

From Father to Son

*Starting Boys Out
on the Road to
Manhood*

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Adolescent and Family Psychologist

Outline

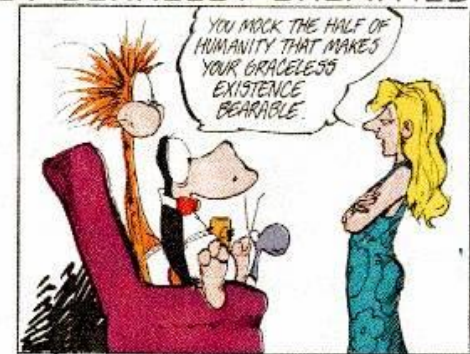
- Masculinity and Manhood
- What Do Guys Need?
- Letters To Your Son
- Resources
- November Follow-up Presentation

The Search for Manhood

OUTLAND



BY BERKELEY BREATHED



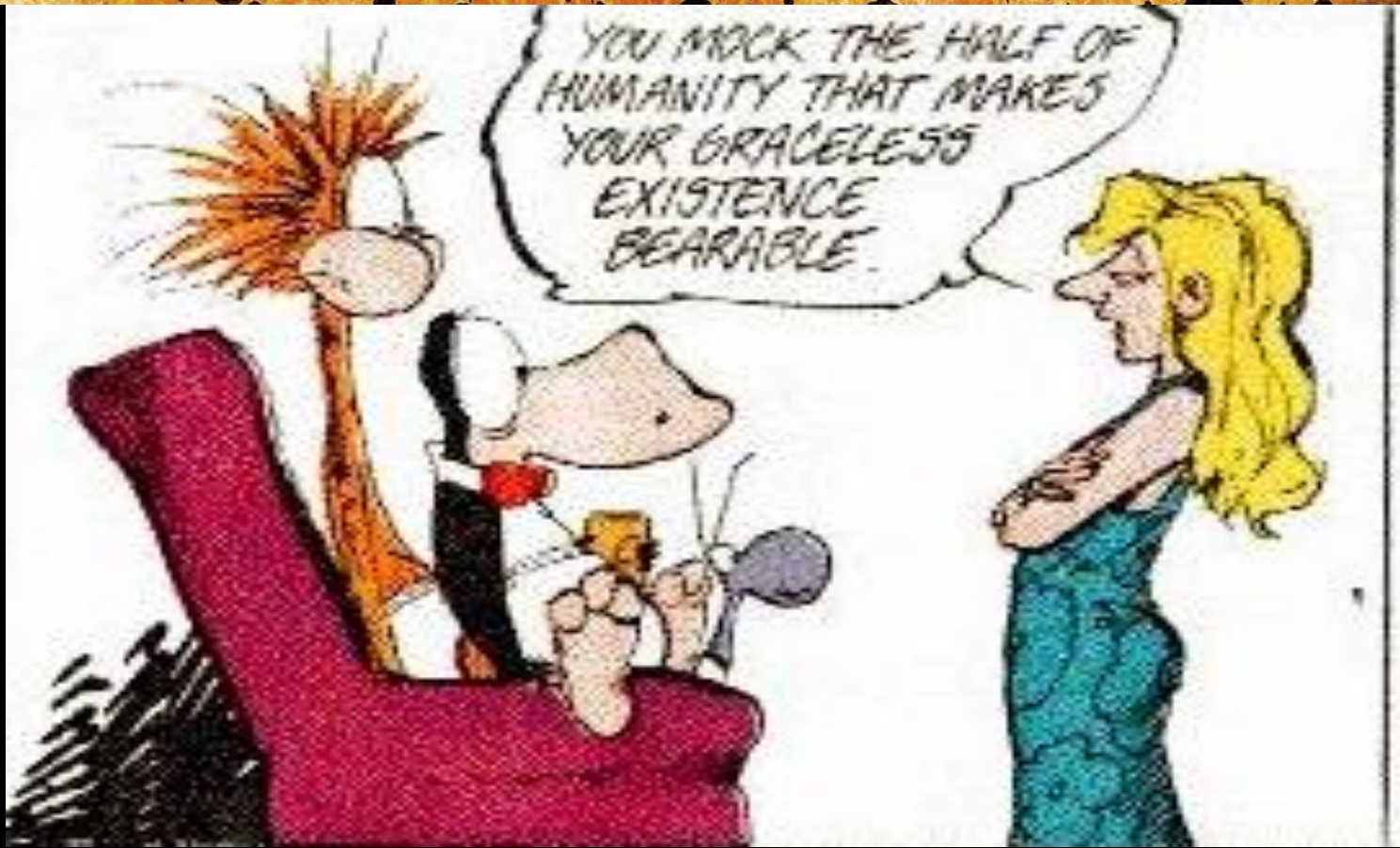
The Search for Manhood



The Search for Manhood



The Search for Manhood



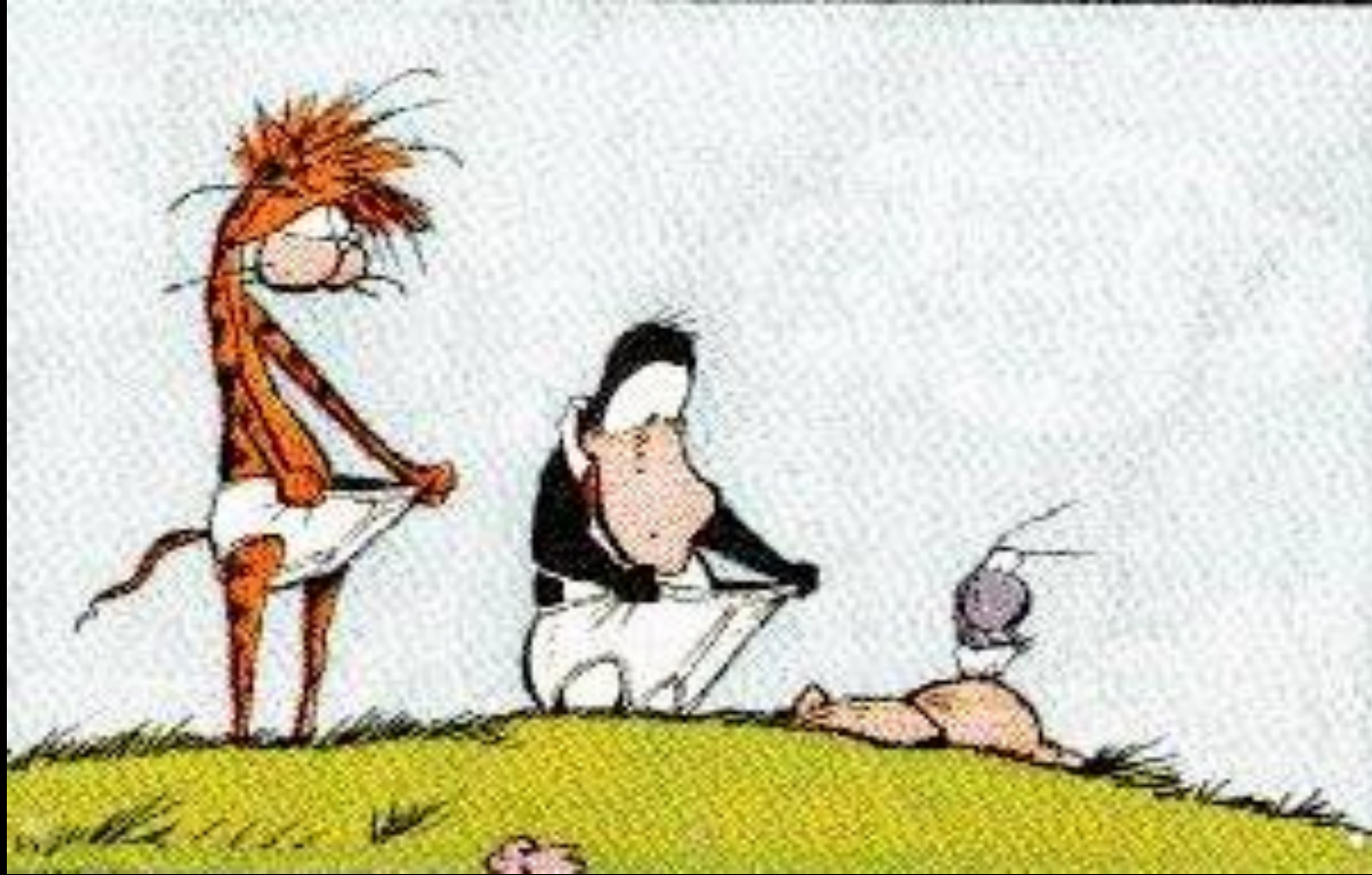
The Search for Manhood



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The Search for Manhood



Gender Traits

- Guys
 - Instrumental
 - Competition
 - Dominance
 - Territoriality
 - Toughness
 - Individuality/Independence
- Girls
 - Expressive
 - Group cohesion
 - Cooperation
 - Mutual support
 - Intimacy

Threats to (Traditional) Manhood

- Moving target for productive work
 - Industrialization then technological
 - Global economy
 - Free market economy
 - Modern employment model
 - Pace of change
- Equality (gender, sexual preference, racial, etc.)
- Sexual Revolution (objectification, mechanization, technology)
- Consumerism
- Adolescent culture
- Feminist revolution (anything you can do I can do better)
- Modern educational system
- Costly, contradictory and often unattainable definition of manhood
- No definitive transition to manhood

Representations of Manhood

- Exemplars
 - Archetypes
 - Stereotypes
 - Role Models

Archetypes

