Resource for Mentors, Parents, Educators, and Coaches

Male Loneliness

1. Overview
2. Manosphere Trends
3. Mentoring Tipsheet
4. Video Discussion Guide

Girls and boys experience loneliness at a similar rate, so why the focus on the male loneliness epidemic?

Restrictive messages about what it means to "be a man" hurt boys' communication skills, friendships, and help-seeking behaviors.

- 46% of boys believe they must not cry, show sadness, or show fear to avoid being teased or picked on. (Source)
- 66% of young men in the US say they are expected to solve personal problems without asking for help. (Source)
- Men who believe in restrictive ideas of masculinity are 6x more likely to have thoughts of suicide. (Source)

There is a 10-year gap between when boys' mental health challenges emerge and when help arrives.

- Gaps in both clinical and non-clinical support, combined with stigma, inhibit early intervention for boys. (Source)

Higher exposure to manosphere content is linked to harmful social-emotional outcomes.

- Research suggests that boys with high exposure to online content about masculinity (Source):
  - Are lonelier (30% vs. 18%)
  - Have more negative self-esteem (14% vs. 5%).
  - Are more likely to believe sharing worries makes them look weak (40% vs. 11%)
  - Are more likely to hide hurt feelings from friends (50% vs. 30%)

If you are concerned about immediate harm to a youth's physical or mental wellbeing, please reach out to a professional using these resources!

What are signs of loneliness & mental health challenges?

» **Behavior**
Isolating from others, not engaging in their usual activities, arguing or fighting.

» **Mood**
Feeling sad or hopeless, or extreme emotions like rage or uncontrollable worry.

» **Thought Patterns**
Racing or repetitive negative thoughts, hyper-focused or not able to concentrate.

» **Major Life Events**
Injury, starting a new school, parental divorce, or loss of a loved one.

» **Key Considerations**
Severity & Longevity. Have concerning moods or behaviors been more intense or lasting longer than usual?

» **Learn more at www.TeamChangingMinds.org.**

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Manosphere Trends Related to Loneliness

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AI Companionship and AI Therapists are on the rise

- 42% of students surveyed say they or someone they know have used AI for companionship. (Source)
- 19.2% of young people ages 12 to 21 said they had used AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Character.AI and Meta AI for advice or help when feeling sad, angry, nervous or stressed. (Source)
- While we don't want to discourage youth from seeking support, this trend is symptomatic of gaps in formal mental health supports as well as lack of community support and mentorship.

New messages push "Maxxing" or having a "Grindset," deprioritizing the value of friendship and connection

- Young men are told that a strict program of financial accomplishment and fitness is the path to prosperity. "Softer" skills like healthy communication and vulnerability are negatively labeled as "beta" while valuing profit and a "successful" appearance is uplifted as "alpha" or "sigma." (Source)

"Looksmaxxing" body-image content and comparison is growing for boys

- 91% of boys said they had been exposed to body image or appearance content online. (Source)
- Research comprehensively indicates a link between high social media use and dissatisfaction with body image. (Source)
- Learn more about Looksmaxxing here!

The manosphere strongly discourages friendships with girls

- Boys are surrounded by content and culture which threaten positive connection. These messages state that:
  - Women and girls' only purpose is reproduction.
  - Women are "temptresses." Any friendship between a man and woman is pretend and must be a threat if a man is in a couple.
- Learn more about what the manosphere says about Dating & Sex.

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Mentoring Tipsheet

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How can we strengthen connections for boys?

1 Support boys' sense of purpose & community.

- Cultivating interests, passions, and commitment to others is a pathway to meaning and friendships.
- It can be scary to take new steps alone. Mentors can encourage taking risks, talk through feelings, promote volunteering, or go to events together.

2 Support boys' friendship skills (and healthy risks).

- Promote active listening, asking thoughtful questions, and joining new groups.
- Take an active interest to learn how boys feel about their friendships. What a relationship looks like "on the surface" may not be accurate.

3 Interrupt restrictive ideas of what it means to "be a man" that are amplified by the manosphere.

- Ask about what boys are feeling that is leading them to search for answers online. Promote critical thinking about influencers' intentions and how they don't have boys' wellbeing in mind.

4 Strengthen boys' emotional regulation skills.

- Promote mindfulness, emotional awareness, and expressiveness–instead of stoicism–to help their healthy communication and vulnerability.

5 Identify youth mental health challenges.

- Learning the signs of anxiety, depression, and chronic stress helps intervene before problems worsen.

“3 Reasons You’re Lonely (And How to Fix It)”

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Questions to Spark Reflection and Dialogue with Youth

To watch the video, click the thumbnail or head to:
https://amaze.org/video/reasons-you-are-lonely-how-to-fix-it-male-loneliness/

1. Are there reasons you think boys, in particular, can struggle with close friendships and feeling connected?
2. Have you ever felt lonely? What was that like for you?
3. What have you done to feel less lonely and more connected?
4. What messages do you hear from influencers that can make boys more disconnected?
5. What advice would you give a younger version of yourself about friendship, loneliness, or feeling disconnected?
6. What can schools, families, or friends do to help people feel less lonely?

Wrap Up Points

1. Feeling lonely or different is normal! Most people feel that at some point. But, there are things you can do about it! You can get better at things like listening and asking thoughtful questions. You can have the courage to meet new people, even if it feels awkward or “cringe.” You can talk to an adult you trust in your life about how you’re feeling.
2. Societal pressures and expectations around what it means to “be a man” hurt boys’ ability to have fulfilling relationships. These ideas are promoted by many influencers. They say boys shouldn’t talk about feeling sad. They say that boys can’t communicate when they feel upset without aggression. They say that the only way to define success is your career or body image. Boys can be so much more than this!
3. Real strength comes from being vulnerable, supporting others and letting them support you!