

WILL

a publication from Men &

BEING A DAD MATTERS

Evolution of family, masculinity
and care work

EVERYBODY LOVES ROVER

Pet ownership positively affects
emotional well-being

RELATIONSHIP'S "SECRET" INGREDIENT

How empathetic responses
fuel connection

men&

THE WILL TO MAKE AN IMPACT



Launching after 7 years of research, the Men& initiative is supported by organizations aligned with the mission of improving lives and helping others. Through feature articles and content pillars, including Relationships, Mental Health, Wellness and Parenting, we look to connect with Canadian Men who are looking for help to improve their current situation. Men& is based in Calgary, Alberta, and sees reach across Canada and beyond. Our current resources are based on Alberta's health guidelines and available resources.

Backed by a helpline for those facing a current crisis, the foundation of Men & is helping those most at risk and need immediate help. Looking forward can be difficult in some situations. Our content & resources are designed to improve lives through our interactions.

Dr. Jeff St. John

Men & provides relevant content with current, authentic, and valuable information on topics that relate to our content pillars surrounding men's mental and relational wellbeing. Our content is intended to benefit our readers in navigating life's daily challenges. All of the content goes through our editorial process to ensure it is accurate and within our community guidelines for language.

WILL is a publication developed by Men & with support from the Calgary Foundation and Fear Is Not Love

Publisher: 323 Media | Editor-in-Chief: Josh Hundal | Creative Director: Mearl Morton | Design: Jessica Mills

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Printed through the Hemlock Zero Program

2011 - 13

- Dr. Jeff St. John begins formal research on masculinity, fathering and care.
- Begins working with organizations to engage men for emotional, mental and relational wellbeing.

2015

- Evolution of Masculinity project launches as research effort with Fear Is Not Love
- FearIsNotLove commissions Dr. Jeff St. John to research engaging men and boys with the support of the Calgary Foundation

2016 - 17

- Focus groups and stakeholder engagement process

2018 - 19

- The Caring Dads Program is launched • Men & is launched as a social venture through Fear Is Not Love
- First advisory groups formed following focus group research

2020

- Men's counselling services offered online

2021

- Men & officially launches to the public • Men & Equally Safe cards distributed through the Calgary Police Service
- Men's Helpline Launched • Indigenous Men's Cultural Helpers program launched

2022

- Men & community of practice begins

Dr. Jeff St. John

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SCAN ME



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think of your body as a

Don't Avoid The Maintenance Your Body Needs

We're all going to die one day

The chances are that not many of us are excited about it. Sometimes it's easier to just hope for the best; sometimes it's easier to not think about it at all.

As men, what do we do when we're faced with something that's hard to understand? What about when it's hard to see how we can do anything about it?

Often, we withdraw. And that has serious consequences when it comes to our health.

As men, many of us get off by fixing stuff. We're all different, but we can find it gratifying to get our hands dirty, take things apart, put them back together again and approach much of what life throws at us in that way: categorizing, organizing, taking apart, putting back together.

Where it gets tricky is when we're faced with our own health and wellbeing.

If it was math, our answer is either right or wrong. If you're driving to your destination, you know how many kilometres you have left to go, you can measure what's left in your tank, and you know when you can put your feet up. Consider even the car itself: either it runs or it doesn't. It's either broken or it's fixed.

Our bodies don't work that way

Sometimes, when you take your body to the mechanic they tell you that it's falling apart and there's nothing you can do about it. Even if you've done everything right – get the oil changed regularly and keep your dashboard polished – you still might hear that your vehicle is going to be difficult (and costly) to repair.



Other times, you can drive long and work your vehicle hard, burn your body's candle at both ends and feel like everything is fine day after day, year after year, until you're surprised by an engine failure.

The thing is, a car is much easier to worry about than a human body.

A car is something we can control (which is appealing) and something we can fix when it gets broken. We can swap out new parts here and there when we need them. We can drive it even when the engine is making weird sounds because whatever that grinding or grumbling means, we can make repairs or maybe drive away in something new.

Think of your body as a tree

A tree, though, doesn't let you pick and choose which branches matter to you.

Whether it's the thick main trunk or a singular leaf, every piece of the tree is equally a piece of the tree. Every part helps it grow, get nourishment, and prosper.

A tree doesn't forget. When its life is done and its rings are exposed, you can retrace its existence, all of the hard years and the good ones. If there was a year of harsh weather or poor health, it will show up there, years later. The tree carries that with it all its life.

If you think this is all just silly symbolism, ask yourself, "How do I view my own body? What framework makes sense to me to make sense of my health?"

For many men, the answer is too often, "I don't think of my health and body much at all." And that comes back to bite us. Whether we know it or not, if we're living with the "car" mentality, it means we're not likely to

...Death is scary as hell

take our vehicle to the mechanic unless, or until, there is something obviously wrong.

Too often, that is too late

With a holistic, whole-life view of the "tree", we know that we need to see an arborist every season. Like a garden, you wouldn't leave it unattended; you know it needs regular attention from a gardener to weed and water and see if, and where, there may trouble brewing.

That's the kind of relationship men need to make sure we have with our doctors and everyone who plays a role in our health: the buddies that we jog with, the life partners who keep us accountable and the chiropractors and trainers who keep us in good shape.

Life isn't a highway

Life is a forest, where everything is interconnected, and where growing strong and staying healthy isn't something you fit in-between pit stops – it's the whole name of the game.

You can keep a car in your garage through the winter, you can strip it down to its skeleton and add new parts as you need them. If it comes down to it, you can get a new one entirely.

In life, we can't do that. Life is short and our bodies are fragile in so many ways – and that's okay. It also makes it much harder to talk about than a car.

When we have an issue we can't talk about, it goes unchecked. When we have a fear that's too big for us to fit in our garage, so to speak, we simply stall. We stand like a deer in highlights: frozen and blinded to all the time we do have, and all the things we can do, to get out of the way.



Three Questions

To Discover You Use Drugs And Alcohol To Cope

by Next Gen Men

When you're struggling, do you downplay it or hide?

When things aren't going your way, is your first instinct to let people know or to hide it?

If you feel that people will think worse of you if they see you stressed out, you're going to choose the coping strategies that let you maintain that cool-calm-and-collected image.

For most men, that means turning to alcohol or drugs, because they can both maintain their current aloof status while also trying to manage their overwhelming emotions.

No one will blink an eye when you say you need a drink or two after a tough day at work, but taking a mental health day off of work seems like a much more daunting task.

Are your friends and family on your side?

