



Panel: Men's Leadership



Eldra Jackson is a writer and sought after public speaker on the topics of at-risk youth advocacy, effective criminal justice rehabilitation and turning around 'toxic' masculinity. **Rob Osman** helps men to open up about mental health by taking them on a dog walk. **Tom Harkin** is one of Australia's pre-eminent advanced facilitators and executive coaches.

TOP EMBODIMENT TIP: **Eldra:** Encourage the men in your life to tell someone they love them. **Rob:** It's not just ok to talk, it's vitally important. **Tom:** If we want a different model of masculinity, then we need to exemplify it.

Main Issues Facing Men at the Moment:

- **Rob:** Strength vs. weakness; stereotypes, and the discouragement of showing emotions
- **Tom:** There's nowhere to see men exhibit the full range of emotions. There's no training for men to express their full range of emotions. Sure they can go to retreats and do exercises, but once a year is not enough.
- **Eldra:** Emotions. Masculinity is not toxic; what's toxic is limiting any human's ability to experience the full range of what is possible through the human condition.

The Burden of Responsibility in Men:

- **Eldra:** The message I received as a young child, in having to defend my little sister from being violated and putting myself in harm's way, was about "manning up" and taking care of others around you.
- **Tom:** Relationships are based on a contract of old school masculinity. Some men have experienced that it's ok to show emotions in exercises but when they're with their significant other there is an expectation to be the "strong one." As we promote emotional literacy in men, there may be a need to renegotiate the contracts of a relationship.
- **Rob:** Understanding what words mean in contrast to the way things were and the way they are now. If I go away and tell my son he's the man of the house, in reality it's my partner who is paying the bills, organizing things, making the meals. What kind of message does it send when I tell my son he's the man of the house?

The Role of Women for Helping Men Open Up:

- **Tom:** sometimes it can be tough on women to see the man open up. Express that you are uncomfortable with the "new" emotional man; let him know I want to embrace this but I am receiving different messages. Grow together.



- Women are still reaching out on behalf of the men in their lives. Keep nudging your men, they may not do it for themselves so don't stop pushing them.
- **Eldra:** Expectation management. Being supportive doesn't mean having expectations.

Having a Safe Place for Men to Talk:

- **Rob:** Not at the pub! The pub can become a place of intense emotions, good and bad. Go for a walk, change the world around you, change the environment around you.
- **Eldra:** The physical location doesn't matter. One man, one individual standing up and beginning the conversation gives everyone else permission to open up.
- **Tom:** Learn how to talk face to face. Too often men are presented with distractions from their emotions, and the lack of eye contact, or face to face engagement allows them to be distracted from what's really at hand.
- **Eldra:** (With regard to special cases ie., a prison setting) A safe space needs to be identified and created. There needs to be anonymity, and having the maturity to recognize one's own boundaries.

How Do We Encourage Men to Make the Mind-Body Connection:

- Keep asking men how they feel, don't shy away from it. Ask them how they feel and peel back the layers and you will find many times anger is simply a mask for feeling sad.
- **Rob:** Empathize with new emotions.
- **Tom:** Men are worried about judgement. When trying to open up, they may find themselves battling ignorance and/or a lack of knowledge.

What Do You Say to People Who Have Trouble opening Up Because 1) I'm Not Crazy 2) Maybe It's Too Late and I'm a Lost Cause:

- **Rob:** People need instant access to different levels of support, not waiting on referrals that will take months.
- **Eldra:** Support and meet people where they are. Having systems and people in place, having someone, some organization, some place to meet an individual where they're at, and has the compassion to sit with them in that space - no judgement and no expectations.
- **Tom:** With regard to referring to a psychologist or therapist, deconstruct the idea of what a counselor is. Some friends may blow off the issues because they don't know how to handle it or want to get involved so they will try to distract you. Some partners may be too close to the situation to really be someone who can listen. Also, for those who think it's too late, use real, relevant stories.

Resources

- ❖ **Websites:** Eldra Jackson: insidecircle.org ; Rob Osman: dudesndogs.co.uk ;
Tom Harkin: tomorrowarchitects.com ; <https://www.tomorrowman.com.au>



Eldra Jackson



Rob Osman



Tom Harkin





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