

# man down



Issue 1 | Summer 2019 | £5

## THE EVERYDAY MEN REDEFINING MASCULINITY



### In this issue:

The Evolution of Masculinity | How Tinder is Swiping Out Humanity | Keeping the Faith  
Otis Mensah Interview | The Life of a Stay-at-Home Dad | How to Be Your Own Boss  
Girls on Film | The Emotional Game | My Experience with Self Harm

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# summer 2019 contents

**This issue we delve into the lives of ordinary men with extraordinary stories, tackle problems from dating to depression, and offer tips on fitness, cooking and much more. Here's what you can find in Man Down Issue One...**

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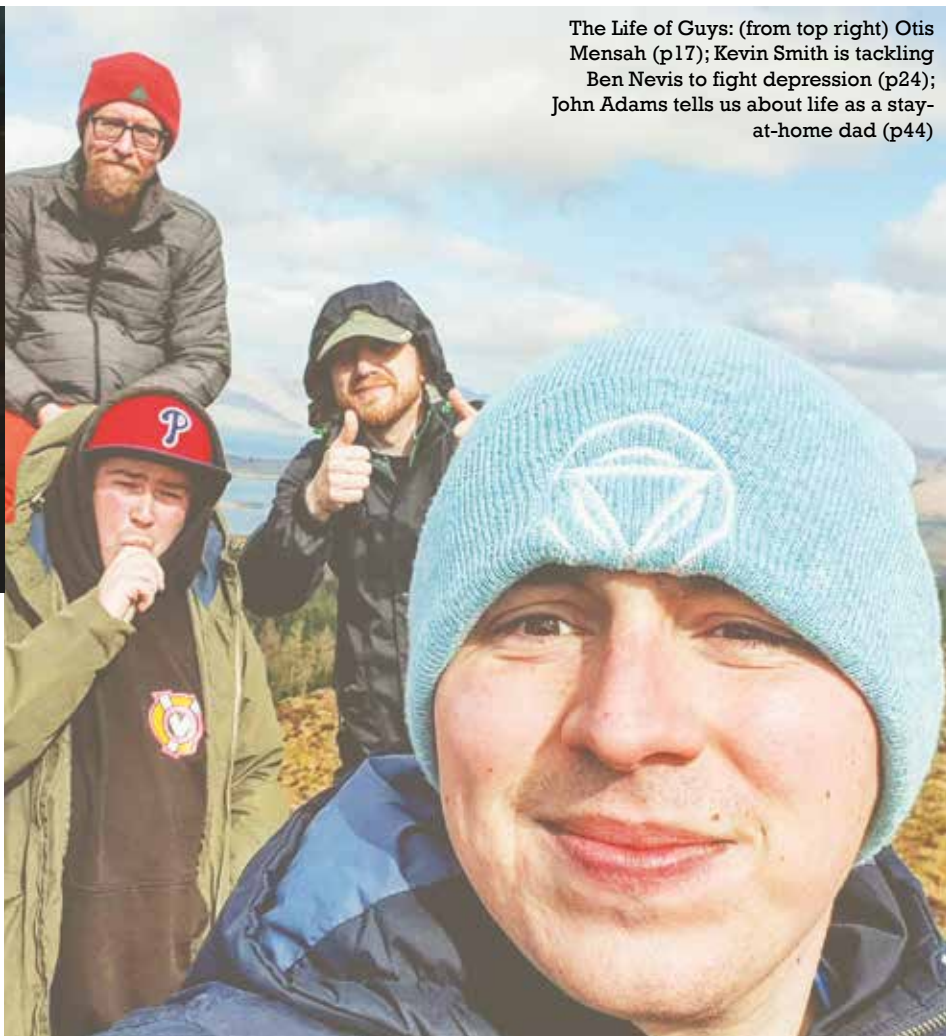
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# editorial

## Editors' Letter

Hello there! Welcome to the very first issue of Man Down, a brand new lifestyle magazine for every man, especially the everyman! We've slaved away to bring you a mag jam-packed with interesting, funny and powerful content and, if you enjoy this, then we'll be releasing four of these bad boys every year.

We're immensely proud of our maiden issue. We've spoken to some incredibly interesting people - from cam-girls to poets, businessmen to faithful followers of religion and everyone in-between. Plus you're in safe hands with our brilliant set of writers, who've absolutely killed it this issue.

No more is that the case than with our title feature, The Evolution of Masculinity. What better way to kick off Man Down than delving deep into the history of man and seeing whether or not we actually have progressed that much?

To the right you can see our wonderful editorial team, all of which have worked themselves into the ground to produce a magazine worthy of you guys' reading. Each issue we'll be asking the team a different question to help you get to know us, this issue it's their favourite feel-good film!

If you like what you see then you should really check out our terrific subscription offer and, while you wait for next issue to arrive, check out our website for a consistent flow of great content. And don't forget to follow us on all your favourite social media channels to keep up to date with all things Man Down.

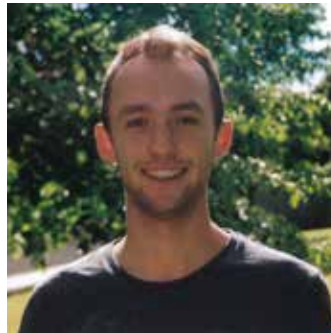
As a little introduction before you embark on this wonderful journey into manhood, below is a little summary of who we are and what we aim to represent. We hope we do it justice!

Lots of love,  
Man Down Team

**Man Down is a men's lifestyle magazine for the every man, which aims to subvert traditional notions of masculinity and is not scared to discuss all the things that matter to men. From entertainment, lifestyle and sport to relationships, mental health and wellbeing, we talk about what men think about. Why man up when you can Man Down?**

## Our Editors...

...and their favourite feel-good film



**David Anderson**

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, because I love the 'Hogwarts March'.



**David Craig**

Valerian, because it's the greatest piece of cinema ever created.



**Gethin Morgan**

Hunt for the Wilderpeople. Perfect happy-sad New Zealand humour.



**Harry Tedder**

Requiem for a Dream, I take solace in other people's sorrows.



**Nathan Makalena**

A good soundtrack puts me in the mood so I'd go for Stop Making Sense.



**Will Pettit**

The Blind Side, the ultimate sport biopic... plus Sandra Bullock.

Get in touch with us:  
[mandownmag@gmail.com](mailto:mandownmag@gmail.com)

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## The final straw for reality television?

by David Craig

**R**eality television has long been held in low regard by culture snobs, but in the past year we've seen just how insidious it can truly be. No longer is this a discussion of vague, pretentious claims about the dumbing down of society, but instead an urgent call to action against exploitative treatment that puts lives at risk.

In May of this year, *The Jeremy Kyle Show* made headlines after a former contestant committed suicide just one week after taking part in the programme. During his appearance on the show, Steve Dymond was accused of infidelity after failing a lie detector test. Members of the audience recall seeing him collapse to the floor weeping as he was found guilty in the court of public opinion. Of course, the accuracy of these seemingly damning tests have long been questioned, meaning the emotional trauma that pushed this man off the edge may have been totally moot.

Following news of his death, the

show halted production immediately and within 24 hours was announced as permanently cancelled at ITV. Undoubtedly, it was the right decision but it's tragic that it took the death of an innocent man to put the exploitative nature of the show into focus. The BBC then began publishing accounts from former guests and employees, the majority speaking of inadequate aftercare and shady practices; most shockingly, stirring up arguments between participants in an effort to orchestrate explosive on-air confrontations.

Virtually every reality television programme has faced accusations of being scripted or set-up, but *The Jeremy Kyle Show* is particularly loathsome for how it did so under the guise of helping people. One would think that there could be no argument in favour of continuing the shambolic production, but alas, some have framed the axing as some sort of assault on its largely working class

viewership.

First of all, it's quite preposterous that this argument comes courtesy of Jeremy Clarkson, perhaps one of the most bigoted men to ever dominate the small screen. Regardless, the point itself simply doesn't stand. The priorities of the minority who genuinely adore the show must of course come second to the wellbeing of those who take part. To claim otherwise is to show a troubling lack of basic human empathy.

The Jeremy Kyle saga has once again brought ITV2's *Love Island* back into the hot seat. Two former contestants from the tropical dating show have committed suicide in the last year, Sophie Gradon in June 2018 and Mike Thalassitis only last March. While their respective deaths have not been quite so directly linked to their television appearances, as Dymond's was, they have stoked up discussion about what measures are in place to safeguard ordinary people exposed to (often) short-lived fame.



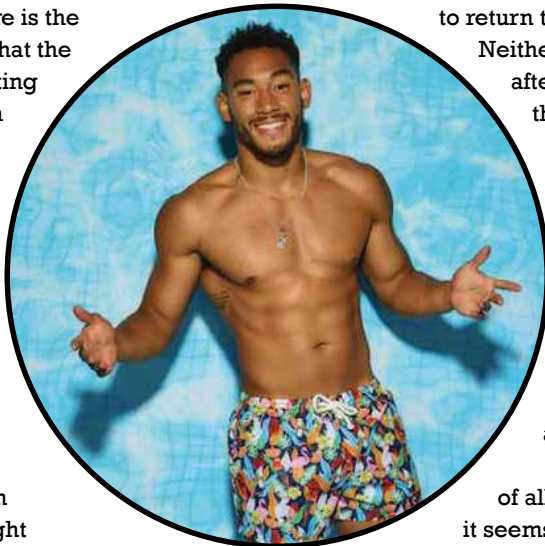
ITV are proceeding in earnest with another series of *Love Island* this year. The show had aired a tribute to Graden following her passing last year but will not do the same for Mike, opting instead to bundle one with the season three box set on their catch-up service ITV Hub. The intention behind this decision is unclear, but there is the troubling feeling that the network is attempting to sweep his death under the rug, quite literally putting it behind them by relegating it to a season from two years ago. The sad fact is that despite the evident risks, there's simply too much money in the show for outright cancellation to be seriously considered.

The network has assured fans that this year's contestants will face new mental health tests, as well as financial and social media training to help them deal with the newfound pressures of fame. More comprehensive aftercare has also been promised. These measures will be expected to safeguard not only the show's participants, but also its ratings dominance. Over 3.5 million people tuned in for the previous series finale, the highest ratings that ITV2 has ever seen. Reaching those heights again will be an uphill struggle.

Much like the Hollywood abuse scandal that began unfolding in late 2017, the events that have rocked reality television have been a catalyst for people to come forward and tell their stories. Most recently, former MTV stars Jess Impiazzi (*Ex on the Beach*) and Carley Belmonte (*The Valleys*) both expressed dissatisfaction over their treatment during production to the BBC's *Victoria Derbyshire* program.

Impiazzi said she felt pressured into having sex while on the show and was

devastated when footage of her doing so was broadcast, despite her begging producers not to. She added: "You feel like you're in a brothel. It made me feel really cheap... these were all random guys." Belmonte's mother died during the filming of her series, but within 48 hours she had felt under pressure to return to the set.



Neither had received aftercare when their respective contracts expired. Production companies Whizzkid Entertainment, True North and the MTV network deny any wrongdoing. Even in the face of all this controversy, it seems very unlikely that we'll be saying goodbye

to reality television anytime soon. Not only is it cheap to produce, but also it seems to pair effortlessly with today's somewhat self-obsessed culture nurtured by the rise of social media. But if the genre is destined to continue, tackling the root causes of its disturbing scandals must be of paramount concern.

*The fame is fleeting. It's hard when that starts to slow down. And all the opportunities you get, they don't keep coming in and it's like, 'How do I transition to going back to just the guy or the girl that I was before?' I think there should be more concentration, more focus on that.*

Josh Denzel (inset),  
former *Love Island* finalist



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## What we've been talking about...

### Grieving sister urges men to talk



Image: Isaac Powner

After a 23-year-old man tragically took his own life after attending Radio 1's Big Weekend, his sister has urged men to be more open about how they're feeling. Isaac Powner had not shown any major signs of being unwell, leading his sister Gemma Braithwaite to make this statement: "We need to break the taboo of 'men are strong' and 'don't cry' to help save their lives, please stop telling young males to 'man up'. It really is OK not to be OK. Be kind, always, some people are fighting a battle even the closest to them don't see."

### Top of the barrel



In our recent article on the best situations to initiate a deep chat (see our website for that piece), we advised not to underestimate the power of a cuppa and a biscuit barrel. Coincidentally, McVitie's later announced they were teaming up with mental health charity MIND to encourage the very same. They are supporting the launch of eight new Time to Change hubs, aimed at ending discrimination towards mental health conditions. Alongside a donation of £150,000, money will be raised from selected packs of biscuits; time to treat yourself to some chocolate hobnobs.

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## This theory is widely discredited

by David Anderson

**A**fter 12 years on air, *The Big Bang Theory* finally ended this month. When it burst onto the scene in 2007, the show offered so much promise. For too long, hang-out sitcoms had almost exclusively centred around groups of friends for whom conventional society and popular culture fit like a glove.

How refreshing it was to see Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady's creation hone in on a friendship group who didn't spend their spare time at bars and coffee shops, but instead playing *Dungeons and Dragons* and bingeing *Doctor Who*. They were professional physicists and engineers working in the California Institute of Technology, yet each were plagued by varying levels of shyness and social anxiety.

*Big Bang* could have been a sitcom to which those who lived on the fringes of society could relate. It also had the platform to destigmatize 'geek culture' and open up conversation regarding the difficulties of living as an introvert.

Leonard Hofstadter is incredibly intelligent yet socially inept, and lives with the even smarter yet more socially

challenged Sheldon Cooper. Their best friends and fellow geeks are Howard Wolowitz and Rajesh Koothrappali. Sadly, rather than laughing with our main characters, we were encouraged to laugh at them.

By default, sitcoms have always poked fun at their characters. That's how it works. Each episode the characters are thrown into wacky situations and we laugh as they dig themselves deeper into trouble, playing on their individual - often stereotypical - faults.

But there is a difference between laughing at the hopeless romantic exploits of otherwise well rounded adults and making fun of traits consistent with social anxiety disorder and even, in Sheldon's case, Asperger syndrome. Rather than having us empathise with these characters and see them for more than the stereotypical nerd, these traits are outright mocked.

The offensive stereotypes stretch further too because, as well as being pigeonholed as typical nerds, the characters' awkwardness was used as justification for inexcusably sexist behaviour. The gang belittle and

objectify their female counterparts consistently with minimal comeuppance - not least their neighbour, Penny, who is depicted as a 'typical blonde'.

In early seasons Howard fancies himself as a womanizer. We are encouraged to laugh at his hopeless and incredibly misogynistic uninvited approaches to women, as well as his outright voyeuristic habit of putting webcams in teddybears to spy on Penny. Meanwhile, Sheldon disregards women at work and Raj struggles to even talk to the opposite sex - unless he's drunk, when he can become disturbingly predatory.

As if that's not enough, offensive racial stereotypes are rife throughout the show too, with Howard's Jewish heritage and Raj's Indian background both regularly mocked.

This is not to say *Big Bang* doesn't have its moments. Sometimes it does call its characters out on their awful behaviour, and every now and then it actually is quite funny. But, for a show which had potential to break down toxic stereotypes, it was ultimately a complete failure.



## Porn ban is a pile of wank?

by Will Pettit

**L**ong gone are the days of finding dirty magazines in the park. So long gone, in fact, that I don't remember ever finding porn in the park.

For the entirety of my adolescence, porn has been available online but that may well be changing soon.

On July 15th, the Government is going to ban porn for anyone under the age of 18, requiring that anyone with urges in their nether regions provides proof that they are of a suitable age for accessing pornography; be that with a credit card, passport, or anything of that ilk.

Before laying out some of the shortcomings of this system, it should be noted that in so many ways porn is damaging to our mental health and our sexual expectations. It sets unrealistic standards, it frequently degrades women, and it can lead to desensitisation when in genuine sexual encounters.

All of this is confounded when it's applied to youths, be they wide-eyed teens embarking on their first voyage into sexual content, or be they seasoned explorers of online pornography. In the same way that cigarettes or alcohol are

age-restricted because they can damage, it can be argued that banning porn for kids would limit the damage that it can cause.

Unfortunately, however, it's not going to work like that.

Children know technology better than anyone, and if there is a way to circumvent the porn ban, they will find it and exploit it. Are the government familiar with VPNs, for goodness sake? In addition, there are thousands of porn websites, meaning it isn't feasible for the government to seriously police all of them.

The Internet is simply too big to achieve that.

Furthermore, even if the government can somehow achieve this pie-in-the-sky goal, teenagers aren't suddenly going to lose the desire to look at naked people on the internet.

Instead, they'll give up on trying to access it through 'tame' websites that have some pretence of a public image, and head towards darker parts of the Internet where there isn't as much regulation, and inevitably someone will end up accessing the kinds of porn

that aren't allowed on more mainstream websites.

