



LAUREN BENN photo

Manology, a course at the Roundhouse Centre, enables men to talk about their feelings in a safe and confidential environment — even the strong and silent types.

Sensitive space for men to bond

Manology course offers 21st century men a place to open up about feelings

By TYLER ORTON

The traditional roles of men are not sustainable in a century wrought with climate change and financial meltdowns, says male issues specialist David Hatfield.

That's why in the fall of 2009 Hatfield started what he calls "Manology" sessions on Monday evenings at the Roundhouse Community Centre.

"It's a non-academic experiential course for men," says Hatfield, who acts as the program director. "It's a place for men to plug into the shared socket of masculinity."

Hatfield says he wants men to feel comfortable walking into a room and expressing their emotions. That's something a lot of men have trouble doing, he says.

Men who attend the 12 fall sessions talk about whatever that week's theme happens to be. Among the issues covered are sexuality, father issues and rites of passage.

The session is a chance for the participants to be in an emotionally secure environment and talk freely about what's at issue without feeling embarrassed. Discussions are led by Hatfield or one of a number of guest instructors.

At a session this week, the subject was sexuality. Participants talked about monogamy, polyamory, intimacy and sexual inadequacy.

The session wrapped with all the participants making eye contact and acknowledging each other's willingness to be present and share with the group.

The session is a very private environment, but afterwards one of the participants, Carlos, who asked that only his first name be used, said: "What I like about this group are the different ages, nationalities and [sexual] orientations of the men who come."

He appreciated the emotional openness of those who attend.

All the male Langara students The Voice spoke to about Manology said they would be unwilling to go to a seminar where they are expected to engage with other men in an emotionally honest setting.

Hatfield isn't surprised. Males are taught not to be emotionally honest with each other, he says. But he adds, "It's been great for young men who have been wrestling with the [questions] of what's my purpose, what should I be studying, what kind of job do I want to have."

"The problem for men is that they get tremendous advantages for fulfilling the so-called masculine ethos," said Langara College interdisciplinary studies instructor Nancy Pollak. "I think it would be fantastic if men took it upon themselves to study the ideology of masculinity."

Hatfield wants young men to know, "If you feel this whole thing sounds a little bit weird or even kind of disturbing then you're totally average."

For less than the cost of a movie, he says guys can choose a topic that interests them and bring a male friend for an evening of Manology.

For more information visit <http://masculinity21st.wordpress.com/>