

Talk Like a Man: Communication & Connectedness For Men in the Middle Years

November 15, 2017



MassMen is a program of Screening for Mental Health, funded by the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health.



Today's Presentation

- Based on "lessons learned" by MassMen

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Masculinities
4. Connectedness

Crossing the No Cry Zone: Psychotherapy with Men

This course will help you be more effective with men in your practice.

Learn more: [at.ptsolutions.com](#) | Learn more: [at.massmen.org](#)

Dr. Fred Rabinowitz, the former president of the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity, and the author of *Deepening Psychotherapy with Men, and Men Alive: A Primer of Men's Issues*, created this course and has partnered with MassMen to offer it at a \$50 discount.

The course covers:

- What counselors should know about male socialization and cultural norms
- "Masculine conflict zones," an approach to assessing men in psychotherapy
- How men's depression symptoms differ from DSM-5 criteria

Earn 4 CEUs for \$49

- Email MassMen's Franklin Cook at frank@unifiedcommunity.com to receive a \$50 discount code (regular price \$99).
- You must be a psychologist, counselor, or social worker licensed in Massachusetts to receive a discount code.
- When you finish the course, you will take a brief exam, submit your \$50 discount code, pay \$49, and receive four CEUs.

MassMen is a program of Screening for Mental Health.

2

Today's Presenter

Franklin Cook, MM Director of Community Outreach

- Helped launch MassMen in 2015 (DPH consultant)
- Owner of Unified Community Solutions, Watertown
- 20 years of experience:
 - Began as a volunteer
 - Suicide prevention & postvention advocacy, project development, implementation, and management
 - Community dialogue, public awareness, and training
 - Leadership for peer grief support as a field of practice
- Currently:
 - Transition to SMH's new MM Health Promotions Manager
 - MM Outreach: Four peer-support initiatives for men
 - Assisting BSAS with overdose postvention
 - TAPS and other national peer grief support initiatives

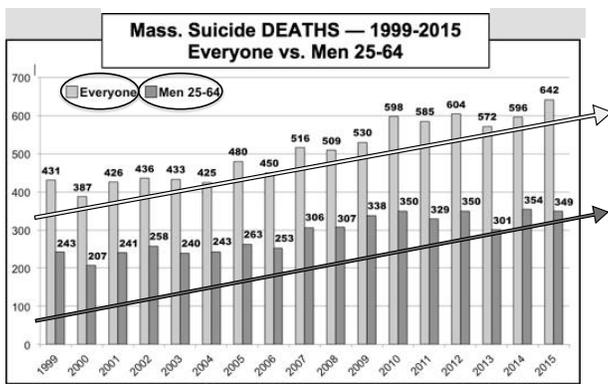
4

MassMen

- Massachusetts health promotions campaign to help strengthen the mental, emotional, and relational health of men age 25 to 64:
 - Free, anonymous online screening
 - Searchable resource database for MA communities
 - Information and connections designed for men
- Collaborative, grassroots approach:
 - Department of Public Health
 - Unified Community Solutions
 - Screening for Mental Health
 - Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention
 - 10 regional suicide prevention coalitions

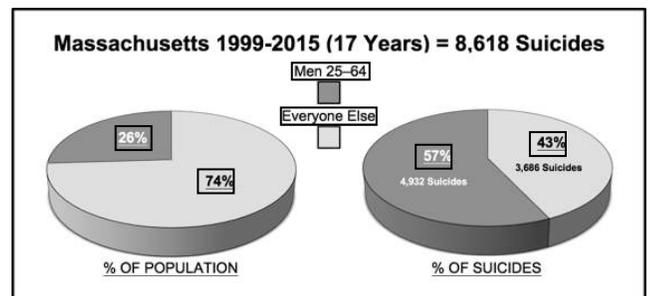
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Continuing Increase in MA Suicides



7

MA Men 25-64 Die Disproportionately



Data Source: CDC, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal_injury_reports.html.

8

MVSPAT Report, Recommendations



PROJECT REPORT: MEN'S VOLUNTEER SUICIDE PREVENTION ADVOCACY TEAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Approximately 80% of suicides in the United States are by men, and data show that a recent overall increase in suicide rates in Massachusetts is largely accounted for by a significant increase in suicide rates among white, working-age men.

