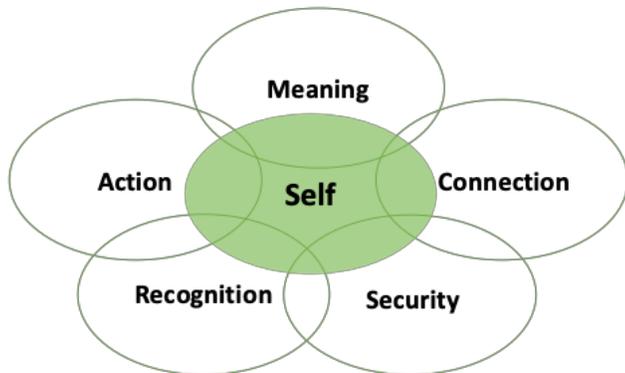


Healthy Masculinity Retreat at Camp Friedenswald

Healthy masculinity was the topic explored by 27 men who met in October 2018 at Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Michigan. Among various issues related to being men, the men considered how to meet five human needs.*



Action. Males are often defined by our activities, especially work, service and play. The world of work for men not only occupies a significant part of our lives day-to-day, but becomes a limited hallmark of our identities.

Recognition. Recognition is that part of self-identity that rests well-being in the hands of others. Human beings generally long to be valued by those around them, especially family, friends and partners.

Security. Personal safety is a need shared with all of creation. Not only protection from external threats, but provision of food, shelter, emotional and psychological safety is essential to survive and thrive in life.

Connection. From birth, human beings need strong bonds with caregivers to form a healthy self. And throughout life the need for connection with others in close, interdependent relationships continues.

Meaning. Action, recognition, connectedness and security each inform meaning and are informed by meaning. Beyond having needs met, beliefs and values give life meaning and purpose.



Examination of unhealthy behaviors used to meet these needs and how this impacts people was discussed. The group then explored healthy ways to meet needs and serve others.

In addition to this meaningful sharing from the heart, the men enjoyed working with their hands—engaging the need for action. There is something invigorating about manual labor in nature, which was experienced in cutting fire wood and clearing invasive brush together.



Also included in the retreats was enjoying the outdoors with the natural wonders of God's world.



*Model drawn from Vern Neufeld Redekop in *From Violence to Blessing: How an understanding of deep-rooted conflict can open paths to reconciliation* (Novalis, 2002) and discussed by Don Neufeld in *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity*, Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas, editors (Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2019).