



MANIFESTO♂

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MAKING
GOOD MEN
GREAT

Editorial Manifesto



Hello, everyone!

I hope our first edition of Manifesto provided some real food for thought and, what's more, for some meaningful conversations.

You can read it here [Click here](#)

As always, the media has provided us with a bucket load of material to draw from. As tempting as that may be, I'm not going to go there for the moment. What I will say is that there is no question that patriarchy, that is toxic masculinity, is embedded in all aspects of our lives, from the aspect of mental health, to politics and economics and ecology.

Why we need to change?

'In Victoria, Australia, there was a 46 per cent increase in the number of children presenting to the ED for self-harm, stress and anxiety, mood, behavioural and emotional disorders between 2008 and 2015. "[The increase] is clearly reflecting that the system is failing," Professor Sawyer said in a recent article published by the ABC.

"In the context of the very major investments Australia has made in

mental health care over the past few decades ... there's some real questions this data raises about what we need to do differently."

It is my view, and I will state this repeatedly, that we are trying to fix a multi-dimensional problem in two dimensions.

Getting to the root cause of the crisis.

Manifesto aims to explore the crisis of men and our community through



a root cause analysis, keeping in mind that there is no quick fix. Our first edition began to cover the main frameworks of what patriarchy is. First and foremost, we wanted the readers to begin to understand the core issues. We introduced the idea that culturally we are governed by patriarchal values that have deep reaching negative consequences on men and society. We need men to be part of forging a new masculinity with a new set of values, one's that will help men and society to thrive and not struggle.

Lorin put up a brilliant introduction in 'Challenging Patriarchal Values' and suggested that it is an unfinished project. In this edition, Lorin follows this up from a woman's perspective to explain the foundation of feminism. This piece is especially important, as the arguments against feminism that come from both men and women illustrate the lack of understanding about the topic.

Mark Hodgson recently brought together some of my material from my

upcoming book, *Making Good Men Great, Surfing a New Masculinity* for a great blog for our website. I liked it so much that I am including it into this edition. Titled *Men are in crisis-how did we get there*, it speaks for itself.

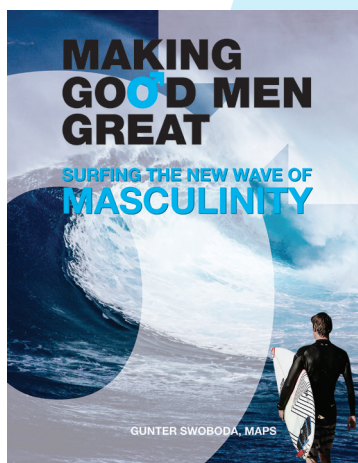
My contribution for this edition is about exploring how patriarchal values drive an ideology that deeply wounds men psychologically, something that has cost all of us dearly. It has led to the very reasons for why men and women struggle with one another; why communities struggle to live together and why ideologies bring about violence.

It explains why our society is struggling to come to terms with the challenges that lie ahead. To adapt to a more interrelated world. Sadly we are regressing to the mindsets of the dark ages. We are forging ahead technologically but are retreating away from more enlightened ideals to forms of barbarism where we treat human beings with contempt and disrespect.

As always, we have a column on 'Good Men being Great'. In this edition it is empty. It is a reminder that we want to hear from readers about good men being great and give them recognition. And finally there is our usual Call to Action.

The most exciting news is that my new book **Making Good Men Great; Surfing a New Masculinity is now available**. Check on Amazon or my webpage for outlets.

[Website – click here](#)



Gunter



Men are in CRISIS

how did we get here?

Trapped in a relentless flow of social and technological change, society is rapidly losing sight of what makes us human. Although most technological changes are heralded as tremendous advancements, much of it fails to live up to the marketing hype. Point in case is the 'Digital Revolution'. Many so-called 'advances' have negative consequences. These only really manifest over time. History is filled with examples of what appeared to be good ideas in the moment. At some point the price for this 'progress' may well be too high.

Overwhelmed by accelerating change

The accumulation of knowledge is growing exponentially. So too is the speed at which change occurs. This means the threat to our individual and collective well being also increases in speed and magnitude. Overwhelmed with the stress of change and weight of expectations, many people feel trapped in their efforts to just survive.

And at the core of this issue is that we, as men, are rapidly moving into a decline – physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually. Even on the biological level, we are producing fewer sperm than 100 years ago (and they are less healthy).