Archetypes

- King
- Warrior
- Magician
- Lover

from King, Warrior, Magician, Lover
Robert Moore & Douglas Gillette

Stereotypes

- Genteel Patriarch
- Heroic Artisan
- Self-made Man

from Manhood in America

Michael S. Kimmel

Role Models

- Musicians.
- Athletes
- Celebrities
- Heroes
- Real people

Role Models

- Musicians
 - RAPers
 - Rock and Roll
 - Metal/Alternative
 - Country

Role Models



Role Models

- Athletes

Role Models



Role Models

- Celebrity
 - Performers
 - Celebutantes

Role Models



Role Models

- Hero
 - Historical, Cultural, or National
 - Everyday heroes

Role Models



Role Models

- Real people
 - Fathers
 - Extended family
 - Teachers
 - Mentors

What Do Guys Need?

- Like everyone
 - Love, support, encouragement, meaning, purpose, joy, connectedness, validation

What Do Guys Need?

- Viable definition of manhood.
- Authentic, deep masculinity
- Legitimizing identity as a man
- Social validation of male identity
- Full range of emotional experience and expression
- Rite of passage
- A domain of expertise
- Physical contact with men

What Do Guys Need?

Viable Definition of Manhood

- Definition of BEING a man to identify with rather than the appearance of manhood
- Virtue

not . . .

Guy Rules

- Physical
- Social
- Intimate Partner
- Sexuality
- Alcohol & Drugs
- Emotions
- Competitiveness
- Intimacy
- Character & Career

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Defining Modern Manhood

- Independence with cooperation **Confidence**