We are social creatures and our relationships play a big role in our lives. We want to fit in, be part of the group and lean on them when we're feeling down.

If your friends or family members are genuinely accepting of you, you wouldn't have to prove yourself. Instead, you will receive empathy or support from them when you are struggling.

If you feel that your friends or family don't have your best interests at heart (or if you don't want to test it), you might be more likely to turn to drugs and alcohol to fill the lack (or perceived lack) of support.

In fact, we might even increase our drinking and drug use to reconnect with our friends.

Men are particularly vulnerable to this because their friendships are more often based on shared interests or activities. This means you could do drugs or drink with your friends because you don't want to be labelled the "buzzkill" or see your hangout invites slowly fizzle out when you say "no" one too many times.

In an effort to keep up your friendships and regularly hang out, you'll drink more or try drugs that you wouldn't do on your own. Once it's become a regular way to hang out, it can be difficult to recognize when it has become a problem.

Do you think you have a problem?

You might be reading this article because you're curious, but there also might be a small part of you that is worried you are using drugs and alcohol as a way to cope. And that's alright.

Recognizing there might be a problem is one of the hardest steps to take in creating a better future for yourself. Being aware enough to know when you're struggling with your emotions is not as easy as you might assume.

To make things even more complicated, men are more likely to externalize their negative emotions. This means when you're overwhelmed with emotions you are more likely to express them as actions, which can be impulsive or aggressive. This can become a problem when these actions put you in risky situations, like impulsively using drugs, driving recklessly, or becoming aggressive and starting fights.

Have you recently lost a source of stability, are acting impulsively or making rash decisions?

If you're externalizing your emotions, you're missing out on opportunities to untangle your emotions and reflect on your situation. Without those opportunities, it's even harder to understand when you might need a helping hand. If this is you, what can you do?

There are people out there who want to help you. If you don't feel comfortable with friends or family, you can always call us for support.

It's important to acknowledge that asking for help is hard



Overcoming loneliness with friendships for your future

START WITH YOUR FRIENDS

by Next Gen Men

Forget vitamins and protein powder. (Keep exercising and eating well, though.) Friendships and social connections are key to your future health and wellness.

Our friendships are some of the most valuable things we can invest in when it comes to our health, inside or out. Yet, men don't usually heavily invest in these relationships after a certain point in their lives. This is even more important in the middle of a global pandemic as it has become more difficult to remain connected to our friends and social connections.

Healthy friendships are critically important for men and have both social and scientific benefits. Human beings are social animals and so, on the level of straight-up brain chemicals, there is a natural benefit to being among friends: time spent enjoying feelings of social validation and gratification releases and combats the harmful physiological effects of stress.

Over a lifetime, whether we live in isolation or among a network of friends, they have been shown to make a substantial difference, including living several years longer!

According to a 2010 meta-analysis, which drew findings from a review of 148 studies, having strong social relationships can translate into an increased likelihood of survival.

The study concluded that the impact of social relationships on determining whether we live long, healthy lives or get plucked from this world too early is just as impactful as well-established risk factors for death such as drinking and smoking. It found that the negative impact can be even greater than a lack of exercise and obesity.

Building friendships is more challenging and important than ever. Just as feeling healthy in our body naturally leads toward feeling healthier in the mind, feeling unhealthy can also help pull us into not feeling well emotionally. The same kind of two-way relationship occurs between our physical health and our social connections.

Does the science say that happy brain chemicals as a result of enjoyable friendship experiences directly equate to healthier bodies and longer lives? Maybe, but it's more complex than that.

Imagine, for example, the social guardrails that friendships give us.

Imagine you decide, over one summer of pub patio nights, that the head rush and harsh taste of a cigarette taste nice after a few beers. Not all day, not every night, you tell yourself. But more and more, you reach for it.

If you are complacent or comfortable, you may not notice when you reach for that more and more. Cue your friends, at your elbow, saying "Hey, bud, what's going on behind this new habit?" or "Dude, you're hacking, why do you keep smoking?"

If you were alone at that moment, would you get those tough-yet-kind questions? You probably wouldn't ask them of yourself since those happy brain chemicals are a double-edged sword.

By being a person in a friendship, you have a landmark outside yourself. You have the social guardrails of someone who cares about you, who wants you to live longer and whose company makes you feel like living longer wouldn't be such a bad thing.

If you don't have those connections, it can lead to loneliness. Loneliness has been noted as the other pandemic taking place, apart from systemic racism and a certain global virus, and as men, we should take particular notice.

Why? Because of the way we have learned to live our lives, we often rely heavily, if not solely, on our romantic partners for social connection.

We grow up internalizing ideas that push us away from our male friendships when it's our male friendships that will protect us the most from the risks of the world we're growing into.

If (or when) our romantic relationships collapse, we seek out unhealthy entertainment, feel unhealthy in our bodies and feel unhealthy in our minds. You shacked up, started nesting, and dismissed as "juvenile" all the fun and/or dumb things you used to do with your buddies.

Sure, some of them were juvenile. Not every habit, passion, or long retold story is worth keeping throughout your entire life.

One thing that is worth keeping is the friends and bonds you create by being juvenile, by growing up, by working through the hard shit, by having a conversation that shows you care. So reach out to friends you haven't heard from in a while.

It's not too late to reconnect friendships within your existing network

Empathy:

The secret ingredient in relationships

by Andrew Gustainis

A common response people have when asked what they want to focus on or improve in marriage or couples counselling is often communication. While this might seem to be a reasonable goal, the term is so general and broad that it is neither descriptive nor helpful. As a counsellor, you're left wondering if by "communication" they are referring to active listening skills, conflict resolution strategies, assertive statements, non-verbal communication, etc.? In truth, they may be referring to all of the above.

In my career as a therapist working with people hoping to create healthier relationships in their lives, there is one element that seems to link and weave through all of the usual communication skills and strategies. It's what I've come to view as the 'secret ingredient' in relationships, and that is empathy. It's that quality, intention and emotion that should always be present and practiced in our most important relationships. It's the one element that provides a special "flavouring" making our connections distinctive and meaningful.

Emotion researchers generally define empathy as the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the capacity to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling. In contrast, sympathy is to feel sorrow or pity for a person's condition.

Empathy is not about trying to fix a situation for someone or make things better. Empathy is, as researcher and author Brené Brown describes, simply "feeling with people." Empathy is the ability to relate to what the other person is going through by tapping into your own experiences. This doesn't mean you have to have lived through

the exact same circumstances. You simply have to know what it feels like to be sad, hurt, or scared, for example, and then communicate and share this understanding with the other person. But this is not always easy. Sometimes the hardest thing to do in a delicate situation with a person is simply to be fully present, listen deeply, and be emotionally connected. And being empathetic also doesn't mean agreeing with them, rather it means understanding what it must feel like to be them at the moment.