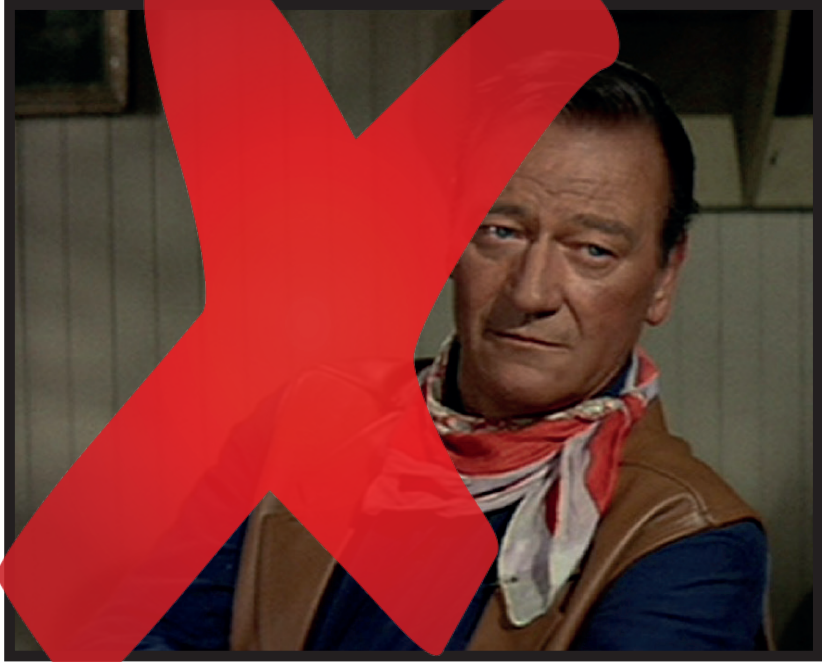
Patriarchy is broken

'Patriarchy' is the traditional Masculine Paradigm – and it no longer works. From a psychological development point of view, it keeps us stuck in adolescence at a time when we need to be functional adults. To make matters worse, there is a lack of meaningful dialogue in our society about what it means to be a man.

Old assumptions must be challenged

Most Universities have very clearly delineated policies about women. Indeed, most have a vibrant Women's study curriculum. Yet not one Tertiary Institution in Australia has anything remotely similar for men. Understandably, our response is that 'men' designed





The John Wayne macho image doesn't work anymore

these institutions for themselves - so they are intrinsically 'male centric'. However, the vision of maleness used is that of the traditional – patriarchal – stereotype. This is as problematic for men as it has been for women.

Without examining the flawed assumptions behind institutional cultures, there can be no considered and well-argued dialogue. An example of this poor thinking is the way our society persistently attempts to argue for sex differences that have no scientific basis. **Men are not from Mars and women are not**

from Venus. But we are also not the same.

The gender question is not settled

In the past there were clear and ridged ideas about gender differences. Gender is the cultural construction of what the biological or sexual differences between men and women means. It has been heavily influenced by patriarchy throughout all human cultures. As a result of the work done by women to support their liberation from these patriarchal constructs, there has been a dismantling of some of the more obvious stereotypes of masculinity



and femininity. This has not only led to some confusion about gender and difference (an artefact of the idea that equality means sameness), it has also led some to believe that the problem is now solved.

Equal but still different

The first issue, of seeing men and women as the same, ignores natural sexual or biological difference. This impulse is to bolster the idea of equality. However the idea that one must be the same as someone else, whether they are male or female, in order to be equal to them, misses the whole point of equality. The ideal of equality is about equal worth as a human being. The project of equality started when men began to argue that they were of equal worth with each other, irrespective of their wealth or background. Because biological difference had been used to oppress women, they argued that it is irrelevant, which it IS in regards to being of equal worth. But it IS NOT to our lived experience of us as human beings.

The second problem is that many people believe that because the laws have changed, and women are seen to be equal with men under the law, there is no more need to pursue the issues that arise from gender stereotyping. The traditional constructs of masculinity still influence men's lives. This has led to

a portrayal of men that is ambivalent at best and highly damaging at worst.

Seeing past male stereotypes

Two new stereotypes have emerged. That of the self-sufficient, driven, materially successful and competitive man who is admired, but also derided for not being nurturing and 'present' in relationships. Alternatively there is the less successful, less competitive man who is seen as being weak and bumbling, but more "in touch with his feminine side". These men are often derided for the very qualities that they have been told they should embrace. Many men feel that they can never get it right. Subsequently they withdraw. Yet, most of us try to be good men.

One of the worst aspects of this confusion is that bullying, bragging, reckless aggression, mindless greed, politicking and posturing haunt us as misguided ideas of manhood. The alternatives have been little more than feminised ideas of masculinity.

So coming back to my original propositions: **Men and masculinity are in trouble because we are attached to an antiquated model of how to be a man. To change we need to explore what it truly means to be and live as a man in the Digital Age.**





Challenging Patriarchal Values.

Part 2: Humanism – The Intellectual Basis for Feminism.

By Lorin Josephson, R.N, R.P.N, BA (Hons) MA (Org Ethics)

Humanism is at the very core of our modern thinking. These ideas underpinned the Civil Rights Movements, Feminism, Indigenous Rights, the fight against Apartheid in South Africa, the challenge to Colonialism, and all other arguments against divisiveness and prejudice. 'Humanism is a family of views premised on a commitment to the idea that ethics and social policy must be based on our best understanding of human nature and the human condition' [Grayling. 2009, p.246].

It is my contention that we have come to a point where we need to expand our thinking and challenge what divides us. In the Western world we have the laws and rhetoric but we remain divided by a multitude of beliefs and misconceptions. All dictators know that the easiest way to conquer a group of people is to divide

them. It is also true that keeping people uneducated and ignorant of the world of ideas will enable them to be more easily oppressed. All societies that are based on the subjugation of a proportion of the members of that society, control knowledge and foster antagonisms, that prevent those people from forming a strong opposition to the status quo.

By continuing to separate ourselves into competitive and exclusive groups we undermine our capacity to move forward.

Humans, women, men, and their children, live in families and networks of connections with other humans. The manner in which we relate to each other and the way in which we value each other is the source of our wellbeing as individuals. We are relational, and our very sense

of ourselves as individuals develops within the web of relationships that we are part of from birth. Humanism speaks to the ethical background of those relationships. Initially within the family and then within the wider society. Culture and tradition provides the understandings and meanings we give to those relationships, and is the source of our values.