- Toughness with sensitivity **Determination**
- Dominance with compromise **Leadership**
- Invulnerability with openness **Courage**
- Pride AND humility **Integrity**
- Love with vulnerability **Intimacy**
- Control with generosity **Responsibility**
- Power with tenderness **Strength**
- Intensity with joy **Passion**

What Do Guys Need?

- Manhood as legitimate male identity
 - Peers (guys AND GIRLS)
 - Adults
 - Culture
 - it's not a zero sum game with equality
 - Eliminating gender identity won't happen
 - Becoming one or the other (or a diffuse amalgam) won't work

What Do Guys Need?

- Full range of emotional experience and expression

What Do Guys Need?

- Rite of passage or Initiation into Manhood
 - Formal
 - Initiation
 - Overcome a Challenge
 - Need to test themselves
 - Informal with acknowledgement

Rites of Passage

- Formal, culturally sanctioned rituals that impart the status of adult manhood (where manhood has been clearly culturally defined)
- Sanctifies status in the community as an adult (with the identification, freedom and respect that provides)
- Imposes responsibilities to the community (with the obligations and constraints that requires)

American Rites of Passage

Formal (though without general cultural validation)

- Bar mitzvah (Jewish), Rumspringa (Amish)

Weak substitutes

- Puberty
- Driver's license
- Loss of virginity
- Drinking and drugging
- Diploma
- 18 yo
- 21 yo
- Hazing
- Tattoo, piercings, etc.
- Fatherhood
- Military service

What Do Guys Need?