While there is no definitive explanation for the comparatively high incidence of suicide among men, a number of theories and ideas are pertinent. Depression plays a role in as many as two-thirds of all suicides. Specifically for men, suicidal behavior is affected by particular psychological and personality factors; the influence of the socio-cultural constructs of masculinity; the use of alcohol and other drugs; the effects of socio-economic circumstances, especially unemployment; dependency on a "significant other" for personal and social well-being; the negative effects of isolation and alienation; and mid-life being a problematic time of life.

There is also no comprehensive or authoritative framework guiding suicide prevention among men, but several ideas are emerging as possible solutions, such as increasing "connectivity" at the individual, family, organizational, systems, and community levels; strengthening men's behavior related to help-seeking and self-care; and engaging employers and workplace strategies in suicide prevention and health promotion.

9

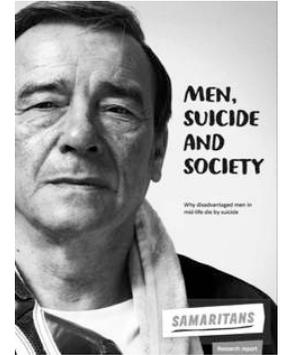
(Cook & MDPH, 2013)



Men, Suicide and Society (2012)

Focus: Disadvantaged men in mid-life (U.K.)

- Role of relationship breakdown
- Psychological factors
- Economic factors
- Role of mid-life
- Role of masculinities



10

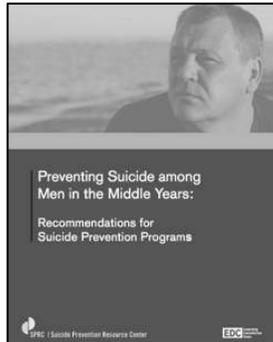
(Wyllie et al., 2012)



Preventing Suicide in MIMY (2016)

Focus: Men 35-64 years old (U.S.A.)

- Understanding suicide among MIMY
- Program recommendations
- Review of research
- Examples of programs and resources



11

(SPRC, 2016)



Men in the Middle Years (MIMY)

- MIMY: 35 to 64 years old.
 - Focus of national SP efforts
- MassMen population: "Working-age" men, 25 to 64 years old
 - 1.8 million in Massachusetts
- Concepts related to *masculinity* apply in various ways to men of all ages.

12



Cultural Competence for Men

Strengthen knowledge and awareness of bio-psycho-social and cultural determinants of masculine identity and behavior.

(SPRC, 2016)

14



Influence of "Masculinities"

- Traits such as independence, competitiveness, success, aggressiveness, courage, activity, efficiency, rationality
- Not perceiving or admitting the presence of anxiety, problems, burdens
- Withstanding danger, difficulties, threats
- Invulnerability (risky or harmful habits, disregard bodily health, avoiding or delaying help-seeking)
- High valuation of power, dominance, control

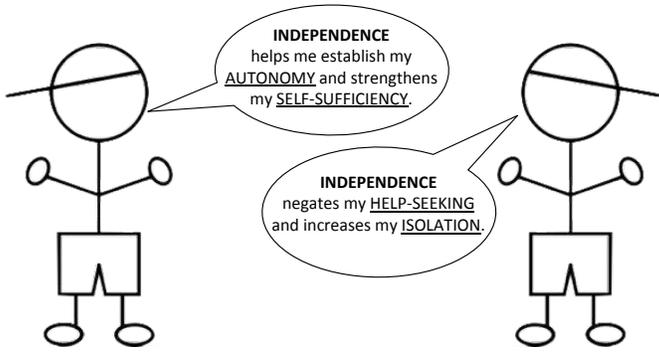
Positive valence vs. Negative valence

(Adapted from Wyllie et al., 2012)

