

# GROWING GOOD BLOKES

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Founder of Good Blokes Co



**MIKE  
DYSON**

**BEFORE WE START**



# A GOOD MAN IS...

What are the character traits of a 'good man'?

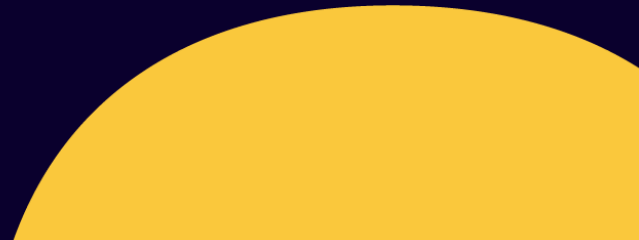


# WHO DO BOYS ASPIRE TO BE?

Kind, caring, strong, humble, resilient, creative,  
funny, reliable, hard-working, respectful,  
responsible, dependable, trustworthy, honest,  
thoughtful...

# HOW DO THEY WANT TO TREAT EACH OTHER?

The most common group value...



# **BUT IS THAT HOW YOUNG MEN ARE SHOWING UP?**

Wellbeing & Behaviour





# WELLBEING IS BEHAVIOURAL

If we want them to be well, we must guide them to bring their behaviour in line with their aspirations.



# WHAT DRIVES BEHAVIOUR?

Developing pre-frontal cortex...

Hormones and limbic systems...

What is expected of us.



# THE MAN BOX

What are the traits that boys & men feel pressure to adhere to?



# THE MAN BOX

'Real men' don't...



# THE MAN BOX

What's the problem?



# **MAN BOX PROBLEMS**

**#1 MENTAL HEALTH**





# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

A culture where women outperform men in 11 out of 12 eq competencies that are 'crucial for effective leadership\*'. .



# **MAN BOX PROBLEMS**

**#2 RISK**

# **MAN BOX PROBLEMS**

**#3 VIOLENCE**



# TESTOSTERONE & STATUS

Chimps, bonobos and the man box






# HOW DO BOYS GAIN STATUS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS?

What would your son say?



# HOW DO BOYS GAIN STATUS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS?

Be tough, be buff, be a pro skater, play footy, be a clown, be cool, don't be a pussy, don't be gay, don't show your emotions, don't care, don't show weakness, don't be a sweat, don't be a simp.



**TESTOSTERONE IS THE  
ACCELERATOR PEDAL**

**CULTURE IS THE  
STEERING WHEEL**

# THE IMPACT OF CULTURE

Is it cool to go to bed early?

Do you win friends by switching your phone off?


Is meditation and journaling 'sigma'?

Do you gain status by prioritising your wellbeing and calling out poor behaviour?



# DOES IT AFFIRM BOYS SENSE OF BELONGING TO BE...

Kind, caring, humble, creative, reliable, hard-working, respectful, responsible, dependable, trustworthy, honest, thoughtful...



# SHAME

A young man's kryptonite



# SHAME

We must be mindful of shame, *and*  
help them to build 'shame resilience'

- Build self awareness and self compassion
- Ways to feel capable, confident, strong.



# SHAME VS GUILT

Moving from shame and blame...  
to guilt and accountability.





# WELLBEING IS BEHAVIOURAL

The dynamic of violence gives us insights into what drives their behaviour towards themselves and others.



# **MAN BOX PROBLEMS**

## **#4 IMPACT ON GIRLS & WOMEN**

# WHAT'S THE IMPACT ON BOYS AND MEN?

Are young men missing out on great relationships  
with women?




# CAN BOYS BE FRIENDS WITH GIRLS?

Don't be a simp!



# THE INTIMACY GAP

Are we preparing young men for great intimate relationships?



# **MAN BOX PROBLEMS**

## **#5 LONE WOLF SYNDROME**



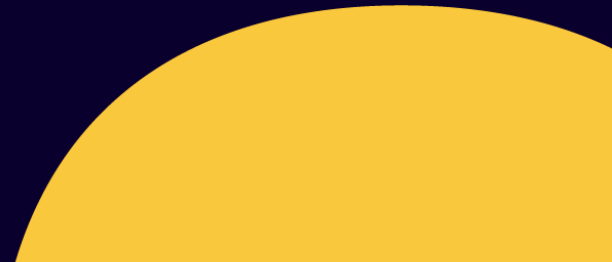
# LONE WOLF SYNDROME

Blockes who lack supportive and accountable mateships.



# LONE WOLF SYNDROME

The vicious cycle that exacerbates the other 4 issues.







# IMPACT OF ISOLATION

Social isolation is as dangerous to our physiological wellbeing as smoking, hypertension and obesity.



