

Getting the Most from a Loving Men event

Here are some pointers to help you get the most from the event:

Think about what drew you to the event What are you hoping for? The clearer you are about what you seeking the more likely you are to get it. You may be looking for connection, inspiration, human contact, physical contact, fun, a deeper understanding of intimacy, to understand yourself better, to understand some of your relationship patterns better, to shake yourself up or soothe yourself down, to be in a lovely space with like-minded people, to find a boyfriend, to make a new friend, or maybe there's just something inside saying 'go!'. Whatever it is, even if it's none of the above, spending some time thinking about this will help you focus.

Be active in getting what you want from the workshop If you sit back and wait for it to come to you, you may be lucky. But your odds are better if you're an active participant in that process (as in life!). Lean into the workshop, take chances and opportunities when they present themselves, stretch your comfort zone a little and you will gain more from the workshop. The more you put in, the more you'll get out.

Speak for yourself We encourage everyone to use 'I' statements when talking in the workshop sessions. This means sentences that start with 'I' or are personalised in some other way. For example: I feel... I believe.... My experience is... and so on, rather than making generalisations or assuming everyone has had the same experience as you. Part of the richness of Loving Men events is finding out how different we all are, as well as recognising and enjoying how similar we all are too.

Go at your own pace and look after yourself Listen to yourself and monitor how much and how far it's right for you to go. For some people just being at the event is stretching every boundary of their comfort zone. For others joining in and taking more risks is what they need. However you want to pitch it, you don't have to do anything you don't want to do, and it's fine to opt out of an exercise or decline a suggestion or request from someone that doesn't work for you.

Expect some ups and downs There'll be a strong focus on making this event a safe and supportive experience, with many good times. But any intense event will probably take you through a range of emotions. It seems to be part of the growing process to hit difficult patches. The point of coming together as a community is to provide support for each other as we go through these difficult times, as well as enjoying the good times together.

If you are struggling, let someone know There will be different kinds of support structures in place: in particular your small group is a great place to speak up if you are finding the event difficult. But you don't need to wait until your group to let someone know. Take a chance on telling someone over lunch, or ask someone if you can have a quiet word. One of the extraordinary things about the Loving Men community is how much people are willing to help each other with difficulties – just let them know.

Try changing some of your usual patterns This is a great place to try different ways of relating to others. This could include: talking to people you would normally avoid; sharing information about yourself you usually keep hidden; trying out activities you're inexperienced in or anxious about; talking about how you're feeling and what's going on for you at a deeper level; taking time out to be with yourself, if you're normally very sociable; letting someone know that you like them... you get the picture?!

Respect other people and the venue Be sensitive to other people and their personal boundaries. If you're not sure if something is OK, for instance if you'd like to offer someone a hug, check it out with them and respect their preferences. Please also help us to look after the venue, and respect the boundaries that the staff/community put in place.

Trust the process This is a famous slogan from many decades of personal development workshops. It's just possible that whatever happens to you at the event is just what you need to happen to help you take the next steps on your personal journey. Often we dismiss things because they're not what we expected, wanted, liked.... But sometimes they are just what we need....