

emale

improving male health & wellbeing
issue 170 March April 2019



Grab Life By The Balls

Tackling the Challenge

Can We Learn from Gillette's Masculinity Ad?

Your Heart Can Help: the answer is within you

Meaning For Men Program

Training and Events

THE GRAB LIFE BY THE BALLS MOVEMENT

A Men's Group (but not as you know it) - The Grab Life By The Balls Men's Group is a pretty laid back group of blokes... just like you. We catch up. We have a chin wag. Sometimes we catch up over coffee. At other times we stand around the fire. We DON'T take ourselves too seriously. There's no secret handshake. There's something going on every couple of weeks. And, you're more than welcome to come along.

Grab Life By The Balls is a worldwide movement of empowered, inspired and on purpose men; who lead by example, who are role models for their mates, family, work colleagues and their community. Creating positive shifts in consciousness for men, women and children across the globe. [#grablifebytheballs](#)

At Grab Life By The Balls we are a bit different...as the name may suggest. We are purposely focusing on the guys- hence Balls. It's a metaphor that blokes can easily recognise and understand. It speaks to our target market. Yes it's a bit cheeky- nothing like a bit of good old Aussie humour... and what Aussie guy doesn't like a bit of slang? Grabbing them (the balls) to us means: blokes stepping up, taking personal responsibility, taking personal control and living their best life. Rather than solely focusing on the cause of all the shit stuff when it comes to men's mental health we ask ourselves a different question like what does it take for us (men) to live our best life?

Why? Well when ya think about it I like to explain it like this... If you're the coach of a football team (insert another sport if you don't like footy) who do you want to study, look at, analyse and learn from: the team at the top of the ladder... or the team at the bottom of the ladder? The Top right? At Grab Life By The Balls we've studied, collected, practiced and played around with what we reckon works when it comes to us men grabbing life by the balls...and we've put it together in a no BS, no fluff, no rah rah way that is practical, easy and relatable.

Sam Parker started Grab Life By The Balls in the Shineshine Coast area of Queensland and recently held a highly successful launch event in Newcastle at the Blind Monk in Hamilton. Nearly 100 men attended and listened to Sam and local healthcare workers. There are plans to hold a regular GLBTB meeting for men in Newcastle.



Big thanks to Sam and his team for his work and visiting Newcastle.

Find out more on the [website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

Message from Sam: Fella's if you would like to continue the conversation feel free to join the blokes only

Facebook page [Blokes Who Grab Life By The Balls](#) We also have another Facebook group for everyone: [The Grab Life By The Balls Movement](#)



GRAB LIFE BY THE BALLS
inspired, empowered, on purpose men

Tackling the Challenge

More men are experiencing major stressors in their lives which impact on their physical, psychological and social health. The *Tackling the Challenge: Talking Men's Health* Project aims to bring about positive change and normalise help seeking behaviour in the space of Men's Mental Wellbeing. The project does this by enabling local men living within the semi-rural, community of Wingecarribee shire, located 110km southwest of Sydney, to share their stories of strength and resilience with the community.

The *Tackling the Challenge: Talking Men's Health* Project highlights men's personal agency and support systems that they have used in their journey from a variety of experiences such as: relationship breakdown, mental health problems, addiction, being a carer, ageing, grief, chronic illness and unemployment. Men who demonstrate positive attitudes towards mental health issues can encourage other men to speak up and seek help before it becomes a crisis. Kawachi and Berkman (2001) also indicate that social connectedness is a protective factor against depression. This is the common thread of Tackling the Challenge – to create an outlet where men can share their personal stories to encourage others to seek support.

The project was built through local partnerships and expertise from government and non-government organisations. Some of these included the South Western Sydney Local Health District Health Promotion Service, Bowral Community Mental Health, Wingecarribee Health Association for Men, Wingecarribee Shire Council, South Western Sydney Primary Health Network, Southern Highlands Prostate Cancer Support Group, a local Chiropractor and a community member with mental health lived experience.

The project's method involved an initial participant screening in which participants are deemed as ready or not ready to share their story through a variety of questions based on their current wellbeing. Working closely with the participant and a local project team allowed participants to tell their stories as seamlessly, recognising that while we can't always control what happens to us, we can control how we respond to it, which is essential for people to maintain an active role in their self-care.