Unfortunately, Patriarchy infiltrates all of these relationships and remains the dominant, but mostly unrecognised ideology that informs our culture, and it maintains the traditions and values that undermine many peoples opportunity to live a good life. 'Patriarchy means the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general' [Gerner 1986, p239]. I don't think anyone can dispute that for most of our history this has been the case, and that in many parts of the world male dominance remains unchallenged.

Since the Ancient world first started to think about life without the overlay of religious belief, the focus of what constitutes a good life has been a major theme of philosophical thinking. Eudaimonia is the Greek word for flourishing. The idea that humans could flourish, and could have lives that were good to live, developed into many ideas about how this might be possible. Ancient philosophy is a rich source of ideas about this, but it wasn't until these ideas were rediscovered in the Renaissance that European

thinkers focused their attention on 'humanity in the real world, not the supposed intentions and commands of supernatural agencies to which human nature must twist to conform' [Grayling. Ibid].

'...Patriarchy was institutionalised in our very way of thinking...'

This was the beginning of the challenge to Patriarchal constructs about what it is to be human, and how humans should live. But patriarchal ideas are so deeply embedded in our thinking that it took centuries for them to be recognised. Given that Patriarchy was institutionalised in our very way of thinking about ourselves long before Western Civilisation was invented, and that it permeates all of our traditional institutions and social structures, it is not surprising that it took that long. It required a very complex set of circumstances to set the stage for the assumptions we had about human life to be challenged and eventually to change.

One of the most defining characteristics of Patriarchal thought is dualism. The concept of binary opposites that we see expressed in a lot of our thinking. A primary division is us and them. The very beginning of the idea of the 'other', someone who is not one of us. The way men and women are divided into binary opposites according to sexual difference in traditional thinking mirrors this idea of us and them. It imports the idea of the 'other'



onto half of the human race from the perspective of the other half.

This dualism –

Male / Female, then has descriptors added also in the form of dyads:
Reason / Emotion
Strong / Weak

These binary opposites were then used to divide society into two spheres of human life; the Public / Private. In the context of the tasks of human life, these two spheres not only encompass the division of labour, but also the value placed on that labour. These spheres of operation of men and women in traditional masculine dominated societies also carried within it the division of power between the sexes.

‘This was the world of ‘men’s doings’ that excluded women...’

Men operated within the Public sphere. This is the world of work, politics, money and power. This was the world of ‘men’s doings’ that excluded women, and enforced the societal norms that divided it from the private sphere. The private world of the home, domestic tasks and child rearing. The world of women where all access to money or power was mediated through the male members of the household.

Layered onto these dyads are our evaluation of the importance and usefulness of the tasks that

belong to each side of the divide. The Patriarchal dualistic either/or approach to dividing and evaluating the tasks of human life remain firmly entrenched today. The division of labour on biological grounds has a very long history, and the realities of each sexes differing physicality continues to be used to determine for individuals what they can, and can not do. That men and women are biologically different is not the issue. The problem is in the way in which we value the different aspects of human life and transport this value onto those that perform those tasks.

The Humanistic ideals that are articulated in the concept of equality do not rest on sameness because this would be nonsensical. It is not just that women and men are not the same, men are not all the same, and neither are women. Physical, intellectual and creative talents are not evenly apportioned amongst us. The moral idea of equality is premised on the idea of moral worth. That the life of an individual human is of equal worth with other individual humans regardless of sex, class, colour, race or religion. What equal rights articulates is that this recognition of each other’s humanity, ethically binds us to acknowledging each other’s right to the same opportunities to use whatever talents we have to work on having a good life.

Feminism was just one arm of the struggle for equality that evolved out of the philosophical thinking of the Enlightenment Period of intellectual enquiry in the eighteenth century in



Europe which gave us the Democracies we live in today. I will focus on this vital Humanistic endeavour in the next part of the series.

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GOOD MEN BEING GREAT

THE INTERVIEW



I met Aaron Lee Yaeger at the Book Expo America in New York. He is an impressive man, striking, built like a bear, with a huge beard that frames a warm and friendly face. It is his face that is the first hint of a man with a warm heart and a sharp mind.

Aaron has worn a lot of hats. Author, Radio DJ, Pilot, Newspaper Editor, Space Education Flight Instructor, Teacher, Game Show Host, Actor,

Ambassador, Stage Hand, Playwright, Salesman, and Director. But of all the hats, the two that mean the most to him, the two that matter the most, are Husband and Father.

He comes from a family of ballet dancers. (I know, right?) His parents met dancing at Ballet West together. So, the first few years of his life were spent backstage at productions like CATS, Dreamgirls, and A Chorus Line, where he developed a lifelong aversion to stage makeup. His parents appeared in a few movies and TV shows, like Girls Just Wanna have fun, and the Tracy Ullman show. He spent two years living in Argentina as a missionary, where he became 'addicted to mayonnaise, and developed a crippling fear of small dogs.'

In college he studied aviation, and was well on his way to becoming a commercial airline pilot when he suddenly developed a rare illness that left him with severe heart damage. Bed-ridden for about a year, Aaron began writing, as it was one of the few things he could do. He spent the

next decade writing books and taking care of his kids while his wife, Ruth, worked, waiting for that letter from publishers to come in the mail. They never did. He willingly confided that perhaps he should have written about sparkly vampires instead. When his son Stephen passed away in July of 2012, he decided that he was going to dedicate his first book to him. Determined that his wasn't going to wait for anyone's permission to be published anymore, he did it himself.

