

BOYS TO MEN

Many of you will know of the research that was done on baby boys and girls. They dressed a baby in blue and the result was that people held it up in the air, chucked it under the chin, were harder with it somehow than when they dressed the same baby in pink and people cooed at it and rocked it gently. So it seems this distinction between male and female, soft and hard happens from the crib, and while that is changing with the new babes coming onto the planet, for many of our men, this was their lot!

Recently we went to see *Into the Wild*, a powerful evocative story of a young man who appeared to be searching out the ancient rite of initiation by leaving behind everything that was society-valued by going into the wildness to find himself. John Bly talks about the sacred wound of all humans and in the movie the star's sacred wound was his family and its dysfunctionality. Nothing that you could actually "see" or "hear".... just the unsaid words of a family who cannot tell the truth, do not wish to hear the truth, who live with their feelings squashed down, their emotions buried, and their authenticity denounced in favour of living a life that appears to be "normal" and in essence is affecting them all adversely. Highly recommended if you haven't already seen it but provocative in its story telling of what our young men of the 21st Century have to live with and what they choose to do about it.

Once, Apache boys began training at the age of ten to hunt and survive. They were trainees over a period of several years. During this time, they were told how to behave; how to be warriors. They learned that everything they did was dependent on faith and prayer. That whenever someone did or said anything "bad", that person threatened their entire family. They were taught to be the best person they could be. To bring disrespect to their family was unheard of. Western trained children were taught to be seen and not heard, to work hard, to be tough, be strong, don't cry, compete not co-operate. Funny that both Indigenous and White males often turn to alcohol and drugs in an attempt to disassociate from the present which doesn't seem to fulfil their needs.

Is it any wonder the identity of our men as warriors is forgotten and our beautiful men have grown up to hide their feelings and then feel inept when it comes to sharing on an intimate level with their partner who is craving more than having the kitchen sink fixed?

I read once that MALE stands for Men as Learners and Elders and yet our society holds mistakes as bad things when in truth they are the only way anyone ever learns... and up until now Elders are not given the rightful respect they deserve.

Men have plenty of everything - money, sex, power, education - and everywhere there are ads and books telling them how to be happy and successful. But to a diverse group of men, the question of what it means to be a man is still perplexing. Most men long for the support and nurture of other men to help in the journey toward masculinity, maturity, and a deeper experience of the divinity in each of us. To have a close friend who will call you on your "stuff" is not in realm of most men! For many their male friends are the husbands of their wife's best friend. So it is heartening to see men's groups springing up all over the world offering men the opportunity to confront their past suffering, the losses in their life, both emotional, financial etc. to have a space where they can speak what they hold in their hearts or they are ashamed of and in the speaking of their innermost truths comes the ability to live with genuine wisdom and vision.

With wisdom comes the knowledge that parents did the best they could and even though it might not have been enough, it was all they had to give....

That to hold grudges, resentment, non forgiveness against the things of our childhood is to create a prison that actually shuts its doors, keeping us imprisoned forever.

That to speak of fears and pain is, in actuality, about being authentic... and that authenticity is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves and our family.

That to cry and be vulnerable is not to be weak and a sissy but in fact is actually healing our past and allowing us to move forward into a new future.

That to share our innermost feelings with our family is to allow the sons of our future to feel safe with their Maleness.

With vision men can change the way the next generation of boy babies are treated; with vision we can see that boys need to be held and cuddled and listened to and encouraged to talk and have an opportunity to explore the creative soft or yin side of themselves as well as the yang side. Perhaps in the letting go of how it was for past generations is to create a new future for men where boys get mentored by caring, loving, nurturing males who speak from the heart and not from the gruff roughness of the past, allowing a new generation of MALEs to come forth willing to be all that they can be.

Diane McCann (The Goddess Within seminar) and Robert Mathews facilitate Man's Inner Journey, a seminar for men and they also teach Tantra to couples. For more information call 08 82481281 or email beyondtheordinary@internode.on.net (www.mansinnerjourney.com)