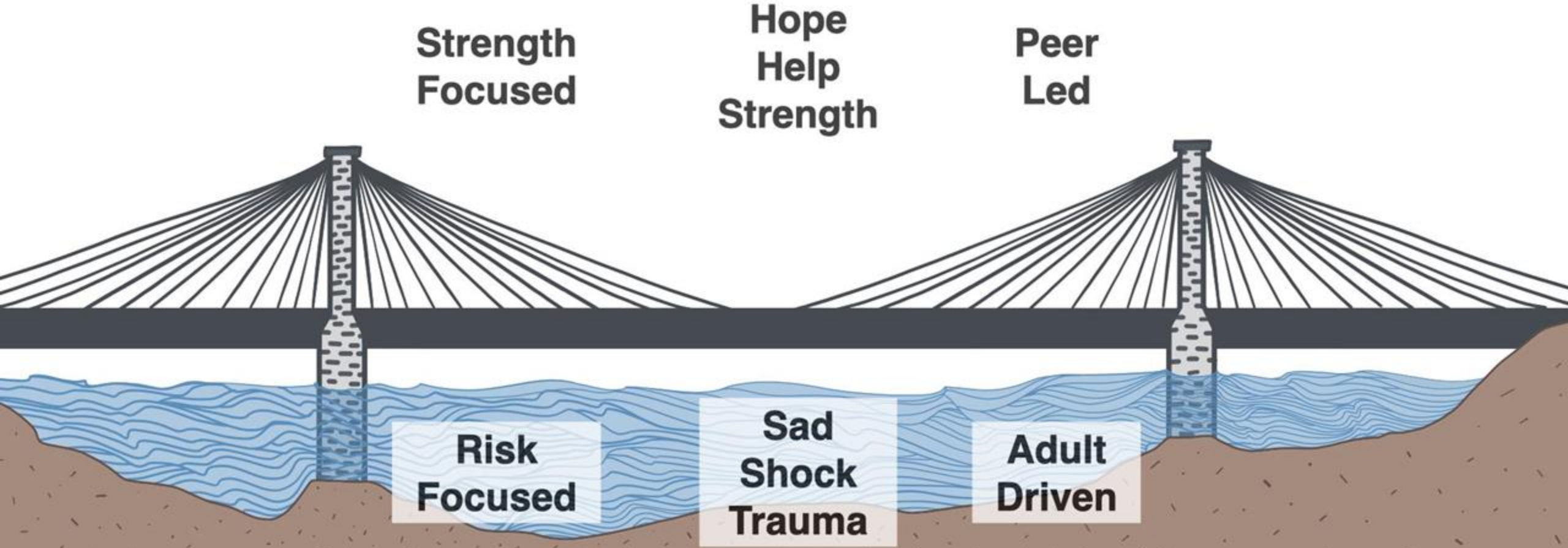
**Hope
Help
Strength**

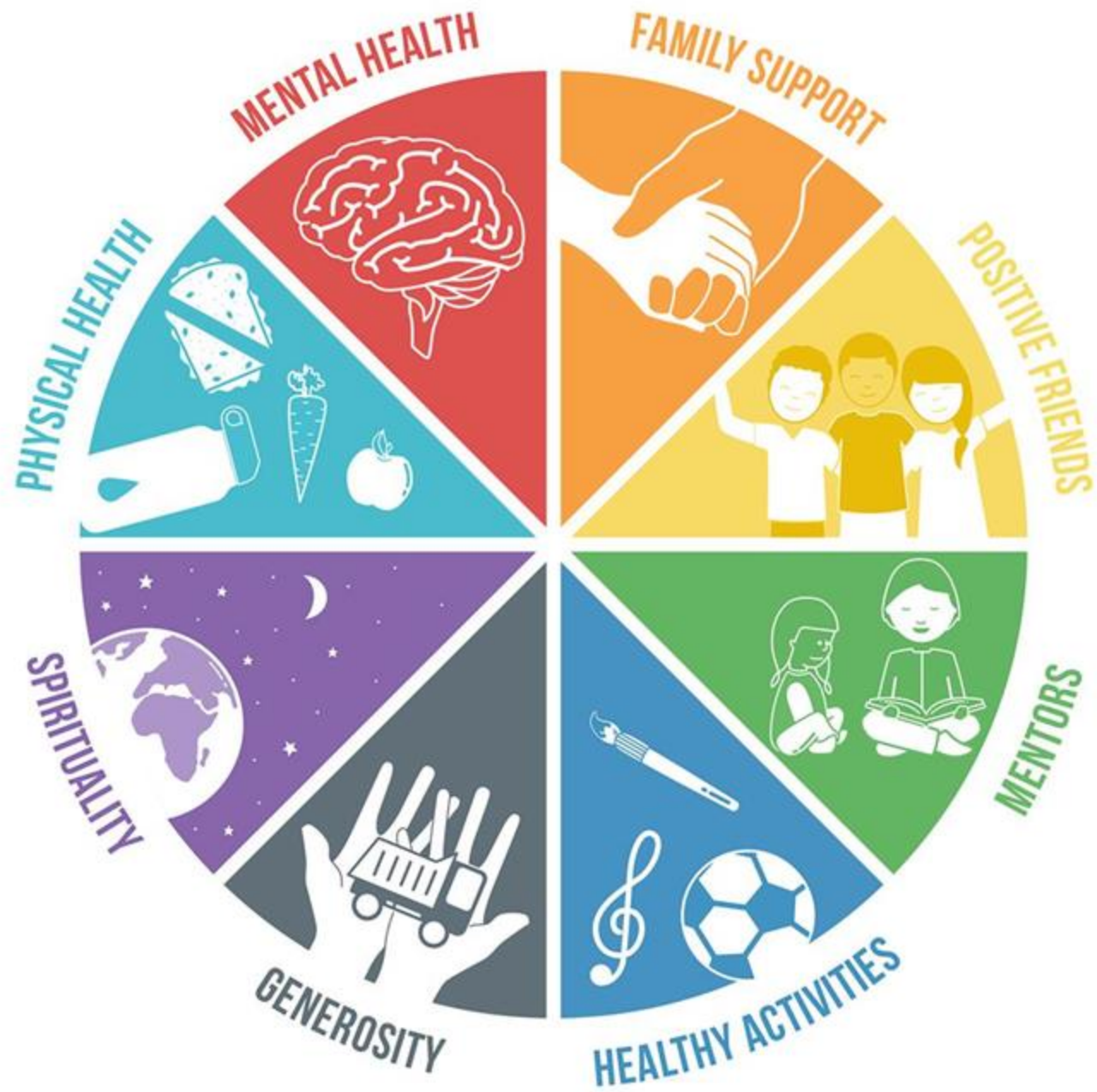
**Risk
Focused**

**Sad
Shock
Trauma**

**Adult
Driven**

Bridging the Gaps in Prevention





Sources of Strength Model

ADULT ADVISORS



CARING, CONNECTED,
AND POSITIVE

Sources of Strength Model

ADULT ADVISORS

+

PEER LEADERS



CARING, CONNECTED,
AND POSITIVE

INFLUENCE WITHIN THEIR
SOCIAL GROUP

Sources of Strength Model

COMMUNITY OF STRENGTH

DIVERSE
INCLUSIVE
COLLABORATIVE

(ADULT ADVISORS + PEER LEADERS)



CARING, CONNECTED,
AND POSITIVE



INFLUENCE WITHIN THEIR
SOCIAL GROUP

Sources of Strength Model

COMMUNITY OF STRENGTH

DIVERSE
INCLUSIVE
COLLABORATIVE

(ADULT ADVISORS + PEER LEADERS) X

STRATEGIC MESSAGING
CAMPAIGNS



CARING, CONNECTED,
AND POSITIVE



INFLUENCE WITHIN THEIR
SOCIAL GROUP



ENGAGE, INTERACT,
AND APPLY

SOURCES OF STRENGTH MODEL

COMMUNITY OF STRENGTH

DIVERSE
INCLUSIVE
COLLABORATIVE

(ADULT ADVISORS + PEER LEADERS) X

STRATEGIC MESSAGING
CAMPAIGNS

=

POSITIVE CULTURAL
CHANGE



CARING, CONNECTED,
AND POSITIVE



INFLUENCE WITHIN THEIR
SOCIAL GROUP



ENGAGE, INTERACT,
AND APPLY



POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMING



BEST PRACTICES REGISTRY AND ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