Aaron, tell Us Your Backstory.

On paper I grew up all over the place. New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake just long enough to be born before moving on. In my actual memory, though, I grew up backstage. I don't know how long or how often I was in the dressing room for CATS while my parents preformed in it. It may have only been a few days here and there, but in my mind, that's where I grew up. All the dancers in their cat makeup and their wig caps.



It was at once all so normal and all so bizarre. I'm actually still afraid of stage makeup to this day. Clowns in particular frighten me, a thing which my wife exploits when she is feeling

mischievous, which is often.

You could say the world of storytelling got into my blood back there, and it has remained ever since. I've always had a knack for storytelling. All of my teachers were certain I was going to be a writer. My parents introduced me as a future writer, and I met several of my girlfriends in my youth when a young woman came up to me and said, "hey, I heard you're a writer."

But I never thought of myself as a writer. Because writers didn't make a lot of money, and in my young mind, that was a deal breaker. You see, I had built my sense of self around the idea that I needed to make a lot of money. Or, if not a lot, at least more than what writers made. I was really tall, reaching my adult height of 6'6" at around thirteen, which was super awkward, so I thought maybe I could play basketball.

"I don't want to break his nose, that's mean."

I tried it for a while, but it didn't stick. I remember my coach yelling at me to throw out my elbows and break the guy's nose. And I thought, "I don't want to break his nose, that's mean." The term gentle giant exists for a reason. When you're tall, people don't really mess with you. To this day I've only been in one real fist fight, which involved me finally standing up for myself to this nasty little kid who had bullied me for about two years. I punched him in the back of the head, he turned around and punched me twice in the chest. I stood my ground, he turned and walked away. And that was the end of it. It was the



most undramatic fight in the history of fights, but he never bullied me again after that.

Sadly he was not the only one. My sister and I were the only Mormons in our school, and we caught a lot of flak for that. One time kids hit me with pennies so hard I had welts form all over me. My teacher sent me to the office, but no one did anything about it. Back then most adults didn't consider bullying to be a big deal, and I secretly think at least a few of them felt the same way about us as the bullies did.

'...you guys are an evil cult'

I remember a kid sitting down next to me in gym, and I got all excited. "Maybe he wants to be my friend," I wondered. "I heard you're Mormon," he said. "Yes, I am," I responded, hoping this would lead into a long conversation where we could share and get to know one another. "No offence, but you guys are an evil cult," he said.

I didn't respond. I just kind of sat there. He got up and walked away, leaving me to sit by myself.

When you don't have a lot of friends, you learn to entertain yourself. I think that started my lifelong love of fantasy. It's really pretty rational if you think about it. "This world sucks, so I'm going to find one that is better and live in that one." I think a lot of people feel that way. We should make a flag, that could be our anthem. I took it to a whole nother level. Using Lincoln Logs and mom's yarn, I would construct elaborate rope bridges where I would re-enact the

famous bridge scene from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. My sister's Pound Puppies were always Mola Ram and the Thuggee, while my Puppy Smartee was always the hero. I actually still have him here on my desk. No, really, I'll take a pic. I became an expert in slowly cutting the yarn with scissors, letting each chord snap and spin dramatically before the bridge finally broke and the villains were cast down into the river. They never died though. They just held up their wet fists and said things like, "I'll get you next time! Next time!" Inspector Gadget always made an appearance regardless of genre.

But my true passion was Legos. Legos are the greatest toy ever invented, because they are every toy. Too poor to afford Army Ants? No sweat, you can make your own legion. Parents can't buy you Jayce and the Wheeled Warriors? HA! My Monster Mind has three buzzsaws instead of just one. Do those Sky Commanders toys look awesome? I can make that myself with Legos and yarn. (Did I mention I wasted a lot of my mom's yarn over the years?)

My goals didn't change much over the years. I upgraded my Legos to Warhammer 40k figures that I painted, and my passion moved from being a contestant on Double-Dare to sending in spec scripts to Tiny-Toon adventures and Animaniacs and anxiously waiting for a response. If Stephen Spielberg is reading this, my acceptance letter seems to have gotten lost in the mail, but I'll gladly accept it if you care to resend it.

Actually I don't know if I ever sent in my scripts. I might just be making all that up. That's the problem when you

are always using your imagination, it blurs into your reality. But despite my whole life basically orbiting around creative endeavours, my career goals were always far from them. I thought about going into architecture, the Police Academy, the Army. I wanted to become a fighter pilot, but then I found out they don't take people with glasses, so I figured commercial aviation was the next best thing. I was in flight school when the 9-11 attacks occurred. I can still remember walking in to file my flight plan, only to be told that all airports had been shut down. That's when I realised that everyone was standing there motionless looking at the monitors.

I probably would have continued on to be a pilot, but then I got sick. Really sick. It's a condition called Rheumatic Fever, and while it sounds like something that wiped out all of Europe in the Middle Ages, it's actually a genetic disorder. When people get strep throat, some people's bodies malfunction, and the white blood cells begin attacking your heart valves instead of the strep cells. Suddenly I couldn't get out of bed more than a few minutes at a time, and many days I couldn't get up at all.

'...the damage was so severe we wondered if I would survive at all.'

