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What is "masculinity?"

- the characteristics that are traditionally thought to be typical of or suitable for men (Cambridge Dictionary)
- Masculinity is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with men and boys (Wikipedia)
- Masculinity is socially constructed and varies across time and place. Typically, masculinity is characterized by competition, control, strength, sports, aggression, power, decision-making and having and communicating fewer emotions. (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative)

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Elements of Traditional Masculinity

- Stoicism
- Help aversive or rejecting
- Ruggedness
- Independence
- Being the "breadwinner"
- Mechanically inclined
- Serving as a "protector"
- Competitiveness
- Exhibiting minimal affection



Failure to meet one's perceived gender standards can result in distress and psychiatric conditions (depression, anxiety, etc.)

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Origins of "toxic masculinity" concept

- Stems from the mythopoetic men's movement
- Borrowed from the work of Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell
- Employed therapeutic workshops and retreats
 - Modeled after historic traditions centered on boys becoming men
- Attempt to connect to the "deep masculine self," which was harmed by the industrial revolution and replaced by "toxic masculinity"
- Toxic masculinity
 - Involves a false bravado, over feminization, or hyper chauvinism
- Lives on in institutions like the Mankind Project

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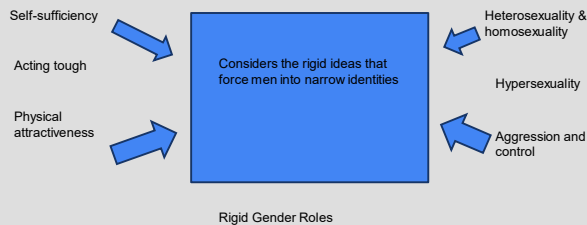
Hypermasculinity & associated risks

- Hypermasculinity involves
- Sexist attitudes toward women
 - Perceiving violence as manly
 - Aggression is the primary conflict resolution tool
 - Seeing danger as exciting
 - Emotions reflect deficits/weaknesses
 - Physical prowess and strength are prioritized

- And is associated with
- Physical aggression (Malonda et al., 2022)
 - Sexual aggression
 - Domestic violence (Santana et al., 2006)
 - Suicidality
 - Misogyny
 - Rape culture
 - Psychiatric diagnosis (Schneeberger et al., 2026)
 - Substance abuse (Wells et al., 2014)

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Hypermasculinity & the Man Box



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Evidence of a male crisis

- Distrust in public institutions
 - Young males trusted Andrew Tate (20%) than Joe Biden (15%) (Barker et al., 2023)
- Increasing amount of males are not in education, employment, or training (NEET)
- Home
 - Absence of father figures
- Education (Centre for Social Justice, 2025)
 - Less prepared for school
 - Less completion of secondary education
 - Lower university enrollment
 - Greater male suspension & expulsion
 - Particularly among African-American Youth (Hines et al., 2021)
- Employment
 - Economic Anxiety (Gupta et al., 2025)
 - Conflicts with males sense of being a provider
 - Career is tied heavily to sense of purpose
 - Greater unemployment rate for young males compared to females (Centre for Social Justice, 2025)
 - Reverse of gender pay gap with young females now outearning young men
 - Seems to revert as women divide their time between work and family
 - Diminished employment opportunities in traditionally male-dominated fields like industry and agriculture (Center for Social Justice, 2025)
 - Move from a post-industrial era to a more service-oriented
 - Loss of well-paying jobs available to non-college-educated
 - Increased importance on soft skills, which may favor women
- Well-Being
 - Increased mental health issues, including eating disorders, depression, and suicidality (Barker et al., 2023)
 - Higher levels of loneliness (Gupta et al., 2025)
 - Greater rates of criminal offending & violence for males
 - Increasing number of men contending female equality has gone "too far" (Barker et al., 2023)
 - Pervasive fear of being cancelled (Gupta et al., 2025)



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Is the male crisis new?



