

Learning to “Take Care of Your Sh*t”

Men often talk about “man rules” and the things that we *need* to do in order to hold onto our proverbial “man cards”. The problem is that many men are *bad* at taking care of themselves and owning their responsibilities. Some guys call it “taking care of your ‘shit’ ”.

What usually follows that type of statement is a list of “manly men doing manly things” like basic grooming skills, knowing how to give a proper handshake, how to treat a woman, dressing properly (including tying a necktie when appropriate) for any occasion, and being able to carry on a coherent conversation.

It also means having some basic “man-skills” such as knowing how to swing a hammer and use power tools, being able to fix (or at least maintain) your own car, being able to unclog a toilet, play poker, cook a steak, and manage your own finances and schedule once you hit a certain age. In fact, here is a great list of 100 Skills Every Man Should Know.

Often, men don’t even know that if they can’t care for themselves, they have a difficult time caring for those in their circle of influence.

It’s Not Easy Being a Man Today

Being a man used to be simple; he was a leader, the beacon of

strength and order for his family in a chaotic world. We all had roles given to us through biology and reinforced by society. Men were strong. There were clear signposts on what was masculine and what was feminine. The rules were handed down from father to son for generations. It was a simpler time and a simpler society.

Today, being a man is much different. The roles are murkier and solid male role-models are fewer and fewer. More men are confused in their roles as the traditional concept of "manhood" is increasingly uncommon. More children are now raised by single mothers. Many men abdicate their responsibilities and fatherlessness is an epidemic worthy of attention as a national emergency. In the United States today, there are nearly 13.6 million single parents raising over 21 million children.

Categories of Self-care for Men

Personally, I've determined we need to take care of ourselves, physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually.

Emotionally



It's very rare that men make their mental health a priority. More often than not, we rely on others – primarily women – to attend to our emotional needs. We even find it hard to admit we even have emotional needs, nor act on those emotions. We learn that we aren't supposed to complain or acknowledge when things are going badly for us. We are supposed to remain stoic because admitting to having problems means showing weakness. But we need to learn to manage our emotions (see my last series on a Man and his Emotions).

Physically



Many guys can hit the gym several times a week and build biceps that look respectful in a tee-shirt. But how many

actually manage their diet, alcohol consumption, and have a diverse list of activities to manage their overall wellbeing? Your responsibility is to keep your body healthy so you do not become a burden to your family. Take your vitamins, exercise regularly, keep that annual check-up with your doctor scheduled, get plenty of sunshine, and fresh air; all of which are keys to remaining a healthy man.

Financially



The concept of “man-as-provider” in the traditional role of the one singularly responsible for a home’s financial security is no longer the norm. A two-income household is needed now to provide an equivalent lifestyle to what a man’s parents or grandparents enjoyed. Being financially responsible though requires you to think long-term and smartly about housing, insurance protection & wills, and your retirement plans.

Spiritually



The Bible calls men to lead their families. While it clearly affirms the equality of men and women (Galatians 3:28), there are also varying opinions about spiritual leadership in the home. Generally, if a husband and wife have a healthy relationship, they make decisions together as equals, looking to Christ as the ultimate Head of their home. They assume tasks based on their individual strengths and share some areas. But in the final analysis, the husband is mandated to carry the greater responsibility for leadership. This means making sure the spiritual growth of his family is a priority by attending church frequently, understanding The Bible, and praying with his spouse.

It also means looking to Jesus Christ as your role model, which requires you to be a servant-leader.

Jesus put it this way: *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:25-28).

Internal and External Care

One of the most common ideals for men is that we learn to show any weakness which reduces manhood and masculinity into an *external* factor, something that can be taken from us or destroyed.

The problem is that we need to admit we may need to take care of ourselves internally as well.

Men tend to neglect their own well-being for the sake of being the provider but we also need a certain level of willingness to look inward and cultivate some self-awareness.

Part of keeping yourself well means accepting that you and you alone are responsible for your life.

But this doesn't mean you are alone in this journey.

Guys with God Buddies among their circle of friends will find encouragement and guidance for their journey as a man. But they can also find support physically, emotionally, financially and spiritually from their wife, if they are married.

So that begs the question: **Can your wife be your best friend and supporter for all of your needs as a man?**



Stay with me as I explore about that in the next post.