# IMPACT OF ISOLATION

*'Research shows that when our sense of belonging is threatened even momentarily, we're more likely to feel worse about ourselves, **perform below our potential, behave impulsively, see others as hostile, and lash out defensively.***

Geoffrey Cohen, *Belonging*. Stanford University.

# LONE WOLVES + THE INTERNET

When real life connections aren't there, it's easy to be sucked into the online echo chamber...  
Missing out on real life human connection...  
And learning about masculinity through influencers, incels, irony bros and online porn.



# IT'S NOT JUST 'INCELS'!

Between 1984 and 2004 the number of people with no one to turn to had tripled.

From 1990-2021, men with zero close friends went from 3% to 15%.

And those with more than 5 close friends went from 55% to 27%.

# HUMAN BEINGS NEED 3 FORMS OF CONNECTION

- FRIENDSHIP
  - EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
  - COMMON PURPOSE
- 



# ARE OUR BOYS...

Really relying on others?

Honest with others?

Checking on others wellbeing?

Holding each other to account?

Proactively seeking others input?

Really listening?

# ARE WE PREPARING BOYS...

For modern workplaces that increasingly value co-operation, collaboration, empathy and emotional intelligence?



**IN A CULTURE OF  
POOR QUALITY CONNECTION  
BOYS ARE DRIVEN TO FIT IN TO  
WHAT THEY SEE AROUND THEM.**



# MAN BOX CULTURE DAMAGES...

- Boys' and mens' wellbeing;
- EQ and ability to collaborate and lead effectively;
- The quality of our relationships; &
- Women's ability to feel equal, valued, celebrated and safe.

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

Schools

Workplaces

Communities

Anywhere groups of boys and men gather...





# REINVENTING MATESHIP

Get their hands on the steering wheel so they can drive each other towards

- Respect
- Teamwork
- Courage
- Empathy



# REINVENTING MATESHIP

Create a culture where support and accountability gain status.

**WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**



**MAKE HIS INNER VOICE  
LOUDER...**

**THAN THE NOISE  
AROUND HIM.**



# STRENGTHEN HIS INNER VOICE

Help him to get clear on

- His values, his strengths, his struggles and the impact he has (and wants to have); and
- What behaviours reflect his values.



# **STRENGTHEN HIS INNER VOICE**

Use mistakes, challenges, sport and games as a chance to reflect on gaps between who he wants to be and how he's showing up.



# **STRENGTHEN HIS INNER VOICE**


Celebrate his wins!



# **SILENCE THE NOISE**

Turn off the wifi?  
Clear boundaries.  
Step into his world.






# SILENCE THE NOISE

Provide alternatives

- Give him chances to hear the real life experiences of men, women, girls & boys.
- Role model asking for help, owning mistakes, collaborating, checking in on others, listening...



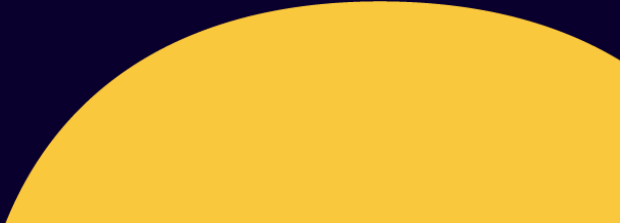
# **SILENCE**

# **THE NOISE**

Prioritise quality, real, human connection.  
With you, with mates, with extended family...

# PRIORITISE CONNECTION WITH HIM

Quality time with parents, siblings and extended family primes them to connect better with others. And vice versa.  
One on one time.



# PRIORITISE CONNECTION WITH HIM

Make it engaging!

Pizza nights, board games, run clubs...


Tell them what you want.

Ask them what they want.



# PRIORITISE EXPERIENCES OF CONNECTION FOR HIM

Prioritise adventurous, creative, safely risky group experiences for groups of young people.



# PRIORITISE REAL MATESHIP

Help him to explore the mateship he needs

- Supportive and accountable mateship
  - Three levels of mateship
- 



**REAL MATESHIP  
IS BUILT ON...**

**REAL CONVERSATIONS**



**#RUOK?**

**#I'M NOT OK**

**#THAT'S NOT OK**

**#YOU'RE OK**



# THESE CONVERSATIONS ARE NOT NORMAL

But that doesn't mean boys don't need, want and even enjoy them.



# HOW TO GET HIM TALKING

## 1 - Carve out time and space

- A different environment, without shame and judgement
- Pick a regular time that works for both of you - long drives, burgers...
- One on one, family check ins
- Put our phones away



# HOW TO GET HIM TALKING

## 2 - Lead with honesty

- He needs to hear your experiences
- Honesty leads honesty
- Strengthens your relationship
- Age appropriate

# HOW TO GET HIM TALKING

## 3 - Get curious & practice listening

- Ask before you tell
- Get comfortable with silence
- Notice urges to step in
- Trust him to find his answers

# HOW TO GET HIM TALKING

## 4 - Encourage action and accountability

- It's not one conversation, start small
- Play the long game. connect first
- Get it wrong
- Get comfortable yourself!