An aside to this is the wider context of how sex is seen in the UK. It's been a few years since I was in a classroom, but I remember PSHE being a total joke. Porn is horrible most of the time, but until there's a total overhaul of what teenagers are taught about sex, all the porn ban will achieve is leaving young people even more in the dark about what to put where.

Lastly, and forgive me if I come across like a conspiracy theorist, I don't want to have to provide ID anytime I want to get freaky with me, myself and I. I've already got a phone with facial recognition and a speaker that recognises me, I don't want to add my personal details to a big ole' 'who watched what when' database as well.

Government: if you're reading this, and I assume you are, then I'd suggest maybe reconsidering your options. The concept isn't a bad one, but it's not going to equate to anything positive.

How about we take the money you've pumped into this, and spend it on better sex education in schools?



# Manny Says...

## Go to the doctor

Going to the doctor can be daunting sometimes...



This pain in my balls is very uncomfortable but maybe if I do nothing it'll go away, whereas if I go to the doctor I might learn of a terrible disease soon enough to be able to treat it...

But nothing is more important than your health...

Arrgh I can't do anything with this literal ballache. Even sitting down hurts ffs. I feel it at work, at the pub, I can't play football and it even hurts to have sex. I can't live like this.



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Nothing to worry about? That's great news! In a couple of weeks I'll be back to my best. I'm so glad I finally went to the doctor, it may have been a tad awkward but it feels so good to know!

So, whether it's a persistent cough, trouble downstairs or problems with anxiety and depression, don't be afraid to head down to your GP and let them know what's bothering you.

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Man Down Magazine  
9 Mappin Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DT





# KEEPING TH<sup>ॐ</sup> FAITH

How does a strong religion affect the lifestyle of a young man?



Waqas Ali (left), Jack Buchanan (centre), Ashwin Srinivasan (right).

**W**hen was the last time you prayed? Statistically speaking, it's likely to have been a while. More than two-thirds of British people aged 16 to 29 identify as non-religious according to a study conducted by

St Mary's University last year, and these numbers are supported by 2017's British Social Attitudes survey. If this research is to be believed, religion in the United Kingdom could largely die out in the next fifty years. But why?



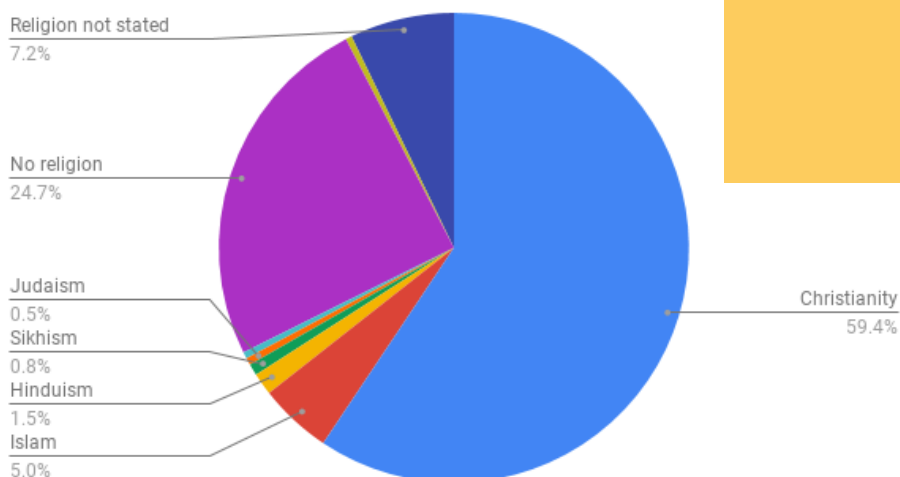
“Christianity doesn’t get many likes on Instagram,” says Jack Buchanan, a 24-year-old from Hertfordshire and a committed Christian, who thinks religious practices clash with a culture of instant gratification: “I always call us the microwave generation, we want everything super quick. We don’t want to ever just roast things for a while, we want it right now.” Jack’s parents raised him in the Church but he didn’t always take his faith quite so seriously, particularly during a stint at the girls school where he sat his A-Levels: “God was just definitely not on my mind at all, being completely blunt. I was living for myself, the desires that I wanted, and it got me nowhere.” Shortly after turning 18, he had the opportunity to help build an orphanage in Sierra Leone, an experience which placed him firmly on the path he travels today.

It was a different journey for Waqas Ali, a Dentistry student at the University of Sheffield, who began exploring Islam at the age of 11 after suffering an existential panic attack in his room late one night. “It’s a weird thought to have as a kid, but I had loads of questions about what will happen when I die. That was my tipping point where I thought I needed to find a reason why.” Now at 22 years old, he also sees an incompatibility between religion and today’s consumer culture, but believes there will inevitably come a breaking point: “We’re almost like robots in a system where we’re being made into maximum productivity so we give the most, but we’re not getting anything out of it. With such a big emphasis on materialism, it’s got to a stage where you naturally start asking questions like what’s the point?”

Ashwin Srinivasan has a different theory. He’s a 29-year-old from Chennai, South India and feels that the decline of religion in young people is less a societal issue and more to do with youthful inquisition. “Young people tend to question things which is beautiful. People will only understand what something is when they start questioning it. They’re trying to get more facts, although they don’t always question the right people.” Ashwin is currently based in Sheffield where he works as a technical consultant and lives with his wife of two years, Nithyashri. Along with almost 80 per cent of the population of his home country, he is a Hindu and has been since birth. His parents both followed the religion, albeit very differently, and he too has found his



## 2011 Census



own ways of practicing.

Diet plays a foremost role in his religious expression, as he strictly holds himself to the principle of not harming any living thing, meaning that the typical British menu took a bit of getting used to: “I’m content now knowing that there’s only going to be one bean burger in most places. It’s fine because I want to follow this, nobody forced me to do it and nobody’s forcing me to eat meat either.” Ashwin perceives Hinduism as less an outright religion and more a way of living, observing traditional practices like yoga and meditation alongside vegetarianism, and performing worship rituals as often as his schedule allows: “It doesn’t force you into anything. It doesn’t say you need to go to temple on so-and-so days, or you need to do this or that to

be a Hindu. It’s quite open, you can follow what you think is right and what you perceive as Hinduism.”

The flexibility of his faith stems from its origins with no single founder or holy text, but Islam is a much more regimented religion. Muslims should attend their Mosque every Friday and traditionally pray five times a day at specific hours, something that Waqas has fully integrated into his lifestyle: “You have to wake up at about four or five o’clock for the morning prayer, so it is difficult especially during exam time. University is also a bit difficult, because there isn’t a prayer room in the Dentistry building so you just have to pray in corners and fire escapes. But, you get to the stage where you almost look forward to praying. This





Jack Buchanan (top left), Ashwin Srinivasan (centre), Waqas Ali (bottom right).

is your time to get out of the rat race of life. It's like meditation basically, where you take your mind out of the world and you're focusing on other matters."

For Jack, prayer also plays a big role in daily life, particularly during stressful moments on the job as an emergency care assistant for South Yorkshire Ambulance Service: "A big part of it is just having that peace because we go to a lot of stressful situations. There's a lot of violent patients and situations with screaming families. Quite often, when something is kicking off, I'm praying for peace the whole time. That really does keep me calm while I'm trying to do something quite stressful." His shifts can cover all hours of the week, but he makes time to go to Church on the Sundays he isn't working, while also attending a social community group on Wednesdays.

Christianity has played a greater



role in Jack's social life since moving to Sheffield last year. He left the south to be nearer to his girlfriend, but as a traditional Christian relationship the two of them do not live together. Instead, he shares a house with friends he made through a local Baptist church and he's grateful to them for helping him find his feet in a new city: "I don't know whether it's Christian guilt that means they have to go and talk to new people but that has massively helped me out."

Waqas has also noticed religion taking an increasingly large role in his social life, but for an entirely different reason.

He follows the doctrine of abstaining from alcohol consumption, which has played a big role in shaping who he spends the most time with: "When I was at sixth form, it wasn't a very big deal. But as you get older, everybody starts drinking alcohol and you start to see different lifestyles. People say that Muslims aren't integrating or not mixing, it's not that. The issue is if somebody drinks alcohol and goes clubbing every weekend, and you don't really drink or don't feel comfortable clubbing, there's not an understanding towards that. You're naturally moving away rather than



moving away consciously.”

For Ashwin, Hinduism itself doesn't have a huge effect on his social circle, but as a married man he's in a very different position. His traditional Hindu wedding lasted for three days and established a strong bond between not only he and his wife, but also his wife's family: “You see things around not just the man and woman but also between families, it's nice that it brings everybody together. If I talk to my wife's relatives or my wife's parents now, they feel more like my parents. We are much closer bonded because of the rituals during the ceremony.”

Marriage is also an important part of Islam but is approached very differently, as Waqas explains: “We look at it very objectively so it's not an emotional decision to get married, it's a logical decision. You avoid getting emotionally entangled because then you can't see all the facts, you have to see if you're compatible. So, you speak to their parents, speak to their friends and see what that person is like and then from there you make a logical decision, rather than getting emotionally involved and getting blinded to everything else.”

With this mindset, dating will inevitably play a lesser role in the life of a committed Muslim, but Waqas believes that's for the best: “Whenever you go into a relationship and it breaks up, you lose a little bit of that trust. So, if you've been in five or six, you naturally don't trust people as much. And then when you get married, you've still got that little bit of distrust that's been building up through all those past relationships. I think it's better to have just the one relationship and then go straight to marriage, so I can't really say I've got experience of trying to meet girls, but it's not really been a concern of mine. I think it's one of those things that will just happen.”

**“I had it out with God and asked him why? That was a really testing time...”**

Jack has been with his girlfriend for almost three years now, after the pair met while running a youth centre in the church they both attended. Under Christianity, they can neither live together nor have sex before marriage: “It's not the easiest thing in the world, especially with the culture we now live in,” he says. But the greatest test has come not from his love life but his work life, where he recently faced one of the only events to leave his faith seriously shaken.



In 2018, he was called to the scene of a severe car crash: “That was my first ever death in the service. It was about two months into it and I thought I was doing quite well, but we got to this one and there was nothing we could do. Everyone tried and the ambulance service worked incredibly hard and very well with the police, but the outcome wasn't great.

I had a chat with this paramedic when I got back and I was just filled with emotion, really trying to fight back tears. Later, I got in my car and just broke down, absolutely cried my eyes out. Mainly because it just went quiet. Before that, you had flashing lights and it was all kicking off, but then I got in the car and it just went quiet and I thought ‘what on Earth have I just been to?’” It took time for Jack to pray again after that, as he struggled to understand why God would allow such suffering.

Ultimately, it was during a long walk in the Peak District that he was able to find some understanding: “I got up somewhere really high, that's always been a big thing in my faith. If you get up somewhere really high, it just puts your life in perspective. You realise how small you are, but that God still wants a relationship with you and it makes you feel quite special. I had it out with God and asked him why? That was a really testing time, but I realised that God didn't cause that to happen and that was a sad time for him too, because it was someone else's free will that caused this.”

Waqas has never felt his faith tested to such a degree, and credits that to the teachings of the Quran: “I feel like every question I've ever had has been answered. It's not about opinions with Islam, it's about facts. For me, that's

what's always given me confidence. When you're constantly referring back and it's always got answers, it does deal with all your questions really.” Ashwin's beliefs have always been strong too, but his relationship with Hinduism has evolved as he's gotten older: “The way I perceived it when I was 15 or 16, the way I perceive it now at 29, and probably the way I will see it in 20 years' time are totally different,” he says.

It's an interesting sentiment that is by no means limited to Hinduism. Many people, including atheists, find that their views on religion evolve over time and in the information age there is more to consider than ever before. In this sense, it isn't surprising that religion faces an apparent decline among young British people, one that may very well be hastened by a more narcissistic culture fuelled by social media. But of course, religion itself must also shoulder some of the blame, as its history of scandal and conflict has likely done little to help with the disillusionment of today's youth. However, the stories of Jack, Waqas and Ashwin show that religion can still find a place in the lives of young people. It's not always easy, but it never has been.



Words: David Craig

## The United Kingdom's other religions

Figures:  
2011 Census



**Sikhism**  
432,000 followers

Much like Hinduism, this religion originated from India, albeit hundreds of years later in the 15th century. The two faiths share some similarities, with common beliefs in concepts such as Karma and Dharma.

**Judaism**

269,000 followers



According to the 2011 census, followers of Judaism comprise less than one percent of the British population, but this religion is one of the oldest and largest in the entire world. The vast majority of Jewish people live in Israel, the United States and Canada.



# The Internet's Prodigal Son

In honest expression and emotional communication, Otis Mensah straddles the line between poetry and rap

“**A** committed advocate of the power of vulnerability in art, he represents all that is great about Sheffield, he's dynamic, and radical.” These are the words then-Lord Mayor Magid Magid used to introduce Otis Mensah as the first poet laureate of Sheffield.

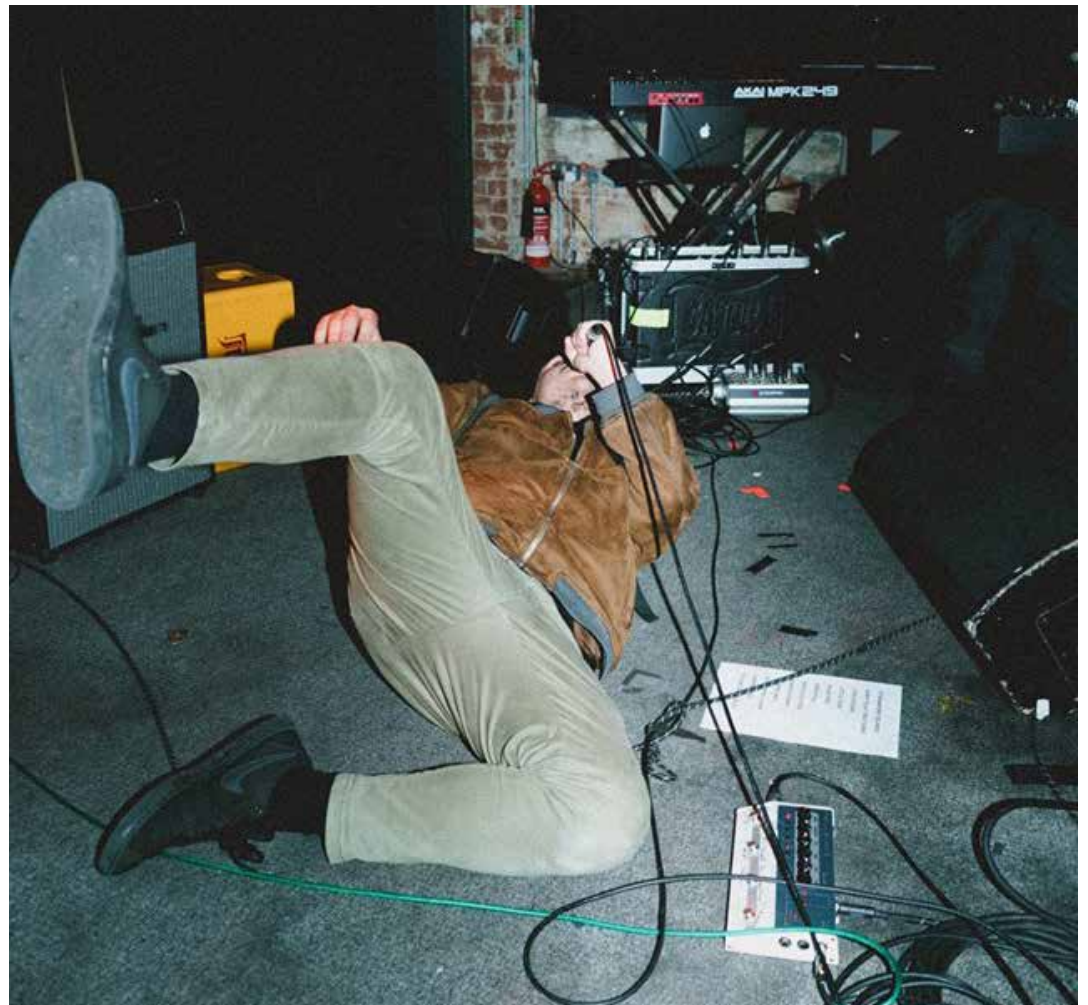
Now, half a year after he's stepped into the position, he's come in to chat about the intersection of poetry and rap, being a child of the internet and his new book 'Safe Metamorphosis'.

## What's your manifesto as poet laureate?

I suppose I'm moving stylistically from a traditional poetry setting to a more energetic rap setting. My main focus as poet laureate and as an artist is breaking the barriers down between the two and showing people rap is a potent form of poetry. Though it has a certain air to it that traditional poetry doesn't have it's still poetic and we've got to get rid of the elitist perception of who is a poet.