Some principles to keep in mind when being empathetic are:

- Focus on the other person – this is about them, not you
- Take their perspective – try and see the situation through their eyes
- Suspend your judgment – this is their experience, not yours
- Understand and validate their thoughts and emotions
- Let them know you hear them and that they're not alone
- Just be there with them – you don't have to fix or solve anything

When we experience an empathetic response it "fuels connection" between people, as Brené Brown says, and creates closeness in our relationships. On the other hand, a lack of empathy in intimate relationships can create distance and judgment, which may ultimately lead to a more disconnected relationship.

By giving and receiving empathy in our relationships we understand how good it feels to be seen, heard and accepted. So, next time we are working to improve our communication, let's remember to sprinkle in some empathy in our interactions to really make them exceptional!

The Joys Of Sharing The Road

You're stressed. Paying bills, working, and all the household and personal responsibilities you carry can be exhausting. Add children into the mix and it is another level of complicated and not how you thought you would spend your life. Working, driving, dropping children off, picking them up and then driving some more.

Adulting is hard and the work is never-ending. It's also full of joy though, and it's what living life is all about.

How can we turn down the stress and turn up the joy? The question of dividing work at home equitably can be a good place to start.

Maybe you know this is an ongoing problem because you and your partner are constantly butting heads over who is doing what chores and when. Or maybe, it's not a consistent point of contention, but it's been bubbling under the surface for a long time. Either way, most couples struggle with equitably dividing the work of managing a household at some point in their relationship!

What does it mean to divide work equitably? It's about finding a balance that's fair. For example, if both partners work full-time, but one partner is doing the lion's share of running the household, then there's an imbalance. That's not an equitable or fair division of the work.

What does fairly dividing work have to do with joy?

When both partners feel there's a balance in responsibilities at home, they're less likely to argue and feel like they need to constantly remind

their partner of outstanding chores or tasks. When a couple finds balance at home, it leads to increased happiness with both partners feeling valued and a shared sense of teamwork. It strengthens relationships, making them healthier and more resilient.

How do we get to the point of balance? Every couple might do this differently, but here's our suggestion on one way to do this.

Ask

Be intentional and take the first step in asking your partner for some time to discuss balance at home. It helps if there are fewer distractions and lots of time to have the conversation.

"Hey, I know we've been really busy lately, and I just want us to take some time to check in with each other about how we balance work at home. Can we talk about it over dinner this weekend when the kids are with my parents?"

Plan Ahead

Get in the right mindset – you're a team! It's not me vs my partner, it's us together vs life.

Remind yourself that it's not about who is "right" or "wrong". It's about problem-solving together.

Think ahead of time about what you can do if you or your partner start to act defensively. What kind of things can you do or say to get past defensiveness?

...And The Load

Activity

Suggest this activity to make the invisible work visible. Each partner should write their own list of all the chores or tasks that they do on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Once you've each had enough time to write your lists, come together to compare and discuss the lists.

What do you notice about your list and your partner's list? How do you each feel about your lists? What, if anything, do you wish would change with your lists? Can the lists be better balanced? If so, how? If you want to change these lists, how will each of you commit to keeping yourselves accountable to the change?

Circle Back

You may want to make it part of your routine to make time to check in with each other about your lists. For example, maybe every month is date night, where the kids go visit their grandparents for the weekend. During that time, you intentionally set aside time to check in with each other:

Have we been accountable for the changes we said we'd make? How are we feeling about the balance of work at home? Have circumstances changed (i.e. maybe one partner's work hours have changed)? How do we account for new challenges that are coming up? How can we be proactive and plan ahead for upcoming changes?

It's going to be an ongoing conversation, and honestly, it's work! But that's the thing: relationships are work and each of us has to decide if the people we love are worth the effort. We absolutely get out of it what we put into it and working toward balance makes life much better.

"In fairytales, fathers are often presented as characters who mistreat or abandon their daughters"

Men's Lifestyle Choices & Depression

by Calgary Counselling Centre

It looks and feels different to every person who struggles with it. When you're depressed, you might lack motivation or interest in things, feel sad and struggle to see the positives, or have difficulty focusing or remembering things. Overall, when you're depressed, you're usually unable to function in ways that you usually would.

Making good lifestyle choices can have a positive effect on depression by helping you build resilience towards it, alleviate the feelings of it, and hopefully overcome it.

Taking care of your body

If you're struggling with depression, it's important to take care of your body. Making conscious decisions about what you eat, how much sleep you get, getting enough physical activity, and being present can all affect the symptoms of depression you may be feeling.

Eat nutritious meals

Eating healthy food is so important for our mental well-being. When you properly fuel your body, you feel better. Your brain consumes up to 20 percent of your daily calorie intake, so it's essential to feed your brain for it to work optimally. Make sure you're eating foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, antioxidants, and fish, all of which have been associated with a decreased risk of depression.

Physical activity

Movement and physical activity can help take your mind off of life's stresses and redirect your energy to something more positive. It also

changes some of the chemistry in your brain and increases positive endorphins, which can improve your mood. If you find that you don't have the motivation to exercise, try breaking it down into smaller steps, like going for a five or 10-minute walk. Every little bit counts and you'll start to feel good about what you're doing and have a sense of accomplishment.

Get enough sleep

Getting a good night's sleep is essential for your mental health. No one can function well when they don't get enough sleep. If you're depressed, your sleeping patterns are often affected. Either you can't sleep or you sleep too much, which can make you feel unproductive or unmotivated. Make sure you're getting 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night and try to limit your screen time before bed.

Practice Mindfulness

One of the characteristics of depression is the tendency to think negatively about yourself, your experiences, and the future. Mindfulness can help with your depression by allowing you to be more aware of your thoughts and stand back to observe them instead of attaching meaning to them. Your thoughts are just thoughts, they're not facts. Mindfulness helps you focus less on the negatives and shifts your focus to more positive things.

Mindfulness doesn't always have to be a lengthy activity. It can be a conscious effort to be mindful for the next 5-minutes, or even the next 30-seconds. Just take the time to focus on being present. Think about your surroundings. What can you hear? What can you feel?

