

What is WiseGuyz?

WiseGuyz is an innovative promising practice program designed and run by the Centre for Sexuality, a nationally recognized, community-based non-profit organization delivering evidence-informed prevention and health promotion programs and services that support healthy bodies, healthy relationships, and healthy communities. We have been leaders in the areas of sexual health, healthy relationships, human rights, sexual and gender diversity, equality, and consent for almost 50 years.

WiseGuyz is an evidence-informed participatory program designed to promote healthy relationships and prevent adolescent dating violence. The program provides a safe space for participants to reflect on the impacts of harmful gender stereotypes and build essential relationship skills. These skills aim to promote healthy sexuality and healthy relationship development while decreasing attitudes related to homophobia and gender-based violence. In school settings, WiseGuyz strategically targets grade 9 boys who are 13 – 15 years old because this is an important time of change as they transition to high school and further develop their identities. For many youth, this is also a time of increasing maturity and curiosity about sexual health and relationships.

Module 1: Healthy Relationships

Participants learn about emotions and the role they play in our lives. They learn conflict resolutions skills and develop their understanding of their personal values and how to communicate them. Participants will build their skills to engage in healthy relationships.

Module 3: Gender and the Media

Participants explore and critique gender stereotypes and engage in discussions after watching documentaries, ads and shows. Through that they develop media literacy skills. Participants also explore gender and sexual diversity and the importance of being an ally.

Module 2: Sexual Health

Participants become more aware of their own sexuality and the changes during puberty. They receive sexual health information and learn about available community and health resources. Participants examine how to make healthy choices related to their sexuality. They also explore how to be in respectful and consensual relationships.

Module 4: Human Rights, Advocacy and Allyship

Participants learn the difference between equity and equality. They gain an understanding of the impact of stereotypes and prejudice. Participants explore becoming an active bystander. They explore ways they can make their school and community a better place.

The Impact of the WiseGuyz Program

Research is an integral part of WiseGuyz. We have been evaluating the program, speaking with participants and schools since 2012. Working in partnership with University of Calgary researchers, we have collected evaluation data from over 800 young men since 2014, which helps us continue to learn and improve on the program. Learn more about the research [here](#).

The Results

From our research, participants have reported:

- Improved communication and conflict resolution skills
 - Improved mental health
 - Increase knowledge about their own sexual health and sexuality
 - Improved ability to engage in healthier relationships
 - Decreased homophobic attitudes
 - Improved critical thinking about unhealthy forms of masculinity
 - Increased active and positive bystander intervention in response to peer violence.
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- WiseGuyz graduates expressed that they are better able to engage in healthy relationships, feel more comfortable making social connections and coping with negative emotions
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- WiseGuyz participants demonstrated significant improvements in positive mental health and friendship closeness. The improvements in positive mental health align with WiseGuyz program content, including building coping skills, emotional expression, exploring norms about masculinity, and identifying social support systems.
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- Researchers found improvements in friendship closeness were driven by changes in intimate disclosure and emotional support, which align with the program's focus on deconstructing male gender role norms that might prevent emotional closeness with male peers.

"Boys that wouldn't necessarily have had a strong social footing, had a better one by the end of the year and had more confidence and had more peers and that they felt like they had a group of people to rely on."
School Administrator

"What these boys learn has an impact on the whole school. They become role models."
Principal, WiseGuyz School

The Long-Term Goal

While there are short-term goals of encouraging healthy choices and better relationships, we know that long term this program has the potential to decrease bullying, homophobia, and even domestic violence. WiseGuyz become informed bystanders that can have a positive impact on the world around them. As one boy put it, *"WiseGuyz makes me a better man and a responsible and healthy teenage boy."*

Support to Parents and Guardians

The Centre for Sexuality is committed to providing parents and guardians with evidence-informed information and practical tools to support their adolescent children in making healthy decisions about their sexuality. Within the WiseGuys program there is an opportunity for two evening workshops (online /or in-person), where parents can learn more about the WiseGuyz curriculum to support their teenager's healthy development. Details on evening workshops will be shared with parents and guardians at least one month in advance.



For more information about the WiseGuyz program, please visit our [website](#)

"The man box was huge for me. Before Wiseguyz I would think its wrong. And I wouldn't listen to other people's experiences. Now I see that things don't have to be about pressures. I can apply diversity to my life. I wouldn't judge other people now. If I see a guy crying, I wouldn't tell him to stop crying. I would comfort them. I didn't talk about it at first. People who weren't in Wisgeuyz would ask my questions. They thought it was about sex and relationships. Then we had to tell them its not just about that. Its about a spectrum. The gender box: Knowing who you are. Knowing you don't have to be a certain thing forms community. Its something more than just talking about sex and relationships. Its forming community. Educating adolescent males to become better in all areas of their lives."

Chris, Former WiseGuyz Participant.

"The WiseGuyz program has been such a huge contributor to building a positive and accepting culture at our school. We have just wound up our 4th year with the program which means that we have WiseGuyz in our grade 9, 10, 11 and 12 classes. We have seen a huge transformation with the boys in our school - their self-confidence, their acceptance of others, their empathy and consideration for others have all grown. It has been amazing watching the boys as they experience the program - they love to go, and they feel empowered by the conversations that they have with the facilitators. It is a program I wish existed when I was in Junior High and one, I hope still exists when my son is old enough."

Tim Hasiuk, Vice Principal, Oilfields Highschool.