

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DEAN DYER

PRESIDENT MEN'S ADVISORY NETWORK INC. (M.A.N.)

I.C.C.W.A.

BOULEVARD CENTRE, FLOREAT, PERTH.

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Introduction

Hello everybody and welcome along to this wonderful event.

My name is Dean Dyer and one of the things I do is lead the committee of the Men's Advisory Network or M.A.N., which is the peak body for men and boys health and wellbeing in this state.

My day job is doing seminars and training around 'better meetings, better teams and better businesses'.

Some of us are working to transcend abusive ways of being for men, to end abuse in every aspect of society, beginning with me and my gender.

My expertise is definitely blokes-focused, so a lot of what I will say here today is male-centric. I understand there are other groups in our community who also suffer and have their problems to deal with.

Please take what you can apply for yourself and leave anything that may not be useful or fit for you.

I am very likely preaching to the converted in this room today, because most of you work at the coalface, but I'd like to point out that we have a problem.

So, I intend to share with you some more about these three things:

1. *Our problems as men* -

- How we can be ignorant and suffer!
- Think we are immortal!
- Fail to take responsibility for ourselves!

2. *How this comes about* -

- We teach boys this!
- We don't grow men up!
- Adolescent tyrants rule!

3. *What can be done* -

- Old ways and force do not work!
- Men can change!
- We need new models!

Body

1. OUR PROBLEMS AS MEN

We live in a city that rates in the top 5 or 10 best places to live in the world, in the 'lucky country' but there is something not quite right for men.

Because of the work that they do and the lifestyles that they lead men are at risk of dying or being seriously injured from road accidents, falls, work accidents, drowning or violence. Men are also more likely to die of alcohol abuse, heart disease, cancer or to commit suicide. It is also concerning that two out of three are overweight or obese.

5 men per hour are dying from preventable conditions.

5 men per day commit suicide. That's a national crisis. (If they were whales on a beach somewhere we would have hundreds of people down there working hard to save them).

Children are growing up in a 'violence soaked' environment, TV, video games, media etc.

I recently read the A.I.H.W. report on Male Health June 2011

I'm sure a lot of you know this, but here's a snapshot -

- 48% percent of men have experienced a mental health issue, most men do not take their health and wellbeing seriously, and 1 in 6 men in Australia don't use their Medicare card.
- Mary Jerram Magistrate State Coroner NSW, said recently about young male suicides "I actually think they don't understand that they're mortal! They get stressed, overcome with anger and have no impulse control."

A recent survey (Friday, 01 July 2011) in Medical Forum WA asked GP's and Specialists these questions:

1. Serious violent behaviour in young men on the streets has increased. From this list, please choose those FOUR things you consider most likely lead to such violent behaviour:

- Family breakdown 67%
- A violent upbringing 67%
- Exposure to violent media 54%
- Relationship problems 43%
- Permissive parenting 41%
- Mental illness 40%
- Bullying 27%
- Lack of other physical outlets 25%
- Absent fathers 23%
- No-one to confide in 13%

2. For any violent act by a young man, please tick the single item you feel is the strongest catalyst for violence at the time:

- Alcohol consumption 69%
- Illicit drug use 17%
- Perceived lack of consequences 9%
- Trying to impress mates 1%
- Ethnic differences 1%

Steve Biddulph, the Australian family psychologist sums it up pretty well in his latest book called 'The New Manhood' which came out late 2010.

“Men, on average, live for 5 years less than women do. They also have higher death rates in every age category. Out of the top seven causes of death in Australia, men excel in the numbers sometimes by as much as two or three times the number of women who die of the same cause.

Men routinely fail at close relationships, 50% of marriages break down and divorces are initiated by the woman in four out five cases.

Over 90% of acts of violence are carried out by men, and 70% of the victims are men.

In schools, approximately 90% of children with behavior problems are boys, and 85% of children with learning difficulties are also boys.

Young men aged from 15-25 have 3 times the death rate of young women, and these deaths are all from preventable causes – motor vehicles and road trauma being the greatest cause.

Men make up the majority of the homeless on our streets.

Men make up over 90% of gaol populations.

The leading cause of death among men aged 15 – 44 is self – inflicted death.

Mental health, physical health and mortality – men dominate every category, just being male is the biggest risk factor of all.”

If all those men and boys were able to speak up, it would be a cry of anguish!

It seems to me the old ANZAC, bronzed Aussie digger values' of mateship, courage; sacrifice and endurance sorely need of a review.

