



Positive
Masculinity

Chivalry isn't dead. It just has a new name.

Positive Masculinity

The goal of this book is to distinguish between toxic & positive masculinity. To do this, we talk about what each one is & who might experience it. When we talk about gender in this book, we mean anyone who says they are male. A neutral ground also exists: Being male has no negative associations. The actions we define in this book determine whether a person is positive or negative. For example, you could be optimistic but unknowingly exhibit negative characteristics. Another disclaimer is that this is not a complete list. From our writings, each person is responsible for deciding what they want to apply to their life.

So, precisely what are positive & toxic masculinity? Unfortunately, both cannot be found in a dictionary when broken down. You can use Merriam-Webster's definition of "male" to say that "to be male is to display the quality, state, or degree of being masculine or manly" & "toxic" to mean "containing or contaminated with a substance capable of injuring or killing a living thing," but you can't say that "toxic male" will kill anyone, right? The short answer, theoretically speaking, might be. "Positive Masculinity" attempts to ascertain this information. Positive manliness is when men utilize physical & profound solidarity to advocate

proper behavior & networks—the antithesis of toxic masculinity. Positive masculinity aims to help future generations of men acquire healthy habits & build stronger communities. It involves being vulnerable, having emotional intelligence, & being morally courageous. It necessitates rethinking what it means to be a man & redefining how the world views "masculinity." Positive psychology is similar to rethinking masculinity. We want to distinguish & feature the positive characteristics of manliness to show men how to act when they want to break the generational trauma that has plagued men.

It's not the 1950s

The origins of toxic masculinity began thousands of years ago when homo sapiens would use physical strength, dominance, & aggression to fight & hunt. These behaviors continued for centuries & into contemporary times, where these behaviors are no longer necessary, yet the attitude is still promoted. Continuing this type of masculinity becomes toxic since it's outdated & incompatible with current times. Toxic masculinity occurs when cultural pressures condition men to behave in traditional, stereotypical masculine ways. Conforming to this behavior entails suppressing their feelings, avoiding distress, being "tough," & using violence or aggression to portray their power. Toxic masculinity only allows men to behave according to masculine ideals, leaving little to no space for femininity, emotions, or help. Ultimately, the primary focus is gaining power, respect, & strength. Examples include saying, "man up" or "boys will be boys." Toxic masculinity stresses the importance of avoiding feelings, & therefore compensatory behaviors are used to exhibit further masculinity. Despite the term's recent popularity among feminists, toxic masculinity did not originate with the women's movement. Instead, it was coined in the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s & '90s, motivated in part by a reaction to second-wave feminism. The movement focused on men's healing, using male-only workshops,



retreats, & rites of passage to rescue what it saw as essentially masculine qualities & archetypes (the king, the warrior, the wildman, & so on) from what it dubbed "toxic" masculinity. According to the campaign, men's aggression & frustration resulted from a society that feminized boys by denying them the necessary rites & rituals to realize their authentic selves as men. In the 1990s & early 2000s, the term spread to other self-help circles & into academic work (for example, on men's mental health). "Toxic masculinity" was virtually non-existent in academic writing—including feminist scholarship—until 2015, other than in a handful of texts on men's health & well-being. But as it spread in popular culture, feminist scholars & commentators adopted the term, typically as a shorthand for misogynist talk & actions. Though the time is now associated with a feminist critique of the sexist norms of manhood, that's not where it started. It is virtually absent from the scholarship on men & masculinities that developed rapidly from the mid-1970s, though its use in that area has increased in the last decade. However, this scholarship has long claimed that culturally influential constructions of manhood exist & are tied to men's domination of women.



Red flags

- That is so gay.
- Man Up.
- Toughen Up.
- Don't be such a wussy.
- Shake it off.
- Boys/men don't cry.
- There’s no crying in sports.
- Grow Some Balls/
He's got some balls.
- No homo.
- Boys will be boys.
- I'm a guy....
 - » Going to the bar/gym/golf course is my therapy
 - » I don't know how to/
I don't cry
 - » We don't talk about this type of stuff/don't know how to communicate.
 - » We don’t do "that stuff.” "That stuff" typically indicates expressing emotions, vulnerability, or fulfilling traditionally feminine-viewed domestic obligations, careers, and roles.

Why is masculinity toxic?