15

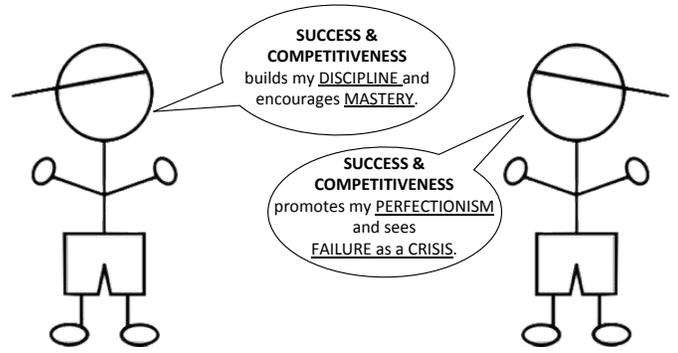


Independence & Control



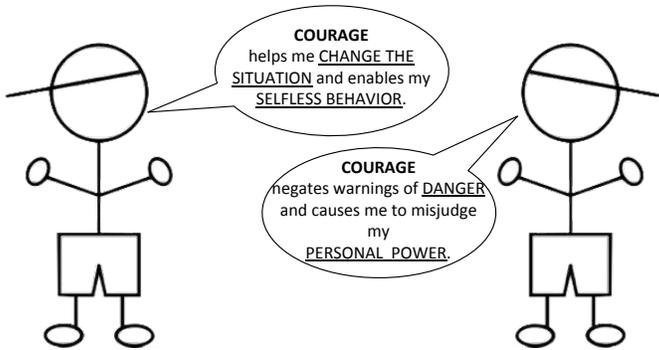
16

Success & Competitiveness



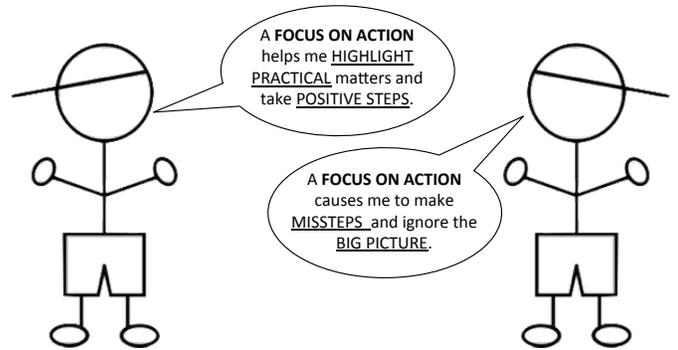
17

Courage



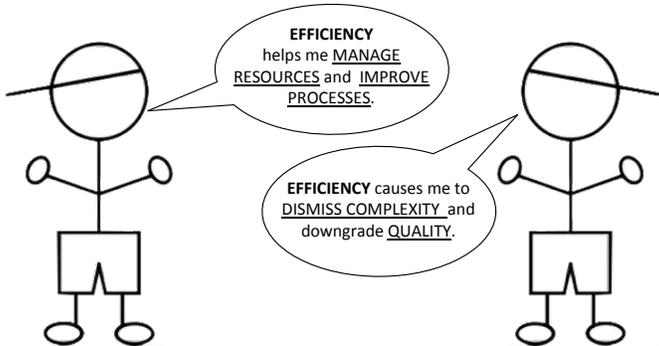
18

Focus on Action



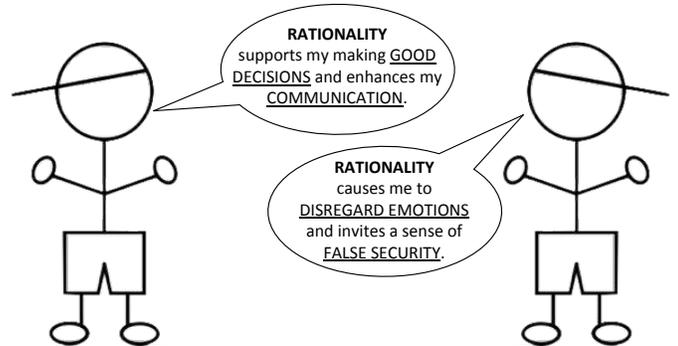
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Efficiency



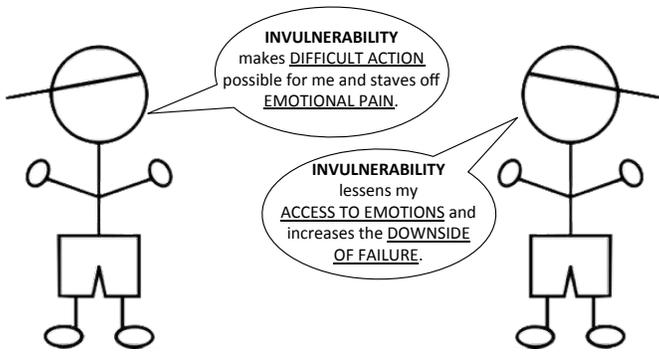
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Rationality



