

## LESS DISCUSSED ASPECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

These comments are not intended in any way to condone domestic violence (dv).

In the western world in particular, women have achieved remarkable progress in rights and freedoms thanks to many, many advocates, activists and individuals. Now many women have careers, financial independence and many younger ones have little or no idea of previous roles and expectations.

During this time while women have been establishing and cementing their roles in today's world there seems to have been limited discussion of what this means for men. Now for men there are expectations of sharing chores, acceptance of affirmative action in job opportunities, change in parental role models and so on. It has been predominately women – not men that have been the drivers of change. Women have acted from frustration and anger at the culturally embedded assumptions supporting a male dominated society.

While the scales have been balancing there has been less effort, almost disregard to assist men through this cultural change. Is there any data on how men perceive and accept these changes? I suggest that for some men fair-minded parents - logic and “love” promotes acceptance, however for some there may be residual “acquired cultural expectations” now considered inappropriate that remain unaddressed?

What is the role of the male in our society? The traditional expectations of “bread winner, protector and head of house with connotations of “ownership” and submission” etc” are no longer appropriate. Even single motherhood via sperm donors is making the male redundant. Girls are often better at school than boys including in the male bastion of maths. Is it getting tough out there for men and boys to find their purpose and place?

While many men are very capable of recognising and adjusting to these cultural changes there are also many struggling even if they themselves do not recognise it.

Are words enough particularly for those who cannot tap their emotions, acknowledge and deal with challenges to their core beliefs - especially in the face of justifiable strident anger of outraged women? Unilaterally demanding change is unlikely to succeed - as it is possible that some men simply cannot tap the source of their anger. For example when a woman quite rightly takes her place in today's society or seeks to leave a relationship with a man who unaware of dysfunctional cultural expectations feels "loss of control and emasculation". While these visceral responses are unacceptable they are just that – hostile responses to a threat to their being. Attention to porn, violent videos and some social media outlets is well warranted as these may feed an insecure person's core beliefs – just as alcohol and drugs relax constraints to violent and controlling behaviour.

If these observations have credibility then a shifting of the debate is required. Entrenched core beliefs are hard to crack. Perhaps more expert and dispassionate advice would lead to better balance into seeking answers to d.v as much as the immediate problem of providing "protection".

There are limitations to what long-term solutions can be achieved from angry activists and political problem solving committees. While activism has achieved warranted awareness there is a time for a calmer approach and to start dialogue rather than risk furthering the divide. Possibly there should be closed doors (to allow unfettered discussion without the risk of pre-emptive media releases) "think tanks" of people well informed about human behaviour in the face of cultural change. Outcomes might even help disengaged teenagers? Deliberations might need to be more dispassionate and to be led by sincere recognition that some men are dealing with deep seated emotional loss of male identity despite change being deemed necessary.

There is also an urgency to changing cultural relationship between the sexes beyond the murder of women. There are the less seen hand down effects of poor parenting, confused children and coercive control. The stakes are high and both sides of rapid cultural change should be considered.

In conclusion, domestic violence is complex and needs a balanced, dispassionate approach to deal with the predisposing causes.



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