I would never be a pilot, and the damage was so severe we wondered if I would survive at all.

For about a year I was bedridden. My wife went to work, and I stayed

at home with the kids. I felt like my life was over, and in a very real way it was. But my beautiful wife, ever the amazing companion that she is, suggested that I use the time to write. My hands still worked, and so did my eyes, even if they needed glasses. And so I began to write about a young woman named Athel who was born from the trees. The rest, as they say, is history.

What Drives You?

People drive me. Making connections with others is something I really value. I get a real high out of meeting with people and talking about the things we love. That's the real secret. People make small talk and they say that small talk is hard, that meeting people is hard. Meeting people is super easy, you just have to find the passion. I promise you, find any person, any person at random on the street, and if you ask them about what they love, you'll never run out of things to talk about.

I believe that is the core of a person. So often people say what they think they are supposed to say, or what a situation expects them to say, or what they think will be the most advantageous or keep them out of trouble. A lot of adult interaction is like that. Kids practice a more pure and natural form of communication. It is in our passions that people really shine and show their true selves.

'I love taking something that means so much to me and sharing it with others.'

That's why I love to write. I love making a connection with others through the story. I love taking something that means so much to me and sharing it with others. And if it becomes something important to them as well, then that is just the most beautiful thing in the world to me. A lot of writers create their art just for the joy of creating it, and really don't care if other people read their stories. I totally respect that but that's just not me. To me the sharing with others is the real goal. A story that no one ever reads is no different than a blank page, to my mind. And what it truly neat is that these interactions are more than simple enjoyment. We affect one another, in a very real way. Every person we come into contact with we alter their course, even if it's just a little bit. We affect everyone around us, for good or for ill, and thus the fabric of humanity is made. We each make an active contribution, adding to the substance of the world in a very real way. History is almost always written from the point of view of great leaders and scholars, but I believe most leaders and scholars are largely irrelevant. The true history of the world is fabricated by countless tiny collisions between people, each one making the tapestry a little more beautiful or a little less beautiful.

I want to weave something beautiful.

Can You Tell Me A Story About A Person Who Was Impacted By Your Cause?

Nothing makes me happier than when someone approaches me and tells me about what one of my books

meant to them. I remember a couple years back I was doing a panel at FanX in Salt Lake City about how to portray grief in fiction. I really had to fight hard to get that panel approved, and I was so happy when they said yes. That was probably one of the most special presentations I have ever done. All of my characters are me, but none so much as Athel from the Isle of Wysteria series. Her youth was my youth, her mistakes are my mistakes, her journey is my journey. If you know that character then you know me. And her dealing with grief is my experience. I don't think I've ever written anything so raw and intimate in my life, and I may never again. Several of the chapters are practically a diary of what I went through when my son died. In fact it's so intimate I can't ever bear to read it. Just getting it down on the page was like pulling out my own heart.

'It helped her feel like she wasn't alone...'

In a way it's a shame because my lighter and funnier stuff gets a lot more readers, but I've always considered Wysteria to be my flagship series. So when a lady came up to me and wanted to talk about it, I was pleased as peaches. She told me about how much it meant to her to listen to someone else candidly and honestly share their pain. In many ways it mirrored her own. It helped her feel like she wasn't alone, like there were other people who really did understand what she was going through. One of the worst things you can tell a parent who has lost a child



is that things will get better. That's a lie. You don't heal from something like that. There is no recovery. You just live the rest of your life with a hole in your heart, and that level of pain becomes your new normal.

In that moment we bonded in a very real and very special way. We connected through our shared experience and the medium of storytelling. That's the true magic of story. The tale is made up but the experiences that went into creating it were real, and the things the characters make us feel are real. We use imagination and paper to try and understand ourselves, and in the process we find truth.

That was one of the most special experiences I've ever had as a writer.

What Is The Most Important Issue You Would Like To See Changed?

Oh, that's easy. Stop trying to change people's minds and instead start trying to understand one another. I feel like too much of our conversations revolve around trying to win. Everything becomes a debate with points kept and a winner declared at the end. We only listen just deeply enough to find fault and poke holes in their reasoning. We make little attempt to actually understand where they are coming from. The problem is that when people are trying to score points, no one wins. Each person digs in their heels and refuses to budge. We become more entrenched, more inflexible, more divided. The end result of trying to change people's minds is almost always no change at all.

We are a pluralistic society. We're never going to agree on anything. And that's okay. We don't have to agree. And once you accept that in your heart, and start really listening, something truly amazing happens. We begin to see things from their point of view. We start to understand them a little better, and they begin to understand us as well. A thousand years of heated debate will yield less results than one good honest conversation, free of judgement or enmity, where two people really listen and try to understand one another. That is true communication, and when it occurs, something wondrous happens. We find out that we are not so different than we once believed. A middle ground becomes apparent, a way to coexist that neither side may have considered before. We find a way to compromise and be good neighbours.

We find each other.

What Are Your Favourite Stories?

Believe it or not, I have a real affinity for the Pixar Shorts. I think they are some of the most creative and experimental things we have seen in recent years. They occupy a very unusual place, because they are some of the only media we consume without having any kind of preconceived notion of what they are. That's very unique, and it allows them to affect us in a way other stories cannot. Allow me to share with you my three favourites:

My first would be Lava. The one with the singing volcanoes. Beautiful



music paired with a gorgeous aesthetic, it mines deep through the rocky exterior to get at the heated core we all share. The need to be loved. It's so simple but sublime, something we all understand without ever having the need to be taught. The ancient Greeks believed that all humans were born with only half a heart, destined to seek out the other half that resides in another.

