

How the West Can Save Masculinity

What if the men who obsess over the decline of the West actually helped to restore it? There is no doubt that life is moving at a faster pace than ever before, accelerated by technology and intensified by our growing divisions. But inside the whirlwind lies a burning question: are there still effective ways to promote masculine virtue?

My previous piece on [the weak men of the online West](#) triggered some alt-right and racially-inclined individuals, who accused me of “virtue signaling.” Others claimed I was portraying all immigration skeptics as one step away from slaughtering innocents (I never said that). New Zealand terrorist Brenton Tarrant [fled in fear](#) from a 48-year-old unarmed congregant who chased him with a credit card machine. Anders Breivik disguised himself as a cop, gunned down an island of defenseless teens, and then surrendered to police, relying on Norway’s lenient justice system. These *are* cowards, and not just in some vaguely intuited way.

Of course, the vast majority of miserable men never snap and kill others. In fact, statistics show the majority of unhappy or economically depressed males are slowly killing *themselves* with drugs, drink, and fast food. Nor are such men who waste away necessarily cowardly: in some cases they’ve simply never had the opportunity to show what they’re made of.

Many boys today have grown up in an educational and cultural environment that believes masculine impulses are inherently harmful. Whether it’s heavy drinking, marital infidelity, fighting, bullying, or general selfishness, men have certainly not always displayed admirable traits. But to state that these traits *are* masculinity itself? That’s a leap. Conversely, men

have historically—and in contemporary times too—risen to great heights of heroism, self-sacrifice, and noble strength to defend their families, communities, and faiths. What has changed is not so much the shortcomings of men but the technology that is allowing larger numbers of them not to develop positive masculine qualities that simply *had to be developed* 100 years ago to survive. Necessity is not only the mother of invention; it is also in many ways the mother of real men.

The chasm between what a man could be and the subtly mocking screen staring listlessly back at him—Nietzsche's modified abyss of sorts—is a powerful recipe for radicalism. Men have always craved a reason to matter, a mate and a mission. Sadly, today's generation of boys are being fed prefabricated and juvenile narratives on YouTube channels by pick-up artists or spending hours immersed in video games trying to forget the disappointment they feel.

So how do we fix it? I suggest six practical steps we can take.

Provide strong role models

Ideally, a man's role model would be his father. In reality, though, men who come from single-mother families or suboptimal situations will have to find role models elsewhere, such as in coaches, religious leaders, the fathers of their friends, and community figures. Some behaviors we now think of as “manly” are in fact socially constructed parodies of masculinity. As fellow TAC contributor Ben Sixsmith points out, is sitting and drinking beer while watching sports on a screen really [“manly”](#)? Young men need role models who *do real things*, from fixing cars and machines to playing sports and musical instruments to helping neighbors. Men who have the time and motivation should also consider mentoring, joining organizations like Big Brothers to help out.

Having estimable role models also means teaching young men practical and helpful lessons about women and courting. The phenomenon of incels, for example, which some such as Simon DeDeo of Carnegie Mellon University argue is [overinflated](#), is a cause for concern even if it is not as numerically staggering as some suggest. As Glenn Stanton [noted](#), “young men have fallen head-over-heels in love with the screens that deliver their daily dose of ‘Fortnite’ and porn. It’s not that they’ve lost the ability to engage with an actual, living, breathing woman. Few ever developed such skills.”

Promote clear consequences

Humans evolved out of tribes where their actions and interactions had clear consequences. Generally, if you cheated the tribe or committed a crime, you were exiled or severely punished. Catastrophes like the 2008 financial meltdown and the Iraq war, to name two relatively recent examples, are not just “mistakes.” In a healthy society, those who caused them would be regarded as treasonous and forced to pay for their mistakes. When young men see nickel-and-dime crimes punished with years of incarceration while the biggest thugs run free, they lose faith in the integrity of the system and become cynical. It’s time to clean corruption out of government and stop giving a pass to a prison-industrial complex that profits from the incarceration of hundreds of thousands of non-violent criminals.

Build an economy of purpose

As men labor and earn money, they need to feel like more than just numbers. It is not just automation and deindustrialization that are bringing men down; it is the way that materialism and impersonal profit have come to dominate everything, subsuming community life and family. Men are not made to be bit players in their own lives. Legislators and

policymakers need to develop an actionable plan to build an economy of purpose designed for families. [Fixing America's broken food system](#) is one way to revitalize the heartland, and bolstering rural and agrarian life is another way that blinkered pro-urban militancy can be countered. Cities should never be the enemy, but neither should the country accept being left behind by superhighways and city-centric legislation. Healthy hard work, from the physical to the intellectual, will always be in style. Men need an economy of purpose where that work isn't just for the money, but actually accomplishes something tangible, from building houses to designing new software.

Reforming our media and culture

Graphic content is almost beside the point, since the real harm done by media is in its deeper messaging. Nihilism, hedonism, and cruelty prevail, as degenerate films are churned out, undermining the younger generation's faith in humanity. Another major target of popular media is, of course, masculinity: demonizing men, promoting the idea that courage and strength are just romanticized bunk. Examples of truly boorish and unacceptable male behavior are routinely conflated with masculinity itself. Many nefarious influences seek to [divide us](#) instead of fostering productive discussions of femininity and masculinity. There's a world of difference between a guy who is an aggressive, intemperate jerk and a tough but respectful man.

Society needs to take a long, hard look at the past few decades of pop culture. While many will argue that this simply reflects the tastes of society, there is ample research demonstrating that media actively shape preferences and trends. It's time for governments to consider media that glorify drugs, crime, and unhealthy sexual behavior as a psychological and social threat. Dominant new media structures can be created without the schmalts that's often characterized

past attempts at wholesome programming. Inspiring films about historical heroism, overcoming adversity in life and sports, comedies that are actually funny and don't dwell on bizarre sexual innuendo and nihilism, biographical movies like [Unplanned](#) about an abortion clinic director who becomes a pro-life leader—these are all good examples.

Putting the social mission front and center

For those who are non-religious, activities and camps centered on coherent missions can be positive, including environmentalism, which can be [compatible with conservatism](#). Other positive missions might include community revitalization projects, volunteering to help the less fortunate, using one's profession to make changes within an industry, using unemployment to study a language or learn a new skill, and simply finding friends to share conversations and camaraderie with. When men lack such missions, they can become resentful about their alienation and even become violent. The accused 2017 Minnesota mosque bomber Michael Hari left as [his only comment to the media](#) a poem he'd written entitled "We Are Men!" A few lines stand out, showing how masculinity can be twisted without a proper purpose: *"Men built this unjust system / And men can destroy it! / We are men!"*

Portraying sex differences as complementary, not combative

Saying men and women are "equal" does a disservice to both. Men and women are complementary, not concepts dreamed up in a sterile boardroom. It is important to work towards a society where both sexes regard each other once again as partners, not as economic competitors or guilty representatives of historical wrongs. Western culture needs to start celebrating

women for their strength and love, instead of subtly (and overtly) demonizing some of them, such as housekeepers and the religious. Living in a society of actual respect means respecting women and men and appreciating the positive contributions both can make. Strong families build strong countries.

There's no manual for becoming a man. Nonetheless, there are concrete steps men can take towards positive masculine ideals.

As says Proverbs 27: 17-19, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored. As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man."

—

This [article](#) has been republished with permission from The American Conservative.

[Image Credit: [Pixabay](#)]