

# *Towards a Better Appreciation of the “Intimacy” Gap Between Men and Women:*

*“Intimacy” is an Action Word for Men*

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**Editor’s note:** Hakomi principles of unity and organicity map into Wilber’s AQAL theory (see his *Integral Psychology*) of intentional, behavioral, cultural, and societal dispositions all being crucial to make sense of humanbeingness. So, what in this vast interconnected universe helps make sense of mysterious male/female, boy and girl relationships? – genes, nurture, nature, accidents? This article helps us sort through the research on this mystifying subject, and deal with the conundrum that there are, in fact, obdurate differences. Martin Rovers reports that this research “*came out of everyday dinner conversations with couples and single people, male and female, about the place and expressions of intimacy within relationships. The central theme that men and women have different languages and meanings for intimacy lead us to a review of the literature, and to our research conducted through informal gatherings in Thunder Bay and Ottawa. Often the discussions seem to back us men into the corner of being unable to be intimate, at least as our partners seem to want intimacy: intimacy was being described more and more in feminine language. Gradually, we men came to realize that we just do intimacy differently, and that mutual respect and appreciation was needed to meet as intimate partners and friends. This article attempts to use everyday language for the experiences and expressions of intimacy.*”

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**ABSTRACT:** It has been 40 years since the feminist movement and almost 20 years since the men’s movement, and yet where have men and women come over these years in our understanding of intimacy, and how intimacy is lived between the sexes? This paper tries to bring us up to date. It suggests that male intimacy still has strong elements of the “hard wiring” days of the hunt and war, and even modern child-rearing practices have not brought boys and girls much closer together in understanding each others’ love language. Intimacy is described today mostly in feminine terms. Becoming ‘soft men’ or ‘hard women’ or gender neutral people is not the answer. Understanding and appreciating the way men “do” intimacy is essential for both men and women’s future relationships together. At the same time, men need to look at their own wounds of intimacy and find a new psychology and spirituality of being a man today.

## **Introduction**

*Men gather, grief surfaces, and men need a shoulder:  
women gather, anger surfaces, and women need a  
fighter. (author unknown)*

From the outset, we confess that, as four male authors, we struggle with our own sense of male intimacy, let alone dare

to write anything on female intimacy, or how men and women get together around intimacy, and so we invite you to read our struggling as our best attempt at being intimate. We have read books, looked at research, and held focus groups of married and single men and women to help us reflect upon the meaning of intimacy as it is lived today. We present our musings, our findings and our feelings.

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Perhaps Terrance Real (2002) is correct when he states that most men are just not raised to be intimate. In fact he goes further to write that “the prospect of deep connection stimulates a visceral recall of each instance of disconnection we (men) have encountered” (Real, 2002, p.59). When it comes to intimacy, men seem to start in the down and out position, seeking validity of our own experiences of intimacy and probably disconnection.

### **Intimacy**

Intimacy is defined by Funk and Wagnall’s (1975) dictionary as the state of being intimate. Further instruction can be found in the subsequent definition of ‘intimate’: 1) characterized by pronounced closeness of friendship or association; 2) deeply personal, private (as in intimate thoughts); and 3) having illicit sexual relations. It must have been a man who wrote this dictionary to so quickly connect intimacy with sex, and illicit sex at that!

Lerner (1989) describes intimacy as a relationship where I-ness and you-ness operate together: perhaps worded another way, where you can be you and I can be me. Peck (1978) takes this one step further by suggesting the love is “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own and another’s spiritual growth”. Fromm (1947) states that love requires the affirmation of one’s own life, happiness and growth. Putting all this together, we define intimacy as a deeply personal relationship, sometimes sexual, where you and I come together with gifts and wounds to nurture each others growth.

### **Intimacy Over Time**

It is helpful to understand the contextual influences on men’s and women’s identity and personality. Gender role socialization is one of the most salient of these contextual influences upon the development of our sense of intimacy (Hyde, 2005; Levant & Silverstein, 2005). We want to argue that much of what has occurred in the past regarding gender roles lends itself fairly readily to quantification, while necessarily incorporating softer human sciences. Examples of these measurable, tangible changes would include: the suffragette movement, the women’s movement, the women’s liberation movement, the feminist movement to the extent that they have advocated for political, legal, social, and economic changes such as the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, right to own property, etc. More recently, radical feminism may be trying to move men out of the reproductive realm, if not out of many women’s lives. However, as Real (2002) states, “feminism, thus far, has failed to capture the hearts of most males” (p. 92).