'The need for love and the longing for love is a deeply human experience...'

That's where we get the traditional heart shape drawing. The ancients knew that the organ looked like, they drew it that way because they were drawing two hearts pressed together. The need for love and the longing for love is a deeply human experience, and the short is universally relatable, for we have all looked up to the sky and wished for another to stand beside.

This pairing of love is reflected in all of the creatures we see in the film. Pairs of bird, dolphins, turtles, even the sun and the moon are paired, but our volcano sits alone. Strong and bold, his strength has no meaning without someone to use it for, his beautiful voice lost to the cold stars without anyone to hear it.

The short touches on the grief of lone unfulfilled. Lava is the only Pixar short that makes me cry every time I see it. When that line is sung, "he filled the ocean with his tears, and watched his dreams disappear," I weep openly

every time. For I know what it feels like, that moment when your dream dies in front of you, and you are left with nothing. I'm actually crying right now as I type this.

But the world does not only take, but sometimes gives as well. Inspired by his song, the second volcano raises up her own voice, her song made beautiful not only by her voice, but by her desire to belong. In a beautiful moment of artistic symmetry, the love he passed to her is returned to him, and it saves him.

In the end they are brought together, their lives now filled with meaning and purpose as they live for one another. And the outline of their shared island, not two but one, is the shape of a heart, the true human heart, two hearts pressed together into a single whole. Love.

My second would be La Luna. The one where the father, son, and grandfather sweep clean the moon. So rarely are we treated to such a magical spectacle that requires no backstory. To do so would rob it of its magic. The passing of post from one generation to the next. The competence and slow wisdom of old age colliding with the energetic experimentation of youth. La Luna is a world that finds beauty in the mundane, that holds sacred that which from our characters point of view is a daily task, but seen through the eyes of the boy is wondrous and heavenly. The importance of family is front and center, the passing on of cherished traditions from one generation to the next. Why do they do this? How long have they



been doing this? When did it start? These questions remain unanswered because they are irrelevant. The fact that they do it together makes it valid. The experience of working alongside one another is what makes it special. This familial bond of the passing of the torch from father to son to grandson, this feeling of being trusted, to take part in something bigger than oneself, this moment of growth is celebrated and cherished.

Each brings a different set of skills to the table, each brings a different point of view. Sometimes they agree. Sometimes they don't. But they work together nonetheless. And that diversity enriches them all. The theme is so simple, expressed beautifully without words. When they work together, something beautiful is created. Something sacred. Something heavenly. Family.

My third favourite pick would be Day and Night. The one with the two people who create day and night vistas through them. Through a blending of light and sound, visual layers convey emotion. Sometimes simple, sometimes nuanced. The same moment plays out differently in the light than it does in the dark, and that difference in front and centre. The two are confronted by something different than what they know, something which is at first incomprehensible. Revulsion, dismissal, defiance, competition, they attempt to interact with one another to determine who is best, bragging of their talents, flaunting of their self. But this breeds only conflict, hurt feelings, and resentment. The more they fight,

the more their previous identities are lost. No longer are they defined by who they are, but are now defined increasingly as by what they are not.

Rarely are such complex and nuanced humans interactions illustrated with such sincere simplicity. As they learn to appreciate the other, they grow also to appreciate themselves as well, enjoying together things that were unavailable to them separately. Outgrowing their former antagonism, the two become friends, synergising, an equation greater than the sum of its parts. It is a metaphor for life itself, as we increasingly grow wider and wider the sphere of those around us we care for and interact with, gradually learning more and more the sacred truth:

The differences between us, enrich us all.

And when they finally embrace as true friends, they realise that they are not as different as they once thought, and they truly share for the first time, taking on the attributes of one another, incorporating what was once foreign as a part of themselves. A new expanded enlivened existence, where they no longer admire from afar but actively experience.

You can find all of my books here:
<http://www.aaronleeyeager.com/>



On Being a Man

By Aaron Lee Yaeger

The earliest thing I can recall is watching *Mary Poppins*. I was about five at the time, and the world was wondrous. The songs were catchy and their accents were funny, but there was one moment that was very special for me. And it wasn't when they join the fox hunt or have a tea party on the ceiling. It was a quiet moment. A thoughtful moment. It was the moment I realised that the story was not about the children, it was about Mr. Banks.

Mr. Banks, you see, was a diligent man. A man of vision and great self-control. He had a dream. A dream of excelling in his chosen profession. It had been his whole life up until that day. Countless tiny sacrifices, innumerable tasks that he may not have wanted to do, but he chose to do them because they needed to be done. His world was calm, well-ordered, exemplary.

'It's one of the most beautiful and sad moments in all of cinema.'

And then, through no fault of his own, everything he had ever wanted, everything that he had ever dreamed of, everything that he had ever built, was about to be taken away from him. It's one of the most beautiful and sad moments in all of cinema. Gorgeous backgrounds of the sun

setting over the buildings, the music somber and thoughtful. The streets empty. Mr. Banks walked alone. I remember watching as a child as he walked towards the bank, knowing full well that he was about to be fired and disgraced.

'All of his fears and feelings were mastered by something stronger.'

