

The-Act-Like-a-Man Box

I call this exercise “The Act-Like-a-Man Box” (ALMB). After I’ve written down all these unwritten rules, guys can still have a hard time admitting how much control the ALMB has over their lives. Some get really angry about the unfairness of it. Like “money” is in the box. I agree it’s not fair, but it’s still true that it’s easier to have high status if you have more money.

	Acts like a girl	Tries too hard	Awkward	Sensitive
Weak	Funny	Money		Controlled by girls
Bad style	Strong/cut	Tall		
	Gets girls	Rule Breaker (but gets away with it)		Short
Fat	Always relaxed	Confident		
	Independent	Good at comebacks		Poor
Shows pain	Good at “right” sports	Detached		
	Slacker attitude (even if he does well in school)			
	Snitch	Rule follower	“Flaunts” being gay	Disabilities

Then I ask them what they would do in the following situations:

- Four guys are friends. One guy in the group gets teased a lot, and hates it but doesn’t say anything.
- A star athlete wants to quit the team but feels he can’t.
- A guy won’t tell his friends that he got an "A" on his science test and that he studies really hard.
- A guy won’t tell his friends that his girlfriend puts him down all the time.
- A guy is really struggling in school but doesn’t want to admit to anyone how much it bothers him.

Then everyone in the room gets quiet because they can see how the box traps them. Doing the ALMB exercise isn’t about where individual guys fit—either inside or outside the box. It isn’t about the center of the box being better or worse than outside the box. It’s also not about labeling the guys in the center of the box as douche-bags.

This exercise *is* about how we all get caught learning to value a person who has more “in-the-box” characteristics and devalue a person who doesn’t. It’s about understanding how these un-written rules convince you and other guys that you can do some things but not others. It’s about how adults actively put pressure on guys to fit and stay in the box. It’s about what emotions you’re allowed to have as a guy and how you’re allowed to express them. It can often train guys on exactly the ways to lash out at anyone they want to shut up.

From E-Book: "**The Guide**" - Rosalind Wiseman. *Free Download Available at Vook.com*