# HOW TO GET HIM TALKING

1. Carve out time and space.
2. Lead with honesty.
3. Listen with genuine curiosity.
4. Encourage action and accountability.



# WHAT TO ASK?

## MAN BOX

- Who are the most popular boys at school?  
what makes them popular?
- Is that different for girls?
- What sports/hobbies are manly? Which aren't?
- What are the insults you hear?
- What kind of things lead to those insults?
- When was the last time you were called that?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## MAN BOX

- What do people mean when they say 'real man'?
- What pressure do boys feel to be a certain way?
- What's tough for gay guys?
- Which emotions are ok for men?
- What kind of 'masks' do boys wear?
  - Why?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## VALUES

- Who do you admire? why?
- Who are you grateful for? why?
- What character traits do you aspire to?
- What would you love people to say about you?  
at your 21st...
- How do you wanna show up this week?
- What are you proud of?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## EQ

- When was the last time you got really sad?
- What does anger feel like?
- Wow does fear change your behaviour?
- Who do you feel comfortable talking to? which teachers, which mates...
- How do you know when you need to ask for help?
- Daily check in...

# WHAT TO ASK?

## RESILIENCE

- What did you fail at this week?
- Why is it so hard to admit to a mistake?
- When was the last time you felt like a terrible person?
- Who stuffed up this week? How did they go with putting it right?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## RESILIENCE PART 2

- Proudest moments of being resilient...
- What area of your life do you need more resilience?
- What does resilience look like for you? What's your resilience style?
- What goals are worth pursuing?
- Who has impressed you recently?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## RISK AND VIOLENCE

- When was the last time you saw a fight?
- What do you think caused it?
- What could they both have done differently?
- What could their mates have done?
- Why do boys act different in groups?
- Who at school is constantly doing something stupid to impress mates?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## SHAME

- What's harder, failure or rejection? Why?
- How do you want to show up when you fail?
  - When you're rejected, or left out?
- How does shame change people's behaviour?
- What do you need from me (or your mates) when you're feel like you don't fit in?
- What can you say to a mate who's feeling ashamed?



# WHAT TO ASK? WOMEN AND GIRLS?

- Who is a woman you admire and why?
- Which girls do you really respect? Why?
- What's different for female teachers?
- What's challenging for girls?
- Do girls feel safe on the bus? Why?
- How do you want girls in your community to feel?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## MATESHIP

- Who was a great mate this week? Why?
- Who surprised you this week?
- Which of your mates have struggled this year?
- Which of your mates can you really trust? Why?  
Have you told them?
- When was a time you had to change yourself to fit in?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## MATESHIP PART 2

- Is it ok to hug your mates? In public?
- Is it ok to tell your mates you love them?
- Do you think that's different for girls?
- Is it common for boys to be mates with girls?
  - Why?
- What does it mean to have your mates back?
- Are they ok?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## RELATIONSHIPS

- What kind of friend/co-worker/boyfriend do you want to be?
- How do you want your friends/partner to feel?
- What would you want them to tell their friends about you?
- What character traits are you attracted to?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## LEADERSHIP

- How confident are you to say something when you see disrespect?
- What would make it easier?
- What would be effective?
- Who's someone that may be struggling?
- If a friend is struggling, do you know who to refer them to?
- What influence do you want to have on your mates behaviour?

# WHAT TO ASK?

## ADULTHOOD

- What's the difference between a boy and adult?
- What 'boy' behaviours aren't working for you anymore?
- What 'adult' behaviours could you be displaying more?
- What would you like to take responsibility for around the house?
- What actions reflect the man you're

# WHAT TO ASK?

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- What actions will show me that you're on track?
- What do you want me to say when I notice that you're out of sync?
- What habits aren't helping?
- How else can I have your back?



# SUPPORTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountable to their own values.  
With empathy.



# BOYS AND THEIR DADS

- They are watching you! What version of manhood do we want to pass on?
- The cycle of absent fatherhood.
- What they want more of...



# BOYS AND THEIR MUMS

- They need to hear your experiences.
- Boys want a strong relationship but they often want it to be different.
- They need a chance to redefine it.
- It's a tunnel, not a cave.

# THEY DIDN'T CREATE THESE PROBLEMS...

#1 MENTAL HEALTH

#2 RISK

#3 VIOLENCE

#4 IMPACT ON GIRLS AND WOMEN

#5 LONE WOLF SYNDROME



# THEY WANT TO BE THE SOLUTION

They need:

- Strong inner voices;
- Quality mateship that keeps them aligned with their values.
- Our support, accountability, curiosity & honesty

# MORE INFO

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