...Depression can affect anyone

Social Connection

When you're depressed, oftentimes you can lean towards self-isolation. Maybe you don't feel like reaching out to friends or family, but it's important to try to work against those feelings. Social connections can help prevent depression from getting worse and help you move through it. Since spending time with friends and family helps you perceive yourself and your experiences differently, it can also act as a distraction and make you feel good.

Finding Meaning and Purpose

When you're depressed, you tend to focus on yourself and might have a hard time seeing that you're part of something bigger. Finding a sense of meaning and purpose in your life can decrease feelings of depression and help you progress through it because it allows you to see that you are part of something bigger. It also allows you to find ways to give back to your community or support those around you. Focusing on others helps get you outside of your head, which can be a proactive measure against depression.

If you're depressed, you may find it hard to make decisions that are good for you, such as eating well and exercising. Instead, you might make decisions based on what you're feeling, like not exercising or not eating healthy because you don't feel like it, and that's okay. Remember to be kind to yourself and start small if you don't feel like doing things that are good for you.

Take a five or 10-minute walk or have a healthy snack. From there, you'll start to feel good about your small decisions and can build upon them.

If you're struggling with depression and those feelings are affecting your ability to function, it might be time to seek professional help

The Changing Shape Of Family, Masculinity And Care Work by Dr. Jeff St. John

“Do Dads Really Matter?”

Some people might be offended by that question. One of the most important conversations currently related to men and masculinity is related to fathering and the impact of fathers.

Dads by the Numbers

Astoundingly, roughly 80% of men will become biological fathers in their lifetimes (Levtov, van der Gaag, Greene, Kaufman and Barker, 2015, p. 15) and the experiences of these dads are as innumerable and diverse as the men themselves. While much has been said and done on the representations of fathers, there is relatively little about the experience of fathers. A lot of the discourse around fathering betrays a common belief that men in caregiving roles are “really only ‘mothering,’” (Kraemer, 1991, p. 28) and that to be a man at all is really only to participate in the subordination of women (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009, p. 281).

Overcoming these discursive and popular beliefs and the ways we embody and perform them is daunting and in some ways, doomed for struggle. In 2006, there were just over eight million fathers in Canada. Under half of these fathers were “biological, adoptive, or step-parent fathers living with children under 18 years of age” (Ball & Daly, 2012, p.3). Of the 1.4 million single-parent families with at least one child under 16, 20% involved single fathers, a number that is on the rise; the rate of growth for lone-male families was over twice the rate of growth of lone-female families (p. 3). This rate of change is representative of the changing fabric of Canada’s (and all of North America’s) social and family landscape.

Engaged Fatherhood: The Data

It’s not the gender of the parents that matters – it’s the quality of the parenting, the relationship between each parent and their children, and the quality of the co-parenting relationship (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999; Biblarz & Stacey, 2010, Nielsen, 2011).

What we know about dads is that their engaged presence in the lives of children makes a massive difference

DON'T CONFUSE HAVING A CAREER WITH HAVING A LIFE



Children are better advantaged if they are raised by more than one healthy adult – (Hrdy on allo parenting). There are some that feel that three healthy adults is actually the ideal number, rather than the traditional singular attachment figure.

Outcomes for children raised by single moms are remarkably similar to those raised by single dads. In fact, children who lived with fathers who were actively involved in their child’s schooling achieved at higher rates than those living with a single mom. (Lee, Kushner & Cho, 2007).

Pruett & Litzenberger, 1992, found that children in married families where the father is the primary caretaker were more intellectually curious, more socially outgoing, and less prone to pathological separation anxiety than those in comparable groups.

Fathers have a significant impact on their children’s social, cognitive, physical and psychological well-being.

Fathers have as much impact as mothers do on their children’s academic and vocational success, mental health, sexual behavior, antisocial or delinquent behaviour, self-confidence, social maturity, and relationships with the other sex. (Brotherson & White, 2006; Flouri, 2005; Lamb, 2010; Tarnis & Cabrera, 2011).

Yes! Dads Do Matter

Becoming a father was one of the most spectacular, life-changing events I could have ever imagined. I am sure there are many dads out there who share this awe and reverence attached to becoming a dad. I take my fathering journey very seriously and am committed to being the best dad I can possibly be. Although I have felt in my heart and soul that dads do matter, it is comforting and exciting to see that the research and literature back me up on this. I would even argue that pushing the conversation further and saying that healthy and engaged caregivers matter in the lives of children is also very relevant. I also believe that we need to be supporting each other to be able to participate actively in the lives of our children.

So many people in my world (mothers and fathers) are faced with the reality of single parenting following a divorce. As a community, it makes sense to be supporting our friends, colleagues, family members and others to be able to work through these challenging situations so that they can continue to show up for their children in meaningful and consistent ways despite the difficulties. Child-rearing is not the sole domain for mothers and the landscape of parenting is changing rapidly in Canada. Divorce is on the rise and children are more commonly facing a reality of fifty-fifty parenting. Societal attitudes may not have caught up yet, but the data is showing that fathers are involved and they do matter. Let’s continue to engage and have the conversation on how to support our children in the ways that will benefit them the most.

Resisting The Images Of Dad In Popular Culture

by Dr. Jeff St. John

...it's still a thing

What do Homer Simpson, Al Bundy and Fred Flintstone have in common?

Homer Simpson, Al Bundy, Phil Dunphy and Fred Flinstone are all fathers portrayed as goofy and inept by the mainstream media. They are often shown as fathers who are eager to shed their parenting responsibilities to escape with their friends or fulfill their own plans, often at the expense of their children. Fred Flintstone was the ultimate bumbling father. While animated, it was certainly a powerful and lasting image. You can almost hear his booming voice shouting "WILMA!". While things may be starting to change, there are decades of media portrayals of fathers as incompetent, childish and bumbling.

Since the 1980s, the images have shifted to really emphasize the goofiness and incompetence of fathers as a parent. It is difficult to find a children's show without a goofy father positioned next to the super-competent mother figure. "Lighten up, it's funny"

While occasionally funny, the joke should be wearing thin. There seems to be a growing conversation about the portrayal of dads in the media and people are starting to notice that the abundance of negative images of fathers is getting tiring. There are some very professional and savvy efforts emerging that recognize the engaged and attentive dad.

Something changes when you have a child, and parenting is something most people take very seriously

When your child comes into the world, it's not at all uncommon for your heart to explode with love as you get ready to do anything to be the best dad possible.

Try tuning in to one of the shows that seek to find humour in ways that don't require making fun of dads, their parenting situations or their relationship with their kids.