And yet, his back was straight, and his gaze was steady, and when he faced the partners, he did not lower his eyes. All of his fears and feelings were mastered by something stronger. A deep abiding self-mastery. It was then in that moment that my young mind realized something.

This is what it means to be a man.

Storytelling is our oldest art form. Long before the first instruments were tuned or the first paintings rendered, we sat around the fire and told stories to one another. It is a beautiful thing. It is a sacred thing. It is a uniquely human trait. We tell stories for many reasons, but storytelling is always the most potent when it speaks to our hearts. Through our stories we learn what it means to be us. We learn what we admire, we learn what we revile. We learn where we came from, and we learn where we are going. These things settle deeply into our hearts, and form the framework around which our entire set of values and beliefs are



built. We resolve, even if we are too young to really understand, to be like our heroes, and avoid the mistakes of our villains. The seeds of who we will become are planted in the soil of our hearts. You can learn much of any people, by listening to their favorite stories.

In many ways we are created by our stories, but we also create the stories as well. By choosing which stories to tell our children, we shape them in a very real and palpable way. That is why it is so important to tell good stories. To expose our children to heroes that we wish them to become. To admire something excellent is to begin to become something excellent. Let us take care, then, of the stories we plant within our children and ourselves. We are all the sum total of everything we have put within ourselves. So then, it behooves us to be careful in selecting what we place within us, for once placed, it remains forever.

“Your focus determines your reality.”

A wise Jedi once said, “Your focus determines your reality.” But, what does that mean? It means that this world is filled with many things, both good and bad. So whatever you seek out, you will find in abundance. If you look for the good, you will find so many examples of kindness, generosity, and benevolence in this world. The world will seem to you overflowing with good families and good friends. Likewise, if you seek out the bad, you will find countless examples of cruelty, deception, and betrayal. The

world will appear to you as a desolate, lonely, violent, and hopeless.

Whatever you seek out, you will find, and it will dominate your perception. In other words, whatever you believe the world to be, you are right.

Oh, the power we all have over the way we choose to perceive the world. I remember meeting a small child in the Formosa province of Argentina. He owned no shoes, he owned no shirt. His hut reeked of mud and parasites. His only toy was a rock which he and his friends would kick around like a soccer ball. I cannot express to you the joy those children had in kicking that rock around. The most pure and lovely laughter I have ever heard. I cannot help but contrast this moment with another. A child on vacation with his family at Disneyland. His clothes were fine, his hands full of treats, his pockets full of toys. Waiting in line for one of the most amazing rides ever to exist on the planet, he laid on his back, kicking and screaming in rage and anger.

Perception is just as important as reality, perhaps even more so.

‘Little boys need to be taught how to turn their aggression into positive behavior.’

All children need a hero, but especially little boys. Ideally one’s father will be one’s hero, but increasingly that is becoming a rarity. In my time as a foster parent, I could immediately tell which boys in my care had never had a healthy father figure in their life. Little boys need to be taught how to turn their aggression



into positive behavior. They need to be taught how to hone their competitiveness into competence and skill. They need to be taught how to refine their fearlessness into confidence. They need to learn how to use their strength to protect those around them. They need to learn how to use their courage to stand up for what is right. If they are not taught, they may never learn how to be a virtuous man. And all of that strength and aggression and competitiveness

and courage can be expressed in unhealthy and even dangerous ways.

Let us use the tools of storytelling and example to rear up the next generation of young men. We need them, and they need us. We are not whole without them. They have so many wonderful things to contribute. They can protect and provide, they can build and invent, they can create and fabricate.

The healthy masculine enriches us all.

Let's talk about patriarchy, beliefs and well-being.

By Gunter Swoboda, MAPS

I was recently talking to a colleague about the issues that men, and women for that matter, face in our society. Things such as depression, suicide, alienation and isolation. He challenged me on my idea that patriarchy is at the root of men's problems. How can an ideology account for mental illnesses?

There are many volumes of academic research and many medical treatises that define mental illness, and differentiate these conditions from psychological disorders, emotional and life problems. What I am talking about are the sorts of problems that anyone of us may face during our lives. The problems of thinking and feeling that cause depression and anxiety, or alienation and emotional turmoil.

Shakespeare wrote a line in Hamlet that reads 'Things are neither good nor bad, but thinking makes it so.' Much of my work as a therapist is to help my clients to closely examine their beliefs, attitudes and self talk. Why? Because the vast majority of psychologists and psychoanalysts have recognised that most peoples emotional disturbances have their origin in irrational beliefs, and self talk that is closely connected to the cultural, traditional and social beliefs within their community.

Albert Ellis, a prominent psychologist and founder of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, most clearly articulated this reality about how we filter the world around us through our beliefs, and the imperatives that are expressed as the 'musts' that drive our behaviour.



The three Major Musts

Ellis suggests that there are 'Three Major Musts' that are at the root of our emotional distress.

1. I must do well and win the approval of others or else I am no good.
2. Other people must do "the right thing" or else they are no good and deserve to be punished.
3. The conflict between 'Life must be easy, without discomfort or inconvenience' and 'You must be strong, tough and successful by ignoring how you and others feel.'

Add these to the core patriarchal values of being territorial, hierarchical, acquisitional and competitive, and we have a toxic mix, laying the foundation for anxiety, depression, alienation and ultimately violence.

Where's it start?