## There's this phrase that comes up constantly in your work 'Child of the Internet' what does that mean?

Essentially it represents our generation, the first to notice the effects of the internet, and the pros and cons being constantly connected brings. It's not positive or



negative, it's reflective of this inescapable cultural effect of the internet. Especially in music culture, there's this feeling that genre is dead because you pick up so many influences from so many places that what you like is entirely unique to you.

## Isn't genre still crucial to defining your own work though? To help you stand out?

I still believe in genre in the

sense that all artists should be valued for carving out their path. Like in Hip Hop, the mainstream media push the rap tag and ignore conscious hip hop, alternative hip hop. It's a bit sad they paint it all with the same genre brush. When I say genre is dead I mean the death of influences. Now, no one should be afraid to pick and choose inspiration from all sorts of genres, not just their own.

## Will these musings be making their way into 'Safe Metamorphosis'?

\*laughs\* All that and then some. I've been working on some of those poems for weeks and some since I was 16. It'll touch on music, meaning, life and living in the north.



*Safe Metamorphosis is available for purchase at: [otismensah.bandcamp.com](http://otismensah.bandcamp.com)*



# Men Who Changed The World

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**This issue... the pop icons who tore apart traditional masculinity**



**Throughout history there have always been toxic expectations of what men should be and how they should behave. People who did not meet these expectations often found themselves shunned and excluded. Yet some men used their platform as rock stars and pop icons to break the mould. Here are a few of them...**

## David Bowie

David Bowie's androgyny ripped apart mainstream expectations of what men should look like. Despite beginning his career suited and booted, on the cover of his third album, 1970's *The Man Who Sold The World*, a long-haired Bowie was pictured lying on a chaise longue in a draping dress. It was dubbed the 'man dress' - because Bowie was not transgender and dressing as a woman, but redefining the boundaries of what the male dress code should be in the first place.

In the following years we saw the glam rock of Ziggy Stardust, striking make-up of Aladdin Sane and dozens more effeminate outfits and styles from the man who quickly became a leading fashion icon. By no means was Bowie the first man to pout for the cameras, wear a dress or paint his face, but the Star Man took things further than anyone had before in the public eye.

## Lou Reed

In some ways, Lou Reed was the epitome of traditional masculinity. Regularly donning jeans, a plain t-shirt and leather jacket, the Velvet Underground frontman conformed to every expectation of how men were expected to look. Add to this his addictions to alcohol and drugs and you have an image of someone as far from progressive masculinity as could be.

Yet Reed's contribution was fundamental in opening up conversations about addiction and sexual orientation, as he used his platform to bring taboo subjects to the masses. Perhaps the greatest example is on 1972 solo album

*Transformer*, incidentally produced by Bowie, in which Reed touched on androgyny, transexuality and prostitution.

## Elton John

The original Rocket Man, Elton John was as invested in the glam rock era of the 1970s as Bowie or anyone who came before him and on stage he was flamboyant and wild. In his spare time, he was also chairman of a football club. From 1976 to 1987 John owned his boyhood team, Watford FC, breaking down any misconceptions that all football fans ought to be hardened men, or that eccentric pop icons couldn't stand on the terraces.

John didn't shy away from personal difficulties either, singing about his own suicidal thoughts in the deeply moving "Someone Saved My Life Tonight", written about his doubts about marrying his fiancé Lisa Woodrow. He then married and subsequently divorced Renate Blauel before later coming out as bisexual and then gay. John eventually married David Furnish and is continuing to champion LGBT rights to this day.

## Freddie Mercury

Freddie Mercury, lead singer of Queen, gave himself and his band names nobody else could live up to. Born in Zanzibar as Farrokh Bulsara, Mercury's outlandish nature was rebellious for a man from his background - but he never let that stop him. Mercury was a star who craved luxury and adored attention.

There was perhaps no moment quite as head-turning as his performance as *Coronation Street*'s Bet Lynch in the music video to 1984

hit "I Want To Break Free". The video saw the band, with Mercury donning a wig, high heels and fake breasts, parodying the northern soap with choreography provided by the Royal Ballet.

In the United Kingdom drag was nothing new, stretching back to the 17th century and Shakespeare's plays at the Globe Theatre. But American audiences were less keen; the video was banned by MTV and audiences at a live show in Brazil even pelted Mercury with stones and beer cans during the song. However, Mercury remained undeterred and his bold moves left a lasting legacy, with the popular RuPaul's Drag Race now winning Emmys and - ironically - MTV Awards over in the States.

## Prince

Prince carried the androgynous style of Bowie and the eccentric stage presence of Mercury, while also beating away countless stereotypes of what black American men should be and how they should behave. His music oozed sexuality and so did his performances, with 1980 album *Dirty Mind* rattling more than a few conservative minds and opening up conversations about sex everywhere. The song 'Darling Nikki', from 1984 album *Purple Rain*, was so shocking that it even reportedly led to the formation of the Parents Music Resource Center in the USA, which eventually gave us the parental advisory now plastered on particularly explicit albums.

Defiance was at the heart of everything Prince did. After an extended furore with record label Warner Bros, Prince appeared in public with the word 'slave' written

on his cheek, later telling Rolling Stone "if I can't do what I want to do, what am I?" He fought for animal rights, preached about his religious beliefs and even argued against the success of the internet in 2010. He certainly wasn't one for convention.

## Ezra Furman

His fame doesn't quite match those icons already mentioned, yet Ezra Furman today is carrying on the legacy of his predecessors. An ardent fan of Lou Reed, his music too comments on the difficulties of conforming to expectations and struggling to fit in. Furman is Jewish, bisexual and androgynous. He doesn't like labels, though, saying in an interview with the Telegraph in 2018 that he wasn't necessarily gender-fluid or transsexual but rather that "I just do being a man different than some". More recently, Furman provided the soundtrack to Netflix sitcom *Sex Education*, which also attempts to beat down the stigma surrounding sexual taboos.

Each of these men did their bit in subverting traditional notions of masculinity and how men are expected to behave, and they are by no means the only ones to do so. Yet the struggles Furman continues to write of and countless men continue to face shows there are still conversations to be had and steps to be made toward a future without toxic gender norms. 🏳️‍🌈

**Words:** David Anderson

# Swiping out humanity

Are dating apps changing the way we approach romance? **Gethin Morgan** gives his take on the corrupting nature of dating apps and why we should use them at our peril.

**S**ome decisions are made in milliseconds. Instinctive reactions which kick in with a certainty that there is no way you could possibly be wrong. Milk and sugar? No thanks. Cheese and toasted? Absolutely. Would you like your receipt? Nah, it's alright.

After all, we know what we want and sometimes there's nothing to deliberate. But what about when it comes to matters of love and attraction? Do we really know what we want in a romantic partner? Should we be able to make that decision in an instant? Have we even got the required information to make that call?

Regardless of the answers to those questions, anyone who has ever been on a dating app has almost certainly made a complete evaluation of another human being before you could even read their name. While our eyes are more than capable of deciding whether or not we are physically attracted to someone, surely a couple of selfies is not enough to figure out whether they would be a suitable match.

Perhaps they pique your interest enough to justify a brief browse through the bio. They like Duran Duran and can't deal with cats? Pfft, how could I ever love this person? Left swipe for you.

There's an ease that comes with flicking through your favourite dating app. No expectation of politeness or reason to be patient. Imagine standing in a bar and someone approaches, then before they can even introduce themselves you shove them to one side. Sat alone at home, staring deep into the abyss of your handheld device, you are completely detached from reality. Without any social pressures or expectations of basic decency, you can be as fussy or unfussy as you like, as crude or objectifying as you please without any ramifications.

We may as well be perusing an online shopping catalogue or rummaging through Netflix's wide range of movie options, such is the level of irreverence with which we window shop for potential

partners. And the more we swipe, the faster we swipe. Yes, no, yes, yes, no. We live in an age where the manners of a social scenario can be dodged completely. And the result of that is treating our fellow people like nothing but AI characters on a screen. Judging and objectifying everyone without a care for their feelings. It's (quite literally) like something from a Black Mirror episode.

Of course, all this judgement is done behind closed doors. They don't know that it took you a blink of an eye to swipe left. But that doesn't mean that ruthlessness doesn't take its toll on our mental health. Dating apps are a playground for those society deem objectively attractive. And anyone who doesn't fit into the elite of the 'hottie class system' is liable to feeling inadequate, unwanted and a bit ugly.


A matchless run or a series of messages left on 'read' can quickly knock you down and down until confidence is at a low. Naturally, our first instinct is to change something, perhaps my profile isn't doing me justice. And the sad reality is that a picture of your chiselled abs or tree trunk arms massively increases your match-ability. Which leaves those without such genetic blessings at a disadvantage, and those avid gym-goers almost forced to sell their body to improve their popularity. Don't get me wrong, if I was built like a brick shithouse I would absolutely display that fact on my Tinder profile, but that doesn't justify the fact that these apps promote the objectification of ourselves, as if the most important aspect of our attractiveness is our body.

Then there is the danger of removing the social dynamics which uphold our sense of morality. While bars and clubs are no strangers to inappropriate behaviour, their space in the public creates a boundary - a boundary where, trusting the goodness of onlookers, inappropriate behaviour can be outed or

They like Duran Duran and can't deal with cats? Pfft, how could I ever love this person? Left swipe for you.

punished. While many of the people we meet are through mutual friends or social groups, which creates an obligation of decency, or risk outing from your own friends group. On the comfort of a phone in an empty room, that's all taken away.

It's not all bad. There are positives that do come from dating apps. I'm sure there are many very happy couples, maybe even reading this, who owe their love to a web-generated match. The odds are improved in your favour when the pool of potential partners is increased from everyone in the bar to everyone in the city. It's like gathering all the fish in the sea and chucking them in a swimming pool. But is that even a good thing? Not only are there more you have to sift through to get to 'the one', but with so many options at your disposal, there can be a sense that there's always someone better. It lowers our patience and before we can even get to know someone properly, our heads have probably turned to a different fish.

I don't think that people should be banned from using Tinder, Bumble and Grindr. Ultimately it is a way of meeting new people. However, I believe that more care needs to be taken with these applications, and that the people using them need to truly understand what is in their hands and how it makes them think. Don't allow incessant swiping to turn you into a pig or a fickle lover. Don't allow it to lower your self-esteem and self-worth. Don't allow dating apps to corrupt you. 





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EDS

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# From the Depths of Depression to the Heights of Ben Nevis

When Kevin Smith went to see his favourite band Frightened Rabbit 11 years ago, he never would have thought that today he'd be training to climb the UK's highest mountain in memory of the band's lead singer.

**I**t's November 2009 and a teenage Kevin Smith is at a small venue in Fort William, Scotland, eagerly waiting for his favourite band, Frightened Rabbit, to take to the stage. It's the first time Kevin has ever seen the band, who are touring 2008 album *The Midnight Organ Fight* in tiny venues across the Scottish Highlands. Only about 30 people see the gig, but Kevin is one of them and he loves it.

After the gig he gets his hand on a copy of the album on vinyl and asks the band to sign it. He doesn't manage to get the signature of lead singer and chief songwriter Scott Hutchison, but he's in luck, as a friend of a friend knows Scott and manages to blag him a way into the green room upstairs.

"We just talked," Kevin tells me as I chat to him 10 years after he met his hero. "It was simple stuff, about family, about how the band are doing, where they see themselves in 10 years and the progress of the band and the progress

of himself as a person. It was just always stuck in the back of my mind."

Sadly, 10 years later, Frightened Rabbit's Scott Hutchison is no longer with us. In May 2018 he was declared missing and two days later his body was found in a marina at Port Edgar, near Edinburgh, between the Forth Road Bridge and Queensferry Crossing. After a long battle with depression, Scott had committed suicide. Looking back, Kevin, now 29 and working as a labourer for a roofing company, has a completely different perspective on that 2009 meeting and Frightened Rabbit's music from the time.

"From my personal experience of listening to that album [*The Midnight Organ Fight*] before Scott had killed himself, you would just assume it was just sad songs written by a sad guy who's just had a hard time. Whereas now if you listen to it, it's a cry for help. There's a song called *Floating in the Forth*, and the song is basically all about committing suicide by jumping off the Forth Road Bridge. And that's what he did. That's how he killed himself. It's heartbreaking now

that you listen to it.

"I'll never forget when [the news of Scott's death] came over the radio. I was at work at the time. I never thought that I would cry over somebody but that was the one person who would affect me the most. It was a total grief. I remember crying for days after that, because his connection with me personally was phenomenal."

Scott's death hit Kevin particularly hard because, over the past 10 years, he has suffered from social anxiety disorder and depression himself. When we chat it's a beautiful summer's day in Kevin's home town of Oban, yet he says that a year ago he wouldn't have even left the house.

"I'd kind of been on this, I wouldn't say bottom shelf, but middle shelf of life, for so long," he says. "Then, when I did hit rock bottom there was no way I could come up for air and it was almost like the life had been pulled clean out of you. You wake up in the morning and every day is a struggle. You don't do normal stuff like cooking yourself dinner; if you can't be bothered standing and cooking then

you just starve. I would starve myself for days. I wouldn't sleep, I would be so tired during the day but when I got home my head would go into overdrive so I couldn't sleep. I never had energy, I had a really bad diet. So, you lose all interest in yourself."

Kevin is a musician himself, but during this dark time he fell out of love with making music. He also lost touch with friends and saw his long-term relationship fall apart.

"I had a girlfriend for four years," he explains. "She knew I'd had problems in the past but she never realised the extremity of it. She left me because of it, and that was the sudden shock for me. This was a girl who I'd been in love with for years and she's walked away from me because I couldn't look after myself. So how could she expect to look after herself and me? It was that sudden shock that just rattled me, it totally rattled me, and made me realise that you can't live in what I call darkness.

"You literally become a total recluse. It's sad because I feel like I've wasted so many years and so many chances on not doing certain things that I could have potentially opened doors with. I've missed out on so many opportunities because of the way I was."

Kevin had never spoken out about his struggle. That is until one day, earlier this year, when he decided it was time to talk. After one particularly difficult breakdown, he sat down with his parents and brother and opened up.

"It's the first time that I'd ever opened up to my parents," he tells me. "My parents had never heard me talk the way I talked. I spoke about debt, I spoke about the split with my girlfriend, I spoke about problems in the world and things that affected me personally.

"It was almost like, at the end of it, I felt so much relief and by the time I'd finished talking to them, I wanted to tell my friends, so they could understand and grasp it. So, I phoned a friend, Paul Storr, who ... had been my best friend in high school, and he couldn't believe it. He was just like, 'I'm so happy that you're finally willing to talk'. Because we'd never really had that heart to heart connection, we were always mates and buddies and would go for drinks and go on nights out and go abroad and all that, but we'd never had a heart to heart conversation."

Kevin had seen what happened to Scott and had struggled himself. He wanted to make a change, both to his own life and also to others who were going through similar situations. He set

himself small goals and tasks to achieve, within one year, five years or ten years, to give himself things to aim for. On the list was climbing Ben Nevis – the highest mountain in the British Isles.

He decided to do the climb in memory of Scott and to raise money for charity, and when he mentioned it to the friends he knew through music, they were desperate to get on board. These friends were Paul Storr, Aaron Forston, Andy Bruce and also Kevin Irvine, the friend who blagged Kevin that meeting with Scott Hutchison back in Fort William all those years ago.

They decided to name the expedition the 'Mass Height Organ Fight', acknowledging the magnitude of the climb ahead of them and also paying homage to the Frightened Rabbit album they all love so dearly.

Since setting himself these goals and planning the Ben Nevis expedition, Scott's outlook has brightened, and he has realised the importance of talking to people, including the friends with whom he's tackling this climb.

"All my friends, even the guys I'm doing climbing with, they were all pushed away [when I was depressed]. Kevin Irvine, he literally lives right round the corner from where I am right now, but I hadn't seen him in about seven or eight months. He'd phone me and I'd tell him I was too busy, I wouldn't be doing anything, just sat watching the telly or doing something useless, but I wouldn't want to hang out with anybody. Once you get to a certain stage, like when I had that breakdown and started realising, 'hang on a minute things aren't right here', you do reach out to friends and your true friends come back – the ones you can rely on and the ones you can support and they'll support you.

"Then you start realising that, hang on a minute, maybe I can open up to these people. I'm not saying that you need to hit rock bottom to realise that, but it's understanding when to talk and when to realise that things aren't right, because I missed that stop on the bus, I was well



Kevin Smith with Scott Hutchison in 2009 (above left) and tackling a practice climb with his best mates (right)

past it. Whereas there are some people who are sitting there thinking 'maybe there isn't anything wrong, maybe I'm okay'. Then they convince themselves and they kind of bury their heads in the sand again and then convince themselves again. To be honest, I did that for years as well. You just assume that things are going to get better whereas they won't, unless you're willing to talk."