Join The Positive Convo

Statistics about Dads in the Media

Neilson (2012) suggests that in storybooks, mothers are depicted as nurturing twice as often as fathers. TV programs and commercials tend to be more direct in making fun of or criticizing fathers. In fairytales, fathers are often presented as characters who mistreat or abandon their daughters. If they aren't mistreating them, they are ignoring them and are blindly leaving them to be mistreated by evil stepmothers. "In a survey of 200 best-selling storybooks, mothers were depicted as nurturing more than twice as often as fathers. In 65% of the stories, the mother was taking care of the children compared with only 47% of the fathers" (Neilson, 2012, p.13) In the types of media that we consume even more readily, fathers are shown to be profoundly (up to eight times!) more likely to be shown negatively than mothers (Neilson, 2012, p.14).

Where they are not shown as being clearly mean and abusive, they are often depicted as incompetent and foolish in comparison to their hard-done-by spouse (Pehlkey, Hennon, Radina, & Kuvalanka, 2009). (Neilson, 2012, p.14). Overall, "[i]n the 100 top-grossing box office films from 1990 until 2005, the fathers generally were depicted as less responsible, less likeable, and less competent than the mothers (Smith, Pieper, Granados, & Choueiti, 2010) (Neilson, 2012, p.17). Many returning shows or sitcoms are the ones that depict fathers as clumsy, goofy oafs with silly or funny advice for their children. The children are often rescued or put on the right path by the competent, confident and capable mother figure (Weinman, 2006, p.60).

An all too common experience

Even today there seems to be the need to overcome the poor images of fathers that dominate the popular consciousness. As a single father trying my very best to be a good dad, I would look for positive images and

written material about single dads. The local and popular cultural context that surrounded me was filled with limiting and negatively connoted images and discourses around fathering, in particular single fathering. Everywhere you looked there were images of deadbeat dads, disappearing dads and of course, the ever-popular abusive ex-husband. Following my divorce, I would often be asked things like, "do you get to see her much?" or "do you get help to look after your daughter?". My ex-wife is not asked those questions, since the assumption is that she has full custody. No one wonders if she knows how to parent, because she is the mom. But the dad, well, he obviously needs help.

Negative images of dads in the media can undermine the role men play in the family. Media plays a large role in influencing attitudes, perceptions and behaviour, so negative portrayals of dads in the media can also lower expectations for a dad's contributions.

The stigma can be almost unbearable

It is difficult enough to be a single parent, but added criticism and concern simply because you are a single dad can be very problematic. It can interfere with creating a healthy community and support network. Parenting is a team sport, even if you are separated, widowed or divorced. Whether it's an ex-partner, a new partner or support from your family and friends, keep in mind that it's better for your child(ren) to have more love and support. The stereotypically negative images of fathers and the assumptions that are made about single fathers can prevent men from reaching out to build a community and network of support.

Thankfully, there are efforts being made to shift and change how men and fathers are portrayed in the media. There are popular new shows that portray the varied and unique family constellations, and how fathers can be positive influences on their children. Try tuning in to one of the shows that seek to find humour in ways that don't require making fun of dads, their parenting situations or their relationship with their kids.

YOU ARE A GOOD MAN

by Next Gen Men

Feels good just reading it, right?

Men of every generation and walk of life have wanted to hear those words and live up to them. But what do they really mean?

When it comes to being a good man, the key word is “being”.

“No man is an island,” as the saying goes, and no man is truly the centre of the universe they inhabit, no matter how much they may believe it. Each of us is part of a community and, if we’re lucky, a family.

Our worth isn’t determined by what we earn, no matter how deeply we may have internalized that idea. Our worth can’t be measured by a paycheque, promotion, resume or job title.

Being a good man is also not about glory. You can climb Everest, earn honours, hoist the Cup or lead your team across the finish line. None of that will make you a good man. It’s not a label that you “win”, because the game in question is not a competition.

When we enter the arena in the game of life, there are no goals to score, only assists.

Be part of a community, help a neighbour or teach a child. Show up for a partner. Sit and listen, or sit and think, and challenge how you think. If you want to be a good man, start with that as your to-do list.

Start by thinking about the role you play in your networks, start by really looking at what impact you make, good or bad

Men are a million different things, and “masculinity” is actually an endless matrix of masculinities; an infinite number of ways to relate to our gender and just as many meanings that gender can take.

There is one thing that unites us, that all men have in common: we all have people who love us, or who have, and we all have people who depend on us and look to us to make their world bright and meaningful.

We also all have people we have hurt, who we have let down, or who we’ve harmed, in ways big or small, loud or sometimes unnoticed.

That’s worth saying again: Men do harm. We harm ourselves, we harm our friends, our children, other men, women, people who are gay or transgender, people who are Black or brown or Indigenous or immigrants and refugees, people who are “different” in all kinds of ways.

We do harm with our ideas and beliefs, by reinforcing systems and ways of thinking that divide and hold us back. We do harm with our actions, with violence: sexual violence, physical violence, violence against ourselves.

In the overwhelming majority of these cases, men are the perpetrators of this violence.

Acts of violence are acts of power and the old myths would have us believe that to be good men we have to be good at wielding power. Not wielding it for good, but being good at using it. In reality, power for good is truly building up relationships and each other.

None of us is an island, none of us is the king of the castle, and we are not entitled to power or violence against another person. There is no “all for one”. There is no prize to earn, no race to win. To be a good man, we have to do good. To be a man is many things. Most fundamentally, it means to be part of the world and part of the human community.

Want to be a good man? Look at your actions, your connections, and look in the mirror.

The emotional benefits of pet ownership

by Men &

Pets & Mental Health

Thirty years ago, the first study on pets and mental health was published. The research was carried out by Purdue University psychologist Alan Beck and University of Pennsylvania psychiatrist Aaron Katcher. They examined what occurs to a person's body when they pet a friendly dog. What they discovered was as follows:

Heart rate slowed down, breathing became more regular, muscle tension relaxed,

lowered blood pressure. The researchers connected these signs of reduced stress with pets in our lives having a significant impact on both our mental and physical health.

Increase in Animal-Assisted Therapy

As a result of increased scientific research, animal-assisted therapy programmes have emerged as a vital component of mental health care. Individuals who own mental health animals, such as an emotional support dog, tend to greatly benefit.

Equine therapy has been used in teen mental health programmes since the 1990s, as therapy that involves horses has been shown to help people with mental illnesses. The human-horse bond helps teenagers to talk about their feelings and problems. They accomplish this through a profound, direct and nonverbal communication experience.

Research aside, we can all find the benefits of having a pet in our homes every day. Here are 10 reasons why pets can have a positive effect on your mental health.

