Positive Masculinity

After a quick online search of masculinity and its commonly related attributes, you'll find yourself confronted with a list of associated words like toughness, ruggedness, vigour, and brawn. Even take a moment now to consider what images come to your own mind when you hear the word masculinity.

Upon deeper inspection, masculinity is a much broader and unrestricted term. In fact, masculinity is defined as a set of attitudes, practices, and behaviours that guide boys and men on how they should act within society.

Therefore, the idea of masculinity relating to the above list of words is something that we as a society have constructed historically, politically, and socially. When looking toward the future, this is somewhat of an advantage, as it means that we can shift such associations and change how we view masculinity.

Effects of Masculinity Norms

Not all men conform to the stereotypically associated norms of masculinity; data has shown that a majority of young men actually disagree with these held beliefs. However, those who do also report feeling a large amount of societal pressure to conform to them in public and suppress the parts of themselves they feel don't fit into the status quo.

Research has shown this pressure can lead men to:

- Participate in riskier behaviours
- Have poorer mental health
- Be more distant as a parent
- Engage in online bullying
- Perpetrate sexual and/or domestic violence
- Use violence against other men.

Characteristics of Positive Masculinity

But what does positive masculinity and its characteristics even look like? The answer is actually quite simple: the characteristics that others value in all people and also the ones that they value in men. These can include:

- Emotional expression
- Vulnerability
- Authenticity
- Non-violence
- Respect.

If such changes can occur, it is expected that improvements will be seen across a range of areas. This includes men's health and wellbeing, respectful and equal relationships, organisational values, safer social environments, and gender equality, as well as reductions in violence and increased social stability.

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Supporting Positive Masculinity

In order for society to see these changes, guidance and support are required to offset the current societal view of masculinity to one more positive for men and society as a whole. Part of this includes creating a safe environment for men and fostering an inclusive and non-judgemental space. Here are some steps you can take to support this change.

Encourage open dialogue and acceptance of different perspectives. Emphasise the importance of respecting others' views and experiences without judgement.

Raise awareness about harmful gender stereotypes that can negatively impact men's mental health and wellbeing. Encourage discussions on breaking free from societal expectations.

Create space for men to freely express their emotions without fear of being judged or labelled. Encourage conversations about mental health in the workplace and your personal life, and destigmatise seeking support when needed.

Encourage men to support and uplift each other. Facilitate group activities or workshops where men can connect, share experiences, and build meaningful relationships.

Address and challenge toxic masculinity norms that can lead to harmful behaviours or attitudes. Encourage healthy expressions of masculinity that promote respect, empathy, and emotional insight.

Share resources on men's mental health, wellbeing, and personal development. This can include books, articles, podcasts, or workshops focusing on self-improvement and self-care.

Final Words

Remember, creating a safe environment is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and awareness. Remember that you are not alone; the journey towards positive masculinity is not a solitary one. Acacia and our team of highly experienced professionals are here to support you 24/7.

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