At some point, the pro-women, pro-equality nature of the women’s movement became something else, at least to a significant portion of the movement. The promised utopia

of equality turned out to be, at best, only that. Women (some women) were hard pressed to explain, having achieved at least some of what men had always had – power – why it didn’t seem to be nearly enough. For many, it was simply untenable psychologically to consider notions such as ‘The Myth of Male Power’. Equality was supposed to be closer to nirvana than it turned out to be.

And let us not forget the men’s movement of the 1980’s and 1990’s. The structures of male power therefore, while fundamentally flawed, were also part of the real problem. Men were as flawed as the structures they had created. Equality with flawed creatures became a non-starter.

The history of relationship and intimacy between the sexes has changed over the years, evolving through the ages of 1) hunter gathering societies (where men were most often gone, on the hunt); to 2) agrarian settlements (where men worked the fields while women worked the home: therefore, we men were still gone); to 3) an industrialization / urbanization (where men left home to go work in the factories all day and night); to today’s 4) wired world (where men can get lost in cyberspace).

While practical elements of these changes / gains may be relatively easy to measure, less concrete elements of such changes are another matter. Changes of attitudes, in group or individual consciousness, in mass culture or in personal psychology are not so obvious. It is not surprising to ask whatever happened to intimacy and love over these years for both men and women. But we believe that we have to look deeper to try to grasp some of the realities that make up the relationship between men and women, and begin the process of uncovering the meaning and experience of male intimacy. Blaming women will never help the cause. We men need to, nea, have to, look deeper into ourselves and our own “hard wired” sense of intimacy, and how this might play out in our relationship with our intimate partners.

### **Growing up boys and girls**

There are many sources and agents that teach boys and men their gender-role expectations. We look at three such sources: families, schools, and media. Parents and siblings are often considered the first and probably most pervasive influence on gender role development (Witt, 1997). Most adults do treat boy and girl babies differently. Children are given particular sex-typed toys and books (Evans & Davies, 2000; Nelson, 2005), and are rewarded for gender-appropriate behaviors (Blakemore, 2003; Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000; Raag & Rackliff, 1998). Adults tend to play more roughly with boys than girls (Grieshaber, 1998; Lindsey & Mize, 2001; Lindsey, Mize, & Pettit, 1997). Chores are often allocated based upon gender role stereotypes (Antell, Goodnow, Russell, & Cotton, 1996).

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Adults also talk differently to their male and female children (Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998). Mothers tend to talk less to their sons, while both parents encourage boys to be independent and autonomous. Pollack (1995, 1998) suggested that less interaction with parents may harm boys by pushing them away from parental support and nurturing too early. Perhaps such an early push for autonomy negatively impacts the ability of boys and men to perceive other persons with deep empathy and form intimate relationships (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Oliver & Green, 2001) and may also form a basis for later issues with anger and violence (Pollack, 1995, 1998).

Through school and in children's books, boys are more often portrayed as action figures (i.e., risk-takers) and as rescuers of women (Doyle & Paludi, 1998; Evans & Davies, 2000; Purcell & Stewart, 1990). They are less frequently written up as a parent or father (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005; Gooden & Gooden, 2001). These images can reinforce competence, being in charge, and risk-taking but not skills for intimacy and connection. Boys are also expected to be athletic and excel at sports (Kilmartin, 2000). High school athletes enjoy high social status, dominance, the envy of other males, and admiration from and social and sexual success with female students (Pascoe, 2003). Emotions, with the exception of anger/aggression, are suppressed, and winning (competitiveness) is usually everything. Lack of success in sports or school may impact non-athlete boys with feelings of failure and lack of self-confidence and worth.

