Masculinity: Key Terms

Finding the conversation around masculinity confusing and not sure what some terms mean? Here are some definitions that might help!

Masculinity

How men often present their ideas of maleness to the world. This is influenced by the cultures we are a part of, and the ideas that we are exposed to.

Misogyny

Hating or looking down on women. It can be obvious, like violence, or more everyday stuff, like making sexist jokes or assuming women aren't as capable as men (a resource exploring this on my website is available on www.lewiswedlock.com/book).

Incel

A guy who feels angry and hopeless about not being in a relationship. Some incels blame women for this and form online groups where they spread toxic or even violent ideas.

Looksmaxxing

Trying to 'level up' your looks—going to the gym, skincare, fashion, or even surgery. Some people do it in a healthy way, but in certain online spaces, it becomes obsessive and extreme.

Sexism

Unfair treatment based on gender—like assuming girls aren't as good at sports or expecting guys to always be tough. It affects people in different ways but mostly disadvantages women and non-binary people.

VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls)

A term for different types of abuse that women and girls face—like catcalling, domestic violence, and sexual assault. It's about recognizing that this isn't just random violence, but something that happens because of gender.

"Healthy" Masculinity

Being a guy without feeling forced into a 'tough guy' act. It's about confidence *and* kindness, strength *and* emotion—being yourself instead of chasing often outdated ideas of what a 'real man' is.

"Toxic" Masculinity

The idea that being a man means never showing weakness, always being dominant, and acting like emotions are for 'girls.' It pressures guys to act a certain way and can be harmful to both men and those around them.

Feminism

The belief that all genders should be treated equally. Feminism fights against sexism and works toward a fairer world—despite what the internet might tell you, it's not about 'hating men.'

Patriarchy

A system where men have more power than women and other genders—at work, in politics, and even in families. It's not just about individual people, but about rules and traditions that make life easier for men and harder for others.

Heteropatriarchy

Like patriarchy, but with a twist—it doesn't just give men more power, it specifically benefits straight men while pushing aside LGBTQ+ people. It assumes being straight is 'normal' and anything else is 'different' or 'wrong.'

Coloniality

Even though most countries aren't controlled by old empires anymore, the effects of colonization are still everywhere—like racism, unfair wealth gaps, and whose history gets told in schools. It's basically how the past still shapes today.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The 'ideal' version of being a man that society pushes: strong, tough, always in control, never showing emotions, and definitely not 'too soft.' A lot of guys feel pressure to act this way, even if it doesn't fit who they really are. You usually hear this term in lectures or in debates, so just

letting you know in case you hear it! You may see the similarities between our definitions of "toxic" and "traditional" masculinity

Red Pill Masculinity

An online belief that says men are being 'lied to'—mainly by feminism—and need to 'wake up' to take back power. It teaches guys that they should be dominant, unemotional, and see women as either competition or something to control. It sounds like self-help, but often leads to misogyny.

Manosphere

A collection of online spaces where guys talk about masculinity, dating, and gender issues. Some of it is about self-improvement, but a lot of it spreads toxic ideas about women, relationships, and power.