- 2024 - Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Best Practice Registry - <https://bpr.sprc.org/>
- 2023 Injury Prevention Publication (Wyman et. al.)
“Prior to this study, no universal intervention has shown reduction in youth suicide mortality through an RCT. The present findings add to evidence that Sources of Strength and other network-based interventions that modify peer and adult relationship systems are a uniquely promising strategy and now worthy of even broader population roll-out studies.”
- CDC *Suicide Prevention Resource for Action, 2022*
<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/resources/prevention.html>



ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



SOURCES OF STRENGTH ELEMENTARY MODEL

**COACHING
MEETINGS**



**Staff Wellness
Personal Reflection**

+

**CLASSROOM
CURRICULUM**



**Engaging, Interactive,
Applicable Activities**

=

**POSITIVE
CULTURE
CHANGE**



**Positive
Social Norming**



Thank you!

www.sourcesofstrength.org
jarrod@sourcesofstrength.org



Program Spotlight: Futures Without Violence



Coaching Boys Into Men

Linkages of social connection and support with gender equality and health outcomes among boys and men



Men, Boys & Mental Health

- 01 1/2 of mental health challenges show up by age 14
- 02 But it takes 10 years before most young people connect to mental health support
- 03 For men and boys, it often takes even longer
- 04 This leads to devastating consequences - Men account for about 3/4th of all suicides globally





Why?

- **Traditional Gender Roles**
- **Intense Life Pressures** - work and financial pressures can negatively affect men's mental health
- **Fewer coping tools** - to help identify the harmful feelings and utilize coping mechanisms
- **Alcohol use disorder** - 7% of men have an alcohol use disorder
- **Communication** - women tend to be more open about mental health
- **Stigma of male mental health care** - men may value independence and decisiveness, and see acknowledging a need for help as a weakness

Social Pressures Man Box

Traditional gender norms commonly drive

**YOUNG MEN TO
PRESENT AS:**

Strong
Competitive
In Control
Unburdened by
vulnerabilities

**YOUNG MEN TO
HIDE VULNERABLE**

EMOTIONS:

Sadness
Anxiety
Fear

**SOCIETY TO
PRIZE:**

Toughness
Anger
Hostility
Emotional Control

BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

FEELINGS



Confused
Angry
Scared
Ashamed
Alone
Worthless

Stupid
Powerless
Vulnerable
Revenge
Hopeless

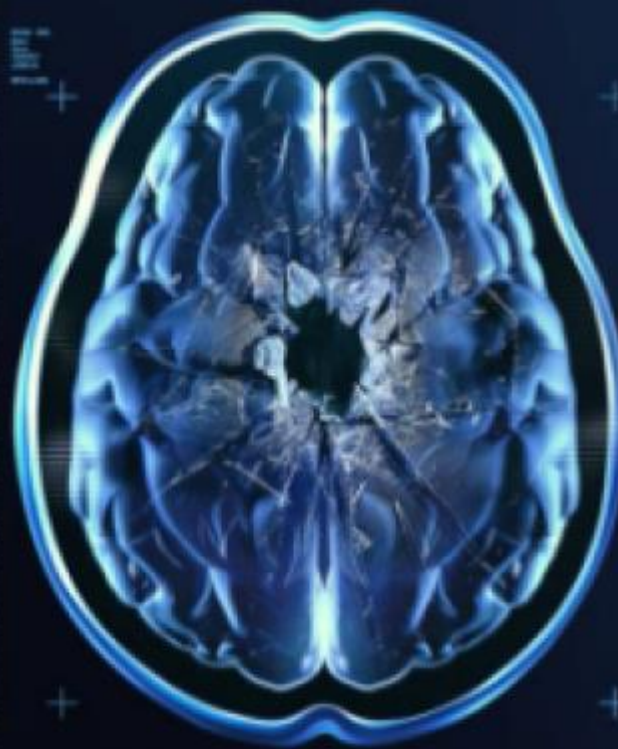


No crying. Man up. Play sports. Cut your hair. No mistakes. Don't play with dolls. Fight back. Be a leader. Don't be a pussy. Boys don't wear pink. Be decisive. Show no fear. Provide. Don't be soft.

J. Clement Wall

What Works Changing Minds

- We know that a nurturing caring adult - someone whom the boy trusts - can make a difference
- So activating and equipping trusted peers and adults in young people's lives, who are active in pastimes they love, can make all the difference
- Futures Without Violence, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing have come together to help young people recognize signs of mental health challenges and connect to caring trusted adults for help



Childhood
Changing

— See the
Changing

DEFEND
CHILDHOOD

What Works Coaching Boys Into Men

CORE ELEMENTS

- ✓ **Caring Adult / Role Model** - working with a small # of boys where there is an existing relationship and an activity or pastime that the boys like/love
- ✓ **Early Intervention** - Reaches boys ages 9-14, to help influence the socialization of young boys to foster gender equitable attitudes, behaviors that promote healthy relationships, and includes an examination and challenging of traditional norms that increase harmful pressures on young boys
- ✓ **Community Buy-In** - Secures the buy-in of a broader community which leads to reinforcement of the messages and practices by family, schools, peers, teams





Coaching Boys Into Men

Key Messages

- Increase knowledge of what constitutes abusive behavior
- Increase in attitudes that promote greater gender equity
- Greater intention to (safely) intervene when witnessing disrespectful or abusive behavior
- Decrease abuse perpetration

Coaching Boys Into Men

Coach Deliverer Characteristics

- Dedicated to developing positive character and leadership among the athletes/boys
- Committed to building strong relationships with their athletes based on trust and mutual respect
- Willing to learn how to lead interactive discussions with their athletes
- Creates a safe environment where athletes can talk openly without fear or judgement
- Stands up for respect - Is a role model for their athletes and fellow coaches.
- Knows where to find support with difficult topics



CBIM Tanzania

In FY 2023, PACT Tanzania under USAID's Adolescents and Children, HIV Incidence-reduction, Empowerment, and Virus Elimination — ACHIEVE — project implemented CBIM intervention program - to:

- foster healthy and respectful relationships among boys
- help prevent violence, harassment, and sexual assault, including through improved bystander behaviors.

CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL SELECTION

- ✓ Drop-out rates
- ✓ Truancy rates
- ✓ Rates of Pregnancy
- ✓ Prevalence of reported cases of Gender-based Violence
- ✓ Schools with high number of children never reached with the intervention



CBIM Implementation Tanzania Takeaways

- 1 Increased ability to identify what constitutes harmful and abusive behavior
- 2 Parents reported improved behaviors by boys, increased respect and support at home
- 3 Improved academic performance by boys and girls
- 4 Improved and increased participation by girls in class
- 5 Demonstrated ability to speak about these issues
- 6 Improved confidence among boys and girls to engage in meaningful conversations
- 7 Greater intention to intervene



Snapshot of the IMPACT

To date over 118000 boys have received the CBIM Intervention program in Tanzania

	Kahama Council Schools	Students Enrolled in CBIM 2023-2024	Dropout Cases	Truancy Cases	Pregnancy Cases	Reported Cases of Abuse
1	Kishima B	390	51 in 2023 21 in 2024	148 in 2023 53 in 2024	0 in 2023 0 in 2024	5 in 2023 0 in 2024
2	Ilindi	609	22 in 2023 11 in 2024	51 in 2023 12 in 2024	0 in 2023 0 in 2024	2 in 2023 0 in 2024
3	Nyandekwa	225	53 in 2023 0 in 2024	97 in 2023 17 in 2024	1 in 2023 1 in 2024	20 in 2023 0 in 2024
4	Bukondamoyo	336	74 in 2023 3 in 2024	139 in 2023 3 in 2024	0 in 2023 0 in 2024	6 in 2023 2 in 2024

Thank You!