Pets give us unconditional love

We Feel Needed By Our Pets

Doing things for the good of others seems to help reduce depression and loneliness. When you have a pet to care for, you feel more needed and wanted. The act of caring for others may be beneficial to one's mental health as caring for another living creature provides us with a sense of meaning and purpose.

This can be true even if the pets do not have a lot of interaction with their caregivers. Elderly persons were given five bugs in a cage in a 2016 study on pets and mental health. Over the course of eight weeks, researchers tracked their emotions. They also



Pets increase our self-esteem

Pets help build social connection

compared them to a control group that didn't have any pets. One group of these participants, who were given crickets, demonstrated being less depressed after eight weeks than those in the control group. Therefore, researchers concluded that caring for a living creature can produce some mental health benefits.

Dogs Can Help Kids Cope With Anxiety

According to a research study by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, having a companion dog can help children cope with anxiety.

A total of 643 children took part in the research; a little more than half of them had dogs as pets. The children's BMI (body mass index), anxiety levels, screen time, and physical activity were all measured by the researchers.

They found that the children's BMIs, screen time, and physical activity were all similar, whether they had pets or not. Their anxiety levels, however, were not the same. In fact, a screening test for anxiety found that 21% of youngsters who did not have a pet dog were "positive" but only 12% of youngsters with dogs scored "positive" for anxiety.

Pets seem to have a demonstrable positive impact on childhood stress and anxiety, and children who grow up with pets are more likely to grow up to be happy and healthy teenagers.

Pets Show us How to Live in the Present

Pets are completely absorbed in the present moment and are unconcerned about what happened the day before. They are equally unconcerned about what may occur tomorrow.

The psychological practice of bringing one's attention to the current moment is known as mindfulness. Therefore, pets can help their owners be more present!

Pets also serve as a distraction from whatever may be bothering their owners so spending time with a pet can help us remember how to be carefree and playful.

Pets Help us Establish Healthy Routines

Pets must be cared for on a daily basis which in turn assists us in developing healthy routines and behaviours.

Physical activity is required for dog owners to routinely take them out for walks, runs, and hikes. As a result, dog owners are much more likely to meet their recommended daily activity levels.

Throughout the day, dogs and cats require regular feeding, so pet owners must get up and care for their animals regardless of their mood. By needing to look after them, we are also reminded to look after ourselves!

Looking For Ways To Be A Better Husband?

There is no magic elixir or checklist that can turn any man into the ideal husband. That being said, there are always things that can be done to form a stronger bond with your partner.

Three important aspects of a successful relationship

Commitment

Commitment entails more than just a desire to remain together for a long period. It's the act of selecting a life partner and pledging to share all of life's ups and downs with them. While there may be plenty of fish in the sea, being married signifies you are fully committed to making the relationship work, dispelling any fears that this is merely a test run. Commitment is a choice you make every day.

Love

While most couples begin their relationships in love, it takes effort, sacrifice, and generosity to keep that passion for each other alive. True love is prioritizing your mate and selflessly offering without expecting anything in return. It also aids in accepting each other for who you are, flaws and all, and forgiving each other when you fail.

Respect

Even the most genuine expressions of love are meaningless if the marital partners do not respect one another. Respecting your partner's talents, ideas, and abilities entails not only accepting but also admiring their differences. Respect can also assist you in listening to each other's perspectives and overcoming obstacles and arguments. Marriage therapists who work with couples on improving their relationships on a regular basis have stated that there are certain tools and abilities that all married men should possess in order to be better husbands.

Things you can do to form a stronger bond

Ask the Question "How can I love you better this week?"

The wants and needs of any person can vary on a frequent basis. It's critical to check in with your partner to see what you can do to improve your love for them. It might be anything from childcare to a back massage to more hugging, or simply checking in throughout the day. Not only does asking the question allow them to directly tell you how to be a better spouse, but it also shows that you care.

Connect in ways meaningful to your partner

You can save a lot of time by learning about your partner's preferences and needs. Ask what they need, what they value, how do they want you to connect with them? It can be easy to assume that others want to receive love the way we do but that isn't always the case. Be curious and discover how your partner prefers to connect and be loved.

Try to understand, not just agree

When it comes to work schedules, personal objectives, home obligations, economics, parenting, and other issues, you and your spouse will not always agree. Instead of trying to "convince" people to your side of the argument, your goal should be to understand their point of view and why they believe what they believe. You'll be better able to compromise and collaborate on solutions that benefit both sides if you understand each other.

Share a six-second kiss

I know what you're thinking: who keeps track of how long they kiss? Well, it's something to think about. It's not the same as merely kissing on the lips when you share a kiss like this. A six-second kiss is long enough to make your partner feel desired by you. It's not long enough to make you all hot and bothered, but it acknowledges your mutual attraction—and could add some sexual tension in a good way.

Allow yourselves some alone time

You are not required to be in your spouse's presence at all times. Spending time apart as a spouse is beneficial. Encouraging your spouse (and, if you have children, their children) to be apart from you will revitalize them. They can fill their cup by spending time with friends, booking a hotel for a night alone, or scheduling a self-care day. It also gives you and your partner time to miss one other, which can make you feel even more amorous when you reunite.

Talk about how you met

When was the last time you and your partner discussed how you first met? Take a walk down memory lane with a conversation: Where did you meet? How did your first date go? Life can throw us some unexpected twists and turns. It's sometimes necessary to remind yourself (and your partner) why you married each other in the first place.

Forgive more often and more quickly

Marriage is the result of two people being extremely adept at forgiving one another. It will be a long road to healing and completeness if you can't forgive your partner for the tiny things they've done. Perhaps most important of all, though...

Don't forget to look after yourself

Let's not just talk about your physical health; let's talk about your mental, emotional, spiritual, and relational well-being as well. To begin with, it's enticing when someone strives to be better in all aspects of their life. However, your personal troubles in any aspect of your life might seep into your marriage and produce further issues. For example, if one partner suffers from depression but refuses to seek treatment, the condition will surely have an impact on the other partner, the relationship, and the entire family.

If you are struggling, don't hesitate to reach out for help. Your partner and your marriage will be thankful you did

HAPPY WIFE
HAPPY LIFE

How To Apologize To Someone You Hurt

by Next Gen Men

We all make mistakes. They don't make you a bad person; it only makes you human. Even though mistakes, mishaps and accidents happen all the time, apologies are still difficult. It's hard to own up to hurting someone else.