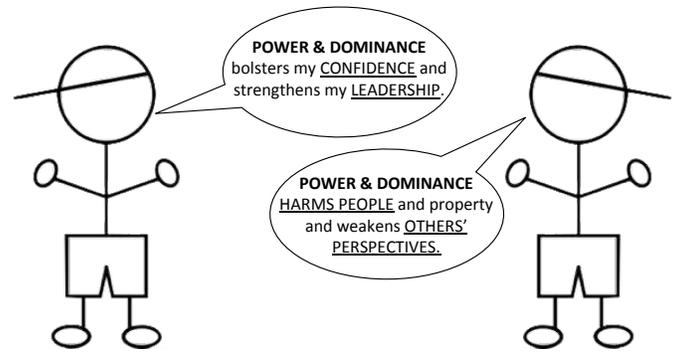
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Invulnerability



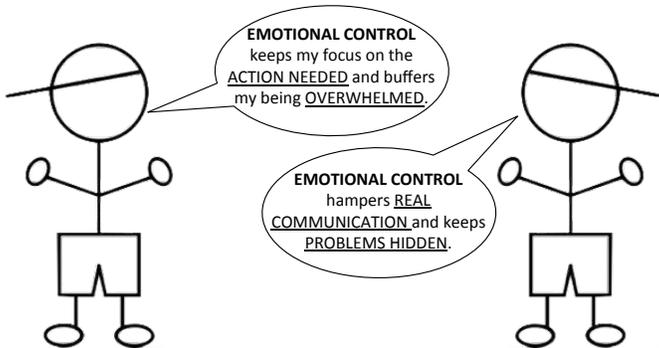
22

Power & Dominance



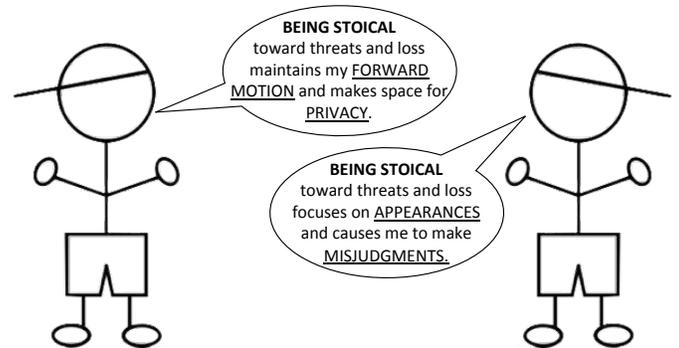
23

Emotional Control



24

Being Stoical



25

Values Being Expressed?

Positive Valence	Trait = Value	Negative Valence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes autonomy Strengthens self-sufficiency 	Independence, Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negates help-seeking Increases isolation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds discipline Encourages mastery 	Success, Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes perfectionism Sees failure as crisis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates change of status quo Enables selfless behavior 	Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negates warnings of danger Misjudges personal power
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlights practical matters Initiates positive steps 	Focus on Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causes missteps Ignores the "big picture"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages resources Improves processes 	Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismisses complexity Downgrades quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports good decisions Enhances communication 	Rationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disregards emotions Invites false security
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes difficult action possible Staves off emotional pain 	Invulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessens access to emotions Increases downside of failure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolsters confidence Strengthens leadership 	Power, Dominance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harms people, property Weakens others' perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps focus on action needed Buffers being overwhelmed 	Emotional Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hampers real communication Keeps problems hidden
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains forward motion Makes space for privacy 	Stoical Toward Threats, Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on appearances Causes misjudgments

26

Buffer Sources of Risk

Trait	Negative Valence
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negates help-seeking Increases isolation
Success, Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes perfectionism Sees failure as crisis
Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negates warnings of danger Misjudges personal power
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Traits' negative nature can increase risk.

- Observe which traits actually are at issue?
- Build awareness of downside of traits?
- Build skills to buffer them?
- Communicate with traits as a frame?

27

Strengthen Sources of Protection

Trait	Positive Valence
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes autonomy Strengthens self-sufficiency
Success, Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds discipline Encourages mastery
Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates change of status quo Enables selfless behavior
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Traits' positive nature can be protective.

- Observe which traits are in place?
- Affirm positive nature of traits?
- Build skills to strengthen them?
- Communicate with traits as a frame?

