# How to be a man: exploring new masculinities



In the evolving landscape of 2024, the concept of masculinity is undergoing significant transformation. In Ireland, men are increasingly questioning the traditional notions that have historically defined manhood, and are instead seeking meaningful change and self-discovery. This shift is catalysed by the mounting challenges related to mental health, addiction, and gender-based violence, which have prompted many to reassess their roles in society.

Traditionally, the archetype of masculinity was rooted in attributes such as physical strength and emotional stoicism. This legacy of stoic masculinity has often left men struggling silently with issues like mental health disorders and addictions. Despite living in a modern world where diverse identities are more accepted, men continue to grapple with these challenges, highlighting a disconnect between societal progress and personal experience.

Central to the ongoing conversation about masculinity is the term "toxic masculinity," which encapsulates the outdated and harmful aspects of traditional male roles. This concept has gained traction, particularly in the wake of the #MeToo movement, which underscored the need for a more conscientious approach to gender roles and relationships.

Amid this backdrop, Ireland is witnessing the emergence of initiatives that encourage men to engage in open and honest dialogues about their struggles. Men’s circles, retreats, and supportive group activities are gaining popularity as forums where men can express their emotions and experiences, supporting each other in a collective journey towards personal growth and change. These gatherings often take place in nature-rich settings, providing a serene backdrop for contemplation and connection.

One prominent platform fostering this new wave of masculinity is the Mythopoetic Men’s Movement, originating in the United States in the late 1970s. Its influence has spread globally, with entities like the ManKind Project offering programmes aimed at initiating personal transformation and healthier self-expression among men. Similarly, the Men’s Shed movement, which began in Australia and reached Ireland in 2011, focuses on reducing social isolation among older men by creating communal spaces for skill-sharing and camaraderie.

In Ireland, facilitators like Pat Divilly are spearheading initiatives that combine physical and emotional well-being. His Masculine Leadership Program educates men on improving mental, emotional, and relational health. Men from varied backgrounds, whether young professionals or seasoned family men, are finding common ground in their efforts to combat feelings of shame and isolation.

Institutions such as The Healing Forest in Kilternan, run by Luke, offer nature-based programs that aim to reconnect individuals with the natural world and foster deeper self-awareness. Another noteworthy initiative, Inward Bound, co-founded by Rob Ó Cobhthaigh, provides retreats focused on personal development and self-exploration, delving into symbolic rites of passage that guide participants from boyhood into maturity.

Such initiatives are not only facilitating personal growth but also challenging prevailing stereotypes around masculinity. Stephen O'Rourke, a physiotherapist and health writer, recently attended a men’s retreat in Dingle, where activities ranged from yoga and meditation to candid conversations over meals. These experiences highlight the changing perceptions among men about seeking support and engaging in personal reflection, once viewed as signs of weakness but now increasingly recognised as pathways to self-betterment.

Retreat participant John from Dublin noted the transformative impact of focusing on personal journeys rather than destinations, while Patrick, an advocate for men's spiritual work, emphasised the empowerment derived from connecting with diverse men. For many, these gatherings have dismantled fears around masculinity, fostering inclusive and positive environments for growth.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/celebrating-mens-health-week-2024-why-it-matters/> - Corroborates the need for Men's Health Week in Ireland, highlighting men's poorer health outcomes, higher death rates, and the importance of early detection and healthier lifestyle choices.
* <https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2024/0429/1446288-kate-demolder-on-how-famous-irish-men-challenge-toxic-masculinity/> - Supports the shift away from toxic masculinity in Ireland, with examples of public figures embracing more feminine and emotionally expressive forms of masculinity.
* <https://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2024.html> - Details the objectives and themes of Men's Health Week 2024 in Ireland, including the 'Know Your Numbers' campaign and the importance of addressing men's specific health needs.
* <https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2024/0429/1446288-kate-demolder-on-how-famous-irish-men-challenge-toxic-masculinity/> - Discusses how Generation Z is contributing to the dismantling of toxic masculinity and the rise of more empathetic and sensitive forms of masculinity.
* <https://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2024.html> - Highlights the initiatives and programs in Ireland aimed at improving men's health, such as the National Men's Health Policy and the Healthy Ireland - Men Action Plan.
* <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/celebrating-mens-health-week-2024-why-it-matters/> - Emphasizes the importance of raising awareness about preventable health problems and promoting healthier lifestyle choices among men.
* <https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2024/0429/1446288-kate-demolder-on-how-famous-irish-men-challenge-toxic-masculinity/> - Illustrates how social justice movements and the pandemic have influenced the shift towards more positive and inclusive forms of masculinity.
* <https://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2024.html> - Describes the role of various stakeholders, including policy makers and service providers, in addressing men's health issues in Ireland.
* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0890406522000615> - Although the content is not directly accessible, the article title suggests it explores representations of rural ageing masculinities, which aligns with the broader discussion on evolving masculinities in Ireland.
* <https://www.call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/cfp/2024/04/11/masculinity-studies-in-ireland-mapping-the-field> - Outlines the interdisciplinary field of masculinity studies in Ireland, covering various aspects such as sociology, psychology, and cultural studies, which supports the academic and societal exploration of new masculinities.