Regardless, apologies are important to maintaining healthy relationships. After hurting someone, an apology can't undo what happened. Instead, an apology should help mend the relationship so everyone involved can learn and move forward. Apologies are for both of you. Apologizing will help you grow as a person and let the other person know you care about them and your relationship.

The next time you need to apologize, try structuring your apology by following these five steps to help everyone heal.

Understand the situation

An often overlooked step in the process of apologizing is figuring out what needs to be apologized for. After all, how can you validate the other person's feelings if you don't try to see it from their perspective? How can you move forward from this situation if you don't know what needs to change?

Before you begin your apology, make sure you understand what just happened and what the repercussions might be. This might require you to actively listen to the other person or take a step back and reflect on the situation, actions, and feelings of everyone involved. This isn't easy to do.

Say Sorry.

A simple "sorry" likely won't do the situation justice, but it's a good start!

A lot of times people need to hear the words "I am sorry" to feel you are making an honest apology. This clear statement of ownership is more genuine than other phrases like "mistakes were made" or "I'm sorry you feel that way" because it does not shift blame or attempt to minimize what happened.

In some situations, being more specific can help communicate that you know exactly what you are apologizing for and be taken genuinely ("I'm sorry for making an insensitive comment about your family" is better than "I'm sorry for whatever I said").



Make It Right

Acknowledge your Actions.

Apologies are hard because it means we have to take a good look at ourselves and our actions and admit our wrongs. No one likes to be wrong, especially when our error results in hurting someone we care about.

We might feel uncomfortable, awkward, ashamed, or embarrassed. These are very common feelings in situations where an apology is warranted, but it's a crucial step in moving forward and healing. Shying away from the truth doesn't protect you and instead damages people's trust in you, extends conflicts, and holds you back from personal growth.

Be honest with yourself and your loved one(s) and don't beat around the bush. In some situations, particularly if something was an accident and won't happen again, giving an explanation of your actions may be appropriate. Be careful to avoid excusing your behaviour ("I'm sorry, but I just..."), and instead only give context if it helps explain your action.

Express Remorse.

Put yourself in their shoes and think about how you might feel if the situation was reversed.

Validate their feelings. Let them know you understand that you've hurt them and that they may feel hurt, neglected, sad, etc. You should let yourself be vulnerable in your shame, remorse, or guilt and express how you regret your actions and the hurt it caused.

This is not the time to feel defensive or resentful, as neither emotion will help either of you move on from this. If you are feeling defensive or resentful, it might help to think of the situation as us working together against a conflict rather than a "you vs. them" battle.

Now, the crucial step: let them know what you will change and follow through. Not sure what needs to be changed or have no solutions? Ask them! Asking the person what would be most meaningful for them is a great way to show them that you really care how they feel. This is also helpful to ensure you are on the right path towards healing, rather than taking a course of action that would only relieve yourself of guilt.

If you seem to be having the same argument repeatedly, take a moment to think about how the last conflict was resolved. Was there anything that we said needed to change, but never actually did?

The key is holding yourself accountable for the promises made. This demonstrates your commitment to change and genuine regret for your actions.

WEN AND...

We live in a world of constant “spin”. Thanks to social media, there are many new ways to cover up the truth and deceive others for political reasons or personal gain. Or for no reason at all, just by passing on the lies and half-truths that have become accepted. Sometimes too, the blunt truth feels uncomfortable, so people may speak in ways that “water down” the truth.

This can be especially dangerous and harmful when the topic is violence, which is often hidden or justified in a fog of myth, misleading language, and nonsense. We can expect people who commit violence to hide the truth of their actions. This is not surprising, even if it is unwelcome.

But we should be able to expect our public institutions to “tell it like it is”, especially when the problem at hand – violence – is so common and harmful to so many. We live in a democracy; the blunt truth, told simply, is an absolute necessity – hard as it might be sometimes to speak the truth.

Here we show how the most basic facts about violence are concealed in news media, criminal codes, professional websites, psychological reports, and other forms of “professional” writing. We also show that, by using misleading language when talking about violence, we reduce the accountability of the people who behave violently, and unfairly put

TELLING IT LIKE IT *is*

by Allan Wade

blame on the people who are the victims of this violence. If someone flies to Rome, gets off the plane, finds a gun, then robs a bank at gunpoint, they will not be accused of “financial tourism”. The term “financial tourism” could refer to a guided tour of the Italian mint or the Italian stock exchange. These sights are at least possible destinations for tourists, even if they are not on the top-10 list of most interesting cultural landmarks.

We do not need a legal eagle to tell us that the term “financial tourism” in no way fits the kinds of actions involved in a bank robbery. Tourism is not robbery; robbery is not a “financial” exchange, even if money is involved.

But if someone flies to Bangkok, heads to a specially selected hotel, and attacks and molests children who are dragged there on the threat of death, they will be accused of “child sex tourism”. They may even be called a “sex tourist”. The horrific violence they committed is covered up by using this kind of language. Their attacks on children have nothing to do with “sex” and nothing to do with “tourism”. And yet, “sex tourism” is a common term in our everyday language. Even the criminal code of Canada would powerfully redefine and conceal the real nature of these actions.

The criminal code sections on sexualized violence against children contain the same misleading language. Section 151 refers to “Sexual Interference” – it portrays the actions as coming from a “sexual purpose”. “Interference” is a penalty in hockey; the term in no way reflects the level of violence and coercion involved in committing the crime.

Section 152 of the criminal code refers to “Invitation to Sexual Touching”. An “invitation” is a positive act – you invite a friend for coffee or for dinner. You might find a movie or a moment between you and your children “touching” in the most positive sense. The actions involved in someone forcing their body onto the body of a child, or forcing a child to manipulate their body, are in no way “sexual”. It is the abuse of power by someone over a child and is a form of violence.

The risk in using misleading language, like that used in examples above from the criminal code of Canada, is that we are taking away the accountability that belongs to the people who perpetrate such crimes. It also sends a powerful and harmful message to people who were victimized as children. It suggests that as children, they were participants in wrongful sex. This is untrue and is a form of public humiliation of children and youth.



YES YOU CAN MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY

Knees weak, arms are heavy

Mom's spaghetti

He feels his heart racing. His breathing is shallow, quickening as he sits in discomfort. He sits on the couch, a lump growing in his throat. A million thoughts are running through his head. He can't pin one down; it's like looking through a car window while driving on the highway, life just speeding by. These aren't new feelings. His worries build up until they burst through like a shaken Coke bottle. Even the little things cause this reaction – the things he can't control, the things that haven't happened yet, the things that don't make sense. He feels a constant pressure. He can't stop thinking. Can't get anything done. Can't relax.

