

# emale

improving male health & wellbeing  
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## Countries where men hold power = bad health

On average, men die younger than women. Men are also more likely than women to die prematurely, from causes ranging from alcoholism to heart disease to suicide. But a [new report](#) from the World Health Organization finds that, in Europe, those problems are particularly acute in countries with the lowest levels of gender equality. Parity between the sexes, it suggests, could actually save men's lives.

"Living in a country with gender equality benefits men's health and shows up as lower mortality rates, higher well-being, half the risk of being depressed, higher likelihood to have protected sex, lower suicide rates and a 40% reduced risk of a violent death," the WHO notes in a press release accompanying the report.

The paper covers 41 countries, collating information about men's health from existing WHO databases together for the first time. It found that, throughout Europe, men are more likely than women to face health problems because of smoking and drinking; unhealthy, salt-heavy diets; and through injury, some of which is sustained through violence like getting into fights or being attacked. The risks varied across the region: In Western Europe, smoking was the number-one risk factor in 2016, responsible for 1 million men's deaths. In Eastern Europe, the biggest risk factors were alcohol and drug use.

Health differences between the genders have historically been so stark, the report says, that we've tended to blame those differences on biology, concluding that men are naturally more likely to die earlier and suffer certain conditions. But the report's authors suggest that health risks from substance abuse or unhealthy diets aren't inherent to being a man; they are linked to cultures that embrace stereotypical ideas of masculinity. For example, they say, "a study of men in the Russian Federation suggested that heavy drinking of strong spirits 'elevates or maintains a man's status in working-class social groups by facilitating access to power associated with the hegemonic ideal of the real working man.'" Men, in other words, don't drink more because they're men; they drink more because of the social pressures that reward them for doing so.

The European countries included in the study differ widely in metrics like life expectancy. Men born in Switzerland in 2016 had an estimated life expectancy of 81.2 years, while men born in Turkmenistan and Russia had estimated life expectancies well below 70. Meanwhile, Nordic countries and Iceland scored highly on gender equality, as measured by a range of factors like representation in leadership positions and educational attainment. Turkey scored lowest on the gender gap index, followed by Hungary and Georgia.

To be clear, the association between gender equality and men's health is based on correlation, not causation. The authors are not actually saying that lack of gender parity causes men to die, but that many of the factors that damage men's health—like smoking or heavy drinking—are particularly prevalent in less equal cultures. The report's authors argue that policymakers should take seriously the idea that the kinds of "masculinities" prevalent in societies with low gender equality are toxic to men themselves. In two examples, they point to road-traffic accidents and suicides. Both are causes of death that don't relate to disease. But men in less equal cultures may be more likely to take risks, suffer from stress, and lack access to help for mental health issues.

The researchers also offers some suggestions about how cultural shift toward greater gender equality could improve men's health. For example, the role of breadwinner has been shown to be associated with increased hypertension and heart attacks in men, as well as increased levels of smoking and chronic back pain. "Despite reproducing patterns of male power, the breadwinner model is not necessarily good for men's health," they write. Leveling the playing field is a long-term project for many women's rights activists. This report offers a reminder that a more equal society is good for men's health and well-being, too.



International Men's Day (IMD) is celebrated on 19th November every year and is marked in around 80 countries worldwide. To help more people get involved and mark the day, the Australian Men's Health Forum has launched a [new International Men's Day website](#) under the theme "Talking About Men".

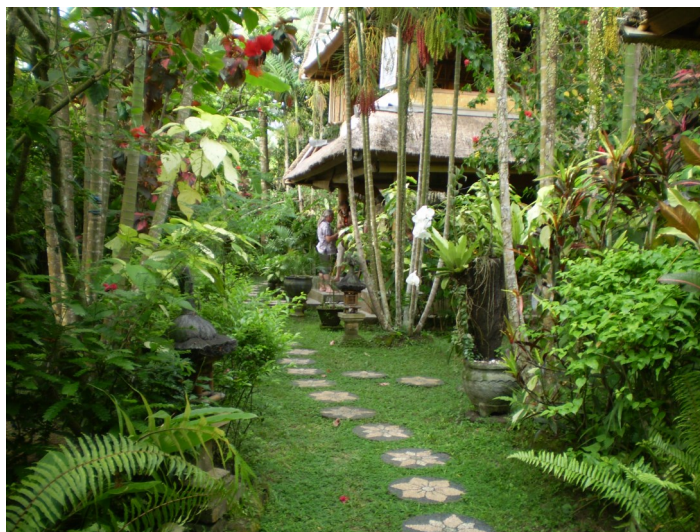
## How about a men's retreat in Bali?

