

Men's group dives into issues

Gathering provides safe space for men to discuss feelings

BY MARC KITTERINGHAM

DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A weekly Salt Spring Island men's group is reaching out for new members.

Reinless is the name for the gathering of men who meet every Tuesday at 7 p.m. The idea behind the group is to provide a confidential, safe space with empathy and suspension of judgement for men to speak freely about their lives.

The group is "a safe environment where we can practise speaking the truth," explained John McColl, one of the members of Reinless. "[It's] a place where there's empathy, non-judgement — or judgement is suspended at least — and people can speak their inner truth without retribution or punishment."

Reinless has no political or philosophical leanings, and is simply a place for men to talk freely and to get support in a confidential, safe atmosphere.

Many men participate because they are not happy. The men's group is a place for them to help deal with negative feelings and to feel better about themselves. McColl has been a part of Reinless for around one year, and has facilitated men's groups in other parts of the country. To him, the group is about trying to find the things that help people in life and to move forward with those in mind.

Discussions also promote a deeper understanding of the feelings members have. As opposed to one-on-one exchanges, a group discussion allows people to get real feedback and to dive into the reasons behind their feelings.



Illustration of the Salt Spring's men's group commissioned by a member.

"It's taught in our culture that we're responsible for other people's feelings and we're not responsible for our own. If you switch that around and take 100 per cent responsibility for your own experience then you're dependent on yourself to create the quality of your experience," he said.

Confidentiality is important to the group. Many stories are brought up that could be embarrassing or cause shame. One of the group's few rules is to keep things discussed a secret.

"We have no real strong rules in the group except confidentiality is one," McColl said. "We don't out anybody that is here and we don't repeat stories to anyone. I can talk about maybe my experience of hearing you, but it's confidential, so that makes it safe."

There are six or seven regular attendees, though that number can fluctuate depending on the week. Any man is welcome to join the group and anyone interested can contact McColl at 519-821-9703. There is also an online sign-up at www.meetup.com/reinless/.