

Want Boys to Become Men? Teach Them the Classical Virtues

There's a growing realization that men are not as privileged as was once thought and may actually be getting the bad end of the bargain in society. Not only do they often bear the fallout from high-profile acts of violence or sexual aggression, but they are also finding it increasingly difficult to keep pace with women in the [employment sector](#).

Unfortunately, these things tend to give the male sex a bad rap. In fact, there seems to be a great deal of confusion over what true masculinity really is.

A video produced by *The Cut* is a perfect example. Using children as interview subjects, producers asked them to give an opinion as to what it means to be a boy. Many children described the male as the rough and tough individual portrayed by the idea of toxic masculinity. Others implied that the male gender was fluid and could be transformed into a female whenever a boy wished.

But perhaps most revealing was the little boy who stated the following: *"I don't really know what it means to be a boy besides physical attributes."*

Such a vague notion of what it means to be a male is a bit startling, especially considering the fact that physical attributes are increasingly framed as a non-issue which can be easily erased via hormones or surgery.

So how did today's boys end up with such a lack of clarity on what it means to be a man?

C.S. Lewis provides the answer in his famous work, [The](#)

[Abolition of Man](#). According to Lewis, there are two kinds of education to which students can be subjected: propaganda and propagation. If they receive the former type of training, then there's a good chance their growth will be stunted for life and little boys will never know how to become true men:

"If they embark on this course the difference between the old and the new education will be an important one. Where the old initiated, the new merely 'conditions'. The old dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly; the new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds – making them thus or thus for purposes of which the birds know nothing. In a word, the old was a kind of propagation – men transmitting manhood to men; the new is merely propaganda."

So how can we ensure that we are propagating young children – particularly young boys – to have a healthy, accurate view of masculinity, instead of one simply dominated by the propaganda of the day?

Authors Brett and Kate McKay [suggest](#) returning to the teachings of Aristotle and the ancient Romans, who framed true manliness as the cultivation of virtues, including:

- "Courage
- Loyalty
- Industry
- Resiliency
- Resolution
- Personal Responsibility
- Self-Reliance
- Integrity
- Sacrifice"

It's been somewhat unpopular to teach virtues such as these for a number of years. But are they a necessary component of raising young boys to be upstanding men? And would we see far

less confusion and negative behavior in today's world if such virtues were a regular part of the training and education students receive?

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