Chodorow (1978, 1989) has theorized that the identity of girls seems more based on an experience of connection of their relationship with their mothers, whereas the identity of boys is formed by experiencing themselves as different than their mothers, and by (supposedly and hopefully) creating an identity with their fathers. While both boys and girls are pushed into the world of growing up, it seems that boys are forced out sooner and more dramatically. For boys, identity seems to be formed by this differentiation from mothers, by not-being-women, not crying, not feeling, and not taking care of others. One might appreciate some confusion in men in that we are born of a mother, held in the arms of our mother, yet need to separate from our mother, only to come back and meet, marry and make love to a woman, who soon will become a mother of our child. Is it any wonder that one of the prime danger times for marital breakup is within the year of the birth of the first child? When men fall in love (or is it in lust?), we think to ourselves (and brag about it with the other boys): Great! I have a lover. Loved as a baby, I am in my lovers arms again. Then after the first child is born, wow! Now my lover has become a mother, and I have one of those already, I don't need two: lover, lover, come back to me! This is not what I bargained for in this relationship. Real (2002) calls this the endless pattern of harmony, disharmony, and restoration. The 20-25 % of men who have affairs usually do so early in the marriage, and go for high opportunity and low involvement affairs,

while the 10-15% of women who have affairs often do so as a comparison measure.

Prochaska and Norcross (2003) write that "girls are typically expected to be sweet, sensitive, and docile, while boys are expected to be strong, stoic, and brave" (p. 421). In identifying with mothers, girls learn the high priority of relatedness, nurturing and care for other people, perhaps at the expense of developing their capacity for autonomy and independence. Brizendrine (2006) suggests that a testosterone surge in the brain of a male fetal brain kills off some cells in the communication centre of the brain and grows more cells in the sex and aggression centers. This does not happen for the female brain and thus women may be soft-wired for contact and crave social attachment more than men. She states that girls are born interested in emotional expression. As well, once born, boys are exposed to the more aggressive, power seeking relational styles of adult males, probably at the expense of developing capacity for the expression of empathy and connectedness as well as other emotions (Gilligan, 1982). These early lessons teach boys to avoid their feelings and become the Lone Rangers of life and love and are reinforced often before any boy even has a thought about looking at girls or sex or love. Contemporary research indicates consistently that boys from all walks of life evidence a clear, measurable decrease in expressiveness and connections by the ages of three, four and five. Corresponding changes in girls occur in the pre-teen level. Attachment theory would dictate that everyone always plays out the 'working model' for relationships we first learned growing up.

The media has also played a part in transmitting gender role socialization messages. Too often the media plays up the differences between men and women (Bing, 1999) to the detriment of recognizing noteworthy similarities. Male characters on television programming are usually older and seen in positions of authority (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2004). Men are often depicted as police officers and criminals (Scharrer, 2001), conveying messages of aggression and competitiveness. Men and women are most often portrayed in predominantly traditional roles (Brabant & Mooney, 1997; Diekman & Murnen, 2004; Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2004; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Boys are often portrayed as smart, powerful, competitive, and violent (Witt, 2000).

David and Brannon (1976) developed their classic four male stereotypes for men. "No sissy stuff" reinforces the rule that we are not women. "The big wheel" describes the man who makes a lot of money and therefore, is described as powerful. "The sturdy oak" refers to men being defined by self-reliance, confidence, toughness, strength, and lack of emotionality. "Give 'em hell" encourages men to be aggressive, in charge, tough, and risk-taking.

Keen (1991), speaking on behalf of the men's movement, suggests that there is a dis-ease between the genders; what

Real (2002) calls “the intimacy gap”; too much blame and expectation and not enough acceptance and appreciation. He states that men need a new vision of masculinity and how men might find ‘fire in the belly’ again and take their respectful places in the world of adults.

### **The Hunt**

It is not difficult to imagine some of the basic and necessary approaches to survival that early hominoids would have taken. With notable exceptions, the hunt and war, with their attendant terrors, would have been carried out by men. The hunt would be carried out in a climate of fear, perhaps of starvation of self, mate, or children and if unsuccessful; fear of injury, depending on the quarry. There is also the fear of cowardice or personal failure in one’s assignment in the group of men. The hunt would also have been carried out mostly in silence, for obvious reasons. With attendant adrenaline – mutually reinforcing – hard wiring – male performance and achievement became the rule of the day. Carrying over such an agenda from the days of the hunt to the present day might include a hard-wired or deep imprint on the autonomic nervous system of fight or flight (but not connection or intimacy), quick orgasm for fear of being hunted, fear of male bonding, etc.