This is anxiety.

Anxiety can be described as intense worry. Some forms of worry and stress are normal, and can even be helpful. But if those worries continue for longer than a few days, or interfere with your daily life, it could be considered a more severe form of anxiety.

There are many physical reactions that a person can experience with anxiety, as well as mental and emotional stress. Some of the symptoms might be:

- Fast heart rate/heart palpitations**
- Shortness of breath**
- Nausea and/or vomiting**
- Shaking or trembling**
- Dizziness**
- Hot flashes and sweating, or chills**
- Problems falling or staying asleep**
- Inability to concentrate**

Someone struggling with anxiety is put into a flight or fight mode – a physical response your body uses when it thinks there is a threat. These flight or fight responses are intended to keep you safe and in survival mode, but the responses are not always proportionate to the reality that's

taking place. When your body is reacting in this way, you are not as able to have clear, rational thoughts. This may cause you to put greater significance on your fears and concerns than is warranted. Anxiety can feel debilitating and scary, but it can be managed.

Above all, do not judge yourself for the emotions that you feel. Your emotions are always valid. Approach your feelings, and yourself, with kindness and acceptance.

Many people keep a worry journal to manage anxiety. As thoughts and worries come up throughout your day, write them down in the journal and set it aside. Then dedicate a set amount of time at the same time each day and allow yourself to worry about the things you've written down and any other thoughts that may come up. Writing your concerns down helps to release them and gives them less power. When you start to become anxious about a thought, tell yourself that you can't spend time worrying about it until the time you've set aside.

Mindfulness is another tool to use when anxiety creeps up. Anxiety often entails worries about the future, things you can't control, or things that haven't yet happened. Being in the moment can help bring you back to the present and ground you.

Use your senses to help get grounded. What can you see? What can you smell? What can you hear? Breathe slowly, deeply, and with intention.

Anxiety can be stressful and scary in the moment, especially when thoughts and feelings are about the future and situations out of your control. With these and other strategies, or with guided help, anxieties can be managed and worries can become more bearable. If you're struggling with anxiety and those feelings are becoming overwhelming and impacting your ability to function, don't wait to reach out for help.

When Your Ex Moves On

Helping Your Kids Succeed In The Transition

by Dr. Jeff St. John

The Broken Dream of the Parent Trap

So, you are divorced or separated and are sharing custody of your children with your ex-partner. Things have stabilized and there is a comfortable routine emerging.

The kids seem settled and even happy. I remember my lawyer telling me at one point that eventually things settle down and you reach a new normal. She was mostly right.

All of a sudden, your ex finds a new partner and is introducing them to your child(ren). What seemed to be smooth sailing is now a tumultuous ocean in a storm.

How can you support your children through this transition phase?

It's important to recognize that children can re-experience the divorce or separation differently at their different developmental stages. What seemed processed and done may re-emerge later as their level and

depth of understanding of emotional issues changes. With this re-processing may come uncomfortable emotions, so have patience with them and yourself. As they re-experience feelings, it may be very personal and uncomfortable for you. Try your best to put your feelings aside to support your child in working through this situation.

Often, children may hope beyond hope for the eventual and romantic reunion of their parents. They may on some level understand that the divorce was best. They may even seem well adjusted and happy now. Regardless, under the surface, there is often a secret hope that their parents will reunite and their life will return to one house with one set of parents. It is the dream of *The Parent Trap*, the popular movie from the 1960s that was remade in the 1990s and starred Lindsay Lohan.

The *Parent Trap* is a popular story of two identical twin sisters who are separated at birth by their divorcing parents. They meet as adolescents, realize they are related and hatch a plot to switch places and bring their parents back together. It highlights the often present hope children have for an "intact" family. When one of the parents chooses to move on, this can send children reeling when they realize their secret dream isn't going to happen anymore.

Do's and Don'ts: Helping Your Child When Your Ex Moves On

While you can't control how or when your ex-partner shares the news, you can support your child as they work through this adjustment.

The Do's

First, put aside your own emotions. It can feel very personal and upsetting if your child expresses anger or upset about the divorce. They may even be very angry at you if you left, or even if you were left. If it was mutual, the child may still be angry at both of you. It is important to resist the urge to stifle your child's feelings and just make them understand it was for the best or that it wasn't your decision. The key is to focus on letting them express their hurt feelings without judgement.

Be real and honest with your child. You can support them by underlining the fact that the relationship was already over and that one person moving on does not mean you or your ex-partner love them any less. It can be helpful to re-state that the child is not at fault for the divorce. It is an adult decision and it wasn't going to change.

Reassure them they are loved (by both parents). One or both parents moving on does not mean the child is loved any less. Find ways to reassure them that they are still important and loved and they are not losing their parents. Explore their fears with them and find ways to show them how they will still have loving parents.

Support your ex-partner as still loving and caring for the child. Resist any urge to speak poorly of your ex or their new relationship. Instead, find ways to support their connection with your child. Angry outbursts can lead to loyalty conflicts for your child.

Take the high road while ensuring the physical and emotional safety of your child. This may mean having a conversation with your ex about how this new person will have access to your child.

The Don'ts

Ask a million questions about your ex's new partner. It can make your child anxious. It also puts them in the middle of a situation that is not theirs to mediate. Retaliate or look jealous.

Reminisce about "the good old days" or share old stories about your relationship with your ex with your child. It isn't helping them settle in to the new reality and only creates more anxiety.

Rush yourself into a new relationship "just to keep up". You may be feeling left behind, or reminded of what you have lost but don't let that push you into decisions grounded in that pain.

If you are hurt that your ex has moved on, don't share this with your child. Keep the focus on the fact that you love them and that your ex loves them. If you share your pain with your child, they will not want to leave you when it's time to go and it puts them in the middle of a challenging loyalty conflict.

Even though the idea of the parent trap might be enticing and romantic for kids, it really is a setup for disappointment. You can avoid this disappointment if you put your kids first. Take time for yourself and to do things that matter to you. Talk to people who support you and focus on your healthy future and the positive choices you are making.



5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

One

Strive to be empathetic and understanding.

Two

Learn to apologize effectively.

Three

Aim to manage anxiety.

Four

Engage with your children.

Five

Share the load with your partner.

ARE

YOU

WILLING?

The conversation doesn't have to end here. There's more online.



MEN^T HEALTH MATTERS^A ^L

Our helpline is free, private and available 24/7

1-833-327-MENS (6367)