

The Ideal Man

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I recall hearing the phrase 'man up' or 'be a man' a couple of times. My cousin had just gone through a heartbreak and immediately my uncle saw him that night he said, 'man up and move on'. He wiped off his tears and was back on his feet like nothing ever happened. I could still see the pain and the anger all hidden behind his face, a mask that he was not able to get off. We have made 'be a man' be a phrase that every man has likely heard. Being a man, you must be tough, strong, aggressive, emotionally hardened, anti-feminine and must have power. Society's expectations and pressures often lead many men to feel depressed, lonely and lost. In other words, we have put a definition on what a man should be and not be. We have made the choice to define what being masculine is and this has greatly affected our men. As many of us have done this unknowingly and even knowingly, we need to change our thoughts and how we perceive men. Not being the strongest or showing no emotion does not mean they are weak. Requesting assistance shouldn't be gendered; as humans, we all seek support in various forms to navigate life. Additionally, immediate control and power aren't universally attainable, so when men in our society lack control, they shouldn't face judgment. It is important as I want the men around us not to feel ashamed or weak whenever they need help with anything which later leads to men having better relationships with those they engage with. They will therefore also be open to receive any kind of help stabilizes their mental health.

Being a man demands toughness, strength, aggression, and emotional resilience. Men are expected to always appear the strongest, taught entitlement and aggression if they're denied what they want. Society dictates solving issues "man to man," a constant reminder. I could hear my male friends arguing over something that was petty and they were all determined to be right.

They would end up saying ‘we could deal with this man to man’ and they would end up fighting. A man fights back, and a real man never backs down no matter what and research shows that this has led to many men becoming violent just to prove they are strong enough. Research conducted by the representation Project where experts who are involved in neuroscience, psychology, sociology, sports, education and media who offer evidence on the ‘boy crises. They make a video *The mask you live in* uploaded by Pizzitola (2022) which shows us men have been taught or have grown up knowing that men fight back and never back down. In the video (7:24) they visit a prison and ask them what they know about being man is and they say, ‘a man never backs down from anything, a man uses violence to solve problems...’. In *Why Men Struggle to Show Their Emotion* Phillip K. Hardin (2022) a clinical member of the American association of marriage and family therapy mentions, ‘Boys are taught to suck it up’ ... “big boys don’t cry.”. Men have been taught not to cry in public as young as five and have grown to be the same. There are very rare situations where you would find a man being comforted while crying but would just receive stares and would be ridiculed and looked down upon.

This should not be the case in any situation. The rising of gangs and shootings are the results that come out from our men. It is rare to find women being involved in gangs and shootings. Men should be able to learn that dealing with anything can be done without fighting or proving physically that they are the strongest. And to make this possible we need to make sure that the men in our society feel heard and appreciated. EdX being a non-profitable organization founded by Harvard develops online counselling programs where in *Promoting Healthy Masculinity among Boys* Online Counseling Programs (2019) shows that creating a safe environment involves acknowledging men's issues, paying attention, reaching out, and discussing healthy masculinity, a conversation often neglected but crucial in understanding that strength isn't solely

about physicality and aggression isn't always the solution. Being a global issue an organization in Australia ,which partners with the government to provide better health for its people, Vic Health (2019) states the following:

A man who has a good and stable mental well-being can have open conversations and encourage or praise the strengths of friends or colleagues. Men are celebrated for being empathetic and vulnerable and are encouraged to seek help when needed. Men and boys show emotional vulnerability and can share feelings of sadness, fear, shame, kindness and joy and that is what we should all encourage them to do.

This is what men in our society should be, not what we think they should be. It is acceptable for women to ask for help. Men are expected not to ask for help but to figure it all out by themselves. Men are meant to keep the pain inside them as they are afraid that someone could use it against them. Taking care of oneself for example having skin care routines is perceived for women. I went to school in Africa and our teachers were helpful but were not always available to offer help. Our school had both boys and girls, and I could not help but notice the problems that could not be hidden. Whenever it was a girl who could not understand a certain concept, the girls would go to either a fellow girl or a boy who clearly understood the concept, but I could hardly see any boy ask questions from any of the girls who would understand whatever was being taught. That was not the only problem. The boys would never share deep stories or thoughts they had with each other and would end up keeping whatever they had in mind to themselves. At some point in life, I questioned my friendship with the boys that surrounded me. Losing more than two male friends to suicide caused me to ask was I not reaching out or did I build a barrier to close the doors to get to me? Was I not listening or was I ignoring and assuming that 'he is a man' he has it all under control? As men shy away from asking for help in the name of avoiding

appearing to be like women, the rates of suicide cases have risen among men. The National Public Health Agency of the United States, Centers for disease control and prevention (2023) find out that “suicide rate among males in 2021 was approximately four times higher than the rate among females. Males make up 50% of the population but nearly 80% of suicides.” And this is concerning as everyone is involved, young and old, black and white.