With their climb, the friends will be raising money for three charities which all encourage communication and open dialogue about mental health among men. These are The Scott Hutchison Fund, which was set up in memory of the singer by his brother Grant; CALM, which is a nationwide campaign tackling the stigma around mental health in men; and Martyn's Monday Club, a peer to peer support group in Oban set up by the friends of Martyn Crookesend, another man who took his own life in 2018. Kevin's admiration for the charities, which work on small and large scales,





knows no bounds.

Not satisfied with simply reaching the 1,345m peak, though, the Mass Height Organ Fight group has decided to go the extra mile to challenge themselves. They plan to carry their musical instruments all the way and perform a Frightened Rabbit song at the top.

"We all have our own little niches within music," he explains. "Myself, I play the acoustic and I have been doing it for - well I had been doing it for years - but then I stopped, which is a lot to do with what's been going on with me personally. With the likes of my depression and all that, I kind of fell out of love with music, whereas now this has pushed me back into music. But then, the other boys they all do their own thing. One of them is a rapper!

"It's a nice little group, we all have the same love for Frightened Rabbit and for the idea behind raising money and raising awareness as well, especially, for the problems that are going on. These

boys, two of them are my best friends and they know what I've been through, so they know this means a lot to me personally as well. So, it's literally a case of we're wanting to basically just get as much publicity as possible. We're not doing this to benefit ourselves in any way, we're just trying to make people aware that it's a serious case. If you told me a year ago that I was depressed I would have never admitted it, whereas now, it's been the longest 10 years of my life, and I now intend to make it more public."

Mass Height Organ Fight will tackle Ben Nevis in July, but before that they have plenty planned, including climbing a number of other mountains in preparation. They've already climbed 350m high Ben Lora four times and have seen all the conditions the Scottish highlands could throw at them.

"We've done it in the rain and the snow one Saturday, and then the following Saturday we did it in scorching heat and

sunshine, then the following weekend it was a mixture of all elements you can imagine. And that was just [over] 300m, so you can imagine what it's going to be like at 1300m. Hopefully it'll be nice weather. Scotland's unpredictable, very unpredictable."

The group don't yet know which Frightened Rabbit song they'll be performing at the Ben Nevis peak, but Kevin is leaning towards Heads Roll Off, from the 2008 Midnight Organ Fight album. There's a lyric in the song which feels particularly apt. "And while I'm alive, I'll make tiny changes to earth", it goes. That's just what Kevin and his friends are doing, and with enough tiny changes, they could make a big difference. 🇮🇪

**You can follow the Mass Height Organ Fight journey on Twitter @MassFight and donate at: [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/massheightorganfight](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/massheightorganfight).**





# BYOB

(Be Your Own Boss)

Too often, owning a small business and the hardships that come with it get overlooked. Will Pettit spoke to William Chew, owner of small food production company Mak Tok, who explained just how hard it can be, but why he never wants it to stop.

**A**t times, Will Chew's Apple Watch can be quite distracting. In the hour I spend with him, 29 emails and seven phone calls light up his wrist, like a bat signal for this business owner to spring into action and keep working.

"Busy? That word doesn't really do it justice! When you're self employed, everything falls on you eventually. You know exactly what's been done, what you're doing, and what needs to be done."

When I ask him what he does to relax, he quickly stops me, explaining that for him real breaks are few and far between.

"You can tell yourself it's time for a rest, but in reality you'll always find reasons to do work. Being a business owner, that's a hard thing to deal with. You can't ever say that work's over and that it's time to take a break, because work and life are intertwined.

"It's not even like I own a shop. It's online and it's with international clients, so I can't stop work and go home, because work is a part of me."

The work that consumes Will's life is his business, Mak Tok.

"In one sentence, I'd describe Mak Tok as authentic Malaysian chilli paste, based on traditional recipes and natural ingredients."

Grinning, Will admits that he's used that catchphrase before at trade shows, in business meetings, almost every day.

Will set up Mak Tok in 2017, when he left Malaysia to come to the UK for University. Homesickness led him to recreate his mother's traditional recipes, and the business was born from there. What started out as 50 jars of one sauce has grown, and he now works with farm shops and department stores across the UK, as well as selling online and exporting the product to mainland Europe.

Scrolling through family photos, Will admits that the distance can be tricky.

"Homesickness is tough. Family is the most important thing to me. I call my family every day, if I can, no matter how busy. Just to stay in touch, to let them know I'm okay. It's important for my mental health and theirs, just so I feel connected, and they know that I'm doing okay."

When quizzed on the stress, Will goes unusually quiet, confessing that while he loves what he does, there is a burden that comes from owning your own business.

"In a small team like mine, we can't afford to bring in outsiders to train us, I must train myself, and then relay that to my team- everything comes down to what I can give them so that they can give me something back.

"How stressful is it? It can feel like a losing battle sometimes. Every time I deal with one problem, something else comes up. There hasn't been a single time since I started this business where I can remember switching off. When you're running your own business, it doesn't matter what you're doing,

everything revolves around growing it and making it successful.”

Will's success, though, is undeniable.

He started selling his paste in Leeds Kirkgate Market - four hours and fifty jars later, he'd sold out.

Since setting up Mak Tok, he sells roughly 500 jars a month and has 25 suppliers. He's won awards, both for his business achievements and his personal victories; the largest one being his fight to stay in the country.

“When I thought I was going to be deported, and have my business shut down, that was hard. I was given two weeks to prove my case, and at that point with no-one else around me, I felt very alone and really felt the full weight of owning my own business.

“It hurt, to know that everything I'd worked for was going to be taken away. A lot of the time there's stuff you cannot share. I don't want to burden my team with my issues, and there have definitely been times where I've had no-one to talk to and I've caved in on myself.”

Stress is clearly something Will, and most small business owners, have to accept as part of their life. 80% of small businesses fail in their first two years, and the 24-year-old knows he has no reason to be complacent, even with his success so far.

Will works out of a shared office in Sheffield full of all the modern trappings of a co-working space in 2019. White walls, inspiring quotes, and enough plug sockets to power a small city. Though, for this young businessman, it's more about the people inside the building than anything else.

“Being able to thrive in an environment where people support one and other, and you have individuals supporting you who understand the stress of being an entrepreneur - that's so valuable, it's great. I didn't get that luxury in Malaysia.

We have enthusiasm, we have some skills, we have personality, and we have great products; but none of us have much experience, and having people to bounce ideas off is such a saviour, especially when times get tough.

It's a recurring theme, the stress of work. When mental health is mentioned, his grin drops for a moment. His energy fills the room throughout the interview, but at this point it is clear he is letting his guard down.

“One of the biggest sources of stress I've found involves my mental health. In my country, my culture, we tend to keep our problems to ourselves. Mental health isn't widely discussed, so someone with

anxiety or depression is seen as weak, not strong.

“One of the main things about men is that a lot of men are not connected with their family, and they don't see how important that can be. That environment that I grew up, it helps me to thrive in my own business. I'm happier to share what I've been through and what I'm going through, and that's what we need to change. Until we can say to every man that it's okay to cry and it's okay to feel things, it's going to be hard to succeed.”

Pausing, he takes a moment to

breathe and glances down at his wrist- unsurprisingly, it's lit up with an incoming call.

“Don't worry, it's just Alan Sugar! I'll ring him back later.

“Being a man can be hard, especially when there are expectations to provide. In reality, that's all I'm doing, is providing. I'm providing security for my family, providing income for my team, providing chilli paste for my suppliers. It can be never-ending!

“Particularly in Malaysia, men are supposed to just keep going, keep being





supportive and providing. It's better in Britain, but there still needs to be change. I love my work and ultimately I love having responsibility, but it shouldn't be necessary for men to have that responsibility if they don't want it."

Returning to the subject of Mak Tok, so too returns Will's smile. He is clearly an impassioned man, with the drive to turn Mak Tok into one of the 20% of small businesses that succeed.

"I always knew I wanted to build my dream, and work with people who wanted to build that dream with me. In

my mind, if I was working for someone else, I'm chasing their dream - that can be fine, if their dream aligns with mine, but that's rare. If I'm going to devote myself to something, then I need to see an end product I want.

"I'll never regret owning my own business, the stress is part and parcel of the experience. It's all worth the pride of looking at what I've achieved."

Will stands, pulling his phone out of his pocket to climb the mountain of notifications he's received in the last 60 minutes. He's already achieved more

than most start-up manage, but he has no intention of slowing down, his only concern is for the growth of Mak Tok, the company he loves.

"When you love what you do, it's a double edged sword. People always say to love what you do, and I do love running my business. I love food, I love telling people about my culture, it's amazing.

But at the same time, the work is crazy, when you love something you never want to stop doing it."





BURTON

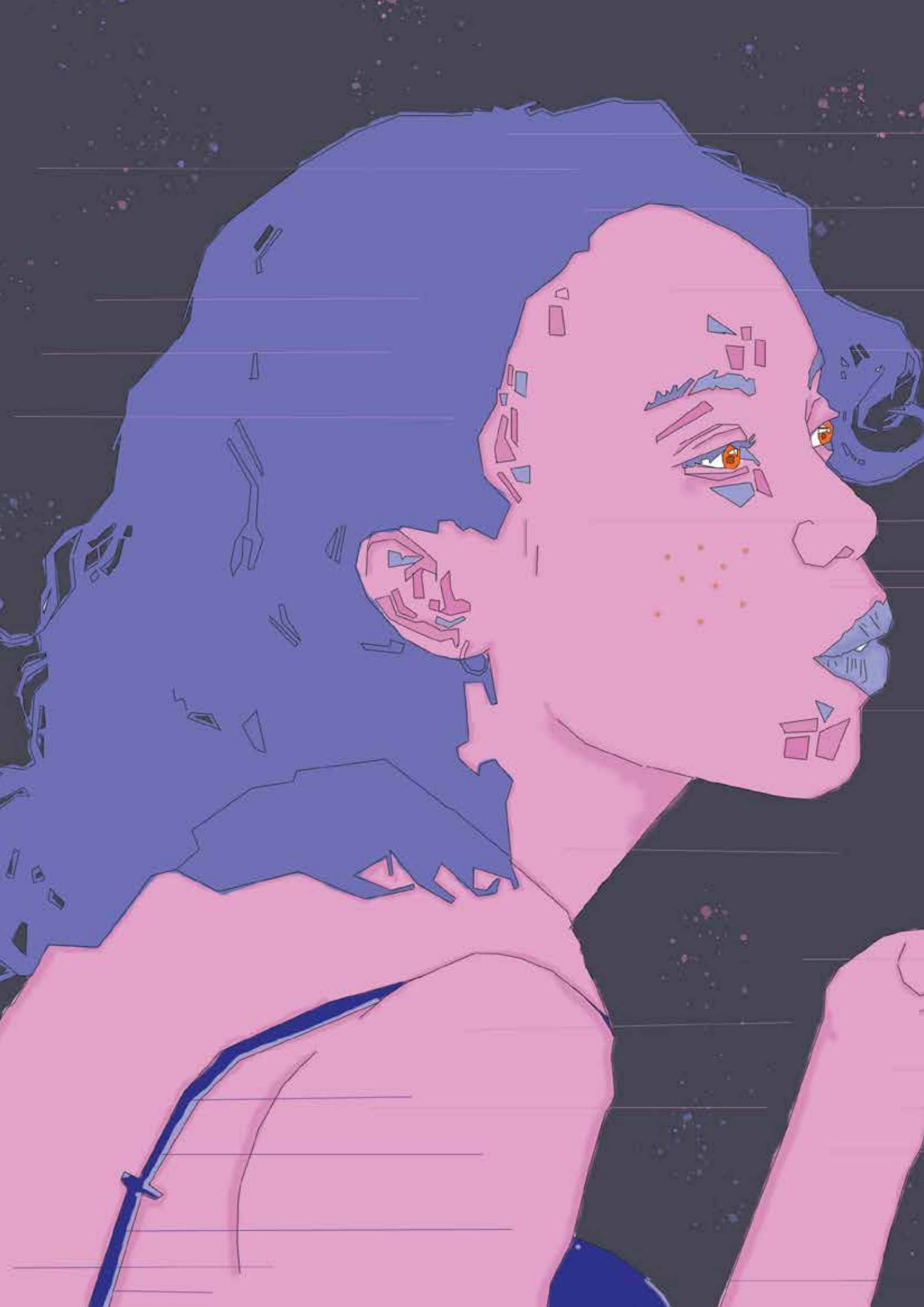
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# Girls on film

**It's easier than ever to find love on the internet,  
but why go through the trials and tribulations  
of relationships when you can get the love and  
affection you crave from a performer.**

*Words: Nathan Makalena*

*Illustration: Eliot Robinson*



**She plays with herself whilst he watches. She can do whatever he asks and together they can live out all manner of sexual desires he might have. Though their relationship isn't of a purely carnal nature, she shows him gentler affections. Inquiring about the tedious details of his day, empowering him and thanking him for his contributions. On the other end of a screen, in his bed, alone, he pays again; to keep these fantasies alive.**

**'E**mma', in most ways, is a normal university student. She attends lectures, goes out with friends on weeknights, squabbles with her housemates about whose turn it is to do the washing up. In fact, her days are rather indistinguishable from her coursemates or those of students around the country.

In the evenings, though, she takes on a different persona - partially for her own security, but it's also what her audience pay to see. She's a webcam model or 'camgirl', the latest colloquialism of the oldest profession known to mankind. The premise is simple, she says, "I log in sometime after ten in the evening, fully clothed. Over the course of the performance (which can sometimes last six to ten hours) I'll make incentives to get my viewers to donate. A piece of clothing will come off at so many tips or you can pay a little extra to chat with me one on one. The performance usually ends with masturbation on camera."

With a relatively low bar of entry and a captive audience in chat rooms and dedicated websites across the internet, 'camgirls' have brought sex work into the 21st Century. She hasn't been in the business for long, a part time fix that's "better than working a nine to five while I'm still at university". But it's this sort of flexibility that has led so many young women to try their hand.

Although the history of camming starts with conceptual artist Jenny Ringley in 1996, the practice didn't become mainstream as a source of income and entertainment until sometime after 2010. The enormous range of opportunity for both performers and audiences was covered in alternative titles like Vice, Dazed and I-D as well as newspapers like the Daily Mail and Daily Mirror.

At the same time, documentaries like *Hot Girls Wanted*, produced by Rashida Jones, raised awareness of the dangers naive young performers could face when getting involved in the industry. For once it seemed like the respect and protection for sex workers was ahead of the curve, unlike the discrimination and victimisation of escorts and prostitutes in years prior.

However, whilst there seems to be a general understanding of the dangers facing female performers like doxing (threats of releasing private information to people they may know) and harassment, people's understanding of the dangers for the male audiences seem misguided at best and disinterested at worst.

'Emma' talks about one man, a fan she acquired in the first six months of camming. "He began to make repeat visits to my streams, keeping up the same lines of conversation across multiple days. I think that's what made me notice. Whilst I was masturbating for him, he would talk about things that weren't even remotely sexual, what he'd done with his day, ask about mine and that sort of thing. He was paying so much money to get me in these one-on-one chats then opening up about stuff that he could've said to anyone on the bus."

The man 'Emma' talks about represents an endemic problem for the overwhelmingly young, male purveyors of online pornography and you can start to build a picture of how dependent they are on camgirls from the countless anonymous posts on forums and message boards for sufferers of porn addiction. One "maxed out credit cards and binged on sites for hours and hours. About six hours per day on weekdays after office and up to sixteen hours per day on weekends." Another

spent upwards of £9,000 over the last year alone and "lost interest in friends and hobbies", after letting his eight-year relationship deteriorate.

The discussion of pornography as a legitimate cause of addiction is hotly contested in psychological circles but according to Dr Clarissa Smith, a professor of Sexual Cultures at University of Sunderland, all of these men are using the intimacy of camgirls to achieve relationships with women they couldn't otherwise get in their everyday lives. Dr Smith is the co-editor of *Porn Studies*, an academic journal whose contributors are making an effort to update the classification of sex addiction at the same rate as the industry.

The problem with reliance on camgirls as a substitute for real female relationships is the issue of genuineness. 'She' was already aware of the tactics and tricks to keep men infatuated, a necessity if you want to make a living out of camming, "I don't want them to have an emotional connection with ME. I've created a persona that's unlike myself, innocent minded and two years younger than I actually am. I'm just playing for what men want, who they feel comfortable engaging with and donating to."