In 1980 Wes Carter and Peter Efford initiated the Men In Bali personal development programs, since then we have completed 34 Retreats, our number 35 and 36 are scheduled for Nov/Dec this year and we want men to join us. We are fun and generous to be with and can safely say that these programs are the only type of 8 day personal development packages exclusively for men available anywhere else in the world!

**We present two residential Retreats – A Man's Journey; Sat Nov 24th to Sat Dec 1st, is for men of any age, and The Elders Way, Wed Dec 5th to Wed Dec 12th. is for men aged 50+.**

What the Men In Bali Retreats offer are methods of reflective enquiry within a supportive community. Together with 6 men, we will co-create a space for honest dialogue and non-judgemental listening, we will learn together and practice new ways that help guide us through those never ending choices about how to be a man, to be more present with ourselves and the other important people in our lives. We do this through many exploratory, confidential and safe processes that we have developed over many years.

**What are the benefits?** – Basically, you will gain profound and new insights into what makes you a good man and how you can take that experience into your life, for yourself and those around you..



### More about us –

Wes Carter - Since 1980, Wes has been conducting personal development group work with men and women, he has listened to, encouraged, challenged, supported and guided hundreds of men. A pioneer of the Men's movement in Australia, he has committed his life to exploring and contributing to the wellbeing of people. A recipient of the Order of Australia Medal for his work in the field of men's health and wellbeing, his work has touched many hundreds of lives. From his deep source of life experience, he shares and facilitates with rich, resonant compassion. Wes is absolutely committed, he brings humour, challenge, support and life experience to this important work among men.

Peter Efford.....is an extraordinary educator, a man of enormous generosity and fun, an accomplished artist and facilitator, Peter's warmth and laughter are at the very source of his attraction and ability to engage people. Peter has for many years worked with men from an intuitive base, he seeks to encourage men to explore their untapped potential, their inner knowing and their innate wisdom. For Peter, Bali is his second home.

Pondok Saraswati is the home of the MEN IN BALI Programs. Founded in 1991, this unique, private not for profit retreat overlooking the rice fields in Silungun near Ubud, provides a perfect tranquil space for group work. Beautiful food, lovingly prepared by Nyoman Rusni, Pondok's founding manager, a nearby swimming pool, village walks and outstanding service. All staff are from the village and are part of the Pondok family.

**Want to know more?** – Make a no obligation contact with either Peter or myself and we will send you all the information required for you to make a life changing decision. - Wes – 0448 895 429 – Peter 0430 993 052. Check out the website [here](#).

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## The Top 12 Issues Men Face Today

### 1) Unrealistic and Stereotypical Portrayals of Men in the Media and the Culture

Tired of seeing dumb and deadbeat dads? Sick of every man on TV being a sex-obsessed womanizer? So are men. Men are often seen as incompetent, misogynistic, brutish slobs who only think about sex, beer and sports and have few other redeeming qualities. On the other end of the spectrum, however, is the superhero—the man who is financially successful, in perfect shape, rich, handsome, brilliant, athletic—the gold standard, and an almost impossible ideal. These two extremes are but two of the false choices of manhood—society constantly asks men to choose between being sensitive ninnyes or hyper-aggressive bullies, financial providers for their families or absent fathers, “men of the house” or “pussy-whipped.” And so the “man-box” begins—the ways in which “being a man” is acceptable by our culture is narrow and limiting. Where are the portrayals of the many men who are complex, kind, communicative, nurturing? The men who are able to be both warriors and poets as needed, able to love deeply and for the long-term, with multi-dimensional abilities about a whole host of things?

### 2) Raising Boys Today

Whether you are raising boys as a parent, as an educator, or as a role model—or just care about boys today—there are few resources and agreed upon methods. What to do when boys are falling behind in school? Are boys being over-diagnosed with ADHD? How can we teach boys to respect not only women, but also other boys and themselves? How do we help boys affected by racism? And how do we have conversations with boys that let them know they can be victims of sexual assaults, a seldom talked about topic? What about boys who are growing up outside the socially accepted gender spectrum? Trans boys? LGBT? Boys have unique challenges. In the past, the two ways of raising boys were to either dismiss bad behavior with “boys will be boys” or to admonish boys for showing signs of weakness, particularly emotional weakness, with the phrase “be a man.” Where is the recognition that boys are complex creatures, with a range of needs, and that growing into a man is not a one-size fits all proposition?