Leila Milani, Program Director,
Global Policy Advocacy

FUTURES
WITHOUT VIOLENCE



Panel Discussion



Small Group Exercise



Breakout Rooms Instructions

- Assigned to breakout room by age range (5–12, 13–25, 25–64, over 65, French: 5–12)
- Time is short (~25 minutes)
- We want to hear from you!
 - Please participate with your voice or through the chat.
- Facilitator Questions:
 - What are some of **your reactions to the content** shared describing social support or social connection and men's health outcomes that were shared today?
 - What are some of the **linkages between men's need for social support and social connection and gender equality outcomes**?
 - What are **some of the ways that social connection and support for men be integrated** into program design and implementation?
 - What **additional resources (training, materials, etc.) would be needed** to integrate more activities related to social connection and support for boys and/or men into your programming?

Large Group Report Out



Closing Remarks



How to Access Content

Links to the **recording** of the webinar, the **slide deck**, and an **overview of each project** will be made available on the **IGWG website** and shared with those that registered.

<https://www.igwg.org/>

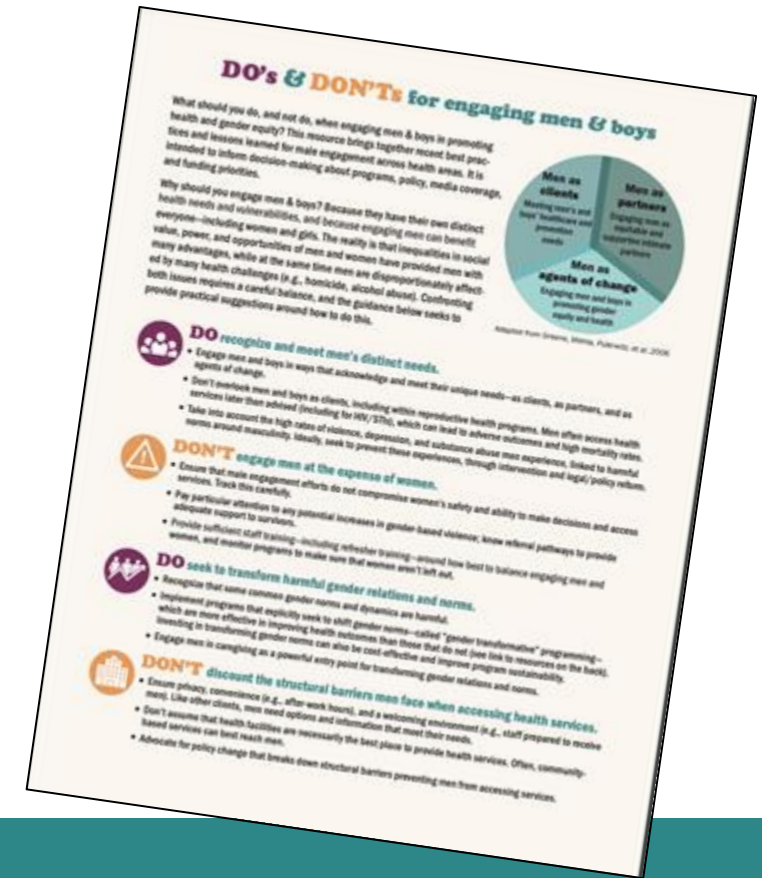


Become a Member of the METF Online Community!

Looking for **RESOURCES** on engaging men and boys in your work?

Would you like to **NETWORK** with others who are working with men and boys?

Do you have an event to **SHARE** with others related to men and boys?



JOIN US!

<https://www.igwg.org/priority-areas/male-engagement/male-engagement-task-force/>

Thank you!