- The dilemma seems to manifest every two-to-three decades
 - Can you think of other times in your life where men were in crisis?
- Correlates with periods of great social/economic/political change?
 - Industrial Revolution
 - Great Depression
 - Civil Rights Movement
 - Deindustrialization

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Manosphere (The Dark Side)

- A loose collection of media personalities and spaces that espouse misogyny, male supremacy, and toxic masculinity under the guise of providing men help
- Opposed to "social justice warriors"
- Found on traditional websites, social media, message boards, and newer media like podcasts
- Beliefs and ideas span from benign self-help to explicit violence against women
- While elements of the manosphere are not new, the term manosphere was likely coined in 2009
- Rich idiosyncratic vocabulary, involving terms like "blue pill" and "red pill"

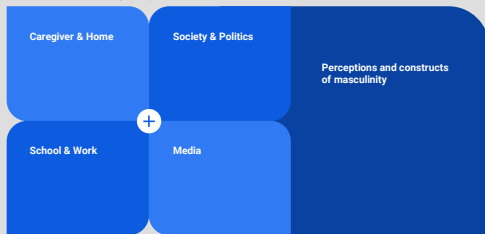
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Elements of Manosphere Groups

- Endorsement of gender essentialism
 - All members of a gender share unique characteristics
 - Contributes to gender stereotypes
- Gender differences are based in biology and immutable (biological essentialism)
 - Adherents tend to reduce all behavior to biological determinants, making much of human behavior predestined
- Men are stoic, rational actors whereas women are driven by emotions.
- Feminism was/is a mistake and the cause of many social ills
- Women are a homogeneous group wherein the male gender is heterogenous, divided among:
 - Alphas, betas, and sometime incels
- Women are at the heart of men's problems
- Women exchange sex for power
 - "Biology" dictates that women are promiscuous to find a high-resource male, who can care for the brood
- Women can not be trusted and are inherently deceptive
 - Justifies male aggression toward women
 - Promotes rape myths, as no woman can be trusted
- Women are hypocritical
 - Wanting independence but simultaneously wanting to rely on men for material support and other resources
- Many adherents have histories fraught with negative experiences with women (i.e., rejection)

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Elements shaping hypermasculinity or toxic masculinity



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Elements Contributing to the Contemporary Manosphere's Popularity

- Unintended consequence of societal inclusion include diminished status, which men have historically enjoyed
- Changing economy with greater women and minorities in the workforce and an emphasis on soft skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, empathy)
- Growing disparity in advanced degrees, which serve as a gateway to greater economic opportunity
- Me Too movement (Brito et al., 2024)
- Online proliferation
 - Anonymity
 - Disinhibition effect
 - Social media algorithms (Australia, 2022)
- Greater commercialization and monetization of the manosphere (Gerrand et al., 2025)
- Artificial Intelligence ???

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Fusion of the manosphere and conspiracy theories

- Broader conspiracy of feminism extending too far at a cost to men
- Great replacement theory
- Cultural Marxism conspiracy (Berkowitz, 2003)
- Q-Anon
- Covid-19 vaccination



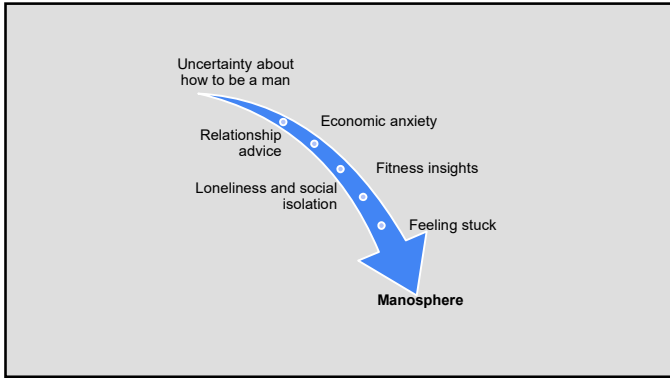
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The Manosphere's Digital Footprint

