

# A 1913 Prescription for 'Toxic Masculinity'

If recent headlines are any indication, it seems that masculinity is destined to be the word of the year. Between shaving commercials, official guidelines from the American Psychological Association, and viral videos depicting “disrespectful” teen boys, the idea of what it means to be a decent man has become rather confused.

This confusion about manhood is true not only for young boys and men asking who they are and how they should behave, but also for young women struggling to discern what type of behavior is acceptable to receive from men and how to fairly evaluate potential mates.

Given this confused state of society, I found it interesting to unearth the opening lines to Teddy Roosevelt's [autobiography](#). Roosevelt, the nation's 26th president was a man's man in every sense of the word. Yet, while his allegedly rough and tumble approach to manhood might earn him a toxic masculinity award today, his straightforward description of manhood seems anything but toxic. As the following points explain, Teddy Roosevelt's version of manhood exudes strength, character, and common sense.

## 1. Strength Under Control

According to Roosevelt, a good man will advocate for true justice. To do so, a man must balance strength with character, not sacrificing right for might:

*Justice among the nations of mankind, and the uplifting of humanity, can be brought about only by those strong and daring men who with wisdom love peace, but who love righteousness more than peace.*

## 2. Family-Oriented

A good man, Roosevelt implies, will not shirk the responsibilities of a wife and children. Instead, he will embrace them and recognize what essential supports they are to the rest of his success and happiness:

*[T]hese virtues are as dust in a windy street unless back of them lie the strong and tender virtues of a family life based on the love of the one man for the one woman and on their joyous and fearless acceptance of their common obligation to the children that are theirs.*

## 3. A Hard Worker

Today's young men often face the stereotype of being deadbeats who live in mom's basement and play video games. While such a description is more an anomaly than not, Teddy Roosevelt would have been appalled to hear that such a concept even had a little foothold in culture. He notes:

*There must be the keenest sense of duty, and with it must go the joy of living; there must be shame at the thought of shirking the hard work of the world, and at the same time delight in the many-sided beauty of life.*

Roosevelt goes on to say that a good man must strive to "not be a burden" to others:

*With gentleness and tenderness there must go dauntless bravery and grim acceptance of labor and hardship and peril. All for each, and each for all, is a good motto; but only on condition that each works with might and main to so maintain himself as not to be a burden to others.*

## 4. Not Easily Angered

We live in an instantaneous age, where reactions to the latest news story boil over on social media every minute without waiting to check facts and know the whole story. Such an attitude, implies Roosevelt, is the exact opposite that a man should have:

*With soul of flame and temper of steel we must act as our coolest judgment bids us. We must exercise the largest charity towards the wrong-doer that is compatible with relentless war against the wrong-doing. We must be just to others, generous to others, and yet we must realize that it is a shameful and a wicked thing not to withstand oppression with high heart and ready hand.*

Is it time we recognize that traditional masculinity such as this is not a thing to be feared, but may be the very model of strength and leadership that our society is looking for?

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[Image Credit: MaxPixel ]