In particular the 'sacrifice and endurance' parts, when it costs so much in men's lives, and ripples out into women's and children's lives as well.

I know I have and plenty of other men have sacrificed their health and wellbeing on the altar of so called 'achievement' and 'success'.

2. HOW THIS COMES ABOUT?

What is up with Aussie 'masculinity'?

Men are taught to grow up a certain way in our culture, 'man up', 'stand strong', 'suppress emotion', 'and be wary of other men' and for God's sake whatever you do, 'do not cry or be vulnerable.'

Isolation, competition and homophobia are crippling us men. It is time we did the opposite; connect, collaborate and learn what love really is.

I'm sure a lot of you know that young men put on masks at a young age in some way as a 'shame response'.

Some of those masks are still on for many of us men.

Ridiculing and shaming young boys into becoming 'man machines' and work robots, it's the opposite of what we want men to be like if we want them to be mentally healthy and well.

Yes, we are training boys to turn into men who suffer and die early deaths.

I think the old model of masculinity is now obsolete and out of date.

The Difference between Boy and Man Psychology

The shift from boy to healthy man psychology is not one that occurs naturally. The difference in the two is so fundamental that a significant event is required for this to happen in a timely fashion. Without such an event there is a risk that boy psychology will persist well into adult years.

Boy Psychology –

- Constantly seeks acknowledgment
- Power is for me
- I am the centre of the universe
- I will live forever
- I am ruled by my emotions
- I take no responsibility for my actions
- I want a mother

Healthy Man Psychology -

- Has a mission
- Power is for sharing
- I am part of the universe
- I know I am mortal
- I can stand with my emotions
- I take full responsibility for my actions
- I seek relationships with the feminine

The bridge between boyhood and manhood is a Rite of Passage -

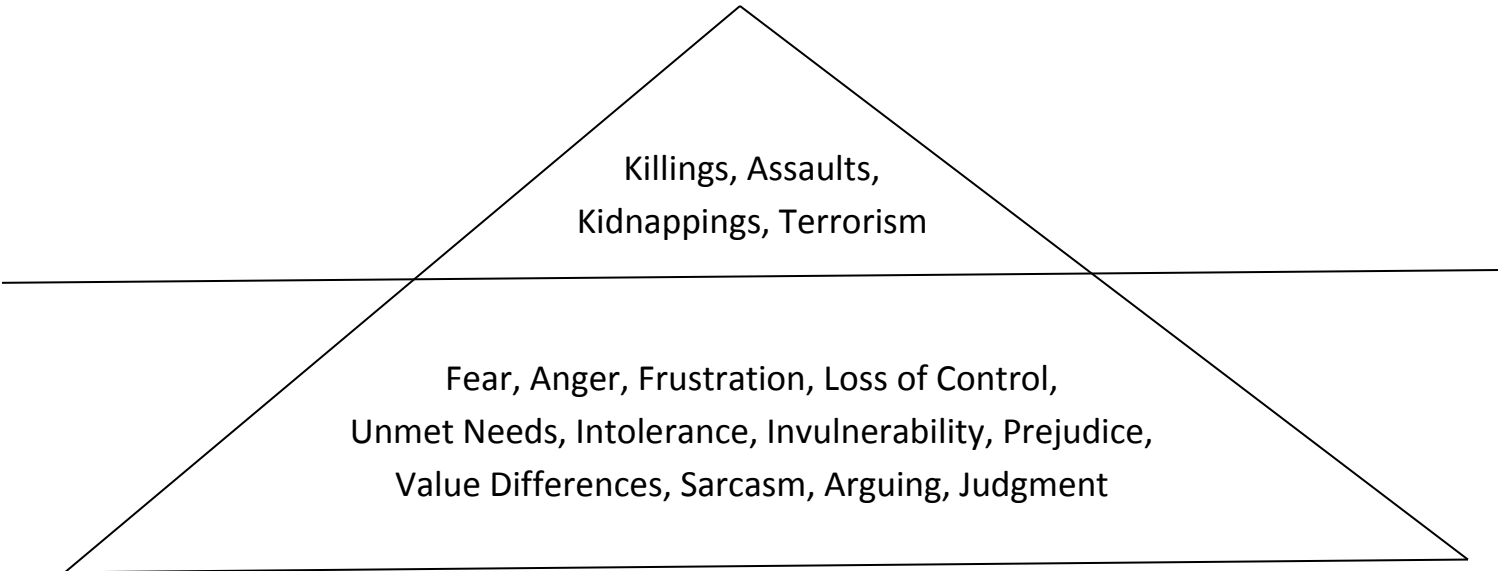
Dr Arne Rubinstein - CEO Pathways Foundation.