Men do not go to war or on the hunt in a vulnerable position. Instead, men put on a brave face or mask to chase terror away. Before the battle, they dig deep for gusto and machismo, or go to their women for sex, perhaps as some deep down need for appreciation or smoothing in the face of fear. Perhaps it is a way to connect with their family and community for whom men enter the hunt and war.

The emphasis on the hunt, war and other acts of risk-taking as part of the gender-role socialization of men and boys can result in greater risk for death and injury at all ages (Arias, Anderson, Kung, Murphy, & Kochanek, 2003; Kruger & Ness, 2004; Mathers, Sadana, Salomon, Murray, & Lopez, 2001; White & Cash, 2004). The leading cause of death for 15- to 34- year-old men is accidents (White & Holmes, 2006). It may well be men’s risk taking behavior that accounts for the worldwide higher death rate for young men than young women (Christov, Zdravko, Todorova, Ivanov, & Tzurakova, 2004; McKee & Shkolnikov, 2001; White & Cash, 2004). It may be that this toughness or unwillingness to ask for help that accompanies traditional male socialization directs men to engage in greater health risk behaviors such as less attention to preventative health (Mahalik, Lagan, & Morrison, 2006), less consultation and visits with physicians and other health-care providers (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Tudiver & Tolbert, 1999), and greater substance abuse such as alcohol and drugs (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Isenhardt, 2005; Courtenay, 2001). Some researchers estimate that risky health behaviors can be responsible for up to 50% of men’s morbidity and mortality (Mokdad, Marks, Stroup, & Gerberding, 2004).

### **Male Attachment**

Attachment patterns are broadly categorized as secure and insecure. Just about everyone is in agreement with working definitions of secure, defined as a delicate balance between seeking proximity to the caregiver and exploration, between connectedness and autonomy. The various insecure patterns break down in to a litany of different possibilities. Rovers (2004, 2005) describes five attachment patterns which are a synthesis of attachment theory and Bowen Theory. These attachment patterns are enmeshed, preoccupied, secure/differentiated, avoidant, and cut-off. He also hypothesized a 6<sup>th</sup> pattern of flipping or bouncing between enmeshed and cut-off (love me or reject you).

What might be the effect of such gender role socialization on attachment patterns in adult life? Research on attachment patterns seems to be pointing in the direction of men being more of the avoidant/ withdrawing types in attachment patterns, while women lean on the side of being preoccupied. Gender differences have been inconsistently found in attachment research, but have been found nonetheless (Levy, Kelly & Jack, 2006; Allen & Baucom, 2004; Collins, Cooper, Albino, & Allard, 2002). Dismissing individuals (more often men than women) manage to maintain a consciously positive image of themselves despite a history of negative interactions with attachment figures. This seems to involve an exceptional degree of self-reliance. Preoccupied or anxious-ambivalent individuals (more often women than men) manage to view relationships with others as desirable even though previous relationships have helped to create a rather vulnerable, insecure self. Men’s ambivalence about relationship partners seems to be attributable to the on-again, off-again responsiveness of their primary attachment figures in childhood (Shaver & Clark, 1996). Preoccupied attachment styles (i.e., women) report more intimacy motivations while avoidant/ dismissive attachment styles (i.e., men) report more autonomy motivations (Robin, 2003). Dismissive individual (more often men than women) tend to give more attention to the sexual aspects of one’s relationship than with emotional intimacy, and dismissive people also find sexual infidelity more distressing (Levy, Kelly & Jack, 2006).

One component of attachment is the internal working model which influences how intimate relationships are conceived in the first place and possible meanings imposed and understood for future relationships. There are common variations, patterns or “working models” to explain the way attachment is learned. The internal working model is a representation based upon experiences of attachment from early childhood and family-of-origin history in conjunction with current interactions between ourselves and significant others (Rovers, 2005). This process of ‘generalising’ working models of intimate interactions is well exemplified

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by work done on attachment style and work by Hazen and Shaver (1990). Fischer and Ayoub (1996) suggest that attachment and working models carry from early, family of origin attachment relationships to subsequent relationships:

People construct their individual working models of close relationships based on the major role relations that they experience in their family and other close affiliations, and gradually they build complex models that connect multiple roles. These roles are organized in terms of not only the specific people and their role relationships but also the emotions experienced in the interactions and the contexts in which the interactions occur. (p. 176)

It would seem that men learn an avoidant or dismissive attachment style from their childhood experiences of needing or expecting to be 'unlike' their mothers, perhaps resulting in confusion, distance, marginalization, feeling unappreciated, even rage at times of adult intimate relationships. At the same time, there seem to be too few healthy male models for them to become initiated into the world of men and male expressions of intimacy (Bly, 1992; Keen, 1991; Corneau, 1991). When men journey into the adult world of intimacy, they would carry with them these wounded internal working models of family of origin experiences and of intimacy found and lost.

### **The Languages of Intimacy for Men and Women**

So if men are, in fact, from one planet and women from another, the languages of intimacy are also quite different. The focus groups comments suggest that men, first and foremost, need to feel appreciated through their work (a new version of the hunt), sports (competition), partners, and family, and probably in that order, and these are all expressions of intimacy for men. The focus groups found that for men, intimacy needs to be seen as doing something, going somewhere, accomplishing something. Male descriptors of intimacy include being appreciated, working (bringing home the pay check), mystery, eroticism. Men tended to partition out intimacy as things they "do" with different people; sex with my wife, talk with a friend, sports with my buddies, getting ahead at work. For men, intimacy seems to come in doing things together, and some of that can be talking. To begin an intimate evening, men would ask their partners, "what do you want to do tonight?" and women would answer, "Let's spend some time together" while men tend to say "Let's do something".

Women want to sit and talk, all the while trying to coalesce every scintilla of emotion into the present moment of intimacy. She wants all of you, full attention, expressions of feelings, deep connection. Women can feel intimate in conversation, feeling special in their children, work, and their partners, and maybe in that order. Men, on the other hand, prefer "doing" therapy over "talking" therapy. In fact,

one of the husband's greatest fear is when his partner states that "we need to talk". Even in the realm of parenting, male parenting seems more about adventures, humor, risk taking, routine, while women parenting is about stories, shopping together, and cuddles. The word 'intimacy' has a ring of being more a feminine concept (Real, 2003), with working definitions like talking, getting in touch with feeling, better communication, sharing as indicators of intimacy. Therapist may be as guilty of this bias as anyone.

How can these two very different working definitions of intimacy be reconciled? Most men agreed that women are better at intimacy than men are, although some men claim that they can share as deeply as any women. When intimacy is taken to mean connectedness, talking, sharing, being together, etc., men shudder; men tend to get lost for this is all new language for them. But when intimacy is about doing things together, facing life together, planning things, going out, talk of appreciation; this is a language men can get into. Therefore, men do have an intimate language and an intimate ability, but it is different than women, and needs to be seen as such. We cannot do intimacy like the girls do. And societal attempts to portray intimacy in overly feminine terms will do a disservice to both men and women in the long run.

Male defense mechanisms against these seemingly feminine approaches to intimacy lurk in the background of our insecurity. We are apt to tell our female partners that actions speak louder than words and that talk is cheap. The most basic level of manhood is really only validated and expressed in action; proving themselves by doing.

### **The Language of Sex**

It has often been said that men tend to genitalize intimacy, to isolate sex from other areas of life, and from other feelings. As such, for men, sexual intimacy is focused in an act – a doing – a performance, and is more specific and definable than the overall intimate relationship may ever be. If we were to ponder the shape of the human sexual organs given to men and women, it becomes obvious that men don't take intimacy in but rather put it out there, handle it out there, project it out there. While women tend to experience their sexuality as more internal and mysterious, men are inclined to experience sexuality as an instrument for penetrating and exploring, and therefore, something which is essentially external to himself. Of course, men do need lessons on the different gears of intimate connection and sex: from affectionate kiss to sensual touch to playful touch to erotic scenarios to the erotic flow towards intercourse. Too often, however, men just want to skip some steps and get to the climax. Men typically want sex on a regular basis, preferably with our partners. But we also have a need for excitement in sex.