- r/TheRedPill
- 4chan/b
- A Voice for Men
- Rational Male
- AngryHarry.com
- Incels.is
- Looksmx.org



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The Manosphere's Podcast Footprint

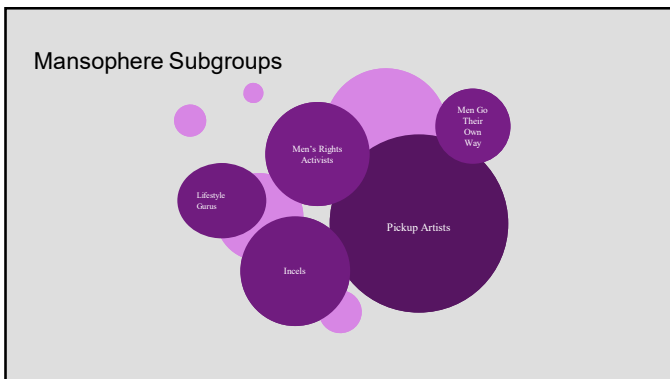
Core

- Fresh & Fit
- The Red Man Group
- Sandman MGTOW
- Reality Check
- Whatever

Adjacent

- Joe Rogan Experience
- Jordan Peterson

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Men's Rights Activists

- 1970s & 80s offshoot of the Men's Liberation Movement and Feminism
- Believe men face systemic oppression
- Previously less concerned with sex and romantic relationships with greater focus on gender equality issues
- Increased feminism —> diminished male social status
 - Some include women's suffrage as detrimental to male status
- Use of statistics to highlight and frame male social issues
 - Increased suicide rate
 - Custody dispositions
 - Hazardous employment
 - Military draft
 - Male circumcision
 - Incarceration rates
- Purportedly positioned as a reasonable counter to feminist overreach compared to other manosphere groups
- Online & Offline presence
 - Fathers for Justice
- Linked to violence
 - Killing of a federal judge's family member

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Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)

- See the rejection of a female-centric (gynocentric) society and isolation as a practical solution
- Gender-separatist movement
- Discouraged from interacting with women or men who support women as equals
 - Fear of being "baby trapped"
- Cite the social ills that men reportedly disproportionately experience
- Avenues to achieve a separatist society (Sexodus)
 - Pursuing sexual relationships with no romantic attachment
 - Avoiding marriage
 - Can include one withdrawing from social phenomena like employment
- Banned from Reddit for violent rhetoric



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MGTOW Disengagement Levels



- Reject female-centric societal norms
- Isolate themselves as a practical solution
- Avoid all interaction with women
- Sexodus involves complete social withdrawal

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Pickup Artists (PUA)

- Individuals that see male-female relationship dynamics as capable of being hacked through a series of techniques that can be taught and replicated
- While popularized in Neil Strauss' *The Game*, the movement dates back further to Eric Weber's *How to Pick Up Girls*
- For PUAs, women's value is inextricably linked to their physical appearance
- Techniques include emotional manipulation and backhanded compliments (negging) and can blur the parameters of sexual consent
- Successful PUAs monetize their skills through packaged workshops and training materials



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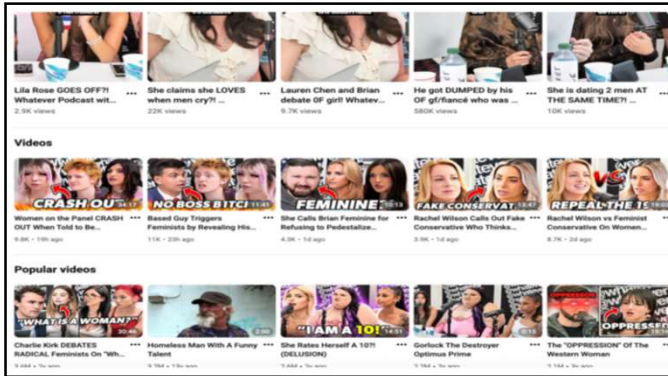
Lifestyle Gurus

