

PROGRESS

# The Reemerging Masculine Heart

MOVING BEYOND OLD-SCHOOL MALE DOMINATION AND THE SENSITIVE NEW AGE GUY (SNAG)



**M.B. IS STANDING**—all six-foot-four of him—and alternately shaking and contorting with anguished tears as he addresses his coaching group. He has volunteered to reveal what it’s like to be a man who compulsively sexualizes the world and the women in it, and his rapid-fire emotional narrative expresses the pain he feels. He deeply wishes to support the women in his life—including his three daughters—yet cannot shut off the inner directive to want to have sex with almost every woman he meets. This includes a tormented moment of viewing his own teenage daughter at the gym from behind and having this unbidden thought form before fully recognizing her. His shame is palpable, as is his rage, at his twisted predicament.

I’ve sat with men like M.B. for over 20 years and I can tell you this: Most men truly want to please their mates and see the women in their lives flourish. And most of them feel like failures in this regard. In this unprecedented era of upended masculine and feminine stereotypes, my male clients perpetually find themselves caught between conflicting ideas of what it means to be a “good man.” This is the case no matter their sexual orientation. And though a majority of men I know conceptually reject the old “power over” paradigm, they are still infected by it. They may understand the diagnosis of their dilemma, but a treatment plan is not so clear.

Here’s the rub: Shifting dysfunctional power dynamics takes more than concepts and protocols. Our frontal lobes may think empowering women is a good idea, but if our primal selves are not fully aligned with that concept, unconscious beliefs will prevail.

« *The Universe Trips Me Out*  
Timothy Karpinski

# These new warriors desire to be in service to the earth and protect her from harm.

What I'm really talking about is not sex but power and "polarity"—and how the primal nature of sex serves to amplify any distorted power and polarity dynamics we have. It seems clear to me that the poles of masculine and feminine reside in each of us as a continuum. While we modern women have learned to identify more with our masculine sides and have more permission to express both our poles, the cultural playing field is far from level. We may have been allowed to enter the masculine clubhouse, but we get constant reminders that we'd better watch our step.

Meanwhile, men are still taught to deny and control their feelings. Feelings are an aspect of the feminine domain so, in cutting off from them, men lose their capacity to relate to the feminine principle inside themselves—and to women in general. The result is men proclaiming beliefs in public that they're not practicing behind closed doors.

Many of the men in my practice judge themselves and their sex harshly. In attempting to distance himself from patriarchal programming ("I am not THAT guy"), a man may end up repressing his primal intelligence (what Sigmund Freud referred to as the "id"). The repression of this primal force manages to both dampen his vitality and set him up for an energetic scenario where the id, frustrated at being denied, eventually feels entitled to have its needs met, by whatever means. "Bad" behavior often ensues, which creates more evidence that there is indeed something "wrong" with him—and so the cycle continues.

And yet . . .

I see a new script quietly being written that moves beyond old-school male domination and the subsequent Sensitive New Age Guy (*SNAG*) backlash, where being "a good man" meant leaving your balls at the door. I call this new story the Reemerging Masculine Heart. It involves a hero who is less invested in being in the limelight and more interested in championing women's reclaiming their true power. Rejecting the ancient entitlement that allows men to rape and

pillage the earth and her inhabitants, these new warriors desire to be in service to the earth and protect her from harm. In this reemergence, men still experience a primal drive to provide, but it's less about material wealth and more about providing unwavering presence and support for the women whose intuitive, brilliant leadership is being summoned. Women whom they love and admire.

I like to imagine that we are on the cusp of some vital maturation, making the shift from treating earth as Mother to approaching her as Lover. This may be the reemerging masculine heart's greatest calling. With this perceptual shift comes an authentic desire to please the feminine, to exalt her beauty, to offer her our devotional presence, knowing that the more she is delighted, the more she bestows her gifts.

Back to M.B. After his cathartic reveal, he is visibly more relaxed. The silent dam of his sexual shame has broken. The group has done enough work together not to take his rant personally. In fact, on a break, some of the women cluster in the kitchen and one of them excitedly exclaims, "The men are taking off their armor—in front of us!" Meanwhile, back on the couch, the men congregate, offering gratitude to M.B. for "doing my work." One playfully acknowledges, "Dude, you broke the Bro Code!"

Exactly.

It seems that breaking the code of silence is now what's being asked of us—women *and* men. Can we find the courage to take full responsibility for the collusive parts we've played—hero, villain, and victim—in a game whose rules we are redefining? Here's a wild idea: Let's stop blaming and shaming ourselves and each other. Instead, let's commit to thoroughly owning and exploring the complexity of thoughts, feelings, and desires that inform our behavior and actions. My experience is that we all need support in safely revealing our messy, conflicted, vulnerable underbellies in order to reclaim our full humanity. Anything less is just more ego posturing.

—JOY HOSEY

## THE NEW BRO CODE

1. Love the earth and shield her from assault
2. Provide a firm holding environment for the feminine to flourish (including her chaotic storms)
3. Take responsibility for all your feelings, including sexual ones
4. Be strong enough to be vulnerable
5. Shift from competition to win-win-win solutions
6. Have a variety of valued allies, both men and women