

Men in Relationship

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The following is based on John Welwood's perspective of Men in contemporary western culture. It is a key component in the dynamics found in a family business. Not only men are an important part of families in business, but also an astounding majority of family businesses are founded and lead by men.

Welwood thinks the male spirit is always searching for challenges and willing to take risks. Men today tend to define their challenges in terms of outer pursuits and conquests. However, most men are primitive in their relationships with women.

For thousands of years men have defined heroism, as separating from women and setting out on their own. And indeed breaking free from dependency on mother and women in general to forge a path of one's own is an essential step in male development. The problem is that many men stop there, never realizing that there are bigger possibilities for male development.

There are three stages of male development. The first one is unity with the feminine, it starts when the fetus is in the mothers womb and goes until the child identifies himself as a boy. The second stage is a painful stage for the boy, the separation. Many men remain stuck in one of the first two stages. The third stage is for a man to root himself more firmly in genuine masculine power by coming down to earth, into his body and relating with his feelings. That way he can become receptive of what women can teach him, thus creating healthy intimate relationships.

Men rarely admit to be afraid of women, but it takes great courage for a man to meet a woman with open heart and mind and be receptive of what she has to teach. On one level it is because his mother was once all-powerful when he was young and helpless. On another level it is because a man's fear of woman reflects his distrust of his own inner soft, receptive side.

In western culture, most men spend their lives dedicated to acquiring accomplishments. That is because the traditional model of the culture is that men should be dynamic on the physical plane and women on the inner plane. However when men reach their midlife without having a strong feminine influence to shake up their inner energy and feelings, all their accomplishments would feel hollow.

The way women usually play the role of activators is by demanding of men more than what men are willing or able to give, feelings, intimacy, communications and expressions of warmth. Men are usually challenged by this demands because for a man revealing his feelings might be taking him beyond his area of competence or expertise.

Men often resist revealing their feelings because they think that would be a feminine way of expression. The truth is that to be honest and present with one's experience is equally challenging for both men and women. For men the issue is to be too far from their feelings, the women's issue is usually to be too identified with them.

Honest adult communication is only possible when there is a balancing of strength and softness. Being in touch with feelings, often a woman's strength and detached reflection by stepping back away from feelings, generally a man's strength.

An issue that many men have is their aggression coming out mindlessly, even on their partners. This is derived from men never developing a healthy relationship with the energy of anger.

It is natural for men to have more anger because for thousands of years, they depended on it for hunting, fishing and fighting to defend their territories. However if a man suppresses this energy he becomes a “soft male” lacking in direction and confidence and if he identifies with it he can be either dangerous or act like an annoying little boy.

Reference:

Welwood, J. (1996). *Love and Awakening: Discovering the sacred path of intimate relationship*. New York: Harper Collins.