

## MEN OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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Men! What is a man? How many of you actually know? We live in confusing times. Men are bombarded from every corner with contradictory signals from wives, women friends, mothers, fathers and peers. "Be strong but don't be macho" says one voice, "Be sensitive but don't be wimp" says another Many of you reading this were raised in the days of the Commandments for Men (Wagenvoord & Bailey - Avon Books 1978) which were:

- Thou shalt not cry.
- Thou shalt not display weakness.
- Thou shalt not need gentleness.
- Thou shalt comfort but not desire comforting.
- Thou shalt be needed but not need.
- Thou shalt touch but not be touched.
- Thou shalt stand alone.

Also in the background as "role models" were John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, James Bond etc. The portrayal from them was that men are dominant, they do not crack, no matter what, they are always a superb lover, they are always sure of themselves and always in control of the women, the money and the situation! Unfortunately all of this is irrelevant and takes men away from themselves.

If we go back to the Agricultural Age, men farmed the land.. Sons were raised to help their fathers and thus did the boys of yesteryear learn from their fathers. Fathers handed down their values, and shared their thoughts and feelings. Then along came the Industrial age and men went off to work in factories. They worked long hours and their sons were left with their mothers. Mothers can raise girls to be women but in order to learn to be a man, men need fathers and this was the beginning of the time when fathers weren't around. Now we are in the Technological age and the same thing is happening.

Fathers go off to work early in the morning and return home often late at night so their sons are left "under fathered". It is said by people like Biddulph (Manhood), Bly (Iron John) and Druck (Secrets Men Keep) and others that being under fathered is one of the major reasons why our men are hurting right now. Remember the song Cats in the Cradle... where the son would do anything for his father's attention but the father is always too busy and then the son grows up and the roles are reversed?

For years we have had the Feminine Movement, a time where women have learned to own their own power and honour themselves and they have been forging ahead. Times have changed. Women can get almost any job they want, they can raise children on their own, there are vibrators readily available! Where does that leave men?

Let's look at some statistics:

- Women live longer than men.
- From 10-14 boys suicide rate is twice as high as girls.

- From 15-19 it is four times as high.
- From 20-24 it is six times as high.
- There are more suicides of Vietnam vets than men who died in the entire Vietnam conflict.

Men are twice as likely as women to be victims of violent crime. Men pay for women about 10 times as frequently in restaurants as women pay for men. The more expensive the restaurant, the more likely the man is to pay. Men who are heads of households have a net worth much lower than heads of female households. More men are homeless than women.

Interestingly it was also discovered that the men who committed incest with their daughters had "little or no emotional or nurturing input in their children's upbringing". And more to the point children who were raised by house fathers (the mothers worked) did better on all tests at a Yale Psychological Test.

What then does that say? That it is important that men have a great deal of input into their children's lives from birth on. That men are deeply caring beings if given an opportunity to grow and access the deep wellspring of their emotions.

Another fascinating point is that when Mattel created a family of dolls, the children who played with them put the male doll aside and when asked why they weren't playing with it said: "Daddies go to work all day".

Men are the gatekeepers of some of the world's best kept secrets. They lead secret emotional lives and often hide their deepest fears and insecurities. Some men disguise themselves as Mr. Nice Guy or Mr. Successful Businessman however if these inner feelings are not allowed to surface they can result in ill health, deep unhappiness or simply feelings of confusion and not knowing. How many of you reading this can see bits of your father in yourself? Perhaps you get angry with the kids or the partner or perhaps with someone at work and have no idea why.

If we look at the division of men and women in terms of work, here are the old choices:

- Women: Work Full Time, Mother Full Time, Combine working and mothering.
- Men: Work Full Time, Work Full Time, Work Full Time.
- Until recently the options have not been there for men. Whether they liked it or not they were raised with the belief system that they had to get a good job and earn good money and protect and support their families. Perhaps it is time to look at our world differently.

Some women make great house mothers and likewise so do some men. Some women get enormous pleasure from working and likewise so do some men. It is time to break with the traditions of our forefathers and begin to live our lives in ways that work for everyone in the family.

Most people are looking for a lasting fulfilling relationship and yet divorce is up to nearly 50% in this country and it is instigated by women in 4 out of 5 cases. One of the most common complaints is that men don't communicate. What women want is someone with whom they can be intimately connected. When they don't get that it eventually becomes too hard and they leave. Also very few men have real "friends" to whom they

can turn in times of trouble. Men have buddies that they can talk sports with but not intimate friendships with whom they can share the secret thoughts of the heart.

Think about an onion. The outside is hard and dry and crumbly, the first layer is very thick and it progressively becomes thinner until you get to the core which is clear and you can see through it. We are all like that, a beautiful translucent core which has been hidden by layers of "stuff" and completed with a dry cracked skin and we think that is who we are. It is time that men had the opportunity to feel safe enough to explore some of the areas that might free them and allow them to be "real". Time for men to begin to unravel some of the layers that they have built around themselves so that we can recognise the gifts each sex has to offer and begin to live our purpose.

Ken Druck says: Disclosure is the least exploited form of power known to men. Therefore men it is time to tell the truth.... to yourself, to your partner and to your parents. You could start with these questions...

- Do you secretly yearn for their father's love and approval?
- Have you told your parents and or kids that you love them lately and if not, why not?
- Do you define yourself on the basis of what you do for a living?
- Do you really enjoy your job and if not what would bring you pleasure?
- Do you have emotional support from other men?
- Do you ever allow yourself the right to feel fearful or uncertain?
- Have you ever made love when you really wanted just to be held?
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What to do then to move toward wholeness?:

- Read books such as Manhood, Iron John, Flying Boy etc.
- Find a men's group in your area.
- Commit to healing yourself and being totally honest in your life.

The only thing we can be sure of in today's society is change and perhaps it is time for men to find a way to access their truth and thus connect with their sacredness. Men have to feel safe being vulnerable and telling the truth.

Like it says in 'The Men we Never Knew': "The reason men think with their pricks is because they have never been taught to feel with their hearts".

Men, it is time to begin to exercise the intimacy muscles of your hearts and live connected with the core of who you really are. If we can create men and women who are willing to live authentically then perhaps we can create a world that works for ourselves and our children.

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