**I**t's this safety and comfort that is unhealthy for the male perception of women in both a sexual and romantic way. If they become accustomed to an environment where all their needs and desires are satisfied without them realising it's being done for personal motivations, men will end up brutally rebuffed by real women; honest personalities that exist in the real world with agency and opinion. Dr Smith argues that this is what makes porn addiction a legitimate concern, it's the ability to get what you want in a much

easier way than the real world that will cause a reliance and a downward spiral of addiction.

Psychologists who find this categorisation problematic lean pretty much entirely on pragmatics, citing addiction requires a compulsive engagement with rewarding stimuli despite the adverse consequences. In their opinion 'rewarding stimuli' would be things that contain active ingredients that the brain craves - nicotine, alcohol and methamphetamines for example. Although, when having sex, dopamine is released giving people a sense of sharp focus and craving. By watching pornography you're giving yourself an easy way to produce dopamine: a powerful and addictive brain chemical. Pornography doesn't contain an addictive ingredient, it turns your body into the addictive ingredient. It enables, which puts it more in line with video games and social media, other hotly contested

'addictions' but ones that similarly provide that quick release dopamine.

Men find themselves trapped in a reward system, needing that dopamine burst before doing anything else, feeling like they deserve it when they really don't.

The other problem this causes in men is an unrealistic expectation of female partners during sex. 'Emma' told me "I do things, and I see other girls do things, that you are not going to find in the bedroom. Girls sticking great big things down their throats and, if you think you'll get that in your everyday vanilla relationships, you're going to be let down."

This is another problem that links back to blurred reality between performer and person, one which has also been linked to more traditional pornography in the past. "I think it's because, I offer that little window to people, a window leading straight into my room where they

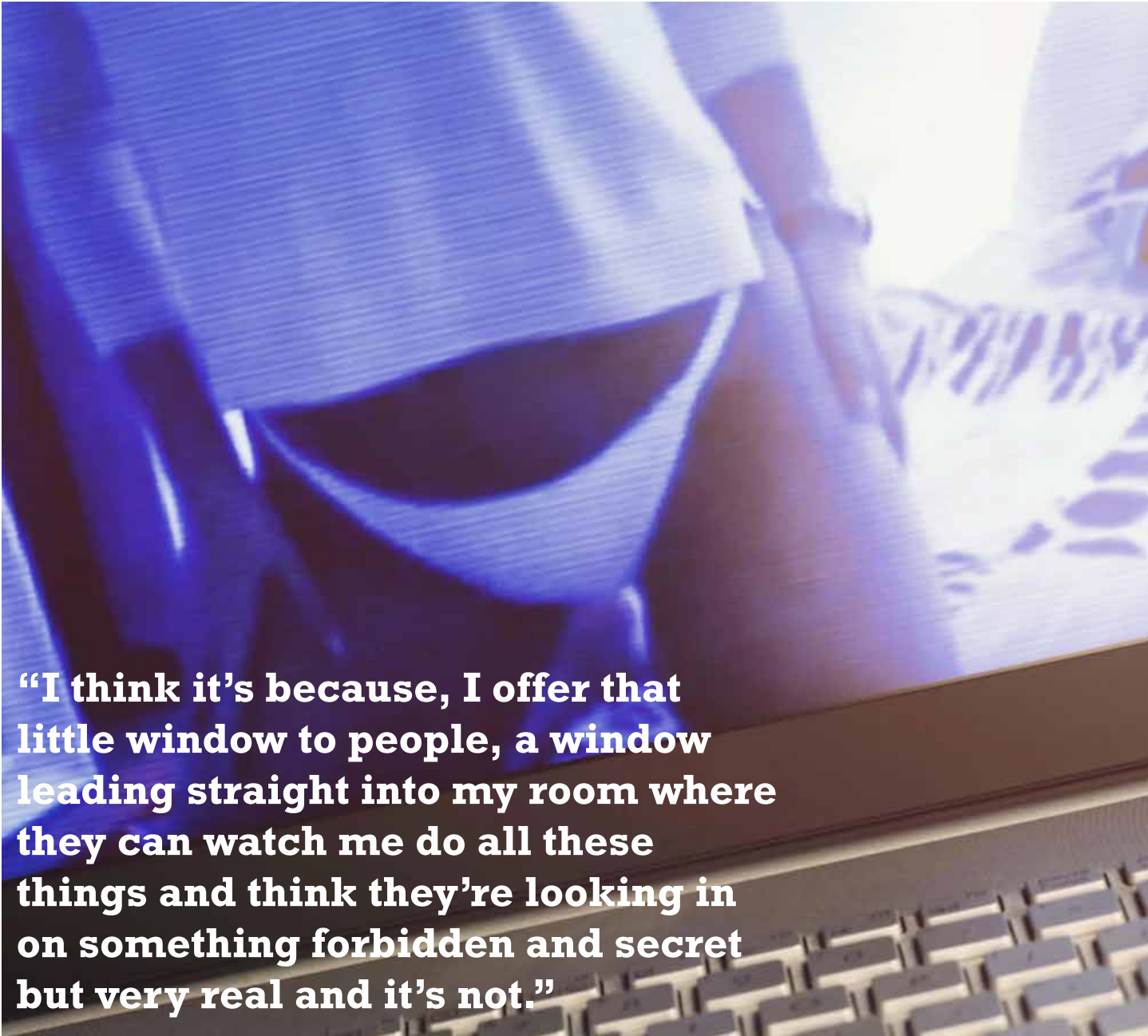
can watch me do all these things and think they're looking in on something forbidden and secret but very real and it's not."

A solution to both of these problems is education, like most issues that affect men (including the whole host of other established addictions) porn addiction is not talked about. Feelings of loneliness and the inability to engage with a woman face to face don't make the rounds in chauvinistic pub banter; erectile dysfunction and disappointment with sex don't find place in water cooler and worksite conversations.

Men need to be told they can interact with pornography in a complimentary and less addictive manner. By using the stimulation in conjunction with relationships rather than as a substitute they won't be left feeling empty handed.



*Words: Nathan Makalena*



**"I think it's because, I offer that little window to people, a window leading straight into my room where they can watch me do all these things and think they're looking in on something forbidden and secret but very real and it's not."**





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# The Evolution of Masculinity



**Society is finally speaking about the problems associated with modern conceptions and expectations of masculinity. Harry Tedder looks at how masculinity has evolved in the last 3000 years, and asks has it really changed at all?**

**P**rogress, have we made any?

The latest figures for male suicide released by the Samaritans in their 2018 annual suicide report once again confirmed UK men are three times more likely to commit suicide than women. It still remains the biggest killer of men in the nation and the toxic ideal of masculinity society has prescribed is a key contributor to the problem.

These ideals are products of historical developments, developments that originated in Ancient Greece, 800BC. Their conceptions of masculinity are intimately tied with courage. So intimately in fact that the very word that we translate as courage, *Andra*, derives from the Greek word for a male adult, *Andros*, which literally means manliness.

The dedication to such courage consumed the early part of their lives, said Dr Chris Mowat, a teaching associate in Ancient History.

"They spent years preparing for war so when the time came, the pressure down was so intense die on the battlefield weakness".

"Those who acted in a cowardly manner were ridden of citizenship and punished as heavily as death, they were pretty brutal. There was no crying, no talking of your problems, just unconditionally get on with it. Those who didn't abide by this simply weren't considered men".

Another major social and philosophical stance in the form of the Stoics, however, saw courage as knowledge in knowing how to die nobly. They sought to learn how the world works and measure human choice against pre-defined virtues.

A further cornerstone of masculinity was being the head of ones' house. Athenians, the individualistic city dwellers of Ancient Greece, were known as 'masters' of the house and had complete control over their family.

"Those who failed to marry and produce children or squandered inheritance and slave control were seen as falling short of masculine ideals. This really established the 'breadwinner' mindset we still see attached to men today", Dr

to never back  
that they'd rather  
than show signs of

courage, authority  
feelings", Dr Mowat

Did they make progress as a result of this though? No, not really.

Self-control and commanding emotions became even more essential for men. They took this idea so literally that even those who displayed extraordinary heterosexual desire were considered effeminate.

Fear of displaying feminine qualities led them to believe that you cannot truly be a man without a beard. Bulwer, a physician at the time, argued that men who shave aim at nothing less than to become less a man. This equally applied to long hair and one could only be a man if they had short hair.

"The Renaissance was a strange period in history. The fear surrounding physical shortcomings such as the lack of beard or too much hair drove them away from any other form of body image", Dr Mowat concluded.

Interestingly, though, the ideal of emotional suppression

Mowat said.

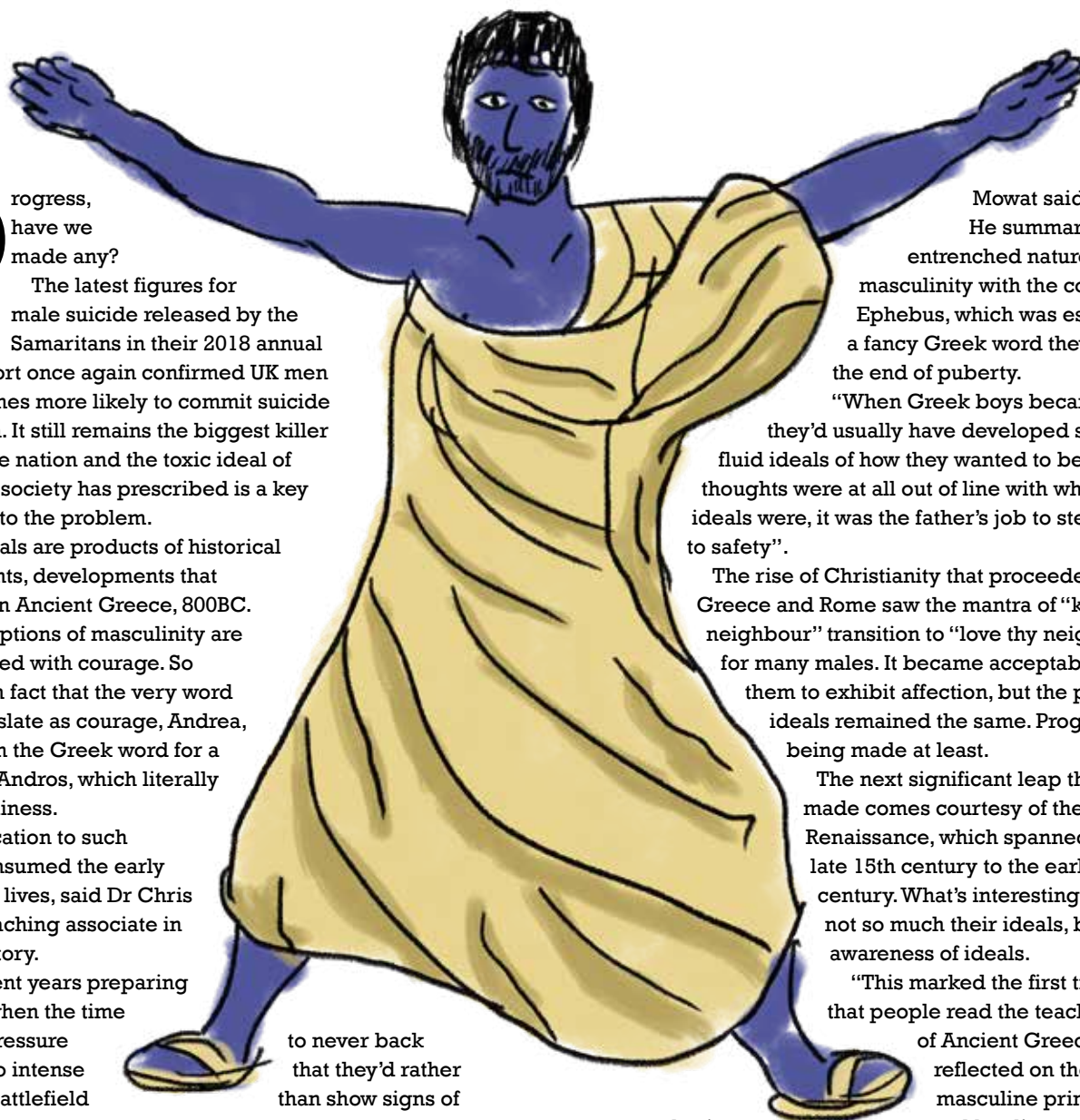
He summarised the entrenched nature of their masculinity with the concept of *Ephebus*, which was essentially a fancy Greek word they used for the end of puberty.

"When Greek boys became men, they'd usually have developed somewhat fluid ideals of how they wanted to be. If such thoughts were at all out of line with what societal ideals were, it was the father's job to steer them to safety".

The rise of Christianity that proceeded Ancient Greece and Rome saw the mantra of "kill thy neighbour" transition to "love thy neighbour" for many males. It became acceptable for them to exhibit affection, but the previous ideals remained the same. Progress was being made at least.

The next significant leap that was made comes courtesy of the English Renaissance, which spanned from the late 15th century to the early 17th century. What's interesting here is not so much their ideals, but their awareness of ideals.

"This marked the first time that people read the teachings of Ancient Greece and reflected on their masculine principles of and bottling up your explained.





began to fade in the century that proceeded. Methodists promoted a culture of refined sensibility that saw men crying as acceptable.

A popular novel at the time, 'The Man of Feeling' by Laurence Sterne, saw the protagonist, a sensitive hero, cry at every sad story he heard. Male sensitivity was finally being promoted; that's until the Victorians came along in the next century though.

The period of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901, ushered a more brutish form of masculinity, maybe due to the intense warfare against Napoleonic France that had ensued 20 years prior.

Many echo that this era prescribed the toxic masculinity that continues to stigmatise modern man. A seismic rise in muscle mass gained importance alongside their faith, thus spawning history's most fascinatingly named crossover event, Muscle Christianity, as explained by Dr Brian Nygaard, a research associate in Victorian history.

"Strength and unachievable levels of athleticism became vital aspects of Victorian masculinity and the introduction of sports into school curriculum saw males demonstrate their physicality from an early age in order to prove their manliness".

The athlete became the male hero of society, with one of the fathers of the movement, Charles Kingsley, claiming, "In the playing field, boys acquire virtues which no books can give them".

Gyms were suddenly spawning all over the country, which saw many males favour physical recreation over going to a bar or tavern. This combined with intense pressure for a man to succeed in his career and earn the respect of his peers led to the highest suicide rates amongst men recorded in British history; a terrifying 30.3 per 100,000 in 1905. Mental illness was an epidemic amongst males but was generally ignored and frowned upon.

This pressure extended to provision for ones' family, which was vital. Men, much like the Greeks, had total authority of the household and the emotional bond between man and child was meant to be that of respect.

Dr Nygaard summarises these ideals, stating: "Emotional sensitivity was non-existent. Physical power, courage, bravery, and hardiness were the most prized traits a man could have".

Literature of the time was also indicative of 'traditional' and

established ideals of masculinity, a prime example being, Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If...' (1895), which guides a

young boy to being a man. It starts with the line "If you can keep your head when all about you" and continues with other hypothetical ideals like keeping quiet and being tough, before concluding "you'll be a Man, my son!"

The calls of toxicity do indeed appear to be somewhat valid but thankfully, things really began to transform later that century.

Fresh from war (again), the 1950s saw a transformation in work and family structures, ushering a complete renegotiation of masculinity. White middle-class men received college educations, worked in large corporations, lived in small suburban communities, and had more leisure time than in any other period in history.

The white-collar revolution detached itself from prior conceptions of the individualistic and self-made man and instead emphasised leisure, family, and corporate work as masculine ideals.