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One result might be that after years of marriage, women might find it easier to love her husband than to appreciate him, while a husband can find it easier to appreciate his wife than to love her. Women can be preoccupied by a bewildering range of intimate qualities in their man, like power, intelligence, wealth or social position. But the erotic hard wiring of men is different. Men's sexual drive is more often engaged by beauty, youth and vulnerability. Men find it more difficult to respond erotically to female traits such as strength, ability, position, intelligence. This is not to say that men do not appreciate any of these qualities; far from it. Men are awed by societal accomplishments like money and power just as much as women are. Men appreciate courage, civility, loyalty, and ability. Men are, however, much less likely than women to have erotic responses to such qualities.

If women are generalist when it comes to love, then men are specialists. Sex for men is about being appreciated while sex for women is about being treasured. Sex for men is exciting, dangerous, active, doing something; like a hunt. If the sexual hunt is successful, men can relax and be open and intimate, sit around the fire and tell stories and let feelings out (at least for five minutes!). Maybe this is part of the hard wiring of men. After all, which hunter would ever think of letting his defenses down and standing vulnerable in a hunt or in war. Men do not fight battles with roses in their hands or by cuddling up to the enemy. Men's sexual identity is always on the line in intercourse. Fear of impotence and inadequacy are the only real enemy men fear.

In fact, the need for love in combination with sex is predominantly a female paradigm. Women find all kinds of qualities and traits sexy that have nothing to do with sex. Men can't, as a rule. Men do appreciate kindness, learning or wealth: they just can't convert their appreciation into erotic or romantic feelings. Women can elevate appreciation into romance while men are able to reduce romance to appreciation. Feeling intimate speaks of warmth and comfort, while feeling erotic talks of risk and mystery; it is a very different language of love. As research suggests, men are more likely to be distressed by sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity, while women are more distressed by emotional infidelity (Levy, Kelly & Jack, 2006). This might be because a woman's sexual infidelity means someone is "doing" something wrong to the man.

One definition of dysfunction is seeing our life through someone else's eyes; to be what others expect; to not be standing solidly on one's own feet. Men need to be validated in women's eyes, to find different ways to reconnect in some meaningful way, but the rules of life seem to be against this. This validation may well be compensation for our distant attachment patterns, or our lack of connection with ourselves. Some research suggests that the best teachers of male intimacy are women (Rovers, 2000). Sometimes it seems that we men define ourselves by what we think women feel or believe about us: that we take

our intimacy clues from women. Perhaps we men are really only what our mothers made us to be, all the while having too few male mentors to teach us otherwise.

## **Naming our Wounds as Men**

"All I knew was that you had to run, run, run, without knowing why you were running, but on you went, through fields you didn't understand and into woods that made you afraid, over hills without knowing you'd been up or down, and shooting across streams that would have cut the heart out of you had you fallen into them. And the winning post was no end to it, even though the crowds might be cheering you in, because you had to go on. (Sillitoe, 1959, p.37-38)."

Some of the major wounds in male intimacy are suggested in Sillitoe's story. Men are wounded by loneliness, strenuous performance, competition, fear of shame, rejection and death (we have to go on), and probably confusion about the meaning of the race itself. Male childhood, adolescent and adult's hurts and wounds tend to get bound up so tight that they fester on the inside. "I don't want to talk about it" (Real, 1997) we men often say: "it" being our pain, our grief, perhaps our depression. Worse than the wounds, Real claims, is men's seeming willingness to deny or mishandle them, or maybe we just never learned how to deal with our wounds in the first place.

Perhaps the greatest wound that men need to deal with is grief which may block all access to deeper emotions: grieving the loss of connection with our masculinity, perhaps due, in large part, to our emotionally and physically absent fathers (Seutter & Rovers, 2004); grieving the loss of ability to express emotions at all, like sadness, fear, inadequacy, depression; grieving the loss of the roles men are called upon to play in society for which we do not amply prepare; grieving losses in various competitions for, sooner or later, all men will loose, for there will always be another king of the hill; grieving the loss of how to let other men get closer to us; grieving the loss of any sense of delight in life as a man.