Positive Valence	Trait	Negative Valence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes autonomy Strengthens self-sufficiency 	Independence, Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negates help-seeking Increases isolation

MAN (getting a divorce)

I work for myself because I like to be my own boss and have control over what happens.

I work with all kinds of subcontractors, and we solve problems together. But I make the final decisions.

We might need to consult with the architect with a supplier. But the buck still stops here.

At work I know what the right decision is, or I can figure it out, or I'm willing to make a decision and take the consequences if I'm wrong. Not much about this divorce seems like I have any real control over it.

My accountant, my brother, even my kids are tangled up in the decisions being made. But what happens in the end is truly **not** up to me.

HELPER

I appreciate that. When you run into a tough problem in your work, who do you get help from?

It sounds like that works well. What if you have a problem that you and a subcontractor can't solve? What happens then? You make hard decisions all of the time at work. How is dealing with divorce similar to or different than that?

Who can help you? Your lawyer, me ... Who else do you talk to about what's happening who is capable of helping you with decisions related to the divorce?

What is up to you? About the process? Or about what you do after a decision is made, even if it's not what you wanted?

Masculinities: Three Generations

- Born 1955 and before (60 years old and older)
 - Traditional masculinity
- Born 1955-1980 (35-60 years old)
 - In transition, from traditional to modern
- Born 1981 and after (35 years old and younger)
 - Modern masculinity
- Very dynamic and complex
 - Some men see other generation POV as primary
 - Many men subscribe to a hybrid POV
 - Societal norms are in transition

Helper's Challenge: Cultural competency in responding purposefully to masculine traits/values

Buffer Sources of Risk

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Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As crisis Arrings of danger Personal power
Focus on Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexity "Big picture" Quality
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotions Security
Rationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass to emotions Downside of failure Role, property Their perspectives Communication Items hidden
Invulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appearances Judgments
Power, Dominance	
Emotional Control	
Stoical Toward Threats, Loss	

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MM focused on communications. Your helping role?.

Example: Masculinities as a "Frame"

- Self-care: A responsibility of being a provider and caring for your family
- Help-seeking:
 - Courageous, competent, independent, in control
 - Task requiring effective thinking, problem-solving
- Problems (& failure): Normal, universal, not a sign of weakness

e.g.: Men's "Frame" for Friendship

- "Doing," "being there," and "being alongside" rather than self-revelation
- Emotions discussed spontaneously, not methodically
- Physical activity, recreation seen as sufficient to manage stress or worry
- Value of confidentiality and permission not to talk about problems or losses
- Mutual empathy based on "knowing who I am" rather than talking about issues

e.g.: Men's "Frame" for Depression

- Escapist behavior (work, watching TV)
- Controlling, violent, or abusive behavior
- Uncharacteristic agitation, anger
- Risky behavior (e.g., reckless driving)
- Infidelity, unhealthy sexual behavior
- Physical symptoms that don't respond to usual treatments (backache, frequent headaches, sleep problems, sexual dysfunction, digestive disorders)

(Mayo Clinic, 2010; Robinson, Segal, & Smith, 2012)

34

e.g.: Men's "Frame" for Being Helped

- Engage men in a familiar setting
- Temper use of mental-health terminology
- Feature testimony about experiences of other men
- Suggest opportunities to help others
- Characterize men as partners with helping professionals
- Offer options for assistance other than from helping professionals

35

Agencies, Systems Must Respond

- The presentation above = oversimplification:
 - Focuses on traditional masculinity
 - Traits not clearly circumscribed (continuum, modulation)
 - Traits not dualistic (light/dark)
 - Offers very limited examples
- How do helpers within systems develop and strengthen cultural competency?
- Men's psychology: Science to practice?

36

The image shows the cover of a CDC report titled "Strategic Direction for the Prevention of Suicidal Behavior: Promoting Individual, Family, and Community Connectedness to Prevent Suicidal Behavior". The cover features the CDC logo and a stylized eagle. Below the title, there is a brief description: "This document describes a five-year vision for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) work to prevent fatal and nonfatal suicidal behavior. The strategic direction we envision is to prevent suicidal behavior by building and strengthening connectedness among individuals and among persons, families, and communities." A white oval highlights the text "connectedness among individuals and among persons, families, and communities" on the cover.