The stories collected focus on the methods and support systems utilised for recovery such as partners, family, professional services, community involvement and exercise. These are showcased to highlight the variety of tools available for men in the community to consider when it comes to their own recovery, help seeking and resilience building.

You can read about Andy, the first story for the *Tackling the Challenge: Talking Men's Health* Project [here](#). Upcoming stories will be hosted on the [Wingecarribee Health Association for Men Website](#).

For more information:

Brendan Bennett – Mental Wellbeing Health Promotion Officer (South Western Sydney Local Health District)
(02) 9616 4048 Brendan.Bennett@health.nsw.gov.au



YOU ARE THE STORY TELL YOUR STORY TODAY.

The Tackling the Challenge: Talking Men's Health project dares to defy the stereotype of keeping silent on men's health.

By empowering men to tell their stories of overcoming life's obstacles, we can work together to encourage other men to seek help in times of need.

To tell your story or for more information, visit wingecarribeehealthassociationformen.org or contact Brendan Bennett on 02 9616 4048 or Brendan.Bennett@health.nsw.gov.au

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Can We Learn From Gillette's Masculinity Ad?



Gillette, the razor company, has sparked global controversy, with a new [advertising campaign](#) in the US that places a focus on negative aspects of masculinity as part of its drive to become a brand that “**encourages men to be their best**”. The two minute advert adopts a “toxic masculinity” narrative citing male-to-male violence; the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault of women by men as evidence of a “problem we can’t hide from”. As is often the case with gender issues, the advert has been deeply divided opinion along binary gender political lines, with one side labelling the adverts “**toxic feminism**” and the other side claiming that the backlash is **proof that the advert is needed**.

So far, so predictable, but what does this have to do with men’s health?

Australia’s new **National Men’s Health Strategy** calls for the health system and all levels of Government to work to “significantly improve men’s health” by providing “services that are male-centred” [and focus] “on the unique needs of men and boys”.

Yet we live in a world where popular gender stereotypes about men, masculinity and men’s health tell us there is something seriously wrong with Aussie blokes. Therefore, it must be men, not the system, that needs to change. As the launch of the National Men’s Health Strategy moves closer, is it possible for those working to improve men’s health to communicate with men about their wellbeing without “doing a Gillette” and dividing opinion. To help you navigate the minefield of talking about gender issues with men, here are four important questions to consider before launching any awareness campaign around men and boys’ health.

1. WHAT PROBLEM ARE YOU’RE TRYING TO SOLVE?

When working to address **the social issues that men and boys face**, it is vital that we are clear and transparent about the problem we are seeking to solve. As a business, the primary problem Gillette is trying to solve is how to sell more products. In order to do this, Gillette has chosen to tie its brand to some of the social issues that are linked to gender. When people think about men and gender issues, they tend to do so in one of two ways:

1. They look at the social problems men **cause**
2. They look at the social problems men **have**

Furthermore, there is a tendency when focusing on the “social problems men cause” to position all men as being responsible for these problems. The combination of these two choices – the choice to overlook the “social problems men have” and the choice to make all men responsible for the “social problems men cause” – is a choice that inevitably limits the range of men the advert will resonate with.

The message this approach sends to some men is that we’re not interested in the problems you face personally as a man, but we do expect you to take personal responsibility for the problems other men cause. For other men, the message that there is something you personally can do to help solve the problems other men cause, will be welcomed. The result, for Gillette, is that it has pleased some of its target audience but alienated others (and generated vast quantities of free publicity in the process). Whether this helps or hinders its quest to sell more razors remains to be seen.

The lesson here, for those wanting to reach out to men, is that it’s important to frame the gender issues you are seeking to resolve, in ways that are relevant to and resonate with the men you want to reach.

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Can We Learn From Gillette's Masculinity Ad?

2. WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO: SOME MEN? MOST MEN? ALL MEN?

There are more than 10 million men and boys in Australia (and close to 4 billion worldwide). Each one of us is a unique individual and so any attempt to communicate with all men and boys as a group, will inevitably fall short. Yet mass communication is an essential part of health promotion. So how do we draw on masculine archetypes to help us reach the majority of men, without resorting to lazy gender stereotypes or attempting to include everyone (and ending up pleasing no-one).