Whatever men's hurts and wounds, the worse thing is that we have been told that we can't have them, shouldn't have them, or at least, if you do hurt, "take it like a man" and "don't cry". This just drives the hurting deeper, with a sense that there is no one there for me, no appreciation, no shoulder to cry on (when men dare do that). The men's movement addresses some of these needs by creating rites for boys to be initiated into manhood by fathers or other male figures (Keen, 1991); unless, as Corneau (1991) suggests, we end up with lost sons due to emotionally absent fathers. Indeed, as some have suggested, are dads really necessary (see the film documentary, *Shot in the Dark*)? Drexler (2006), in her book, *Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men*, suggests that boys might, in

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fact, do better without a male influence in the home, where the domestic sphere is becoming increasingly feminize. However, in her book, she also suggest that these ‘maverick moms’ actively recruit male figures from their families and the community to be in their sons' lives and set examples of strength and compassion. However, Drexler fails to review the literature of decades of fatherless families, and some of the bad examples the boys in fatherless families are following. On the other side of the coin is what Herzog (2001) would classify as “father hunger”; how young boys, without benefit of a father's care, can become fearful because there is no one there to show them the way. The way forward for men might be through acknowledging wounds and grief towards a new spirituality of manliness.

Research has demonstrated the correlation between traditional masculinity and negative attitudes toward seeking help (Good, Robertson, O’Neil, Fitzgerald, DeBord, Stevens, Bartels, & Braverman, 1995; Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003; Wisch, Mahalik, Hayes, & Nutt, 1995). For example, men are less likely to seek healing for their problems (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Leong & Zachar, 1999; Sandman, Simantov, & An, 2000), since needing the help of others will probably be seen as weakness. If in need of help, men still ask fewer questions than women (Courtenay, 2000). Additionally, since men are socialized to ignore or minimize pain (Lisak, 2001), they tend to underreport emotions and irritability (Jansz, 2000; Pollack, 1998), and deny substance use and abuse (Grant, 1995). As such, counseling men is a difficult journey.

### **Grieving the Losses**

Vandenberg and McIntosh (2007) state that men need to begin the process of addressing losses in life: the loss of father-son relationships; the loss of role within the family; the loss of seemingly appropriate expression of emotions. Real (1997) suggested this decreased relational ability creates unresolved grief and loss which translates to later depression in addition to relationship problems. A review of the grieving process and, in particular, how men grieve, may help men grieve our losses as well as appreciate that we men grieve differently.

As we have seen, society encourages men to express stronger emotions such as rage or hostility while discouraging them to express sadness and loss. Women, on the other hand, are encouraged to show a wider range of emotions, including mourning. According to Thompson (1997), this “gender-structured patterns of emotional response” (p.77) will lead to men and women grieving differently. Grief can be seen as a social construct and it is mostly fashioned by prevailing gender expectations. Grief as often depicted as “tears and sadness, a slowing of behavior and thought, and/or quietness more punctuated by sighing than wailing” (Zinner, 2000, p.182). As such, grief can be characterized to have more feminine-assigned

qualities, and less masculine expressions such as anger, irritability and solitude. Therefore, the tools used to study grief may be inherently influenced by attributes that correspond with a “contemporary and relatively feminine-based profile of grieving [that] may also bias the expected view of bereavement” (p.182).

Beyond being a social construct, grief might also possess a biological root which, in fact, reinforces community attachment (Zinner, 2000). Therefore, what society determines as the grieving process may well be determined by who is recognized as a legitimate griever: women and men who show their emotional distress, who are willing to accept comfort from others, and who promote a bigger expectation regarding the need for communal support as opposed to “masculine style grievers”, who resist social and professional assistance, and who promote independence as a sign of strength.

Doka and Martin (2001) suggest that men have difficulty expressing emotion, other than anger, upon the loss of a life partner. Besides, expressing emotions such as sadness, dread or weeping may well clash with the image of masculinity that society upholds and expects from men because it can threaten society’s construct of men being viewed as autonomous and in charge. Some men may opt not to disclose their emotions regarding grief because they may feel insecure about revealing these emotions. Yet, it can be seen that men have several different manners of expressing their grief. A number of men are very able to express their emotions by talking about their pain with family, friends, and peers.

