

A New Rule Book for Men



You may have been conned by the Old Rule Book and the family you grew up in to behave in certain ways. Like any con, it loses its power once it is exposed. Once you see the situation for what it is you are in a strong position to make other choices. Human nature invites you to do more of the same types of behaviour to resolve a problem — only to find yourself even further stuck. When you understand where your patterns of behaviour originate and what supports exist for their continuation, you are in a good position to rewrite your own story.

The Old Rule Book was made up of the following ideas:

The Traditional Man's Old Rule Book

1. Men are biologically superior to women, and so better at activities using physical strength (the myth of the hulk).
2. Men's thinking is rational and logical and superior to women's thinking, which is emotive and illogical. (Men can't really understand women.)
3. A man's image is based upon being more powerful, being fiercely competitive, dominant and controlling. (If you are none of these things then questions may be asked.)
4. Masculinity rather than femininity is the more valued gender identity to have — men rule OK.
5. Work and career success are the mark of a man. (Watch out for redundancy and unemployment.)
6. Self-esteem is established through achievement, competence and success.
7. A natural order exists whereby men are expected to assume control over others — especially their family, children — and their environment.
8. A man who needs help to deal with issues or problems is weak, vulnerable and incompetent — the myth of 'I must do this all on my own'.
9. Expression of soft emotions is unmasculine and a sign of weakness — 'Little and big boys don't cry.'
10. Communication based on sharing feelings, intuitions, and physical non-sexual contact is to be avoided. (I don't understand it so it must be wrong.)
11. Sexuality is performance and goal oriented. Intimacy and sensuality are of lesser importance.

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12. Intimacy and sharing with other men means either homosexuality, or that the other man will take advantage in a competitive setting.
13. It is acceptable for men to use their power, dominance and violence to keep control inside and outside the home.
14. Real men are tireless, invincible and keep working regardless of the personal or health risks. (Real men die early of heart attacks, lung cancer, alcoholism, strokes.)

Writing a New Rule Book is a huge challenge, but one that you, like many other men, are capable of taking on. The New Rule Book is very different in that it is based on being powerful alongside others, not at the expense of others. It embodies recognising what you and others have to offer, giving equal weight to each story. A New Rule Book would look something like this:

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1. Strength means different things to different people. Strength is defined as knowing yourself, your abilities, your needs, and sorting these out in respectful ways. Both men and women can be strong in physical, emotional, and verbal ways.
2. Well-made decisions use a range of styles, including rationale, logic, intuition and emotion. Each style has a valuable contribution to make and no one style is more important than another.
3. Real men are powerful but not at the expense of others. Real men have an understanding that power is not a finite commodity but something that is to be shared. Power is used to increase, not decrease, the opportunities of others.
4. Masculine and feminine attributes are of equal importance. Men are not more important than women, and women are not more important than men. It is essential to value the differences and the similarities.
5. Work and career are part of our lives. Other roles — such as being a good father, partner and friend — are of equal importance. The New Rule Book says that men don't duck Out of their social and emotional responsibilities. They balance their lives with a range of activities that enhance positive self-esteem.
6. Self-esteem is established through knowing ourselves, being respected and respectful, and honest about who we are.

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7. Men and women work in partnership to create a better situation for everyone. Entitlements are negotiated between people, not given.
8. A man who needs help to deal with issues or problems is weak, vulnerable and incompetent — the myth of 'I must do this all on my own'.
9. Real men are in touch with their emotions, and are able to identify and express them. Men are genuine and honest in letting others know what they are feeling. The only weakness is hiding yourself from yourself.
10. Communication based on sharing feelings, intuitions, and physical non-sexual contact is to be avoided. (I don't understand it so it must be wrong.)
11. Intimacy and sharing are the most important parts of sexuality. This requires men to be present physically, emotionally and verbally during this time
12. Real men are able to feel comfortable enough to risk being honest with other men and respect other men's need to share with them.
13. It is unacceptable for men to use power, dominance and violence to keep control inside and outside the home. Real men see the ultimate costs of this behaviour and take steps to ensure they act respectfully towards others.
14. Real men take care of their physical and emotional health, balancing the demands of work, home and recreation.

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