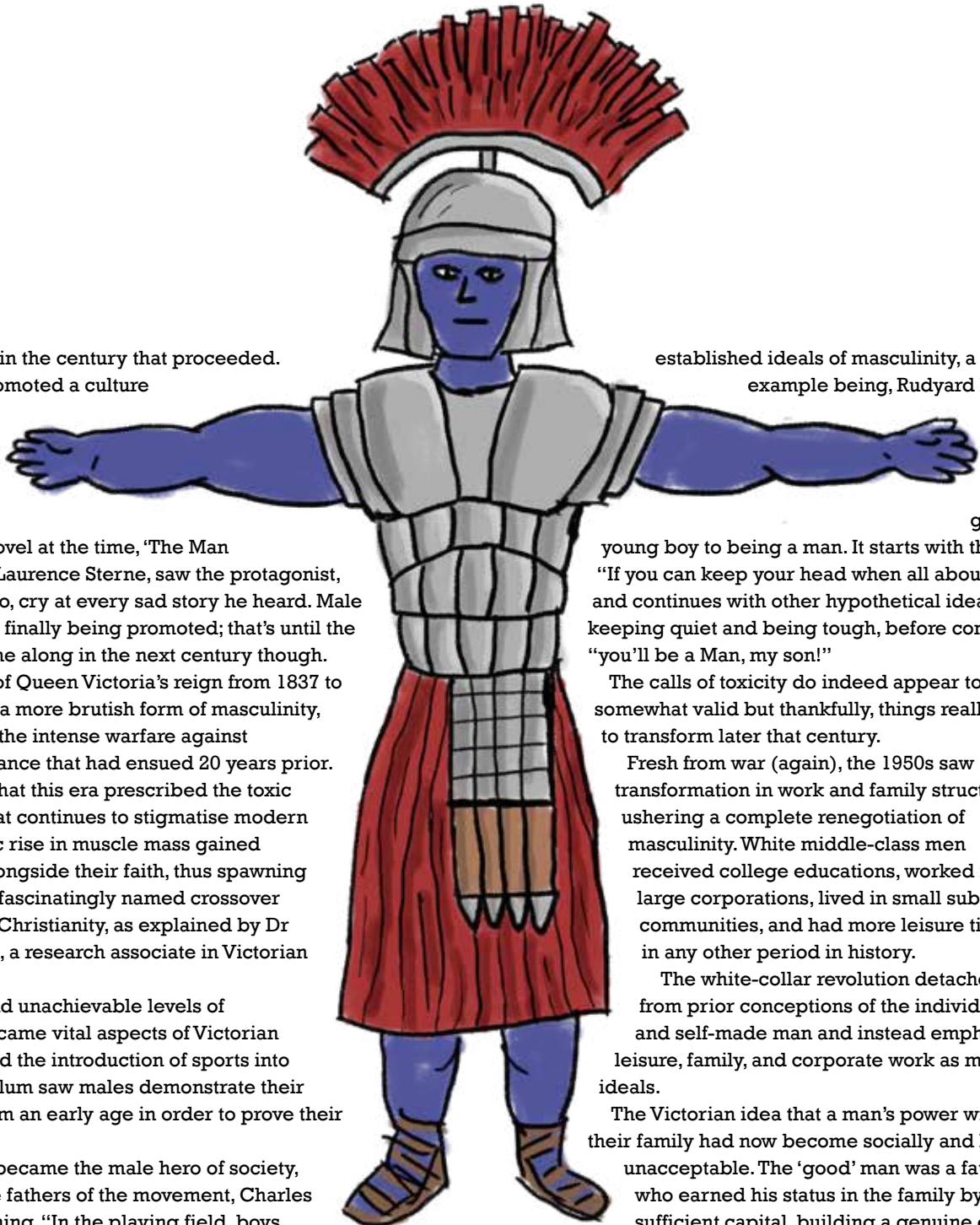
The Victorian idea that a man's power within their family had now become socially and legally unacceptable. The 'good' man was a father who earned his status in the family by making sufficient capital, building a genuine emotional bond with his children and enforcing discipline with fairness and love.

In fact, by the end of the decade, there were more than 3,500 working men's clubs in Britain, with a combined membership of more than two million people. Here, working class men could spend time with their families and socialise with other families.

Men who fell short could not expect to be obeyed. A father's power in this sense was conditional but still seen as vital.

Take the protagonist, Jim Stark, in one of the biggest western films of the 50's, Rebel Without a Cause. His father was submissive to an overbearing wife and had no control over or relationship with his son, which led to Jim's behavioural issues. It tried to cement that one of the keys to ensuring well-behaved youth was through having a strong, loving father figure who worked in tandem with the mother figure.

For all the good, however, there were still buckets of bad. Ones' body image was seen a sign of how successful they were



in their career.

Taller males with broad shoulders were seen as strong, masculine types and were respected in the office. Short males were expected to work harder to make up for their deficiency in height. Crew haircuts were the standard, exuberating professionalism and stability because apparently the Renaissance were onto something with their whole short hair thing.

Men were also still expected to publicly show no weakness, acting strong and silent, whilst hiding intimate aspects of their lives. Struggling with grief showed vulnerability and crying could never be public, even when a spouse died.

They were also expected to gain respect and power and seek success in every aspect of life. Those who did not have successful careers or families were not seen to be masculine. Whilst ideals were very much more progressive, they were still rigid and non-negotiable. Things to change, were about however.

The 60's challenged the notion that sex should only be marital and kept private and people became more liberal on the whole. It also challenged, but failed to confront, a notion far more significant.

Homosexuality was finally decriminalised in Britain as part of the Sexual Offences Act 1967, theoretically allowing males to publicly express their homosexual identity. This wasn't necessarily the case as laws still prohibited them from having the same rights as heterosexual couples, such as marriage or adopting a child.

Men, such as Olympic gold medallist John Curry, felt compelled to shelter their homosexuality because society still didn't see such an orientation as conforming with male standards.

The 70's ushered a much greater sense of visibility towards homosexuality, with popular male icons such as David Bowie coming out as gay. This didn't radicalise public opinion, however.

In 1975 a poll of almost 2,000 people found that only 40 per cent approved of gay couples living-together openly, while almost half thought they should 'never' become teachers or doctors.

"It was still a dangerous time to be gay", said Dr Philip Henry a researcher in contemporary sociology.

"It was still an alien to most men and indeed most people. They were dismissed as soft, weird and wrong, essentially not real men that were marginalised through hatred", he said.

This decade saw a lot of progression in terms of masculinity though. Gone were the conservative black and white suits and in were individualistic trends of enormous collars, flared trousers and paisley shirts.

"Male fashion truly embodied the laid-back aura of the time. It was fluid and men weren't getting judged or scolded for wearing something a bit more dangerous. There wasn't this need to look professional and successful all the time. There wasn't a need to look what was considered manly at all".

There wasn't a need for men to dismiss housework either. In fact, those who deemed themselves too good for it were looked down upon. The average male spent 90 minutes a week doing

household chores and embraced domesticity as part of their identity, an identity dubbed by commentators as the 'New Man'.

Emotionality, intimacy, nurturing, and caring became traits affiliated with the 'New Man' across the 70's and 80's.

This re-assessment of masculinity was the platform for further fluidity. The 90's saw the term 'metrosexual' coined in popular culture, referring to the surge of male interest in fashion, shopping and other areas traditionally coined with femininity.

This, however, was counteracted by the 'Lad Culture' affiliated with the rise of Brit Pop, which typically shuns sensitivity in favour of drinking, violence and sexism.

Masculinity finds itself in a period of uncertainty, with no definition, as Dr Henry explains:

"As gender roles are gradually eroding, so are the characteristics of masculinity. You're now free to be what you want to be, whether that be traditional or more fluid".

"It's important for men now to understand they don't have to conform to archaic aggressive stereotypes of masculinity, for the betterment of their mental health and quality of life, but these traditional expectations are still very much present".

An alarming YouGov survey in 2018 affirmed this, finding that 61 per cent of young men feel pressure to 'man up' and 53 per cent said they feel like society expects them to never ask for emotional support.

Outdated expectations still linger and whilst masculinity has come a long way, it hasn't evolved as much as it should have. The very concept is still literally killing people.



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# The Life of a Stay-at-Home Dad

**John Adams** gave up his job in PR nearly ten years ago to become the stay-at-home parent. Somehow, in 2019, it still seems like there are startlingly few stay-at-home dads out there. **Gethin Morgan** spoke to John to see what the home life is actually like.





**I**t didn't take long for John Adams, 43, and his wife Gill to feel uncomfortable with sending their firstborn Helen, now nine, to nursery full time. "We recognised she needed more time with her parents. I wasn't particularly happy with my job at the time so it made sense for me to take that hit for the team and concentrate on family and home."

It was back in 2011 when John started the transition from full-time to part-time to unemployed. By the time he was a fully-fledged stay-at-home dad in Surrey he and his wife had another daughter, Izzy, now 6.

"I'd always been a hands-on father even though I'd worked full time. My wife says that I'm the more natural parent, which I feel she's being a bit hard on herself saying that. But, for us, it was just a more natural fit to do it that way."

The bigger shock to the system was house husband duties. "What became apparent pretty quickly was just how awful my wife and I had been at keeping up various aspects of domestic life. I was opening up cupboards and I'd find stuff in there which was four years out of date."

Once everything was in order with the house he set up a blog – Dad Blog UK – initially a platform for him to rant, it quickly grew into one of the largest of its kind, picking up several awards along the way.

His eagerness to share is representative of his attitude towards the lifestyle. He speaks with a pride about his job, though he says it's no big deal at all.

"It really was just a brutally honest, very easy decision based on very practical things. I wouldn't change it at all. I'm very happy spending time with the kids and very, very few men get to do that."

"If you look at the history of the family, raising children only really became split between men and women during the Industrial Revolution. And if you look at other cultures fatherhood is viewed much more positively. Stay-at-home dads, I've heard this said in aboriginal culture in Australia, are just a foreign concept, because men are part of the home and part of the family."

While the perception of men who let their wives bring home the bacon may be one of weakness and emasculation, John says the reaction of mates has been anything but ridicule.

"From male friends it was mostly curiosity and a desire to find out more."

One person actually took me to one side and said 'tell me exactly what you're doing because my wife and I are thinking of doing the same'."

If anything he feels blessed to live in a time when it's even possible. He tells the tale of a builder working on the house shortly after John left his job. In his 60s, smoking roll-up cigarettes and burying a packet of Hobnobs, you'd think the builder would be the least understandable kind of bloke.

"I thought I better explain to him because he'd probably wonder. He stopped what he was doing and looked into the middle-distance and I was not expecting a good reaction from this guy. But he just said 'I wish I'd been able to do what you did, I didn't see my kids growing up.'"

Ironically, perhaps, it's women who have given him the harder time. "To be a mother and to care for kids is a very big deal. And then a man comes along and proves that we can do it just as well and it's a bit of a threat to their status."

He speaks of one particularly shocking encounter with an elderly lady six years ago. "I was bottle feeding Izzy in a café one day and she came up, took the child out of my arms and started shouting loudly to everyone that I was babysitting. I didn't know what to do. I just sat there in silence. Luckily her adult daughter was actually there and she looked horrified. She was not too impressed with her mother. She did say to her mum 'no, he was just being a dad'."

While he gets fewer strange looks than he used to, his status is still far from being normalised. "There are still gender roles to be broken down. The way we're raising kids is a bit screwed up really."

"There's still a long way to go. There are a lot more men doing it, a lot more men speaking publicly about it. I think there is steadily a recognition that men are equally good carers as women. I like to be mischievous and say that men can be just as bad too!"

With shared parental leave introduced four years ago, allowing men and women to split 50 weeks of parental leave as they see fit, there are supposedly financial incentives for more men to take the hit. But with the gender pay gap problem and paternity leave often offering less money, sometimes even no money at all, homes with female breadwinners face an uphill financial struggle.

"Potential stay-at-home fathers need to consider the impact on their personal finances. I see a lot of things



in magazines about what you should consider as a stay-at-home dad and it always refers to changing nappies and what people are going to say to you in public.

"I'm sorry but I think we need to move a little further on from that. We've actually got to really look at the detail here. If you do become a stay-at-home father you need to think about what you might do in the future once you're at a point when you can return to the workforce. Will you return? Will you do it part time? What's going to happen to your pension? These are all things you have to think about. I've ruined my finances. I'll say it now."

After a brief interruption from little Helen asking why exactly daddy has ruined his finances, John returns to his surprisingly relaxed natural state. Early mornings, school runs, housework and cooking, all while maintaining an award-winning blog, it's a tough slog.





He says the most challenging time is the four hours between kids finishing school and Gill coming home from her work at a Financial Services Firm. Doing homework and entertaining little ones is the nitty gritty of parenthood and, by the time both are put to bed, it's 9pm and the only time John gets to spend with his wife. Until 10pm that is, when it's time for bed himself.

It's a life-dominating commitment but he seems to take it all in his stride. Clearly grateful to be able to watch his two children grow up, he is totally at peace with life. And if the brief moments of parenting heard over the phone are anything to go by, he's a complete natural. Fortunately that picture has already been painted by the time John suddenly has to cut the call short, remembering that gymnastics practice is actually at 3pm, not 3.30pm. Daddy-duties take over and it's time to go.



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# The Emotional Game

**Gethin Morgan** is a 21 year old football fan whose view on the sport changed after a moving experience at Euro 2016. Here's his take on the softer side of the sport.







**T**he beautiful game isn't always that beautiful. Throw thousands of passionate, tribal and (probably) inebriated people into a cauldron of tension and things can get ugly from time to time. While it's important to shine a light on all incidents of violence, racism or abuse in any other form, we can often forget about the many positives the game can bring. For millions of men around the world football is a unique, sometimes vital form of expression.

It's no secret that men have been plagued by lack of emotional release for years and years. That old word 'masculinity' made sure of that. For those blokes too proud to cry about a sad event or talk about their feelings, football has provided a cathartic platform for generations of emotionally stunted men.

I personally like to see myself as an open individual, part of a generation of men breaking down toxic masculinity. But throughout my teenage years I thought crying was pathetic. I must have gone years without shedding a tear, simply because I would've been annoyed at myself for being so weak.

As far as I can remember, it wasn't until I was 18 that those years of tears

finally got released. And, though I wouldn't quite say the floodgates have opened, I have since grown more and more comfortable about making it rain; whether it be mourning unrequited love, watching a sad film or drunkenly expressing my love to friends.

The turning point which 18 year old me experienced didn't come from any of those situations, though. That fateful day in the summer of '16 was actually in a football stadium, surrounded by thousands of other men and women doing the exact same thing.

I'm Welsh and quite religiously follow Wales' national team. Wales, historically, are not especially good at football. But hey, we're a tiny country, so that's nothing to be ashamed about. Needless to say, when we qualified for our first major tournament in almost 60 years, we flocked out in our thousands to France for Euro 2016.

Most Welsh football fans will call that the best summer of their lives. Our mere presence at the tournament was more than we could ever have hoped for. So when we topped a group consisting of football giants England and Russia, we were quite excited. Then after more success against Northern Ireland, we

faced the highest ranked team in the tournament – Belgium.

After conceding a goal barely ten minutes in we were ready to accept defeat and head home, proud of having the best month ever. Those Godlike men on the pitch had given us so much to celebrate. It would have been greedy to ask for anything more. Then a first half equaliser and a second half stunner by fan favourite Hal Robson Kanu put us in dreamland. Could we actually make the semi-finals?

It was with just five minutes to go that Sam Vokes leaped high to meet Chris Gunter's floating cross. I remember that moment vividly. I remember that brief moment of disbelief as you realise a goal could be on the way. I remember the ball bouncing off Vokes' head and looping past the goalkeeper's long arms into the back of the net. I remember losing my mind along with thousands of other Welsh people in the stand behind the goal, as the players looked up, seeming just as stunned as us.

The next thing I remember is my face being soaking wet. I was balling my eyes out. I don't think I stopped crying for at least half an hour, maybe more. It was probably the most emotional experience



in my life. It was a fucking game of football.

While I'd spent years too scared to cry, here I was wearing it like a badge of honour. It felt right. I took selfies of my damp face and bloodshot eyes. I told everyone I knew about how much I cried that night.

Admitting to happy tears is much easier than admitting to sad tears, sure, but I could never have previously owned up to such a sign of emotional vulnerability. For some reason it feels acceptable for a man to let it all out in a football stadium. Extreme anger, devastation, elation – it's all on the cards.

Football is escapism. Just like movies and music and art, football is a way of getting away from reality for 90 minutes and existing in this weird world where all that matters is 22 men kicking a ball. Only unlike those other forms of escapism, this is one where men aren't judged for reacting strongly to. Isn't that kind of beautiful?

Men should feel comfortable crying at the end of Titanic or opening up about a break up, but if they're not there just yet then football is an absolute Godsend. Imagine how bottled up these guys would be without it.

The reason we invest so much and the reason we feel comfortable emoting like that is because football gives us a sense of belonging. It forms part of your identity. You're stood there, surrounded by thousands of people, most of whom you don't know and have never spoken to, yet you feel at one with every single one of them. They are like your family. You're all there for the same reason, wearing the same colours, sharing the same hopes and dreams, sharing the same love.

And just like romantic love, you go through the highs and you go through the lows, at the end of the day you're not going anywhere, and that's what makes it so special.

I have high fived, hugged and occasionally kissed the bald heads of men I have never met before and haven't met since. I've felt brotherly connections with guys whose name I couldn't even tell you. That is a feeling which I don't think can be recreated anywhere. It is completely unique.

A lot of that night in France has blurred into one by now. Just after noticing my own soaking wet face, however, I remember turning to my actual brother. He's 14 years my elder, which means I was only four when he left to go to university. While we get along

well, we haven't shared many emotional moments together. But when I turned, eyes flooding, to look at my older brother in glorious shock, he looked back with the exact same expression on his face, watery eyes and all.

