

# SPECTRUM

## Being a man today

I do not think it is possible to answer such a question without speaking of world views or visions of life. Of course, when we speak about world views or visions of life we are talking about spirituality or religion. Now, how is it that all of these connect, and what do they have to do with the male gender question?

It is not enough, it would appear to me, to state simply that men need merely to be less violent and abusive and more feeling and caring. Many men are that (and in the majority?). But feeling and caring are relative, and sometimes vague and confusing. We require some norm or standard by which to evaluate or measure them. That norm or standard ought also to possess short-term and long-term dimensions.

Let me illustrate. Is Morgentaler humanitarian in the "service" he offers when he alleviates a short-term difficulty, but then unleashes great potential, long-term devastation (post-abortion trauma)? Where is the feeling when he refuses to seriously discuss or concern himself with these matters? In professional sport - hockey is a good example - we accept (even encourage) violent and brutish behaviour. Yet, we allow the players involved to become heroes and role models for our children, and then parade their charitable outreach in community projects. Is there not some contradiction, some confusion of values here?

That confusion continues when

sports heroes (and the public) are not able to make a clear distinction between, and a transition from, the sports arena and the street. I think of Mike Tyson. Is he a victim, as some are claiming? No doubt. But so are many of us who cannot distinguish between real sport (recreation) and professional business which advocates violence. So when it comes to discussions of what it means to be a man which view or vision do we encourage and uphold: short-term and violent or long-term and caring? And, on what norm or standard are these to be based?

Let us not fail to consider also our whole Western economic way of life, one built on indiscriminate consumption. We need to admit - if we haven't done so - that we confuse wants and needs. Frequently we want something not because we need it, but because it will put us at an advantage vis a vis someone else. What others possess often becomes our own point of reference, which awakens wants and desire in our own hearts and minds. What does it mean then to

be a man in our consumer oriented society? Do we succumb to the influence, or do we stand up and seek meaning elsewhere?

Men devote much of their time and energy trying to gain advantage. They concentrate on power, wealth and prestige. But too much of it is directed toward the marketplace, with its concocted measurements of success - large bank accounts, expensive wardrobes, benefit packages, cellular phones.

It is however, a truncated approach. Other things in life suffer, and the struggle for balance vanishes. Is success in the marketplace, in one's job, to be more highly valued than success at the home front - keeping one's marriage or home together and happy? What does it mean to be a man in balancing the demands of work and home?

In our society we guard highly our individual rights and freedoms. And so we should. But these become rather meaningless - in the long run - if we cannot appreciate also our public responsibilities. We are forgetting this. We are very

## Stress

*The information contained in this article is from an interview with Tom McAvity, from the Mental Health Commission on the MIND-BODY CONNECTION - CHSR-FM by Janet McGeachy-Hansen.*

Stress is all around us. It is a common problem of our society. The American Academy of Family Physicians discovered that approximately 2/3 of all office visits to doctors are stress-related. The nature and operation of our society produces stress. It is common to all of us and we all respond in a natural, biological way since the dawn of society. Imagine cave people walking in a field of grass coming across a saber-tooth tiger. Their system reacts with a FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE. This response involves our system changing in the following ways:

Increased adrenalin, corticoid, output,

Decreased digestion, Increased blood flow to the extremities, etc.

If we are not able to "fight" or "runaway" in response to the stress in our environment, than we may be carrying around this stress in the form of tension or other physiological or psychological ways. When we stay in this "geared" state to deal with stress can be taxing for our bodies, and our minds.

Stress doesn't have to always be negative. Some stress is positive - such as a promotion, getting a scholarship, making a sports team, etc. Stress can be a result of "major life changes" or be a part of daily

## Metanoia by John Valk

reluctant today to speak about right and wrong. We prefer to speak of choices, alternatives and options.

That might itself not be so lamentable, if we weren't so individually oriented and self-centred. Does individualism and self-centredness go hand in hand with being a man?

We understand freedom in terms of doing what we wish or desire. Frequently men take a short-term approach. But that is slowly beginning to bring us to our knees, and not least in regard to our moral crisis.

In order to respond to all of these concerns we need to respond to the deeper question of what it means to be human, and what is the meaning and purpose of our life - as men and as women. These are religious

concerns. They will need to be answered in terms of our past, our present and our future directions. We need to challenge ourselves not to limit the parameters of these discussions. We need to get beyond a relativism, not to allow ourselves to be shaped and influenced solely by the present powers of individualism and consumerism.

To be a man, it appears to me, is a willingness to challenge our stereotypes, our uncritically held assumptions of rights and freedoms, and our Western love affair with secularism. These (religious) world views or visions of life have begun to strangle us in ways we never imagined. But it is not too late for a change, for a turn around.

## Mind-Body Connection by Janet McGeachy-Hansen

living. How we react to stress is what's important.

Some of the more common signals we experience under stress include:

hostility, irritability, anger; resentment, phobia, unwanted thoughts, muscular tension, headaches, neckaches, and backaches; digestive problems, muscle spasms, fatigue, insomnia, obesity, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, and poor self-esteem are all some feelings we may experience under stress.

Stress affects from three basic sources:

- Environment
- Physical (our bodies)
- Mental (our thoughts)

Environmental stressors include: noise, crowding, interpersonal demands, time management pressures (deadlines for essays), performance standards (needing to get an A to get into graduate school), pollutants.

Physical stressors include: rapid growth (adolescence); menopause; aging; illness, accidents, lack of exercise, poor nutrition, sleep disturbances;

Mental (thinking) - how you interpret changes; how experiences

are labelled (for example a sour look from a friend may get you thinking you have done something wrong when it may be they are just not feeling well);

Physiologically, we all respond to stress in the same way. However, we all learn different ways of managing stress in our lives. For example, some of us may exercise while others may increase alcohol and/or drug consumption as a way of handling stress which in fact increases the stress in their lives.

There are several ways we can learn to respond differently to stress. These ways come under the subject of "Health Maintenance Behaviours". Interestingly enough, this is the primary function of the brain - not writing essays, exams, reciting poetry. These are all interesting and educational pursuits, but the main function is the take care of the body either through maintenance or repair.

The RELAXATION RESPONSE is one way we can learn to slow down the body's response to stress. This is the opposite of the "alarm" response and helps serve to restore the body to its normal balanced state. This has a recu-

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