- Offer a range of advice on topics as diverse as fitness, relationships, finances
- While such content creators do not necessarily identify as belonging to the manosphere, much of their advice carries a message about being an "alpha"
- Popular lifestyle personalities include Andrew Tate
 - 3rd most Google searched individual in 2023
 - Former professional kickboxer
 - Frequently espouses a view of male dominance and female submissiveness
 - Currently being investigated on sex-related offenses in several countries
- Fresh and Fit podcast

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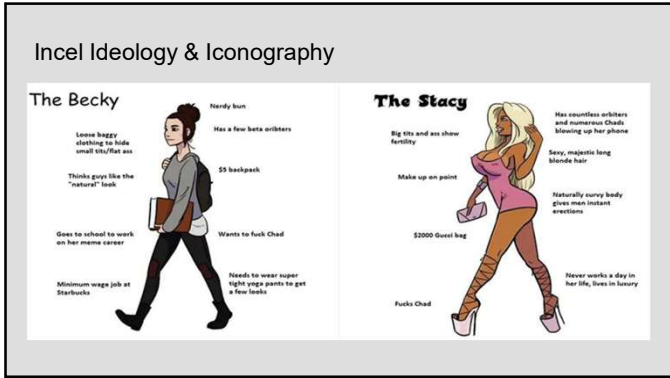
Incels (involuntary celibates)

- Date back to the 1990s and the Involuntary Celibate Project (Kassam, 2018)
- A belief system based on pseudoscience and misogyny wherein some men are deprived of the romantic and sexual relationships they believe they are entitled to
- Such men apply an economic view to relationships with a few attractive men (chads) garnering the attention of the entire female population (hypergammy)
- For those men not matching this ideal archetype there is little hope of meeting a romantic partner, as such there is frequent talk on incel forums of suicide
- Such males see themselves as excluded from the romantic marketplace due to their
 - Physical appearance
 - Lack of money
- Males that fail to recognize this system populated by deceptive women chasing Chads are considered "blue pill"
- Men who are cognizant of the purported inequity of the current relationship ecosystem are referred to as "red pill"
- Increasingly recognized as a domestic threat

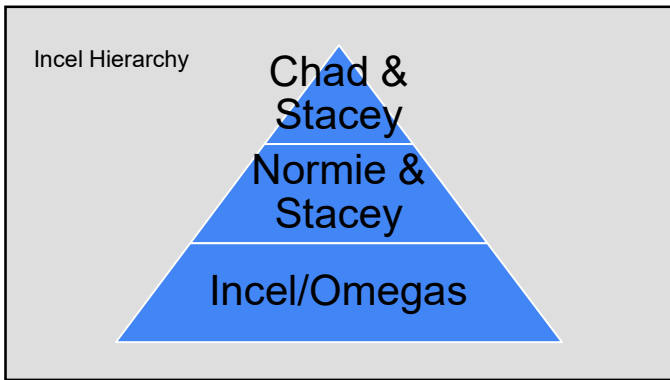
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Incel Ideology & Iconography

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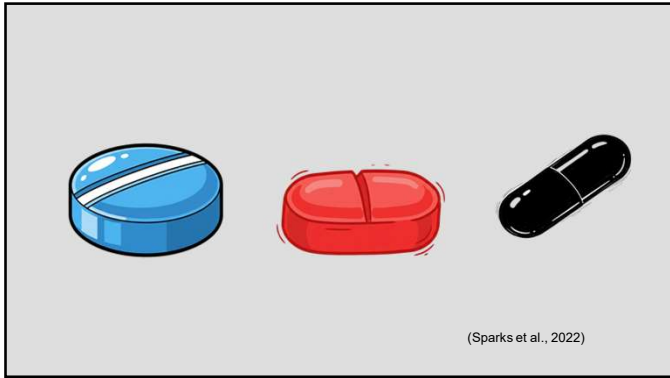
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Incels & Lookism