- Connectedness between individuals (friendships, social contacts)
- Connectedness of individuals and their families to community organizations
- Connectedness among community organizations and social institutions

38

(CDC, n.d.)

Major Protective Factors for MIMY

- Social connectedness to individuals, including friends and family, and to community and social institutions
- Access to effective health and behavioral health care
- Coping and problem-solving skills
- Reasons for living, meaning in life, and purpose in life

(SPRC, 2016, p. 15)

39

Men: Barriers to Connectedness

- Link to masculine beliefs
 - Independence
 - Competitiveness
 - Dominance
 - Emotional Control
 - Stoical Toward Threats, Loss

(Adapted from Hall & Partners, 2014; SPRC, 2016; Wyllie et al., 2012)

40

Men: Barriers to Connectedness

- Relationship dynamics affects sociability
 - Single (without a partner)
 - Relational breakdown
 - Dependence on partner for emotional support
 - Not sharing emotions with partner to be strong, to protect them
 - Poor engagement of boys with their fathers affects social adeptness as adults

(Adapted from Hall & Partners, 2014; SPRC, 2016; Wyllie et al., 2012)

41



Men: Barriers to Connectedness

- Financial and physical limitations can be a factor
- Changing circumstances
 - Injury or illness
 - Mental health issue
 - Unemployment
 - Family dynamics (e.g., having less time)

(Adapted from Hall & Partners, 2014; SPRC, 2016; Wyllie et al., 2012)

42



Men: Barriers to Connectedness

- Friendship patterns affect isolation
 - Dwindling peer relationships in midlife
 - Friendships based on a common interest or activity, and participation ceases
 - Many men do not discuss intimate personal issues with friends

(Adapted from Hall & Partners, 2014; SPRC, 2016; Wyllie et al., 2012)

43



Isolation Can Be Self-Perpetuating

- Social isolation causes emotional isolation
- Emotional isolation causes social isolation

44



Mid-Life Inherently Difficult for Men

- Consequences of long-term decisions about work and relationships come to light.
- Possibilities for making changes are limited, and most likely involves risk.
- Success: “Winners” and “losers” are known.
- Accumulation of effects of lifelong problems:
 - Mental illness
 - Alcohol abuse
 - Intermittent unemployment

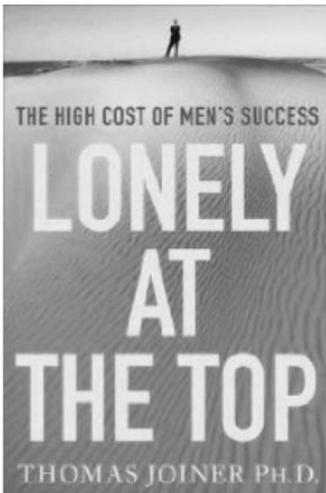
(Wyllie et al., 2012)

45



46





"If ending up lonely were a race, it would start out as a fair one, with males and females evenly matched, more or less. [But] ... men go on to 'win' the loneliness race; [and] to the victor go the spoils of alcohol problems, depression, divorce, and even death" (Joiner, 2011).

47

Men, Disconnectedness, & Suicide

- Lack of social problem-solving, communication skills
- Social perfectionism (need to meet expectations, perceived standards being unrealistic)
- Self-criticism (negative self-appraisal, inability to enjoy one's own successes)

(Wyllie et al., 2012)

- Decreased sense of belongingness
- Increased sense of burdensomeness

(Joiner, 2009)

48

Components of Effective Care

- Primary Care
- Emergency Department
- Behavioral Health
- Substance Abuse
- Crisis Outreach
- Actionable knowledge
- Screening and assessment
- Effective referrals
- Safety and crisis planning
- Effective therapies
- Continuity and follow-up
- Patient engagement

(Adapted from SPRC, 2016)

49

Actionable Knowledge

- Prevalence, preventability of MIMY suicide
- Characteristics of suicide risk, mental disorders among MIMY
- Relationship between alcohol and drug use disorders, intoxication, and MIMY suicide
- Ditto for chronic disease, disability
- Characteristic patterns of help-seeking behavior and coping among MIMY

(Adapted from SPRC, 2016)

50

Client-Centered Referrals

- Mental health & substance abuse care
- Care for the whole person
 - Basic needs and practical assistance
 - Unmet psychological needs
 - Connectedness
- Effective referrals (*applicable, direct, practical, reliable, effective, accessible, verifiable*)