- Physical contact with men
 - Ritualized & formal
 - Casual & familiar



What's A Dad To Do



Letters to Your Son

A Letter From Father To Son

- What's the goal:
 - Inspiration
 - Guidance
 - Validation
 - Definition of manhood
 - Statement of values
 - Heirloom

The Letter

- Developmental considerations
- Length
- Write it and put it aside
- Have someone else read it
- Mix serious and light
- Make it personal
- What about mom

The Letter

- Setting the stage.
- Love and pride
- Why this letter
- Man of Character
- Manhood defined
- Facing challenges
- My commitment to you

The Letter

- **Setting the stage**

Begin the letter with a statement that marks this moment or event as a time to pause and reflect. Link it to a larger life process or stage.

The Letter

Example

“entering high school, junior year, graduating

“facing challenges

“preparing for adulthood

“making decisions that will affect your young adulthood

The Letter

- Love and pride

Have something good to say about the kind of kid he has been. Set a tone of love and pride rather than inadequacy and criticism.

The Letter

Example

“I love you.

Your mother and I love you and are very proud of you.

“You have always been a person who . . .

“There are wonderful qualities you have

“You are a son I am proud of. I want you to be the kind of man you can be proud of.

The Letter

- Why this letter

This statement is to let your son know this is more than just a “I love you” letter. They need to know it is talking about the bedrock of personal choices that determine whether they will live a life of integrity and honor (versus one of dissolution and disappointment).

The Letter

Example

“there are things I want you to know

“this letter is an attempt to talk about some important things

“it is time for you to begin to take on some of the responsibilities of manhood/adulthood

“It is time for you to think about the kind of man you want to be

“You are going to want to have more freedom and a greater say in your life and with that comes responsibilities and obligations

“We are looking forward to you taking these qualities and building on them over the next couple of years/in college/when you go out into the world.

The Letter

- A man of character

Then, tell your son what you expect of him in terms of character, honor, integrity, moral, principles

The Letter

Example

“I expect you to be a young man of character. This means

“You will be facing a number of challenges and responsibilities over the next (4) years. By the time you graduate you will need to be ready to be responsible for yourself and begin to contribute to the community

“Faith beliefs

The Letter

- Manhood defined

Here is the heart of the letter; what makes a man, what are the values, virtues or morals you expect them to have.

The Letter

Example

“There are a number of qualities that distinguish a boy from a man.

“Roles.

The Letter

- Examples

Roles

- Man
- Friend
- Husband/partner
- Father
- Son/family member
- Student/Employee/Boss
- Citizen
- Neighbor

The Letter

- Examples

Areas of life

- Love
- School and Work
- Friendship
- Marriage/Partnership
- Sex
- Alcohol and drugs
- Community

The Letter

- Facing challenges

Make sure you include a statement about what a man does when he makes a mistake. They will. We all do. They need to know how to recover from it.

The Letter

Example

“You will make mistakes, it is what you do with mistakes that will set you apart

“When you face challenges, difficulty and failure (in effort and in character), I hope you

The Letter

- Your commitment to your son

How are you going to be there for them. What can they expect from you.

The Letter

Example

“You can count on me

“When you need something

“When I think you need something

The Letter

- End with love

Love. Clearly and directly. It is important. It grounds them. They need to hear it from you.

One more thing . . .

- What do I know about this manhood thing!
- Personal accountability (or another reason kids are a pain in the ass)
- Be present
- Be hopeful and positive
- Letter Ceremony: November 11 @ 7AM
And don't forget to . . .

The Letter

- End with love





www.drjameswellborn.com/survey

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Resources

Websites

www.DrJamesWellborn.com

www.jamesgwellbornphd.com

www.DrJamesWellborn under
ARTICLES tab

- There's A Stranger In My House
- The Blog

Parenting Teens Newsletter

- www.drjameswellborn.com/newsletter

Social Media