- The establishment of a standard of physical attraction wherein incels compare themselves and others to, usually reflects racist, eugenic beliefs
- Attempts by adherents to maximize their looks (looksmaxxing)
- Subscribers focus on those attributes which purportedly make them unattractive



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Looksmaxxing

- Involves improving one's physical appearance
- Focus is to improve one's sexual market value (SMV), otherwise called ascension
 - Reflects a spectrum of behaviors ranging from softmaxxing to hardmaxxing
 - Softmaxxing involves behaviors like skincare and physical fitness
 - Hardmaxxing includes more extreme forms of modification like surgery
 - Objective is to maximize SMV with the most return on investment (ROI)

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Looksmaxxing

- PSL scale (looksmax.org)
 - A rating system designed to give a quantitative assessment of one's overall facial aesthetic (total facial harmony score)
 - Genetics play a significant role
 - Scale ranges from 0 to 10 with associated probabilities...
 - However, adherents say a 10 or 9 do not exist, so the scale practically extends to 8
 - Key areas considered, include
 - Eye, nose, jaw, cheekbones
 - Qualitative scores in descending order: Tera Chad, Giga Chad, Chad, Chadlite, High Tier Normie, Mid Tier Normie, Low Tier Normie, Subhuman

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The cheekbones

Well-defined cheekbones are characterized by their elevation. High cheekbones are a feature that transcends gender associations, they are a universal sign of optimal facial development. The higher they are set, the more favorable they are considered. On the other hand, excessively low cheekbones are considered a flaw, and result in a facial appearance that resembles a melting or sagging effect.

In general, men tend to exhibit less pronounced zygomatic bones compared to women. This difference arises from the greater projection of the nose, jaw, and brow ridge in men, which can make the cheekbones appear less prominent by comparison. However, some degree of cheekbone prominence is still considered desirable.

You can identify elevated cheekbones through the following characteristics:

- Widest part of the face will be near the eyes if cheekbones are set high
- Ogee curve in 3/4 profile
- Ogee curve in frontal view
- The ogee curve's outline constitutes more than half of the midface length, and a shorter outline typically signifies cheekbones that are positioned lower
- The presence of slight protrusion near the eyes indicates the elevated placement of the cheekbones
- The greater the protrusion, the higher set the cheekbones tend to be

Spoiler: Examples of good cheekbones

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Looksmax.org forum

1st post: Rate and give me advice to ascend. Also should i start blasting hgh at 15 pretty short and an late bloomer i also have not hit my growth spurt.

3rd response: 1. Too young 2. No jaw definition 3. Large nose 4. Sunken eyes 5. Scarring under eye 6. Narrow clavicles. My advice is grow up and save for surgery.

5th response: hgh is good while your growth plates are still open

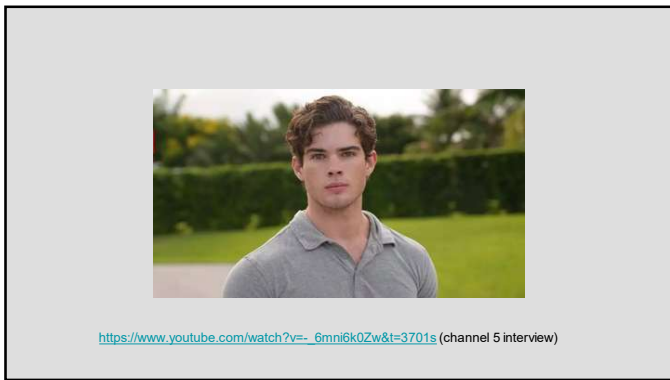
6th response: Take test or it's fucking over for you