(Adapted from SPRC, 2016)

51

Continuity and Follow-Up

- Patient-centered discharge planning (see "Referrals")
- Immediate follow-up (e.g., Caring Contacts)
- Teamwork across silos (including in safety planning)

(Adapted from SPRC, 2016)

52

Patient Engagement

- Self-care & resiliency components
- Strengths-focused (self-efficacy)
- Self-help & alternative approaches
- *Renaissance of person-centered care*

(Adapted from SPRC, 2016)

53

MASSMEN.ORG

Agencies, Systems Must Respond

- How do helpers within systems develop and strengthen cultural competency?
- Men's psychology: Science to practice?
- How do helpers within systems use SPRC/2016 & other sources to focus on connectedness?

bit.ly/foundmassmen



54

MASSMEN.ORG

FOUNDATIONAL IDEAS: These sources cover many of the foundational ideas MassMen has used to guide the development of its programs and communications.

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

- "Project Report: Men's Volunteer Suicide Prevention Advocacy Team": This report, published in January 2013, was researched and assembled by 10 middle-age Massachusetts men, all of whom are survivors of suicide loss who experienced the death of a middle-age man who was their family member, friend, or colleague.
- "Preventing Suicide Among Men in the Middle Years: Recommendations for Suicide Prevention Programs": This seminal report, released in 2016 by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), delineates conclusions drawn from the most recent research, offers clear program recommendations, and lists examples of current resources and programs.
- "Men, Suicide and Society: Why Disadvantaged Men in Mid-Life Die by Suicide": This report from the UK Samaritans features a series of essays focused on what is known about how masculinities, relationship breakdown, psychological factors, economics, and being middle-aged affect suicide among middle-age men.
- "Men at Risk: The Physical, Mental and Social Health of Men in Massachusetts": This follow-up to the 2011 Massachusetts Family Impact Seminar features essays on three intertwined aspects of men's health, including "Men's Mental Health in Massachusetts: Stigma, Substance Abuse, Suicide and Unemployment," by Michael Addis of Clark University.
- "Addressing the Specific Behavioral Health Needs of Men": This Treatment Improvement Protocol from SAMHSA focuses on men in substance-use treatment settings, and in doing so covers essential information about interacting with men to offer them assistance in any setting.
- "The Interpersonal Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior: Current Empirical Status": This brief essay by Thomas Joiner explains his popular theory, which states that the conditions necessary for suicide are feelings of decreased connectedness and increased burdensomeness and the capacity to perform a self-destructive lethal action.
- "Crossing the No Cry Zone: Psychotherapy with Men": Fred Rabinowitz's online course is a superb overview of the essential principles of men's psychology.

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CONNECTEDNESS

- "Promoting Individual, Family, and Community Connectedness to Prevent Suicidal Behavior": This document explains the CDC's view of connectedness as an overarching strategy for suicide prevention.
- "Making Connections for Mental Health and Wellbeing Among Men and Boys in the U.S.": This report by the Prevention Institute was funded by the Movember Foundation to help with its long-range, high-level strategy. It contains excellent background information, including a section on male socialization in the U.S. (pp. 24-26).
- "Men's Social Connectedness": This study of men in Australia, funded by the Movember Foundation in collaboration with BeyondBlue, focuses on men 30-65 (Men in the Middle Years) and provides excellent insight into men's view of connectedness, of barriers and facilitators of connectedness, and of interventions and possible solutions. Follow these links to learn more about BeyondBlue's work with men and social connectedness program.
- *Lonely at the Top*: Thomas Joiner's book about the health costs of success for men in American society contains or refers to helpful information on connectedness, especially in Chapter 8, "Solutions: Realistic Ways to Connect to Others."

MASSMEN.ORG

57

MASSMEN.ORG

Crossing the No Cry Zone: Psychotherapy with Men

This course will help you be more effective with men in your practice.



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MassMen is a program of Screening for Mental Health

massmen.org/menstherapycourse

4 CEUs

- Psychologists
- Counselors
- Social Workers

Regular Price = \$99

- *Must* now be practicing in MA
- Discount = \$50
- Your cost = \$49

56

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SMH Screening for Mental Health®

William Burgey, MS
MassMen Health Promotions Manager

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57

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58

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