### 3) The Disposability of Men & Boys

Men have historically been the first to war, the first into a burning building, the last to exit a sinking ship. Men are seen as the champions of economic progress and the ones who are there to put into place the infrastructure that drives our transportation and communication systems. But there are hidden costs—every year thousands of men die in the coal mines, railroads, sewers, satellite towers and other dangerous workplaces that are too often taken for granted. From the invisibility of boys who are being sex trafficked to men who are being exploited as cheap manual labor, there is something in our collective consciousness that treats men and boys as disposable. Showcase someone as a hero—but when they get catastrophically injured, there is always someone next in line. What we think of as “progress” often comes with an enormous price tag for men and boys. Men and boys are also the invisible victims of rape and sexual assault. There is no clear language, few outlets for it is up to use to co-create a future where everyone really does have access to financial security and it is not tied so inextricably to being a man.

### 4) Combatting Racism, Sexism, Homophobia and The Man-Box

All of these seemingly different social issues stem from society’s views of masculinity. Racism comes directly from men being told their role is to “provide and protect”. Most of systemic racism comes white supremacists seeking to gain economic advantage. A man is not a man unless he is a financial success (so the old stereotype goes). And racism has long been used as a way to leverage financial success for a small group of people at the top. Sexism comes directly from the idea that women are “less than” men. It’s part economics, part control, part access to sex. Homophobia is a way of marginalizing other men—as well as cutting men off from platonic touch and emotional intelligence. All of this leads to the “Man-Box” — the idea that there is one “right” way to be a man, while



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### 5) Parenting, Stay-At-Home Dads and Paternity Leave

While times are changing and stereotypes along with them, there are many places where moms are still seen as the default parent, the one who is more “natural” at the act of parenting and caring for children. Dads are clearly present in the lives of their children, but Stay-At-Home-Dads are all too often seen as slackers or losers, when nothing could be further from the truth. They are there for their children because they want to be a part of their children’s lives. And yet, men are not supported in learning about their roles of becoming a father in the same way that women are taught about becoming mothers. This starts early—boys don’t play with dolls. And then goes all the way to the workplace: men—even men with money and status and privilege—often cannot take paternity leave without it being questioned. Men also find enormous difficulties when it comes to divorce and custody. The role of active, engaged fathers should be coveted. That is not going to happen if men are only seen as financial providers who are incapable of nurturing.

### 6) The LGBT Movement and the Expansion of Gender and Sexuality

For all the strides that the LGBT movement has made, it’s still difficult to be a man and to fall outside the gender and sexual norms. There is still real homophobia, transphobia and gay-bashing. Why? What is it about the perception of what a “real” man is that allows those to occur? On the flip side, men of all kinds are becoming more vocal and more supportive of the entire gender spectrum. How long will it take for all types of gender and sexual expression to be seen as “normal?” Should we even divide people into man and female, or should we simply work towards an all-genders world? We are now seeing many stories of same sex families with grown children who seem to have turned out just fine, thank you. We are heartened by the speed at which LGBT rights have made progress, but the work is far from over.

### 7) Relationships of Every Kind

When people think of men and relationships, the first thing that often comes to mind is sexual relationships. But the truth is, men are just as interested in and committed to a host of other kinds of relationships. Male friendships, fathers and their sons and daughter, sons and their fathers and mothers. Familial relationships of all kinds. Long term committed relationships between loving partners. Platonic friendships. Work relationships. Online relationships. Meeting new people. Friendships between gay and straight men that go beyond stereotypes. Men loving their children with their whole heart and soul, and making conscious decisions to love differently than their own parents. ALL of those relationships are part of the psyche of today’s man, and all are relationships that should be celebrated by our society and culture. After all, a loving relationship with any other human being is a sign of strength.

### 8) Men, Money, and the Pressure to be a Financial Success

It’s good, of course, to have enough money to pay your bills and live within your means. And in a family unit, it has long been assumed that men would be the one to provide for their family. Even in cases where there is a husband and wife and the wife is working—it’s still assumed that the husband is someone going to be “responsible” for making sure the family is financially OK. The pressures to be a financial success lead some men to abuse the system. And others to feel like a failure, for not being able to live up to society’s expectation of them. All of this is made even more difficult by a world that is changing even faster than most of us can keep up with it. There are fewer career jobs that have built in security and that you can retire from with a pension. Robots, technology and automation really does mean there are fewer jobs out there. For a high percentage of families, a \$1,000 unexpected expense would be catastrophic.



