

# MEN WHERE TO FROM HERE?

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What a joy to see men pushing prams, being hands on fathers who want to be there for their children, wanting to be involved in day to day rearing of these precious beings and doing a fantastic job.

Oh how far we have come from the days when fathers were the people we feared. When the famous line from our mother was: "Wait until your father gets home!" Fathers were often distant people whose presence you were in awe of. Hoping you wouldn't disappoint; wishing to be held and told he was proud of you; praying you didn't do anything wrong to make him raise his voice or his hand, or worse still, a belt!

Yesterday men were not encouraged to feel. Today they are with women who expect them not only to do their share of housework and cooking, but also to actually share their feelings!

Our men have been hiding their wounds, particularly the father son wound for a long time. Male competitiveness, played out in many areas of work often has its origins in father son relationships. Attempting to discover who they are, the son looks to the father for the blueprint of what it is to be a man. They often hear "it is a dog eat dog world, the best man wins or the winner takes all". Often men are in constant struggle attempting to define himself against other men. It goes deeper than that on a primordial level and some boys must also defend themselves from the unspoken but powerful competition with their fathers. This can be from the subtle to the overt, from: "You'll never be half the man I am" to "You'll never be the athlete I was" etc. If boys are not heard or listened to they can grow into men who push themselves beyond their limits in a heart wrenching effort to win their father's approval. This tragic competition remains virtually unacknowledged in our society.

Work is what men do and many thrive on it. But while satisfaction is gained from what they do, their careers don't necessarily represent the fulfilment of their dreams. Often in reality work has not only been a life-long disappointment but also a violation of their spirits. Men often feel they can't go for their dreams because of "responsibilities" to wives and children; like the hotel manager who dropped out of medical school because he had 4 sons or the champion athlete who, when his girl friend got pregnant, quit sport, became a taxi driver where he stayed for 30 years. An author of men's work says "I have rarely spoken to a man over 50 who didn't express some sense of regret about his work. What I really wanted to be was..... or What I really wish I could have done was...." This is because men have been trained to see themselves as the provider first and foremost. When men live out of a deeply ingrained expectation they shape their life around the demands that being a provider creates.

It is time for men to find themselves. What does that look like in the work environment. What is it that you really wanted to do when you had dreams? What would it take for you to go after that dream? Chances are if you have a passion for it, you will most likely be good at it and when you are good at it then it becomes second nature and you can create money from it. Look at the ways in which you run tribal beliefs about your "work!" The world has changed but many people remain stuck in beliefs that they have to do it 'hard' or they can't do what brings them pleasure. "You can't be an artist, photographer, ballet dancer etc are catch cries of parents who gave up on their own dreams.

Men also need to find a way to enter the realm of feelings. For men actions speak louder than words therefore they do communicate however unlike women who are often overtly verbal, the male vocabulary for feeling is action. We can all train ourselves to communicate differently though and that is what is needed in the arena of male/female communication. Women need to say less, be more precise and not regurgitate the same issues repeatedly and men need to speak about their feelings from an "I" perspective rather than a body perspective, e.g. "My back hurts again" versus "I feel really sad and unsupported". Men **do** their emotions rather than **feel** them. A fist may go through a door or the axe gets a workout chopping wood that is not needed. One man said "When I found out my daughter had cancer I went to the

shooting range and blasted the target until it was black with holes.” Women on the other hand can collapse into a crying place and then share what they feels.

Both sexes need to do it differently if we are to continue to share our lives and our love. Perhaps women can learn that the little things men do, the cup of coffee, the pat on the backside etc ARE the man’s way of showing his love, and the majority of men are never going to write a romantic love poem or dance for you wearing a silk sarong! Perhaps men can practice sharing a little of how they feel until it becomes more comfortable. Many divorces happen because women complain they don’t feel loved and their men didn’t communicate. In reality the man did everything he could in the doing side of the relationship except talk from the heart! A great saying is “Men do for women because they don’t know how to BE for women.” It is time for both sexes to see each other’s differences through the eyes of love.

Men of today need to incorporate the feminine dimension into their lives. They need to acknowledge their woundedness; access the ability to grieve; find what they long for, want and desire and then identify their truth and work toward healing; you can only heal the pain when you can feel it and once felt, it can be released in the quest for wholeness.

Women need to be patient. Instead of centuries of sisterhood that women have had, they have had centuries of competition rather than co-operation. Women need to understand that the steps of the emotional process for men can be very slow. Women generally change because they don’t want to “suffer” any longer from constrictions or oppression. They need to realize that men are men, women are women and men will never BE women! To some degree men’s feelings will always be expressed differently from women’s. Women need to honour men for their journey of emotional exploration. All men thrive on validation and acknowledgement so do it more women! Accept that men are doing the best they know how to do with the tools they were given; everyone has been wounded or betrayed at some time and we have all inflicted wounds and been betrayers. It is time to shift our focus away from patriarchy and matriarchy – neither of which worked well, and discover our sameness because in the end we both want the same things... to be loved, appreciated and respected for who we are.

### **The Seven Steps to Manhood (kindly extracted from Manhood by Stephen Biddulph)**

- 1. Fixing it with your father – your father is your emotional line of contact to your masculinity. You have to work toward a clear and resolved relationship between you and him. You cannot cope with your life successfully until you have understood him, forgiven him and in some way come to respect him.**
- 2. Finding sacredness in your sexuality – you have to find out how to not just be comfortable, but transformed and fulfilled in your sexuality. Sex will either be a sleazy obsessive part of your life or a sacred and powerful source of your wellbeing. First you must relocate your sexual energy in yourself instead of giving it away to women. Then learn the dance of the male and female.**
- 3. Meeting your partner on equal terms – anyone can get a partner, the trick is to keep them. To do this you must learn to meet your partner as different but equal. This means respecting your partner but respecting yourself also. You will need to be safe with communicating.**
- 4. Engaging actively with your kids – You can’t parent from behind a newspaper and you can’t leave it to your partner because women don’t have what it takes to role model a man to a child.**
- 5. Learn to have real male friends – get emotional support from other men and find out how to complete your own initiation into manhood. All men need the help of other men to complete certain**

transitions as well as just having a richer life.

**6. Find your heart in your work** – You need to find work you believe in so that the time and energy you spend working is spent in a direction where your heart lies. It isn't enough to just make a living. The real work of men is to support and protect life and build toward a better world. If you don't love it, eventually it could slowly kill you.

**7. Free your wild spirit** – You need to find a spiritual basis for your inner life that is specifically masculine and based in nature, something that connects you with the earth.