

Reconstructing Masculinity(ies)

Recognizing that “men” and “masculinity” are socially constructed, let’s consider the making of men.

A. Traditional Masculinity

The Man Box of So-Called Real Men

Thinking of our dominant culture of traditional masculinity, write the marks of a “real man” inside the box and write outside the box what males are called who don’t fit in the Man box.



A REAL MAN ...

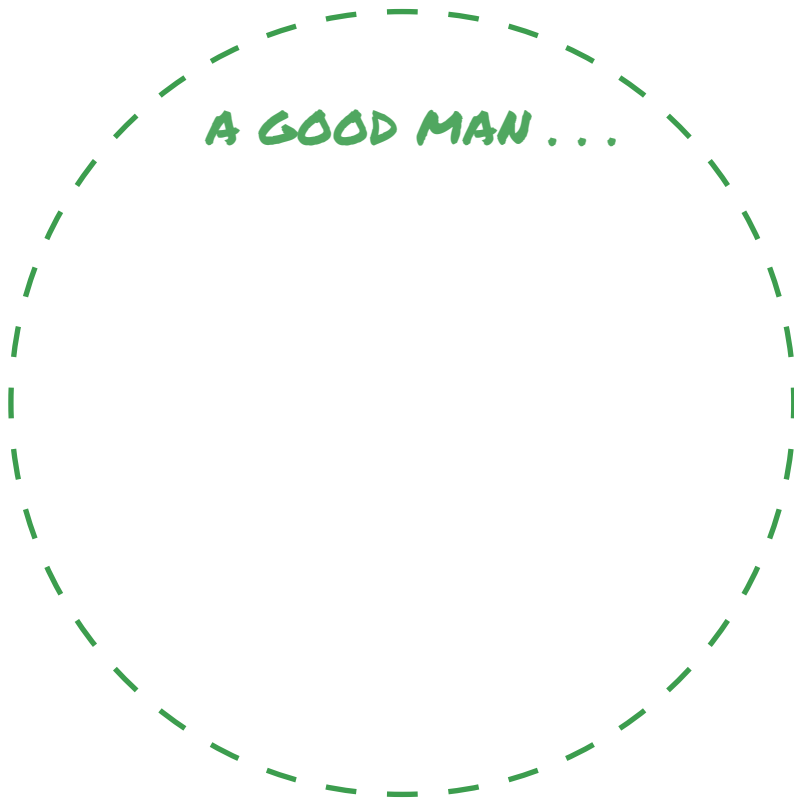
Discussion Questions:

1. Which of these traits can be healthy? Which of these may be a problem?
2. How are boys and men boxed in or controlled by these social definitions?
3. How are boys and men treated when they don’t fit these social norms?
How does this impact them?
4. How does this kind of masculinity look upon and relate to other genders?
How does this impact them?

B. Healthy Masculinities

The Circle of Good Men

Imagining healthy masculinity, write characteristics of a good man within the circle. Consider what Jesus embodied and how he related to others.



Discussion Questions:

1. Which of these traits are especially important for Anabaptists?
2. What difference might it make in how we're formed as males to define healthy masculinity in these terms?
3. What difference might it make in the world for males and other genders if men lived out this kind of masculinity?
4. What kind of man do I want to be? What would I want said at my memorial service, reflecting on my life as a good man?

If you want, pull findings together from this exercise to create summary lists of traditional masculinity and healthy masculinity.

Traditional Masculinity

Healthy Masculinity

You might compare this to what bell hooks describes, drawing on the work of Olga Silverstein and Ronald Levant in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (Washington Square Press, 2004), 118.

Traditional masculinity is about . . .

avoiding femininity,
restrictive emotionality,
seeking achievement and status,
self-reliance,
aggression,
homophobia,
nonrelational approaches to sexuality.

This kind of masculinity denies men their full humanity and destroys their own and others' well-being.

Healthy masculinity is about . . .

integrity,
self-love,
emotional awareness,
assertiveness,
empathy and strength,
autonomy and connectedness
responsibility to self, family, and society.

This kind of masculinity creates and sustains life and peace.