9th response: Ropemaxx and meet with your gay god

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Incel Vocabulary

- Hypergamy: belief that women look to ascend the social hierarchy through courtship. That 80 percent of females focus on the 20 percent of highly attractive males (i.e., Chads).
- JBB (just be black): certain behaviors that grant one greater sexual access are limited to being African-American
- Pinkpill: the female counterpart of an incel, a group of women who believe they have no hope of romantic or sexual relationships because they do not meet conventional beauty ideals
- Cuck: a man whose female partner cheats on him
- Going ER: referencing mass attacks carried out by fellow incels, to offer praise
- Stormcells: those incels that identify with far right organizations like Stormfront

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Incel Vocabulary

- Pawning: using attractive women to convey high sexual market value
- Going caveman: sexually dominating a woman
- Shit-testing: a woman purposely testing a man's limits, pushing his buttons, to assess whether he will stand up for himself
- Pro-incels: men who empathize with incel community but do not personally identify as incel
- Pre-incels: those identifying as on the path to incel

https://incels.wiki/w/Main_Page

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Incels & Mental Health

- Greater sensitivity to rejection
- Greater fear of being single
- Self-esteem fluctuates more in response to relationship status
- Less secure attachment
- Greater dating anxiety
- Key issue is how individuals manage their stress: hope, cope, or rope
- Suicide risk
- Ruminating on perceived deficits and blaming problems on non-incels
- High degrees of loneliness and social isolation
 - Drives them to find connections with other incels with similar experiences

(Sparks et al., 2022)

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Incel Violence & the Beta Uprising

- 1989: Ecole Polytechnique Massacre
- 2009: Collier Township Shooting (LA Fitness)
- 2014: Isla Vista Attack
- 2015: Umpqua Community College Shooting
- 2018: Toronto Van Attack
- 2018: Tallahassee Attack



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ER manifesto: *My Twisted World*



Humanity...
All of my suffering on this world has been at the hands of humanity, particularly women. It has made me realize just how brutal and twisted humanity is as a species. All I ever wanted was to fit in and live a happy life amongst humanity, but I was cast out and rejected, forced to endure an existence of loneliness and insignificance, all because the females of the human species were incapable of seeing the value in me.

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Suspected Behavioral Warning Signs of Violence



- Fixation on a person or group
- Social supports
- Interpersonal rejection
- Personality disorder traits
- Grievance
- Access to weapons
- Violence preoccupation
- Acute distress

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Additional Harmful Behaviors & Networked Misogyny

- Sexual & Nonsexual Harassment
- Non Consensual intimate images dissemination
- Doxing
- Hacking
- Cyberstalking
- Cum Tributes
- Swatting

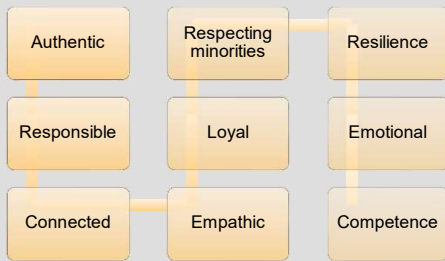
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Themes of Extremism

- Increasing dichotomous view
- Moral imperative to act
- Identification of few allies and many adversaries
- Urgency to amend the perceived grievance
- Isolation
- Limited social connection with those with differing views

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What constitutes healthy masculinity?



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The Remedy...or parts there of

- Highlighting resources that promote masculinity in a healthy manner
 - The Art of Manliness
 - Movember
- Open discussion of emotions
- Education on gender stereotypes
- Education on combating misinformation and disinformation
- Normalize seeking help
- Greater mental health outreach

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The Remedy...or parts there of

- Research inputs (especially media) on masculinity
- Distinguish between assertion and aggression
- Connection to mentors and role models
- Develop rich social networks
- Cultivate healthy principles
- Avoid punishment that conditions young boys toward aggression and violence
- Intersectionality appreciation
- Broad understanding of being a "protector" and "provider"
 - Offering safety and protection in various ways
- Engagement online
- Education on sexual consent