It's the only time we've seen each other cry as adults. We've never spoken about it since. But we shared that night of raw emotion. There's no one I would've rather spent it with. We both knew that we felt the exact same way as each other. And we basked in it.

There is a little bit too much hatred and vitriol in football - we do probably care a little too much. But at the end of the day,

I have high fived, hugged and occasionally kissed the bald heads of men I have never met before

when the final whistle goes, the beautiful game brings people together and allows men to express emotions they would otherwise suppress. There's something to be said for that.



▲ **Top:** Fans prepare for a game in Denmark by drinking, singing and playing street football

▼ **Bottom:** Gethin shares a Guinness with some new-found friends, and fellow fans, in Dublin



YOU'VE GOT TO STEP UP AND BE THE MAN OF THE HOUSE YOU'VE  
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UP AND BE THE **MAN OF THE HOUSE** YOU'VE GOT TO STEP



## Can't grieve, won't grieve

Men on the whole struggle to process grief and express it  
healthily. My father was no different.

Words: Will Pettit

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"You've got to step up and be the man of the house"

Those were the words that countless people told me when my father died; at the hospital, at the solicitor's office, at the funeral, everywhere I went I was being told that it was my job to be everything that 'the man of house' should be – strong, thoughtful, protective, and stoic. Even as a grieving 14-year-old, I found it all quite ironic, because in my mind it was this responsibility that had led to my father's death.

Four years before, my parents felt what I can only imagine is the worst pain possible, when they got a phone call from West Suffolk Hospital explaining that earlier that day, their 20-year-old son had suffered a serious asthma attack and died.

One of the most harrowing memories of my life is my mum's sobs cutting through the silence of the morgue, her head resting on my brother's chest.

My father, however, remained stony-faced and silent, showing no emotion outside of a hand on my mum's shoulder. I don't doubt for a second that inside he was feeling every bit of grief that my mum was outwardly displaying – yet even at this point he could not escape the fact he had been conditioned to support everyone else.

Ultimately it was that deep-rooted belief which I believe killed him. At 65-years-old, having never smoked or drank excessively, he suffered a stroke caused by high blood pressure. In my mind, his inability to even begin to process his grief, and his dutiful attentiveness to being 'the man of the house', is what led to his death.

He went so far out of his way to protect

*Left: A young Will with his father*

everyone else that he ended up leaving us more vulnerable than ever.

This is a state that so many men understand, too, at any stage of life. Often, men take the length of time they've gone without crying as a sign of strength, wearing it like a badge of honour. Prince Harry lost his mother at 12, and has admitted since, he was encouraged not to cry at her funeral, and still finds it hard to honestly talk about the grief he felt.

If I'm honest, I don't remember seeing him cry once after the death of my brother. I heard him cry, however; frequently he'd go into his office, and if I sat outside I could hear him weeping, only to emerge several minutes later and ask my mum how she was feeling, and whether she needed any help.

Throughout his life my father, unintentionally or otherwise, followed some of the most harmful elements of stoicism. Philosopher and lifelong stoic Laura Kennedy described emotion as an unwanted distraction, and I certainly saw elements of that throughout my father's reluctance to grieve.

This concept of emotions being an unnecessary part of existence isn't limited to grief either. Too often a victim of the male suicide epidemic struggled to vocalise what they were feeling, for fear of judgement, or an unwillingness to show weakness. It is no great surprise to anyone that men struggle to show emotion, but it was only when my father died, and I was thrust into that position of responsibility, that I realised how little room to grieve men are afforded.

It never seemed to occur to anyone that what I needed at 14 was exactly what my father was never given, and what most men who have suffered loss aren't – time, and indeed encouragement, to

grieve.

My mother, my grandmother, my auntie, my sisters, they were all forthcoming and vocal with what they were feeling, and this seems to be the case for most grieving women who I've met. They have the emotional understanding to know what they're feeling, and how to cope with it. Further to that, they are not judged in quite the same way as men.

Esteemed poet, Randall Horton, spoke of his uncle's passing, and all the relative gender observations he made, saying; "The man who manages his grief by working through it with projects, helping others, and so on is ignored. The man who emotes openly is criticised."

I didn't need to be told as a grief-stricken teenager that I had to be the man of the house, or that I had to look after my mother. Instead, I needed someone to talk me through my pain and encourage me to accept that there would be moments of weakness.

Equally, my father needed that four years earlier when his son died. Someone to say that he could ask for support, rather than just continuously offering it out to others. It is my firm belief that had someone looked past the societal expectations of men, he would have been able to deal with the death of his child. Had he been afforded that apparent luxury, he might still be alive to offer the support to those that he sought so vehemently to defend.

Ultimately, men are never afforded the time or environment in which to truly mourn, and move past what they're feeling. That isn't just the fault of those around them either – any man who has suffered loss needs to accept that they are grieving, and seek out the same level of support that they so readily offer out.

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# Why own a house when you can own a garden?

We're living through a houseplant resurgence led by those without mortgages, ownership or stability. **Nathan Makalena** finds out what gives millennials green thumbs.

*Below: Hanging basket of Fittonia on Jack's windowsill.*

*Above Right: An arrangement of Philodendron in Jack's bedroom.*



"Kids are getting smarter but the brain ain't getting cheaper." These are the first words screamed by Ollie Judge of Squid on their single 'Houseplants'. From relative obscurity to over a quarter of a million listens on spotify, regular rotation by new music DJs across the radio and coverage in NME it's safe to say this song hit a chord. Why?

In an interview with Dork he said it's about "being able to afford a house and not having to have beans on toast for the week leading up to payday." A future he feels very unlikely about seeing. So what about the title? Houseplants. If they're supposed to be an indicator of affluence and comfort then why do they decorate homes of university students, slowly sinking into deeper pools of debt. We're living through a houseplant resurgence led by those without mortgages, ownership or stability.

I wanted a venerated expert, and whilst this article might stray into the field of psychology, sociology and botany I thought it best to just find someone with a shitload of plants and pick their brain on the how and why of indoor gardening...

"I used to worry about house inspections saying there were too many so I'd hide some away in my cupboard or under my bed" says Jack Dunnett. He's always had a passion for plants but this took on new growth once he reached uni. "I got my own room and I could fill it how I wanted to. I think that's



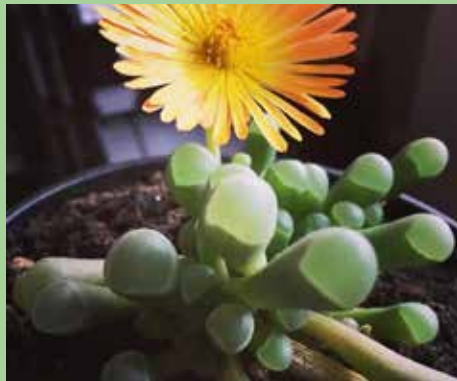


what everyone wants to do, it's just a lack of confidence that puts some off." With over 25 plants in his room, "grouped by habitat type to create a microclimate of humid air", and on the way to a degree in landscape architecture, Man Down feels comfortable labelling Jack as our gardening aficionado. So where does he think some of the causes for this renaissance lie?

"I suppose the most pessimistic take is that people just do it for instagram but surely it's at least somewhat true. I mean they look nice, don't they? People are gonna share that. Floral prints are in... Minimalism is in too. Just the white wall with the one plant. I like that but I don't have the space. Bit of an oxymoron I suppose but I need to put my clutter somewhere." The aesthetics of plants seem their most obvious benefit. We aren't all buying them to reduce algae growth in ponds, restore crucial nutrients to soil, or grow veg on an industrial scale. People have them because they look nice. And if they look nice you know they're going to take a photo to share with everyone. #houseplants on Instagram brings up 1.9m posts on the latest check and there don't seem to be any favourites. Succulents, ferns, hanging, trailing and climbing all... (cont. on p58)

# Jack's Tips: Low effort plants for the student in you

Now it's your turn! Take these tips and pick up some hardy, low-maintenance plants to perk up your home.



Fenestraria Rhopalophylla  
(Baby Toes)

The 'window leaf' succulent, this plant belongs to a hardy breed that thrives in plenty of light with a weekly water. Make sure to soak your succulents, pouring in water until it runs out the drainage holes at the base of the pot.



Crassula Ovata  
(Money Tree)

Another succulent, although this one also brings promises of good fortune, making it a crucial inclusion in any millennial home. This species also borrows from the Bonsai Tree, growing a full miniature trunk and branches.



Sansevieria trifasciata  
(Snake Plant)

The snake plant is a fantastic air filtration plant, taking in Co2 and expelling oxygen throughout the night. This makes it perfect to place in the bedroom. All it needs is indirect sunlight and the occasional water.



Philodendron

Just like the snake plant this hearty, leafy green is incredibly adaptable. Pop it in a bright room and wait for the soil to dry between waters. This breed also survives outside when the weather's nice so take it out to clean the leaves and soil.



## Colour

When it comes to setting tone in your room colour is the most important choice. There's a million and one choices to make but here are some quick ones. Lighter colours make rooms feel bigger and brighter whereas dark tones create a sense of cosiness and intimacy. This makes selecting colour dependent on room. Warm colours (yellows and reds) make nice hallways and entrance rooms whereas blues do well in bedrooms and bathrooms. You'll be looking for some consistency within rooms so try to pick a neutral colour (various hues of white and black) and a feature colour. A good first step is painting three walls in your neutral and one in your feature colour. This creates an excellent base to then start purchasing furniture that contrasts instead of clashes. For this remember the colour wheel is your friend. The simplest way to find matching colours is to choose two on opposite sides of the wheel. This is quite a bold technique though and you'll need plenty of neutral colours to relax the room.

## IDEA

The quickest fix is making sure your bedsheets match your curtains as these are the two largest blocks of colour constantly on display. Don't get matching patterns or it'll end up looking like a child's room but work inside the same colour palette for both. Perhaps picking out the dominant colour in a patterned bedsheet for a more plain, relaxed curtain.

## Rugs

The Coen Brothers were right. A nice rug really does tie the room together but choosing from Persian, kilim, Oriental, ikat, dhurrie, shag, etc can really be a headache. Some quick tips; a rectangular room needs a rectangular rug, if people are walking over it constantly pick a darker colour, if it's in the bedroom try to compliment with colour but in the living room (or the kitchen) go wild! As for placement try to leave a foot of room between the rug and the wall and if it's under any furniture make sure it pokes out at least 6 inches

## IDEA

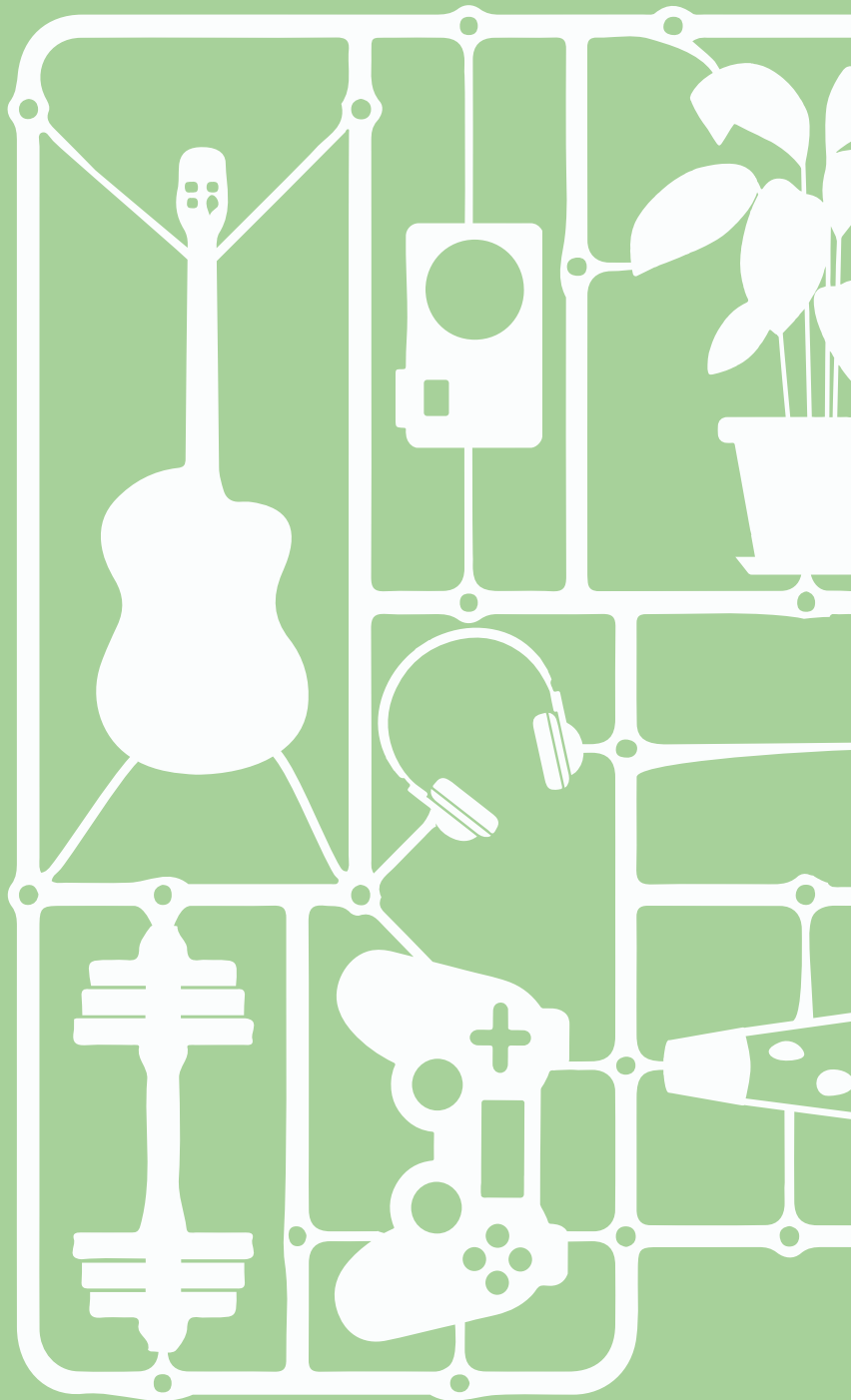
Think about how the texture of the rug clashes with your furniture. Pair shag rugs with neat leather furniture and faux cowhide with velvet. A good rug should be the focal point and it's worth thinking of all the different ways this can be achieved.

## You've been framed

Another really easy way to make your room more mature is to frame any wall art you want to hang up. Not only does this do wonders for maintaining the paper (no frayed edges or tears), a good frame adds an air of elegance. While blu-tacking is quick and easy a carefully chosen frame brings the eye's attention to the art by distinguishing it off the wall. We're not saying ditch the Pulp Fiction poster, just give it nice distinctive frame.

## IDEA

If you keep records don't hesitate to frame them above your player (or anywhere else for that matter) you'll be able to cultivate a neat little corner to chill out to your tunes. Also the joy of vinyl is surely, in part, the wonderful 12" pieces of artwork the record comes in.



# Male Liv

Plants are just one way to spruce up your

Man Down to

Words by

## Storage

In terms of storage you need to decide whether you're looking to show off your trinkets or hide your tat. For subtle storage systems try to make the most of some furniture. Consoles and sideboards can store anything you want on top whilst hiding unsightlies inside. For clothes don't hesitate to maximise your

space, like hanging a shoe rack from the back of your door. Jumpers and bulky winter wear can be kept in clear plastic bins under the bed which will decrease wear and prevent mothballing unlike a cardboard box in the attic. When filling statement storage spaces with your valuables experiment with texture, colour and size. Stack books horizontally, place large vases next to smaller trinkets and don't worry about spacing things out.

## IDEA

If you're proud of your garms look into an open plan wardrobe, after all clothes are an extension of self expression as much as the way you choose to decorate your rooms so why not cross the wires. Additionally, standing rails are a lot cheaper than any wardrobe and don't leave you reliant on being that guy who asks for friends to chip in during the inevitable move.

## Style

When looking for inspiration there's two main styles that are 'in' at the moment. Minimalism and mid century modern. Now black and white may look chic but funnily enough minimalism is incredibly expensive to pull off successfully. Turns out it costs a lot to live off a select few quality items. If this is the path you want to go down you must first ditch any and all items that aren't absolutely necessary. Keep storage systems subtle, use muted colours - heavy on the neutral tones - and use feature objects (plants, lamps, wall art) sparingly. You'll have your Patrick Bateman game on in no time. Mid century modern is nothing new (have a guess when it's from) but the style is coming back around in a big way. Whilst borrowing some tenants from minimalism. it's a lot more fun, leaning on sleek lines, wood laminet flooring and bold feature pieces to break up sections of the room.

## IDEA

The internet is your friend when looking for inspiration. Go to image boards like Pinterest or r/malelivingspace to find practical ways people are incorporating these styles into their homes. There are also affordable ways to experiment with these trends. Being so in vogue means their design has filtered down to brands like Ikea and Muji who value quality as much as cost.