Before defining toxic masculinity, it is essential to note that being masculine or a man is not inherently wrong or harmful. They only become contaminated when the notions cultivate rigid thinking, a disconnection from the authentic self, feelings, or core values. Toxicity seeps in when identifying as "a man's man" perpetuates patterns of unhealthy thoughts and behaviors. This negatively impacts you and those around you suffering through the abstract construct of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is expressed by exaggerated, archaic ideas of being a man and masculinity. It is complex, deep-rooted, and difficult to define succinctly. I'll attempt to define it by, suppressing, masking, not feeling, or understanding emotions. At the same time, emotional expression is limited to anger and irritability or more destructive emotions such as rage and aggression—furthermore, consistent attempts to maintain an image of being hard, tough, or overly self-sufficient. According to Medical News Today, toxic masculinity symptoms might appear as aggression, Sexual aggression or control, and showing no or suppressing emotions. Hyper-competitiveness, needing to dominate or control others, A tendency towards or glorifying violence, Isolation, Low empathy, Entitlement, Chauvinism, and sexism (homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny).

How to reduce toxic masculinity.

We all can play a part in reducing toxic masculinity. Television, radio, and movies have traditionally played an enormous role in influencing behavior and ideas. Ultimately it comes down to the individual building more awareness, making intentional choices, and being patient with change being a process. Here are some ways we can collectively help diminish this destructive aspect of our society and how men can individually challenge their own beliefs and behaviors collectively create safe spaces for men and their emotions, take men who get sexually harassed, self-harm, or have eating disorders/body image issues seriously, praise vulnerability as strength, Reduce pressure on men to act a certain way which perpetuates fragile masculinity, which leads to toxic masculinity Redefine for yourself what it is to be a man or masculine. Challenging archaic ideas that likely have been defining it for you in examples such as; How much can you drink, How many fights have you been in, How many sexual partners have you had, What type of car do you drive, How big is your house, muscles, or anything else is.

Green flags

- WOW, That's so straight!
- Men are men, no matter what.
- It's okay to not be okay.
- Your feelings are valid .
- It's okay to cry/
Boys and Men can cry.
- You can play sports and show emotions.
- Boys will be held accountable.
- I'm a guy....
 - » I can use therapy.
 - » I want to learn to show my emotions.
 - » I want to communicate better.
 - » I want to be a better partner and father, so I will help out around the house without being asked and listen to my partner more.
 - » Occupations have no gender roles.
 - » I will do all the things that I can do.

Mr. Roger's positive neighborhood.

To an entire generation, Fred Rogers was a beloved figure from childhood. He invited children to be his neighbor and engaged their curiosity by teaching them how the world works; he took them to exciting places they might never have seen otherwise and encouraged them to be open, caring, and honest. Part of his message was that you were special, exactly how you were, and that you deserved love, patience, and caring. That message was important for children who might have yet to fit in. Despite being incredibly gentle and soft-spoken, Mr.

Rogers taught children how to live in a world that could often be confusing, chaotic, or scary, and he did so with compassion and empathy. He would directly address confusing and complex concepts for children. Ideas that some adults would think were inappropriate for children, such as the death or even the assassination of Robert F Kennedy. Because he believed children deserved to be treated with respect and not be talked down to or hidden from the realities of the world. By directly addressing these issues, Mr. Rogers taught children to confront their fears bravely by taking things children often had a hard time dealing with and explaining them in a way children could understand. While his messages were about love and compassion, Mr. Rogers never shied away from confrontation when necessary. For example, he stared down congress to secure funding for the Public Broadcasting System. Rogers would directly address the social ills of the day, like racism and segregation. He enraged Evangelical



Christian groups because he preached a message of unconditional love and acceptance. He steadfastly refused to condemn LGBTQ+ individuals. But he did all this in a uniquely Mr. Rogers way. With a smile, kindness, and a reminder to even those he disagreed with or those who opposed him that they were loved and special just the way they were. He was never angry, aggressive, pushy, or stern. But in his way, Mr. Rogers fought to make the world a better place.

Bond, toxic James Bond.

with his squinting, pouty angst, when you get down to it, Bond is still a womanizer whose main skill in life is killing things and looking really cool doing so. Bond was created decades ago by Ian Flemming, and the fact that he's such a cipher is what's allowed him to be reinvented and reimagined so many times, as long as the movies have the right trappings: cool cars, guns, gadgets, preening villains, and of course women who are defined by their sexual availability to him—Bond girls. This was gross in the '60s when Bond got big, but now we can actually see who Bond is: basically every action hero stereotype in a nice tux.

This isn't to say that a Bond movie can't be fun or entertaining, but he is a relic of the sort a woman could never be, because he exists as

a person that uses his masculinity as a weapon and also lets it define him. James Bond is an idea, for sure—and an outdated one.

He's the ideal man of an age past: He's able to bed an assortment of women with nary an effort, he kills without remorse and keeps his feelings—when he has them—comfortably and Britishly locked up. He does fall in love once in a while, which, in his world, means giving up the double-O life. But that woman always conveniently dies or turns out evil so he can go back to bed-hopping.

He's everything men are told they should want to be: promiscuous, except when it comes to the right (still disposable) woman, unfeeling, violent, but smart and suave. James Bond is an aesthetic; he's the idea of charm and class with a deeply violent and pretty misogynistic underbelly. In short, he's the patriarchy.