Gillette has clearly attempted to move away from the classic, hero archetype that male grooming brands have been promoting since the 1990s: muscular, metrosexual, perfectly groomed and attractive to women. Instead, it presents us with the classic 21st Century trio of progressive masculine archetypes: the Bad Bro; the Good Bro and the Bystander Bro. The Good Bro is the progressive male hero, no longer defined by his looks. What defines the Good Bro, is not cultivating the right body or perfect looks, but adopting the correct political attitudes and behaviours. As Gillette's new advert states, good men are those who "say the right thing" and "act the right way".

In contrast, the Bad Bro is a stereotypical representation of masculinity at its worse: sexist, racist, homophobic and violent. Some commentators have claimed that **Gillette is presenting the majority of men as evil**, while others have countered that it **presents men in a positive light**, but the reality is more nuanced.

Gillette presents the archetypal bloke as a row of brainwashed bystanders, lined up behind BBQs with their arms folded. These everyday blokes are neither Good Bros nor Bad Bros, they are complicit Bystander Bros, unconsciously repeating the mantra, "boys will be boys". Gillette is unequivocal here, the majority of men are not Good Bros – "some already are in ways big and small, but some is not enough". When you study the ad closely, the message to men is clear and deliberate, some men are Good Bros, but most men are not, so men need to change.

In any communication campaign targeting men, it will always be impossible to create messages that are relevant to all men. There will also be times when it is necessary to narrow your campaign to try and connect more effectively with specific communities of men (younger men, older, gay men, Indigenous men and so on).

But for people who are trying to reach most men, it is vital to carefully consider what message you are sending out to (and about) the majority of men. If you want to build trust and an ongoing relationship with most men, then it probably doesn't work to start that process by effectively saying that most men are a problem.



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Can We Learn From Gillette's Masculinity Ad?

3. WHAT SOLUTIONS ARE YOU OFFERING?

If you want to engage with men more effectively then it's important to think carefully about the solution (or solutions) you are proposing to the problems you want to address. Having chosen to highlight “the social problems men cause”, as part of its drive to sell more products, Gillette proposes that the solution to these problems is simple: “men need to hold other men to account”. The idea that complex social issues such as the sexual assault of women and male-to-male violence can be resolved by telling people what to do, is optimistic at best. If this was the case, we could also resolve many of the key health issues we face by simply telling people to stop smoking, drink less alcohol, eat better, exercise more and see your GP regularly.

According to Fernando Desouches, former Global Marketing Director for Axe/Lynx, Gillette has fallen into a “**progressive man**” trap. “Recently, many brands have sought to counter traditional ways of being a man by presenting men in a more progressive – but equally stereotypical and unrealistic – way,” he says. “Telling men that all they need is to be vulnerable and emotional is simply trying to force one trait on to them to replace another. And in the Gillette ad, this message is clumsy and patronising. At issue is Gillette’s focus on telling men how they need to behave and its failure to help them feel comfortable being who they really are.” Most complex social issues have multiple solutions. Working with men and men’s groups to find solutions to the problems that are important to them, is more effective than dictating a single solution and telling men that your way is the right way. The lesson here is to be careful of offering just one solution to the issues you want to address and be sure to allow space for a range of different approaches that empower men of all backgrounds to find their own solutions.

4. ARE YOU TALKING WITH MEN OR AT MEN?

The cultural conversation around men and gender issues is often dominated by two contradictory messages that both attempt to break through the gender stereotype that men need to “man up”. The first message is that men don’t talk enough, so when it comes to gender issues like men’s mental health, they need to “open up” and as Desouches says “be vulnerable and emotional”. The second message is that men talk too much (they “mansplain”), so when it comes to talking about gender issues men’s job is “shut up” and listen.

What arises from these contradictory messages to men to both “open up” and “shut up” is that **the majority of Australian men** now feel that they cannot speak openly about gender issues. Telling men what to do is easy, but rarely effective, particularly when men feel unable to talk through issues and arrive at their own conclusions.

