

Health Perils of Being a Man

by Noel Peterson, Austin

Remember that in order to protect one's family and care for them a man must be in full working order himself.

The quality of men's health impacts not only themselves, but their families and loved ones as well. The Center for Disease Control reports that men die at higher rates than women and are the victims of over 93% of workplace deaths. The increased death rates come from engaging in hazardous behaviors; taking extraordinary physical risks, overdoing things like work or physical activity or just plain not paying attention to the body. These behaviors are exacerbated by men's difficulty to connect emotionally. Generally, men feel uncomfortable expressing their feelings and instead isolate themselves. In so doing, men experience feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Because men isolate, they experience difficulty in relationships. The capacity for meaningful and fulfilling intimacy can be problematic.

Why are men prone to such health risks and behaviors? Men receive unhealthy messages of what manhood is. Images of bravado and "macho-men" are encouraged and celebrated in our culture. Men try to live up to these unrealistic and false images. As an attempt to avoid feeling weak or insignificant, men lose sight of their purpose, live unfulfilled lives and adopt unhealthy habits that lead to increased health risks.

So, what can men do to transcend these unhealthy messages of manhood and take better care of themselves. First, decide that health is important. Remember that in order to protect one's family and care for them a man must be in full working order himself. Second, cultivate an awareness of the body and how it is feeling. Aches and pains should not be ignored. They are the bodies signal that something is wrong. In the same way a car's oil needs to be changed after 3000 miles; the body also needs frequent attention. Third, develop a goal and plan for health. Good goals could include eating better; exercising routinely, developing a yoga practice, seeking relationship counseling, visiting a doctor or getting involved with natural health practices. A healthy plan also involves cultivating a proper support network. Enlist the help of friends and family to help achieve desires of improved health. Find a workout buddy or encouraging person to be accountable to.

Fourth, do it! Nothing happens without action. Reach out to a support group if there are obstacles to getting started towards the goal. Go back to step 3 and re-evaluate the plan if it falls by the wayside after a couple of weeks.



Fifth, enjoy the new changes! Rewards are appropriate after a few months of maintaining a new, healthy life. Get in a new habit of awareness by noticing how much better the body feels. Be grateful for increased energy or better sleep. Celebrate!

It's possible for men to experience greater qualities of life that impact them personally, as well as for the families and friends they love!

Noel Peterson is founder and practitioner at Austin Clinic of Homeopathy located at 9414 Anderson Mill Road where he specializes in men's health issues. Go to www.austinclinicofhomeopathy.com or just call (512) 299-2131 for a private consultation now. See ad on page 8.

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