Many men seem to choose to express their grief mainly through action rather than communication. For this particular segment of the male population, responding to loss by expressing grief in a physical manner that involves action and results in concrete outcomes, such as establishing a charity or commemorative for their deceased partner, serves as their means of contending with their loss. This might mean taking on several large projects at once in an effort to burn time, energy and attention that would be directed to grief. The expression of grief may also be expressed in a more intense and aggressive caliber of play during these sporting activities, as opposed to shedding tears with friends. Risk-taking behaviors such as drinking and driving or engaging in unprotected sex with several partners can serve as a cover for expressing grief (Staudacher, 1991) while simultaneously fulfilling gender-assigned roles and beliefs regarding manhood. It may be that these men need to “do something” as part of their grieving process, or perhaps concentrate on altering the future as opposed to revisiting their past. Some men express their grief in a cognitive manner by seeking to determine a rationalization or develop a plan in an effort to assist them to contend with the loss.

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Perhaps men have learned to better manage their emotions (Lund, 2001) because it is not that men are discouraged to express all emotions, but rather, only certain ones such as grief, sorrow, sadness, aloneness. Societal expectation may be pushing men to adopt active coping styles to contend with grief as opposed to more open healthy expressions of emotions.

### **A Spirituality for Male Intimacy**

Men are often supposed to be the holders of the spiritual realm throughout history and in most societies. Men were the kings and priests, the givers and defenders of life and blessings. Much of that is being lost over the years, both in the realm of political power as well as spiritual power. There is a sense that in this postmodern world, the power of men is fading fast, held up by decaying structures of religion and politics, and fewer people, especially women, hold these as having any significance at all. What might a new age spirituality or male energy look like for men? How do men regain a second birth into manhood? What are the ways of intimacy for men? I want to redefine the male spiritual energy roles of King, Warrior, Magician, and Lover (Moore & Gillette, 1990)

One descriptor in manliness and male spirituality is the symbol and energy of the King, with the power to bless and feed others, be that a man's partner, children, co-workers, or the community at large. The King brings peace and order, and enables all in the realm to prosper and enjoy life. The King is about graciousness, mercy, blessing, sacrifice for the sake of the community. This is one expression of male intimacy articulated by providing for others, working, and "putting food on the table." The shadow side of this role is the tyrant who sees himself as the center of the universe, or the weakling prince whose low self-esteem and fearful approach to life withholds life for everyone.

The Warrior is perhaps the most common form of male energy and is shown in the ability to assert self and defend the realm; be that family or country. This is the expression of male intimacy wherein the man would give his life for others, to defend others and to provide security for all. The shadow side of the warrior can be seen in the grandstanding bully who attacks to fend off his own cowardice and insecurity, or the coward, who fails to stand up both for himself and others.

The Magician is the wisdom energy in men that allows us to create sacred space for wonder and future. This energy is expressed in learning, curiosity, and wonder. It can include both academic and spiritual openness. The shadow side of this for men could be seen in the know-it-all-trickster who seduces others for his own gain and attention or the dummy who has given up and become inept in responding to the world around him.

The last spiritual energy for men is that of the Lover; that power to take delight in and create passion, wonder, warmth and connection with others, especially his partner. This seems to be the more popular characterization of today's intimate man, but men have more to do than make love. The shadow side of this for men is the momma's boy who is unable to move out into the world and can't take responsibility for becoming one who gives life, or the dreamer which might describe the male who is cut off from most human relationships and withdraws into the dishonesty of his own imaginings.

I note that King, Warrior, Magician and Lover are, in fact, community functions accomplished by doing something for and with others. When done well, they are connection activities, and when given fully, unselfish acts of love. These are aspects of male intimacy; a way for men to find "fire in the belly" (Keen, 1991) again, a spirit of delight and energy, and hopefully, a new eroticism. These four male energies require initiation and teaching from wise elders; a journey through the woundedness of men to a new found manliness. We need to come in from the cold. These are some of the deeper emotional and spiritual realities of relationships and connection and intimacy that men can live: a love meant to be given to all. Men can benefit from learning and copying the feminine ways of intimacy while women need to learn and appreciate the male approach to intimacy and both need to find ways to meet in a complementary place.

Men can be intimate, even if men choose to use other words like being here, providing for, doing things, protecting. The overall concept of intimacy needs to be broadened to better include these male experiences, otherwise, the male and female planets will just keep missing each other in the night, to the detriment of both. We think that any definition of intimacy needs to incorporate this I-you balance needed for real intimacy to be lived.

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