

## ADOLESCENT MASCULINITIES AND THE DRAMA OF SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION

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**Issues:** Sexual Health Promotion, Adolescent Masculinities, Applied Theatre, & Positive Youth Development.

**Description:**

Sexwise is an Applied Theatre based Sexual Health Promotion program, devised by Performer/Facilitators (in their early 20's), for rangatahi/youth across Aotearoa New Zealand, with a focus on North Island low decile (1-6) schools and schools with a high percentage of Māori and Pacific Island students.

Sexwise aims to challenge and motivate rangatahi/youth to discuss, explore and reflect on behaviours that affect their health and that of others, with reference to current accurate information. Sexwise provides an engaging and safe forum for discussion of often contentious, tabu and stigmatised subject matter. Funded by the Ministry of Health.

**Lessons learned:** Dynamics of homophobia can be a barrier to meaningful engagement with Sexual Health Promotion for adolescent males. Facilitators must address homophobia skillfully to maintain a safe space without shutting down or shaming anyone. Male Performer/Facilitators can model healthy emotional expression and vulnerability in the process of Sexual Health Promotion with rangatahi/youth, offering young men a space to discuss Sexual Wellbeing with depth and nuance.

**Next steps:** Further dialogue about masculinities and male representation in our programs can ensure that we remain culturally relevant to the communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand we engage with while increasing our effectiveness with young men.