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Step 1: Assessing the inputs regarding masculinity

1. Ask how the individual spends his leisure or free time? (Good prompt)
2. What media does he subscribe to?
 - Specific attention to the content creators followed
 - Inquire about the different social media platforms
 - TikTok, YouTube, Meta, Instagram, X (Formerly Twitter), Substack, Discord, Twitch, KiK
 - Pay specific attention to the resources identified in this presentation

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Step 1: Assessing the inputs regarding masculinity

3. Inquire about the content in a neutral manner
 - What is appealing about the content?
 - What type of issues do they address?
 - What are the creator's views regarding
 - Women
 - Romantic and sexual relationships
 - Division of labor
 - Equality among the sexes
 - Politics
 - Job and economy
 - How to be a good man

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Step 1: Assessing the inputs regarding masculinity

4. Assess the alignment between the subject and content creator
 - What does the subject agree with?
 - What does the subject disagree with?
5. Ask whether the subject thinks critically about the content
 - What are the subject's procedures for assessing the accuracy of information?
6. Ask whether the content consumed matches the subjects values.

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Step 2: Identify examples of positive masculinity



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Step 2: Identify examples of positive masculinity

- 16 Examples of positive masculinity
 - <https://www.thepixelproject.net/2024/12/05/16-examples-of-positive-masculinity-and-how-they-can-help-stop-sexism-misogyny-and-violence-against-women/>
- Dad, how do I? (YouTube)
- Keanu Reeves
- Terry Crews

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Step 3: Assessing & Refining Values

Values, or principles, provide direction in life and nebulous scenarios. They...

- Guide human behavior
 - Are broad enough to permit application in a wide variety of situations
 - Relatively stable
1. Ask the youth about their personal principles?
 - a. Prompt by asking what things are important to them in life
 - b. Question what things were instilled in them by their caregivers
 - i. In order to facilitate discussion and learning, feel free to provide examples for them to select from (honesty, integrity, being a supportive friend, being trustworthy)
 2. Educate about principles & values
 3. Help them assess whether their values are consistent with the content

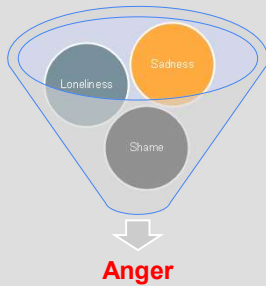
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Step 4: Inform about emotions

- Normalize discussion about emotions
 - For some youths, their Emotional Intelligence (EQ) will be poorly developed
 - Explain the range of emotions
 - For many males, anger has been the primary or lone emotion normalized
 - Find models to emulate
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDkeYOGaiQ8> (Danny Garcia, boxing)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/AnFg3JYvGSo> (DJ Shipley, Navy Seal)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPH-W4PvM> (Kid Cudi)
 - Indicate that emotions are ephemeral and shift
- Review youth's precipitating triggers
 - Ground the exercise in a concrete example or experience
 - Utilize props like paper and pencil to organize the exercise
 - Employ an emotion wheel
 - Behaviorally deconstruct the event in reverse
 - Layer thoughts and feelings at different times and stages
- When appropriate, provide alternative resolution skills
 - For some males, conflict and aggression has been taught, implicitly and explicitly
 - Praise young men for identifying alternative means of expressing themselves
- Consider mental health referrals where appropriate
 - Assess whether psychiatric issues like acute anxiety or depression are contributing to the embracing of toxic ideas

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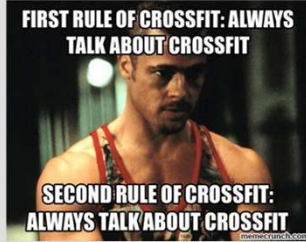
Male Emotional Funnel



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Step 5: Develop a social support network