## Make it you

Last but not least you shouldn't fail to recognise that you are part of the interior design, living and moving around within it all should be an extension and reflection on you. It's your space, fill it in a way that you think is comfortable and fun. The only way to make new tradition is to experiment, we don't have all the answers but you might. Just no lava lamps please.

# ing Space

room. Here's some more takeaway tips from  
improve your pad

Nathan Makalena



...seem to be in vogue and could be a reason for the wealth of plant diversity.

Another huge trend on millennial social media is political discourse.

"There's so much movement for green politics and people are just more socially conscious about the environment, the benefit of plants and that. Everyone wants a bit of green." Jack says. He's right, the Green Party in England have recently made gains at a local level, the Extinction Rebellion movement caused extensive disruptions in London for five days in April and programmes by David Attenborough continue to push notions of sustainability and environmental responsibility into the public sphere.

"Plants are such an easy way for people to make a difference and to feel like

gardening. The Garden of Eden released in 1652 by Sir Hugh Platt promoted the spread of greenhouses and later great Botanical Gardens like those at Kew. By the turn of the 20th century, better heated homes and more natural light saw the middle classes indulging in houseplants. Post-war, hardy breeds become more commonplace in office spaces and later shopping malls. It all came to a head in the 1970s, a period of houseplant obsession countless commentators reference in relation to our current climate.

"There's a massive emphasis on greenery in urban planning at the moment. There's been so many studies that show its benefits, people seeing green on their way to work or school

modern movement though.

I mean it did happen in ancient times - turf roofs and the like - but a scheme in Berlin, about 20 years ago, introduced roofing felt weighed down by rocks and plants just naturally grew there. Now you're seeing an enormous global pickup of the practice." So where does that leave us? Plants, loved for their aesthetic and research-backed benefits to our health and wellbeing, make naturally great additions to our homes. Though that still remains the central oxymoron, HOUSE plants. A report by thinktank Resolution Foundation found one in three UK millennials will never own a home, half will be renting in their 40s and a third 'by time they claim pensions'.

So these features take on a new



*Jack at Kettle's Yard. An art gallery whose extensive use of indoor plants provided inspiration to his latest landscape architecture project.*

they're making a difference. I think that's important." If one demographic are acting on these messages more than others it is the younger, green thumbbed, indoor gardeners.

The history of gardening has been ever evolving. Once, a pastime enjoyed by those of immense prestige, creating vast, sprawling landscapes. Think hedge mazes of French chateaus or Mughal style displays around the Taj Mahal even as far back as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Then, the incorporation of exotic species forced a shift for the first time to indoor

have better performance results and greenery in workplaces drives productivity and employee satisfaction." These studies that Jack speaks of, in part, drive the green architecture movement - sustainable urban planning that seeks to minimize the negative environmental impact of buildings through material use and energy efficiency. One way this can be done is through the inclusion of plants. "They also cool urban areas and soak up water, so lessen the impact of flooding. It's all under the umbrella of green architecture. It's definitely a

meaning; safety and security, the power to exercise expression in your space and make a rental, an apartment, a dorm or a bunk feel like a home. Even if most of us can't afford a house, we can still have a garden.

"I'd say just go out now and get one. They're as cheap as a meal deal. If you kill one off it's not the end of the world," is Jack's parting message. Just make sure to not over water, know when to repot, and have fun as you use plants to make wherever you live, home.





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*'OH' and 'MY'*

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# My experience with...

## ...depression and self-harm

In our regular feature, we give a platform for someone to open up about their experience with illness.

By David Craig

**I**t was a typical New Year's Eve party. Less than an hour before, my friends and I had counted down into 2019 and mumbled our way through the lyrics of Auld Lang Syne. But now, I was sat outside my friend's apartment cradling my bleeding arm, having just punctured my wrist twice with a small kitchen knife. The year could only get better from here, right?

The first thing to say is that this was not a suicide attempt, but rather the result of heavily binge drinking during a bout of depression. Drunkenly dropping my new iPhone down the toilet likely didn't help matters either. It was, however, the latest and most severe case of self-harm I had inflicted since my first at the age of 15 years old.

It would be about two weeks before

I could comfortably walk around without dressing the wound, while in the immediate days after I also found movement in my left hand to be both painful and extremely diminished. It served as a wake-up call. Previously, I had framed my self-harming as "minor" due to both its relative infrequency and the fact that I had never required medical treatment for it.

But at that point, I realised that deliberately injuring yourself is something that should never be taken lightly, no matter what form it takes or how severe the consequences. Amid feelings of fear and shame, I knew it was vital that I never indulge in that behaviour again.

Three months prior, my GP diagnosed me with anxiety and depression,

something that had been a long time coming. Since my mid-teens I had experienced bouts of low mood that could last anywhere from a few days to six weeks at a time, but had always dismissed anyone who suggested I see a doctor about it.

In hindsight, the fears and anxieties that had prevented me from doing so seem totally ludicrous. I built a nightmarish image in my mind of a cruel doctor who

would shrug off the troubles I had been facing, or force me to open up in ways that would make me feel uncomfortable. So too had I heard horror stories about antidepressants, causing anything from night terrors to performance issues.

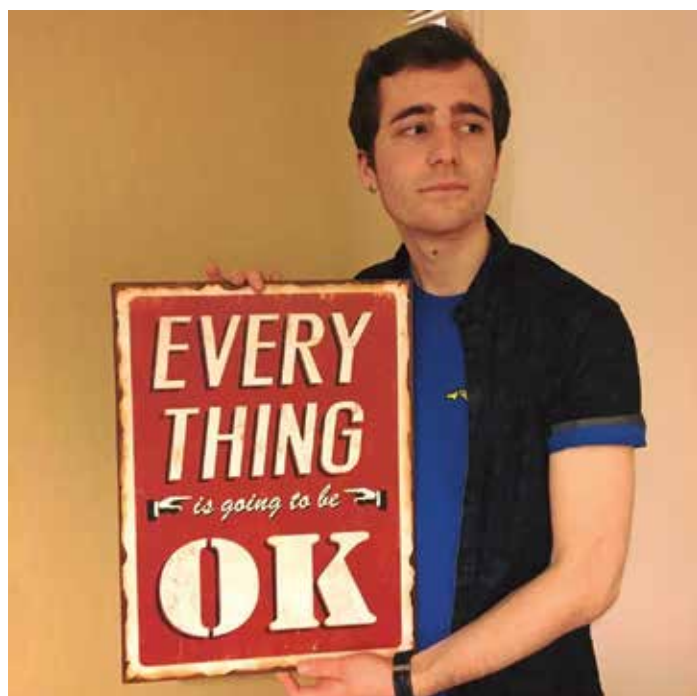
Here's what actually happened. After a tumultuous few weeks at university in which I spent much of my time in a catatonic state on my bed, leaving the house most often to drink myself out of consciousness, I realised that the degree I had spent the last two years working towards would soon be in genuine danger. The fact that I simply wasn't enjoying being alive seemed almost a secondary concern.

I booked an appointment with my GP and planned out in advance exactly what I was going to say in my iPhone notes. Of course, the moment I sat down and tried to speak I broke down into tears, so ultimately the notes weren't all that helpful.

In a less dignified way than I had envisioned, I was able to tell him how bad I had been feeling. Obviously, questions ensued but the aggressive interrogation I had imagined was nowhere to be found. He asked me to come back in a week's time, at which point if nothing had improved, treatment could be discussed.

At the time I was frustrated, but now in a healthier mindset I understand why he asked this of me. Going on antidepressants is a life change that shouldn't be a spur of the moment decision.

Seven days later, things hadn't got any better and so I was prescribed an antidepressant and anti-anxiety





medication called Sertraline. It's important to note that side effects to any medication can vary wildly depending on the biology of the individual taking it, so do not by any means take my experience as gospel.

**F**or me personally, side effects were a mix of biological and psychological. In the first few days of the prescription, I was slightly nauseated, experienced chest pains and generally felt quite woozy. Those feelings passed before too long, but in the first few weeks I suffered more anxiety attacks than I was having before going on the drug. My GP had warned me that this might be the case, so I was prepared to deal with them, although they were decidedly unpleasant. The dreaded performance issues did arise (no pun intended), but within a month they had subsided.

Antidepressants don't take effect immediately, meaning initially it can feel like you're putting yourself through a lot for little benefit. In my case, I'm glad I persevered because after around six weeks I found my mood was more stable than it arguably had ever been and I was able to get my studies back on track.

Of course, that isn't to say you should ignore side effects that are causing you great distress. Check in with your GP

regularly, particularly if you are concerned about how you are reacting to whatever you have been prescribed.

By the time the Christmas break arrived, I felt very much like I was in the late stages of recovery, making the New Year's Eve incident all the more upsetting. What went wrong? I'm not an expert, but I'm willing to place much of the blame on alcohol.

Most antidepressants advise or even command that you stay off the booze while taking them. Certainly, binge drinking does not come recommended and the resulting heightened emotional state likely played a large part in causing the whole miserable episode.

Still, it's now almost six months later and not once in that time have I felt the need to take a sharp object to my person and I intend on keeping it that way. That's all well and good, but what do I really want you to take away from this article?

First, if you think you may be depressed, go to your GP straight away. I struggled off and on for at least three years before making the leap and wholeheartedly regret not doing it sooner. It's true that everybody gets down from time to time and it isn't necessarily

**”**  
*Nobody should ever feel that they need to purposefully hurt themselves to simply put up with life. You deserve better than that.*

a clinical issue in every case, but if you're feeling uncertain then it's good to get a professional opinion.

Second, never allow yourself to justify or normalise self-harm. If it's something that you're doing or even considering, seek medical help or at the very least confide in a trusted friend or family member. Nobody should ever feel that they need to purposefully hurt themselves to simply put up with life. You deserve better than that.

It would be naïve and dishonest to say that I haven't felt depressed at all this year. There have been numerous tough moments and I have no doubt that there are many more to come. But since receiving treatment, I feel better equipped than ever to tackle those challenges.



## IN CONTEXT

**400**

estimated number of people self-harming in the UK per 100,000. The highest level in Europe.

Source: Mental Health Foundation

**15,000**

first-year students at British universities reported mental health problems in the 2015-16 academic year.

Source: BBC News

**8.2m**

cases of anxiety in the UK in 2013.

Source: No Panic

**75%**

of 2016 suicides in the UK were men.

Source: No Panic

**16.8%**

of British men showed signs of anxiety or depression in 2014.

Source: Mental Health Foundation

## USEFUL SERVICES



offering emotional support  
helpline: 116 123



offering information  
infoline: 0300 123 3393



support for under 25s  
telephone: 0808 808 4994





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# Stretch yourself before you wreck yourself

Our resident fitness devotee **David Lewis** has your three simple exercises for this issue! This time, he talks you through three body-weight stretches you can implement in the mornings that will offset the pains of the desk-bound office worker.

1.



## Prayer Stretch

This one is for the lower back pain that comes from sitting at a desk for hours at a time. Spending that long sat down will tighten up your hips, roll your shoulders forward, and tighten up your lower back like nothing else. Spending 60 seconds in the prayer stretch will fight all of these problems simultaneously. Make sure you are maintaining a loose spine, push your head towards the ground, lean back onto your hips, and keep breathing! You can do this twice a day for two or three rounds, and you should feel an immediate difference - particularly in your lower back.

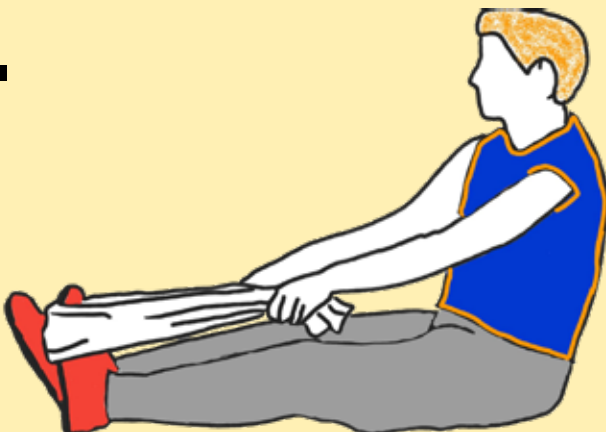
2.



## Shoulder Pullback

One of the main problems I face as a trainer is people with poor posture and shoulder pain - unfortunately one usually offsets the other. If you have poor posture, it puts you into a compromised position and will inevitably cause shoulder pain anytime you lift anything of any weight overhead. This stretch serves two main purposes in that regard. Firstly, it pulls your shoulders back and rotates them externally, which will remind your musculature of how it used to feel before you spent 8 hours a day sitting at a desk. You can do this as frequently as you want, just make sure you focus on pulling your shoulders further back each time. Try to bring your shoulder blades as close together as possible, and you should feel that shoulder pain ease consistently.

3.



## Towel Stretch

I concede that this isn't strictly bodyweight, but if you don't have a towel or t-shirt that you can donate to the cause then this probably isn't the article for you. Spending an entire working day with your knee bent will lead to tight hamstrings and calves. Further to this, I am yet to meet a client who had ankles that were too strong. Implementing this will help you to stretch out both your hamstrings and calves without risking tweaking your back. Further to that, stretching your ankle will help you to strengthen your ankle in the position where it is traditionally most vulnerable.

# A budding cook's most essential tools

The old proverb states that a good workman never blames his tools, but what if he knows there are better ones out there? **Harry Tedder** gives us six kitchen tools to take your cooking to the next level.

## A Damn Good Knife



If you were to allow a chef stranded on a desert island to have one item, they probably wouldn't hesitate in picking a chef's knife. Using a sharp knife is a true game changer. No longer will you have to wonder whether the knife will cleanly slice through your carrot or if your tomato will be reduced to a disembodied pulp. Meal prep is made easier and much quicker; it also just makes it a hell of a lot more satisfying. This is easily the most important item on this list.

**We recommend:** Chef's Path 8 Inch Chef's Knife

## A Sturdy Wooden or Bamboo Chopping Board

Good knives are great and all, but it's only when they're paired with a trusty chopping board that you get the most out of them. A sturdy chopping board makes cutting easier and ensures your swanky knife won't dull quickly. It's recommended that you use a wooden or bamboo chopping board as they absorb the bacteria from raw food, preventing the nasty stuff from lingering in the grooves made by your knife (unlike their plastic equivalents). They also look cooler and are better for the environment.

**We recommend:** IKEA Lämplig Bamboo Chopping Board



## Cast Iron Skillet Pan



These things can go anywhere and do anything; at least almost anything anyway. They have near-unparalleled levels of heat retention, allowing you to pan-sear meat or veg your non-stick pan could only dream of. In fact, you can even shove them in the oven! They're versatile and will suitably cook just about anything without damaging the pan, such is their indestructibility. A good skillet pan could be left in your garden for 10 years and still be perfectly fine after a quick clean. They also look cool and make you look like you know what you're doing (even when you don't). They're certainly worth the extra bit of effort to maintain.

**We recommend:** Lodge Cast Iron Round Skillet





## **Dutch Oven**

Basically, the pot equivalent of a cast iron skillet. Versatile as anything and indestructible. Hob or oven, no problem. The beauty of these is they allow for slow-cooking, roasting, braising, soups, casseroles, the whole lot. They aren't simply the jack of all trades and master of none though; they deliver unbelievable results. Investing in one of these will get you a bit of kit that will more than make its money back.

**We recommend:** VonShef Cast Iron Casserole Dish

For more advice on all your cooking needs, plus links to the products below, head to [www.mandownmag.jusnet.co.uk](http://www.mandownmag.jusnet.co.uk).



## **Meat Tenderiser**

This is a pretty simple one, it's basically a big spiky mallet that when unleashed upon your tough meat, makes it a lot more tender. There's some science behind it, but it basically softens the fibres within the meat. It's especially useful for tenderising and flattening cuts of pork or chicken breasts, allowing you to make some lovely pork cutlets or juicy chicken burgers. There's also something very therapeutic about pounding your meat.

**We recommend:** OXO Good Grips Meat Tenderiser



## **Mixing/Prep Bowls**

This is a pretty simple one, it's basically a big spiky mallet that when unleashed upon your tough meat, makes it a lot more tender. There's some science behind it, but it basically softens the fibres within the meat. It's especially useful for tenderising and flattening cuts of pork or chicken breasts, allowing you to make some lovely pork cutlets or juicy chicken burgers. There's also something very therapeutic about pounding your meat.

**We recommend:** FineDine Stainless Steel Mixing Bowls

*On sale: 2nd September*

£5.00

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## CONTACT

e: subs@mandownmag.com  
t: 0114 123 456

**Man Down Magazine**  
9 Mappin Street  
Sheffield  
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