## The Top 12 Issues Men Face Today

### 9) Sports as a Lens of Culture and Masculinity

Sports has typically been the domain of men—not that women aren't wonderful athletes and fierce competitors, but it's inarguable that men on average have been faster, stronger, more powerful. Sports highlight so many positive aspects of traditional masculinity—strength and power, after all, are wonderful qualities when used for good. Sports icons have historically been our heroes; they are beautiful, golden boys, idolized. But *all* sides of masculinity come out in the world of sports—bullying, power struggles, homophobia, and sexual abuse. The difficulties of parenting (or taking paternity leave) when you have a high-profile, high-paying job—and people depend on you for their sports fix. The high incidence of concussions in the NFL leads to discussions about mental health. Covering up of sexual abuse so that sports heroes can keep playing affects everyone. And what about men who simply have not interest in sports, particularly competitive sports. Why must they feel ostracized? Shouldn't sports be an option for a fully realized life, but not a requirement? The conversation about men and sports ends up being a conversation about both the best and the worst of men and masculinity.

### 10) The Prison Industrial Complex

The prison system affects men disproportionately, and we don't talk about it nearly enough. There is no shortage of questions. Does the prison system work to create people who are better humans than they were before they went in? How does a man change while inside? Are men and women given equal sentences for equal crimes? What role does mental illness play in those who commit crimes and are imprisoned? What about race? What it is like for kids who have a parent in prison? How difficult is it for guys who are trying to parent their children *from* prison? What impact is the school-to-prison pipeline having on our nation's boys? And how do we work towards better understanding how violence and aggression lead to the most horrific of crimes so we can prevent them from occurring? The answers to questions like these will bring about change, and change is needed to solve the societal impact of crime and punishment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its effect on men.

### 11) The Young and the Old, the Strong and the Weak

Men who are old and men who are young don't fit into the two biggest parameters of idealized masculinity—older men are seen as weak and feeble while younger men are not yet financially successful. But beyond age, there are other forms of societally defined weakness that keep men out of the traditional man-box. If you are not able-bodied—i.e. if you are disabled in some way, weakened by injury or disease, or suffering from mental illness—you are told to “man up” and “take it like a man.” Or worse, you are outwardly marginalized, shamed, bullied, rendered invisible, somehow excluded from the boys club. It may be reasons why body-image problems are becoming increasingly in the realm of the masculine. A quest for perfection of the physical body is a way to prove strength and prove manhood. But is that the direction we really want to go? Granting men permission to be whatever they are—young, old, weak, strong, able, physically challenged, happy, depressed—is not a just part of manhood. It's a part of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 12) Helping to Solve the Bigger Problems of the World Today

Racism, Sexism, Homophobia. White supremacy. Environmental Issues. The negativity, polarization and abuse in politics. War. Sexual Violence. Economic instability and inequality of wealth. **Yes, men want to help solve all of those.**

Source: The Good Men Project



## Mental illness is not restricted to humans

Psychological problems are quite common, in humans and animals. Many people bite their fingernails or skin when they feel stressed or bored. Dogs and other animals also bite themselves when stressed or bored.

Some cats commonly show signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder. These cats repeat behaviours again and again when only harm will result. For instance, some cats lick themselves so much that they rub their fur off in spots. This behaviour is similar to how some humans create bald spots by pulling out hair after hair on their head.

Many humans ruin their life with repeated use of alcohol or other drugs. Some animals also abuse psychoactive chemicals. Cats get so stoned on catnip that they hallucinate and think they are stalking a prey when there is none. Dolphins squeeze pufferfish (do not try this at home) to get them to release a neurotoxin that has a pleasing effect. The dolphins then pass the fish to another dolphin, like a human passing a joint.

Humans develop phobias to all sorts of non-dangerous stimuli – elevators, mice, fruit. Animals also develop phobias – of lightning, strangers, heights. If an animal has been abused by a man who wears a black hat, black hats may become the phobic item. Military dogs in war zones sometimes develop post-traumatic stress disorder. Seeing its beloved handler get shot would be stressful indeed.

Some animals show signs of depression. These signs include not eating and low general activity. Some primates also show depressed facial expressions. Veterinarians often prescribe human anti-depressant drugs for dogs who have behavioral problems. The drugs seem to help, but there are no large studies showing that they are more effective than a placebo.

Do you think only humans intentionally kill themselves? Think again. Highly stressed dolphins and dogs have been observed drowning themselves. Some dogs starve themselves to death after their human dies. I like to tell people about animal psychological disorders to make the point that humans with disorders are not weak willed or lacking in character. Psychological disorders typically result from a combination of biological and social influences. We and our animal friends do not choose to have a psychological disorder any more than we choose to have kidney disease.

On the bright side, humans and animals seem content most of the time. You might say that we are usually as happy as a lark.