1. Outline the youth's social support network, with an emphasis on healthy masculinity
 - a. Ask who knows them well
 - i. Repeated theme of no one knowing the subject
 - b. Again, use physical resources if necessary
 - c. Explore the extent that the youth is alone/isolated
 - i. With increasing amounts of time alone, assess for the experience of loneliness
 - ii. Be mindful of potential suicide correlates
 - d. Distinguish the extent of friends or associates in the physical and digital domain
 - i. Online friendships are welcomed
 - ii. Healthy, successful living will likely always include an element of navigating relationships in the physical world
2. Inquire about the online communities they belong to
3. Look to broaden the youth's social network
 - a. What local resources are available
 - b. Are there interests or hobbies to build a network around (see later slide)
3. Teach the importance of "checking in"



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Step 6: Managing Anxiety

1. Education about anxiety
 - a. Normalize experience
 - i. Emphasis that anxiety serves as a motivator, not only an inhibitor
 1. No anxiety is as big a problem as too much anxiety
 - b. Provide information about the physiological and cognitive elements of anxiety
 - i. Physical: breathlessness, chronic tension, stomach ache, headaches
 - ii. Cognitive: Impending sense of doom, rumination,
 - c. Identify chief anxiety triggers (events, situations, people, etc.)
 - d. Develop and implement exercises to combat anxiety
 - i. "One new thing a day" task
 - ii. Enduring anxiety with a timer
 - iii. Mindfulness meditation
 - iv. Introduction of cold sensation
 - v. Diaphragmatic breathing

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Step 7: Foster creativity, interests, and hobbies

1. Actualization of interests and hobbies can help foster self-esteem and confidence, which can be applied to other life domains and situations.
2. Inquire about the person's interests & hobbies
 - a. How do they spend their free time?
 - b. What things interest them?

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Step 7: Foster creativity, interests, and hobbies

3. Construct a list of possible interests by assigning "homework"
 - a. Inquiring what things have they heard or saw that has fostered marginal interest
 - b. Encourage them to select one or two interests to explore
 - c. Assess progress through the SMAA*RT framework
 - i. Specific: "I will learn more about running a small business"
 - ii. Measurable: "I will spend thirty minutes weekly researching the topic via online review or listening to relevant, reputable podcasts."
 - iii. Achievable: "My goal is realistic and something I can dedicate time to for the next four weeks."
 - iv. Accountable: "I will designate someone as my accountability buddy, whom I will inform of my progress"
 - v. Relevant: "The goal aligns with my future plans of owning a business."
 - vi. Time-oriented: "By month's end, I will have dedicated two hours researching small business ownership, and develop one important industry contact."

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Step 8: Foster critical thinking skills in a post-truth era

1. Assist in recognizing misinformation and disinformation
 - a. Misinformation that is wrong but perpetuated by mistake
 - b. Disinformation involves one knowing information is incorrect but sharing it regardless (purposely deceitful)
 - c. Malinformation includes information based on fact but used out of context to harm
2. How to fact check
 - a. Does the individual have expertise on the subject
 - b. Are citations used
 - c. Is the material presented in a neutral, non evocative manner?
 - d. Assess for bias in the content
 - i. Does the content creator have ulterior motives or gains by presenting information in a specific manner?
 - ii. Are they selling a product?
 - iii. Galaxy brain
 - iv. Grievance against a shadowy conspiracy

(Lawrence & Hicks, 2025)

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Step 8: Foster critical thinking skills

3. Other techniques
 - a. Consider how the content makes one feel
 - b. Pause and return to the material later
 - c. Ask for others' opinions
 - d. Research literacy media strategies and resources
 - a. NYS Education Department Media Literacy Toolkit

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Potential positive resources (Treat it like a buffet)

- Strength with Heart
- Tedx Talks*
- Boyhood Initiative
- Movemeber
- Master Samwise (YouTube)
- APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men*
- Society for Psychology of Men and Masculinity (Division 51)
- Ryan Holiday (author The Obstacle is the Way)
- Mansosphere Debunked (podcast)

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