Society has also put an assumption that certain careers are for women. They are not necessarily termed for women, but it is rare that you find men in such careers, the healthcare field being one of the greatest. Taking an anatomy class seems very uncomfortable for men. I am personally taking an anatomy class and the first day I was convinced I was in all women class since you can literally count the men in our class. You cannot be able not to notice them. The United census Bureau responsible for producing data about the American people and economy published an article *Your Healthcare Is in Women's Hands* by Day and Christnacht (2019) that women are taking over healthcare ‘Women have increased their participation in record numbers in health care occupations that require higher education, including dentists, optometrists, pharmacists, physicians and surgeons, and veterinarians. These occupations were dominated by men in 2000. Women now make up most veterinarians and pharmacists, and have made strong gains, doubling their representation, in other occupations such as dentists and optometrists. At the same time, the number of men who are dentists or veterinarians decreased over the two decades. Even so, today men still make up more than half of dentists, optometrists, EMT/paramedics, and physicians and surgeons. In some health care occupations, such as nurse midwives, speech pathologists, dental assistants and medical assistants, women account for at least 90% of workers.’ And this leaves me and you to think if men are becoming discouraged to

join these paths of careers or are simply not interested. Encouraging all genders in healthcare is vital; without diversity, we risk losing male participation in the field.

Men should also freely express emotions without fear of being labeled feminine. In *The Mask You Live In* uploaded by Pizzitola (2022) men are seen as the same as women and only the genes separate men and women. We are the same in how we think and do things and we all have feelings. So just as women have feelings and get help by airing them out so do men have the same feelings and can also get help by airing them out. Mission harbor Behavioral health which contains experts in Los Angeles who treat people with mental health issues shows in an article *Men and Emotions: The Importance of Becoming Vulnerable* by Dekin (2020) shows us that men can do this by being honest with how they feel, and I quote 'To be vulnerable, you need to be honest about the way you're feeling. So often, men will feel a glimmer of sadness or grief and quickly shut it down. In order to open up about your emotions, you need to accept them and feel them. Recognize the way you're feeling and try to figure out what's making you feel that way. Allow yourself to express those emotions however it feels right. 'We should all let our men do this openly and not look down upon them as this will bring forth better men in our society. Men who do this end being respectful and mindful in the society. Men will not be afraid to say they are not okay, and this will reduce suicide cases as they are increasing as the men are unable to keep it in and end up having the decision of taking their own lives.

In *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) the character Jordan Belfort says, 'my name is Jordan Belfort the year I turned 26 I made 49 million dollars which really pissed me off....' The character is really praised in the movie which is the intention of it to show that men get away with crimes and are still given much respect which represents what society has put to be the best. Men with the greatest success get praised and are honored. They receive attention and through this way

they have power. Is there any good reason that most billionaires and millionaires are men and even this is seen in our leadership as many of our present and past Presidents are male.

According to Forbes, Dolan K. and Peterson, C (2022) say the most successful people are male and for women it appears to be because of inheritance. This could not have been a coincidence. Society has affiliated success with being perceived as the one in control and with power and therefore men have been pushed to go to the extremes to acquire the attention that comes with success. The good feeling of control and receiving respect is what now every man wants to acquire. In the past, in my culture, men were the people who were fit to go to school and get knowledgeable and this would earn them respect and glory in the community. The more one could get more educated the more they received respect and even the best things that were offered at that time. It's an issue that is still there globally and was there and is still here.

As we have easily let our norms and behaviors describe what being man enough is we should all do a better job in taking care of our men to build a better society. Being strong, having power and being anti feminine should not be the terms we use when describing what being a man really is. But letting our men be vulnerable and open with us is what we should all try to have. Let us encourage and support our men just like we would do for the women as the differences only lie in our genes and not our emotions. Since now we know how the phrase 'be a man' has a great impact on the men in our society let us make this phrase forgettable. It starts with you. Objects or entities that do not possess the capacity for feelings or emotions are inanimate. Men are human beings who are just like any of us and are not objects or entities. As far as I know my dear cousin, he most likely had a breakdown later behind closed door. I just never saw it.

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