James Bond isn't really a character; he's an archetype. Bond is an amalgam of stereotypes and tropes that are so hollow he can be played by a different man every generation, and it's fine. In the latest iteration, while Daniel Craig has brought much needed-depth and gravitas to the character

Boys will be boys,
but someday they'll be men.



"Boys will be boys, or so they say.
But I'm raising my boy to be a
man someday. Shouting is not
nice, and kicking hurts. Nobody
likes their face in the dirt. So
boys that fight, kick, & shout
will be boys that sit in time out!"

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



Locker room culture

Unless seven women with eerily similar stories are lying, what Donald Trump labeled as simply "locker room talk" at the second presidential debate was him bragging about things he has done to women in real life. In an infamous leaked audio recording, he says he grabs women by their genitalia and kisses them without their consent. And two separate women are alleging he did exactly that to them in the past, as reported by the New York Times. So seven accusers have come forward with stories of assault that show a clear pattern, down to the Tic Tacs Donald Trump put in his mouth beforehand. Grabbing the genitals of another human without their consent isn't just unacceptable — it's illegal. What Donald Trump calls locker room talk is what others — like, I don't know, the Justice Department — would call sexual assault.

But by labeling actions like grabbing women's body parts as locker room banter, Trump is asserting he either frequents locker rooms where men just confess straight-up crimes to each other with zero repercussions or, most likely, that he doesn't understand the definition of sexual assault. That should shock us. Forms of behavior characteristic of sports people within the confines of the changing room or the locker room. This culture is associated with male-dominated humor and prejudice, sexist, racist, and homophobic so-called banter. Such male preserves treat the locker room as a form of off-limits territory, a backstage sphere in which views might be expressed and behaviors condoned that would never be accepted in more public spaces. Comparable backstage spheres are the club room or the private dinner. In April 1991, Boston Herald sportswriter Lisa Olson took legal action in Massachusetts (Suffolk County Superior Court) against the New England Patriots of the National Football League (NFL). She alleged that a locker-room incident involving three players in September 1990 violated her civil rights and constituted sexual harassment. The legal suit stated that Olson had been 'held up to public ridicule, scorn and derision' because of the player's and team officials' disparaging and demeaning statements and actions. Compensatory damages were sought for medical treatment following the incident and for continued 'emotional distress.' The NFL mounted an investigation, and the offending players were punished. Olson was, however, vilified and persecuted by Patriots' fans and moved to Australia to work for several years before moving back to the USA in 1997. What Olson herself called her experience of 'mind-rape' certainly altered the conditions in which women journalists could go about their business in the world of male sports, reducing the acceptability and incidence of ritual hazing, but any participant in or observer of male sporting cultures knows that the locker-room culture remains in large part a bastion of atavistic male prejudice.

Step out of the

MAN CAVE



So why does it matter?



Different expectations of being a man can sometimes leave him feeling lost & confused about how he should behave.

In recent years, the phrase "toxic masculinity" has gained popularity.

Men use this dominant masculinity, called toxicity, by using superiority, cruelty, & control to assert dominance & authority.

Characteristics of toxic or unhealthy masculinity may also include absolute physical strength, physical aggression, fear of emotions, discrimination against non-heterosexual people,

hyper independence, sexual aggression, violence, & anti-feminist behavior. Many individuals who identify as masculine may feel pressured to exhibit toxic masculinity, which can cause them to behave violently or aggressively toward others & themselves.

Overcoming cultural pressures & biases that classify certain attitudes & emotions as "masculine" or "feminine" is essential to healthy & happy masculinity.

Author Maeve Allen, a contributor to The Good Man Project, expands on the definition of healthy masculinity: "I would argue that positive masculinity also means embracing femininity & not being ashamed of its expectations." Allen believes that removing these exact boundaries can make a difference in men's & women's lives. The statistics around male vulnerability tell us a story of healthy men who push back on traditional gender norms & focus on positive mental health. For example, a study by Promundo shows that if we removed beliefs that force men to behave according to specific male standards, we could reduce sexual violence by at least 69% & eliminate at least 41% of traffic accidents, 40% of bullying & violence, 39% of suicides, 7% of binge drinking, & 4% of depressive symptoms among men (18-30) in the US, every year.

According to a study conducted at the University of Texas at Austin, men who are compassionate, vulnerable, & emotionally balanced have higher self-esteem than those who do not forgive their mistakes. In addition, according to a study in The Journal of Family Issues, fathers who are more willing to abandon traditional male norms are more likely to achieve the ideal of fatherhood (developing a nurturing & caring relationship with their child). So what we found is critical: Men more willing to be more vulnerable, emotional, & compassionate tend to live longer, happier, healthier lives.

