

## Healthy Masculinity

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Since Father's Day is fast approaching I want to talk about men, but more than that I want to talk about Healthy Masculinity. It is said that most men are not taught to share their feelings for fear of being judged as less than. For many years, we have been put into a box and that's where we usually stay. We stay in what is called "The Man Box" and survive in this tight cocoon where we are stifled. We don't even think about getting out and living whole lives.

For years, many of us have survived being in poor health, blaming others, being in poor relationships, and feeling angry about stuff we don't even know about. We have denied our true feelings. We are in constant competition with one another about who has the best and largest dog, who drinks the best beer, and who can get the most women. Who is the best lover? Not many of us because a lot of us don't even take the time to love ourselves.

Patriarchal Masculinity has taught us not to take care of ourselves. It has taught us to always be concerned about domination and control. We despise or deny most emotions. The only emotion we are comfortable with is being angry.

So living in the Man Box has also taught us to support and encourage violence. It also encourages violence on other men, and especially on women and children.

All of this is Unhealthy Masculinity.

Healthy Masculinity involves shared-mutual power between two partners. Emotions are welcome and no longer stifled as unhealthy masculinity has taught us. I have become a big fan of recognizing underlying feelings. When living an authentic masculinity, it becomes important to recognize that anger is not a sole emotion, but a secondary emotion. Living in mutual power provides the opportunity for us to validate each other's feelings and share a close connection to our partners.

For those of us who have children healthy masculinity becomes essential. For boys, growing up with a healthy father is a model that they are not quick to forget. If they see you treating their mother with equality and respect they will learn to treat women with respect, and to listen to what they have to say instead of being dismissive of them. For our daughters, they will learn to expect respect and equality from future partners. I cannot tell men enough that our modeling to our children is so important.

Becoming healthy as men also models to other men that there is no need to possess or to control. There is no need to be better than others or dominate. We don't need to compete with one another and always win. It sounds so exhausting.

Healthy masculinity is a journey that should never end for us. We should be able to talk to one another about our journey. If we step out of the Man Box and become fully alive we can share triumphs and our difficulties. We can perhaps finally step out of the Man Box and enjoy being healthy and free to love ourselves and others in a healthy manner.

Happy Father's Day to all fathers this year. Let us share our happiness with our loved ones and other men.