

# Mental Health and Healthy Men

A conversation with therapist Jimmy Hill

Tuesday, March 30th, 2021

# Introduction

## About Jimmy and Trailhead Treatment Center

- Therapist for seven years
- Opened Trailhead in 2019
- Specialize in men's mental health
- Treat men from 18 to 60 years old
- Work with emotional intimacy deficits, complex trauma, compulsive sexual behavior, process addictions, sexual minority men, college aged men



# Today's Agenda

- The root of men's mental health issues
- Common mental health problems men experience
- Reasons men often avoid therapy
- Tips for finding the right therapist
- Signs it might be time to find a therapist
- Mental health resources

# The Root of Men's Mental Health Issues

# **Psychological Patriarchy**

## **(Real, 2002)**

- Traditional gender socialization asks both boys and girls to “halve themselves.”
- Female children are allowed to maintain emotional expressiveness but are systematically discouraged from developing their assertive selves - their “voice”
- Male children are encouraged to develop their assertive selves but are systematically pushed away from exercising their emotional expressivity
- Messages to boys: “Boys don’t cry”, “Don’t be afraid”, etc.

**“Recent research tells us that boys from all walks of life evidence a clear, measurable decrease in expressiveness and connection by the ages of three, four and five. By the time most boys hit kindergarten, they show significant drops in their willingness to express strong emotion [or] openly demonstrate their dependency [on others]. Before our sons learn how to read, they have read the stoic code of masculinity.”**

***How Can I Get Through to You?* by Terrance Real**

# Psychological Patriarchy

- Teaches women not to know
  - Reduces their ability to trust their own intelligence
  - Increases caretaking behaviors
  - Services men's egos
- Teaches men not to care
  - Reduces emotional intelligence
  - Decreases empathy
  - Decreases connection and healthy communication
- Supports Traditional Masculine Norms and Toxic Masculinity

# Toxic Masculinity

## What is it?

- “Toxic masculinity is characterized by a drive to dominate and by endorsement of misogynistic and homophobic views.” (Parent, Gobble, & Rochlen, 2019)
- “Characterized by the enforcement of rigid gender roles, but also involves the need to aggressively compete [with others] and dominate others.” (Kupers, 2005)

# Traditional Male Role Norms

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(Mahalik et al., 2003)

- Winning
- Emotional control
- Risk-taking
- Violence
- Power over women
- Dominance
- Playboy
- Self-reliance
- Primacy of work
- Heterosexual self-presentation
- Pursuit of status

# Common Mental Health Problems Men Experience

# Common Mental Health Problems

## The effect of traditional masculine norms

- **Emotional control and self-reliance**
  - Unwillingness to discuss feelings (Heath, Brenner, Vogel, Lannin, & Strass, 2017)
  - Decreased help-seeking behaviors (McDermott, Levant, Hammer, Borgogna, & McKelvey, 2019)
  - Strongest predictors of men's mental problems (Wong, Ho, Wang, & Miller, 2017)
- **Playboy, self-reliance and risk taking**
  - Increased psychological distress (Wong, Owen, & Shea, 2012)

# Common Mental Health Problems

## The effect of traditional masculine norms

- **Heterosexual self-presentation**
  - Decreased HIV testing (Parent, Torrey, & Michaels, 2012)
- **Power over women**
  - Associated with problematic or compulsive pornography usage (Borgogna, McDermott, Aita, & Kridel, 2019)

# Common Mental Health Problems

## Covert Depression (Real, 2002)

- Women tend to internalize their distress
- Men tend to externalize their distress
- Clinicians miss the diagnosis 70 percent of the time in males
- While depressed women typically feel disempowered, depressed men feel disconnected

# **Common Mental Health Problems**

## **Covert Depression (Real, 2002)**

- Three indicators or types of symptoms in men:
  1. Seek to escape via substances or behaviors
  2. Isolate from close, meaningful relationships
  3. Experience increases in irritability and emotional outbursts

# Reasons Men Often Avoid Therapy

# Reasons Men Avoid Therapy

- Feels at odds with how most men communicate
- Tried therapy before and didn't like the therapist
- Being made to go by a parent or romantic partner
- Being vulnerable is scary

# Tips For Finding the Right Therapist

# Finding a Therapist

- **Are they clinically trained and licensed?**
  - Life Coaches, pastors, friends and family can not provide clinical support
- **Do they have consistent availability?**
  - More frequent sessions early in the process is generally more helpful.

# Finding a Therapist

- **Are they culturally competent?**
  - This is important for minority populations.
  - It's not your job to *constantly* educate your therapist around issues that are specific to your minority community.
  - It is important to provide your therapist with your unique perspective

# Finding a Therapist

- **Does the therapist specialize in your presenting problem?**
  - Ask about their credentials, training, and competency.
  - Be cautiously curious about therapists that say they specialize in 40 different issues.
  - Look for therapists that have certifications in the specific issue you are wanting to address.
- **Don't limit yourself to Knoxville or the city you live in**
  - Telehealth provides opportunities to meet with any therapist (that provides telehealth) across the state.

# Finding a Therapist

- **Maybe you have found a therapist that meets the above criteria. How do you feel in the session?**
  - Does your therapist try to give you advice or do they help you access your own inner clarity about what you need?
  - Do they listen to you or do they talk excessively?
  - Do they over relate to your problems by telling their own stories, or do they remain curious and ask questions to help you obtain clarity?
  - What do you feel in your body during the session? Tension or Safety?
  - Do you feel seen, heard and understood?
  - Do you feel safe enough to address concerns you may have with your therapist?

# Signs It Might Be Time To Find a Therapist

# Mental Health Resources

- **UTK Counseling Center**
  - [counselingcenter.utk.edu/](http://counselingcenter.utk.edu/)
- **Psychology Today** - Local, State and National Listings
  - [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com)
- **Therapy for Black Girls**
  - [therapyforblackgirls.com/](http://therapyforblackgirls.com/)
- **Black Mental Health Alliance**
  - [blackmentalhealth.com/connect-with-a-therapist/](http://blackmentalhealth.com/connect-with-a-therapist/)
- **National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association**
  - [naapimha.org/aanhpi-service-providers](http://naapimha.org/aanhpi-service-providers)
- **Therapy for Latinx**
  - [therapyforlatinx.com](http://therapyforlatinx.com)
- **Black, Disabled and Proud: College Students with Disabilities**
  - [blackdisabledandproud.org](http://blackdisabledandproud.org)
- **WERNATIVE** - Resources for Native American students
  - [wernative.org/](http://wernative.org/)
- **National Association of the Deaf** - Mental Health Resources
  - [nad.org/resources/health-care-and-mental-health-services/mental-health-services/](http://nad.org/resources/health-care-and-mental-health-services/mental-health-services/)
- **TN.gov** - Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
  - [tn.gov/humanservices/ds/bvis-tn-business-enterprises/tbe-services-for-the-blind-visually-impaired.html](http://tn.gov/humanservices/ds/bvis-tn-business-enterprises/tbe-services-for-the-blind-visually-impaired.html)

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