

Loneliness is rife among young men. It's time to get offline and talk to each other | Alexander Hurst, *The Guardian*, OPINION, August 15, 2025

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At first I was startled when the psychologist Angelica Ferrara told me that most of the time it's women, not men, who want to write about her research into male loneliness. But this is the crux of the issue, isn't it? That we men need to talk, and we don't: not nearly enough, anyway.

10 In the US, two-thirds of men aged between 18 and 23 think that nobody really knows them; only a fifth say they have friends they can really count on. Of course, women also experience this same loneliness— at rates that are not far behind their male counterparts.

15 While I understand the reflex to lash out and ask, "Why should a bunch of incels get so much attention?", such a dismissal is a mistake. As Ferrara put it to me: men's failures to maintain close connections are hurting society at large.

20 Since 2017, there has been a marked increase in the number of men inhabiting what some researchers refer to as the "man box". That is, men who have deeply misogynistic beliefs about masculinity and gender roles: who want to know where their wife or girlfriend is at all times, who think they should always have the final say in a relationship, and who think gay men "are not real men".

25 Let me address men directly: this is our problem and our responsibility. We need to find a way out of this, and I think that starts with separating masculinity from "domination". For too many men, domination is where masculinity is grounded. Dominating conversations online and offline, dominating the physical space around them, dominating women. An identity formed around domination was always going to damage men, because it is fundamentally at odds with community. I think community is what a lot of alienated westerners are really yearning for deep down.

30 In fact, I'd go so far as to say that domination is not only at odds with community, but with true confidence. Domination is something that the insecure seek as a means to generate confidence; the truly confident do not need it.

35 "One of the stereotypes that I combat, and that men combat too, is that men don't need closeness." I have male friendships whose natural setting is banter, and I have male friendships that involve deeper intellectual and emotional sharing, where we have found the space to just sit and talk.

40 I do wonder if the ability to cultivate deeper connections can be taught. Ferrara and I are roughly the same age, and both from the US; neither of us encountered any kind of unit on identifying and discussing emotions in our elementary schooling. But she hit me with something surprising: among the men she has interviewed who *do* report having close relationships, a fair number of them (including a curious concentration of Canadians in particular) did talk about emotions and relationships at school.

We live in a cynical age. It is an age where the "manosphere" is full of grifters ready to prey on men's loneliness and need for connection by selling them poor substitutes for real community, such as the sad bravado of masculinism. (520 words)

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