

Guardian Project Curriculum

Group Level HIV & STD Risk Reduction Activities for Young Men Who have Sex with Men ages 18-29.

Healthy Relationships Part I: Long term Relationships and Romance

- Objectives

- ▽ To provide a comfortable environment in which MSM 18-29 can share and discuss experiences and opinions regarding long term relationships (LTRs) and romance
- ▽ To explore the positive and negative aspects of being in a long-term relationship.
- ▽ To discuss how LTR's promote and/or hinder HIV prevention.

Healthy Relationships Part I –LTRs and Romance Instructions

Agenda

Welcome & Check-in
 Review of established
 Ground Rules
 Activity
 Discussion / Debrief
 Closing Announcements

Activity:

1) During check-in, members are asked to answer the following question:

“Do you think that queer culture emphasizes or de-emphasizes romance, and how do you think that affects us and our relationships as gay and bisexual men?”

2) Once all members have checked in, members are asked to define “romance.” After a good number of defini-

tions are offered, the following Guardian definition of romance is presented by the facilitators: “Romance is a special emotional memory created between people; it is intangible and can only belong to you.” It is stressed that under this definition, romance does not require substantial amounts of money.

3) Following the presentation of the new Guardian definition of romance, members are invited to share romantic experiences they have experienced. This will allow members to gain new ideas on how to be romantic as well as to provide examples of times in our local gay community that romance and intimacy are emphasized

rather than raw sexuality.

4) Brainstorm a PROs/CONS list regarding being in a LTR (an example list is on page 2).

Explore the following in debrief:

- * Does an LTR guarantee or imply monogamy?
- * Is LTR always only between two people?
- * Do gay/bi men want LTRs?
- * Do you want LTRs?
- * What are the qualities of successful LTR's that you've witnessed?
- * What impedes us from forming LTRs when we want them?
- * Does an LTR help reduce HIV/STD risk?



Supplies:

Markers
 newsprint
 New Guardian Definition of Romance

Time Requirement:: 1.5–2+ hrs
 (depending on group size)

This material was developed for use by the Guardian Project of St. Louis. Permission is granted to reprint for educational purposes.

Key Talking Points / Questions to ask:

What is romance?

What do you think about the stereotype that gay/bisexual men are more romantic than heterosexual men?

Some studies show that gay men in long term relationships are more likely than heterosexual

couples to have an open relationship. Gay men may participate in relationships of different levels of commitment simultaneously. How does this relate to HIV/STD risk?

Guardian Mpowerment Group
 a Program of Project ARK
 4169 Laclede
 St. Louis, MO 63108
 314-535-7275

www.guardianproject.org
projectark.wustl.edu
 Developed by Duane Westhoff, MSW
 and Don Gerke, BSW

LTRs & Romance - Examples from Guardian Mpowerment Group 2005

Guardian Project Curriculum

Pro's and Con's list generated by members of Guardian on 7/25/2005

Possible Pro's of LTRs:

- Stability
- Emotional, Financial, Sexual Security
- Facilitates Romance
- Experience Devotion
- Personal Awareness
- Emotional and Physical Support
- Benefits (i.e. legal)
- Family
- Attachment
- Trust
- Increased intensity
- Love
- Reduces STD transmission
- Someone is always there for you
- Possibly don't need condoms

Cons of LTRs:

- Loss of sexual freedom
- Feeling trapped
- Stagnation
- Loss of sexual interest
- Loss of Individuality
- Compromise and Sacrifice
- Less time with other friends / relationships
- Stress
- Emotional Conflicts
- Loss of Solitude
- Fear of loss
- Burning out
- Carrying unfair burdens

About the Guardian Project

The Guardian Project is an intensive, coordinated social marketing campaign designed to promote safer sex practices among young men who have sex with men (MSM) and to decrease the spread of HIV and STDs. One component, the **Guardian Mpowerment Groups**, are social discussion groups designed to bring out the best in our community. They provide Guardian Members with quality social events, and the information necessary to keep our minds and bodies healthy, and our sex lives SAFE and ALIVE. The Guardian Project is administered by the AIDS Foundation of St. Louis. Guardian Mpowerment Groups are organized by Project ARK.