Another problem is that a lot of us fail to recognize the roots of violence.

Violence: 'force or power used to damage or injure'.

'Violence Iceberg'

Physical Violence

A diagram of an iceberg with a horizontal line representing the water surface. The top, smaller portion of the iceberg is above the line and contains the text 'Killings, Assaults, Kidnappings, Terrorism'. The larger, submerged portion is below the line and contains the text 'Fear, Anger, Frustration, Loss of Control, Unmet Needs, Intolerance, Invulnerability, Prejudice, Value Differences, Sarcasm, Arguing, Judgment'.

Killings, Assaults,
Kidnappings, Terrorism

Fear, Anger, Frustration, Loss of Control,
Unmet Needs, Intolerance, Invulnerability, Prejudice,
Value Differences, Sarcasm, Arguing, Judgment

Non-Physical Violence

Thoughts

Words

Actions

Family, workplace, social, community...

There is not much point in sorting out the 'tyrant' out there somewhere when we first need to sort out our own inner 'tyrant'.

2. WHAT CAN BE DONE?

I've worked with men all my adult life, the last 12 years exploring what it means to be a man and helping other men to do the same. I get to see what lies behind the masks of men and I can tell you it is a thing of beauty.

So, what works with us blokes and what does not work with us?

Here are some things that do not work so well with helping men to change:

- ❖ Blame
- ❖ Shame
- ❖ Chastising
- ❖ Intimidation
- ❖ Put-downs
- ❖ Punitive
- ❖ Telling and insisting
- ❖ Removing responsibility
- ❖ No accountability

Versus, here are some things that do work with helping men to change:

As men grow up they learn the 'teacher' not the 'subject' so;

- ❖ Mentor
- ❖ Guide
- ❖ Show
- ❖ Model
- ❖ Support
- ❖ Encourage
- ❖ Non-violent communication
- ❖ Allow reflection, self-exploration
- ❖ Empower to do it their way
- ❖ Encourage responsibility by modeling
- ❖ Hold accountable, with compassion

To sum this up, men and boys need to get the message that they are wonderful, valued, amazing human beings and they have so much to offer our families and communities, just the way they are. Beautifully imperfect!

Recently I had cause to do some reflection on bullying.

Bully: a person who uses strength or power to hurt or frighten others.

Bullying: behave as a bully towards, to intimidate.

What if we were to do the opposite of this?

The opposite of hurt, frighten and intimidate...

Is to heal and love, reassure and comfort, pacify, calm and encourage.

Interesting huh?

This is an essential learning about how to treat others and probably more importantly, about how we treat ourselves.

Because, as you know, we can only do for others what we have already done for ourselves.

So to a description of a 'new leader', the sort of people we need more of:

The energy of the new leader is needed today from men and women of conscience.

New leaders distinguish themselves from the 'old leader', the obsolete and morally bankrupt soldier of fortune, whose actions are centered around personal gain and whose purpose is harmful to themselves and those around them.

The 'old leader' uses machismo, rage, bullying, criticism, manipulation and control to intimidate and gain respect through fear.

The new leader is someone who looks inside themselves, does battle with the demons in their own soul and emerges with maturity and grounded strength.

Conclusion

So, I have shared with you three things;

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The good news is we are developing a culture of men who can help themselves and help other men and boys to grow and be well. Doing it locally and within their families.

If we help our boys to grow into healthy balanced, connected and caring men, helping them to become more aware of these issues and pitfalls, help them to be less stressed, seeking solace in alcohol and drugs.

Or worse, killing themselves, either slowly with drugs and alcohol or quickly with cars and ropes.

Helping older men to realise their wisdom and eldership, the capacity they have to bless and honour a younger man, indeed many younger men.

Then, our relationships, our families, our workplaces and our communities, will begin to flourish in new and amazing ways.

The benefits will ripple out for all to notice, especially the women and children who really deserve to have the best of their men, don't you agree?

I love this saying:

“If a man is in his healthy masculine power-his archetypal ‘King’ energy, then all those in his home, family, and community will flourish and thrive.”

I hope to meet you and talk about ways we can work together on this soon.

Thanks so much for the work you all do, your willingness and efforts for the health and wellbeing of boys and men in this state.

Thank you.