



# Liberating Masculinity

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## Purpose

1. Identify the rules that govern today's masculinity
2. Assess where these rules succeed and where they fail to help us become our best selves
3. Encourage youth to find their own optimal path towards a masculinity that fits them best



## My Story

I have always valued the qualities that come with being manly. When I developed depression in high school, I wanted to be a “real man” about it: I suppressed my emotions, poured myself into my work, and pushed away any outside support. Society implicitly taught me that men achieve strength, courage, leadership, independence, and success through this behaviour.

However, no matter how much I followed these rules, I never found those qualities. In fact, I kept getting worse to the point of attempting suicide. I felt betrayed – the rules of masculinity didn't help me become the man I wanted. Through this experience, I discovered that there are inconsistencies between mental health research and our current idea of masculinity.

Since then, I've been touring across Canada to share my story with other young men. I pull back the curtain on the expectations and rules within masculinity and encourage young men to assess if the rules they follow really bring the qualities they desire. From mental health, to relationships, to body image, I believe that every man or masculine-identifying individual should have the freedom to adopt a version of masculinity that works best for them.

## The Model

### 1. What is considered manly?

Here are traits that society generally views as both manly and positive:

Strength      Courage  
Leadership  
Success      Independence

These qualities are great, but masculinity is more than traits – it is also how we achieve those traits.

### 2. The Man Box

Based on Australian masculinity research, the Man Box is a representation of the beliefs, expectations, and rules that dictate men to exist in a certain way

Learn more about the Man Box here



We are implicitly told that by following certain rigid rules, we will achieve masculine qualities.

### 3. The Unspoken Reality

? → **65%** Canadian men that experience a diagnosable mental illness in their lives  
? → **63%** Canadian men (18-34) that experience considerable loneliness and isolation  
? → **25%** teen boys that are struggling with muscle dysmorphia

Is there a link between the Man Box and the struggles men experience?

### 4. The Research

There is evidence that many of the Man Box rules pressure us into problematic behaviour for ourselves and others. For example:

- Constant emotional suppression leads to a plethora of physical, mental, and social consequences
- Close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives
- Unrealistic body expectations are bringing increased shame to men and women

### 5. What Now?

The rigidity of the Man Box does not account for the diversity among men and the various challenges humans experience.

It's time for an update. As a society, we need to encourage men to find what works best for them on an individual level instead of blindly following the expectations of the Man Box.

By coming back to the core traits of masculinity, we can discover new ways to be masculine that better address the problems men – and humans – face.