This process doesn't start in adulthood. It is a process that happens developmentally. Patriarchy interferes with how boys are nurtured and because we are surrounded by men who are struggling themselves. Boys are quickly taught that suppressing feelings such as anger, sadness, hurt and fear are important functions of being masculine. Boys learn that they must not cry. They learn that winning is more important than cooperation. Boys learn to displace empathy by erecting defences against their own and others feelings. Therefore, in their inner world, boys experience a serious wound to their emerging sense of self and a deep sense of alienation only

to be compensated for with a mask of superiority and invincibility. In therapy this is recognised as the narcissistic mask behind which boys and men learn to think mainly about themselves and not so much about others.

And that makes us men susceptible to not dealing well with stress. It makes us defensive and reactive. It leaves us confused about what we should prioritise, and it makes us vulnerable when the unexpected occurs. Without a good understanding of our own, and others emotional states, we have much less resilience when having to cope with life problems.

Patriarchal ideology leads us to believe we can control our lives in a way that is unrealistic, and so when things go wrong we automatically believe that we as men have failed. Not measuring up to our own expectations is often the pathway to depression when we internalise our emotions, or aggression if we externalise them. And the more patriarchal a culture, community or institution is, the more likely it is to create men that are emotionally out of touch, have reduced empathy and feel alienated.

Empathy: The cornerstone to help men grow.

Those of you who have been following my blogs know by now that the idea of helping men to rethink masculinity, is about enabling men to begin to de-construct the values enshrined in the patriarchal ideology, and it's dominance in our institutions, organisations and education.



Patriarchy interferes with our capacity for self awareness which makes it almost impossible for us to be aware of the emotional states of others. When we don't understand our feelings we are vulnerable to acting out with aggression. Now, if we want to begin to prevent the prolific use of violence in our culture we need, and yes here we go again boys: 'we do need to be more in touch with our own feelings and be more attuned to the emotions of others'. And here lies one of the great challenges I have working with men.

How can we help men increase their emotional awareness and range and increase their ability to empathise with others?

Although there has been a continued emphasis on making men more emotionally aware and expressive, less attention has been given to empathy. It is my view that any discussion about masculinity that does not include a reflection on the importance of empathy in the evolution of men, is missing the point.

Most importantly, research has shown repeatedly, that empathy can be taught and enhanced throughout our lives. And an effective place to participate in that allows men to grow, is in fact in men's groups that are well facilitated.

But what about just starting the journey for yourself?

Roman Krznicar, the author of *Empathy: Why it matters and how to get it*, talks about Six Habits of Highly Empathic People.

- **Habit 1:** Cultivate curiosity about strangers.
- **Habit 2:** Challenge prejudices and

discover commonalities.

- **Habit 3:** Try another person's life.
- **Habit 4:** Listen hard and open up.
- **Habit 5:** Inspire mass action and social change
- **Habit 6:** Develop an ambitious imagination.

The Challenge

Now here is my challenge to you:

1. Go to this article and read the details of the habits.
<https://tinyurl.com/ybd4ccpu>
2. Try the habits for 30 days,
3. Think about how you may benefit from being part of Making Good Men Great.

Next

1. Teach your children by modelling what you are focusing on.
2. Bring it into your community by talking about it.
3. Take it into your work place and make it part of your values set.

Summary

Patriarchy reduces men's emotional awareness and expression, it inhibits empathy and therefore reduces or blocks our ability to be intimate in our relationships. The consequence is living in a world wherein we feel lonely, alienated and often enraged.

Our job as a man is to unlearn the values handed to us in patriarchy and come out from behind the mask to become more emotionally attuned, more empathic and more authentic.

These are the core steps to learning to thrive and to move from being good to great.



Call to Action

If your choice is to be Great then it is time to take action.

We are constantly evolving psychologically, socially, philosophically and physically but we rarely pause to consider what has contributed to us making the decisions we make and how we can change our focus to improve who we are as an individual. There are often major triggers that challenge us and develop new skills such as a promotion, a new relationship or our own self-awareness.

Our programmes draw on the core fields of philosophy, contemporary psychology and neuroscience to take you on a practical, goal directed journey to identify what makes you 'you', to define your aspirations and set a path to achieving them. Most importantly the programmes help you to understand the ramifications of patriarchy in your daily life and shows you how to de-construct these damaging beliefs in order to live a more fulfilling life, have better relationships and to make a difference to others.

The programmes have five phases that recognise that our thinking affects how we feel. These feelings in turn can influence the decisions and actions we take. Fundamental beliefs about ourselves need to be understood in order to set the right goals, identify and leverage our strengths and also to become mindful of our weaknesses and how these can be improved.

'What makes a Good Man Great?'

is the central question this programme challenges you to address, and provides you with the tools to define your path to greatness – personally and professionally.

Logistics

One-on-one or group sessions to establish meaningful dialogue.

Ten sessions of an hour-and-a-half, spread over 10 months which provides time for reflection and action of key concepts.

Location: Group sessions take place in our office in Mona Vale and individual sessions can be face to face or via Skype or FaceTime.

There are other ways to get involved. Join in online on Facebook, Twitter and with the Blog.

[Facebook.com/GoodMenGreat](https://www.facebook.com/GoodMenGreat)

[Twitter.com/GunterSwoboda](https://twitter.com/GunterSwoboda)

[GoodMenGreat.com/blog-medium](https://www.GoodMenGreat.com/blog-medium)

But foremost get involved in a movement that will make a difference by Making Good Men Great.