Taking time to build trusting relationships with men of all backgrounds and perspectives, to discover what they think, feel and want, requires an ongoing commitment to working with men and boys. The Government’s **National Men’s Health Strategy** calls on the health sector to develop a “best practice consumer engagement” plan that is inclusive of men of all backgrounds. In principle, this is a positive step forward. The strategy runs for ten years from 2020 to 2030. It is an opportunity to commit to a decade-long process of learning from men’s lived experiences of “being a man” and developing a deeper understanding of how to improve the lives and health of men and boys.

If we resort to positioning men and masculinity as the problem we are trying to solve and decide that telling men how to behave is the best solution, then we are destined to fail. However, if we rise to this challenge in collaboration with men, we can help build a health sector in Australia that is - as Gillette used to say – the best a man can get.

Glen Poole, CEO [Australian Men’s Health Forum](#)

Your Heart Can Help: the answer is within you

Shame is one of the big drivers behind men's health or mental health challenges. An inability to talk about things that are "wrong" with us can drive these and other problems deeper within us. When that happens, we are less able to see what the real problems - the causes - might be, meaning we are more likely to see and treat symptoms. Along with shame there are a host of other emotions that can paralyse us and make it hard to be proactive about our health. This can mean we are unable to move forward ... we become stuck.

Our capacity therefore to be able to manage our emotional response to issues is one of the keys for us to take charge of what's happening to us and look for support mechanisms that can help us to climb out of what may be potentially, a very big hole.

A new book **"Your Heart Can Help: the answer is within you"** by Klaus Baur brings new hope to men, struggling with their health or mental health, by tackling the root causes of so many of the problems found in the mental health space. In essence, Baur introduces the reader to a resource that is so rarely accessed and yet is freely available within us all: the heart. This is not the physical heart, but the 'feeling centre' also known as the spiritual heart, which is the key to our capacity to regulate our emotional state and well being.

For most of us, the heart is inactive or dormant or at least very underused. Society tells us that the brain, knowledge and thought are more reliable or more stable than our feeling centre. As a result we tend to guard and protect the doorway to our feelings which stops access to a critical resource within us. Instead of using and trusting our feelings, we listen to and are driven by our thought patterns which in turn are directly influenced by both our social conditioning and quite often, fear. "We have really lost our way in the western world when it comes to our ability to deal with the huge mental health crisis found in populations across the planet", says Baur.

"Because of our reliance on sorting out our problems using the intelligence of our mind alone, we are reinforcing deep unconscious behavior patterns which go back generations and which stay alive in many of our human interactions when we try to protect ourselves". "That's why I wrote this book", he says. "It's my experience that when our heart opens, our feelings become stronger and we are able to tap into another dimension of our consciousness which has a much deeper and more complete intelligence than the mind alone: this is the heart. Opening our heart is easy, it's just that we need to be reminded with some steps and to be guided so that the over-domination of the mind is reduced to enable the equilibrium or the bridging of heart and mind, to be re-established."

And guiding is exactly what the books sets out to do. In an incredibly detailed and methodical way, step by step practices lead the reader through some new techniques which strengthen our heart and which are underpinned by practical heart tips which unpack how to use the heart in real life moments.

According to Baur, as we open our heart we clear blocks and develop an internal strength and emotional resilience which is second to none and which affects our entire wellbeing and health: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Our heart helps us to become anchored to our moral core, our principles. We develop an automatic heart-capacity based on a 'stronger heart' building an innate capacity to manage stress better.

Stress is a proven, major contributor to health or mental health issues. Decisions we make on this new strength and inner balance are then driven from inner wisdom, not fear-based motives (e.g., fear of failure, fear of missing out, fear we will not be liked, etc etc). As this happens, we are able to see the need for boundaries for both ourselves, and others, but these become established in healthy ways as our inner strength grows. Rather than feeling isolated (one of the key issues behind depression and illness), as our heart opens, we feel more connected and compassionate, automatically. This very shift helps stop the slide into unhelpful thought patterns.



Your Heart Can Help: the answer is within you

In *Your Heart Can Help*, Baur takes the reader on an amazing tour of the heart and the practice to support the opening of the heart. Using simple Key Heart Help (KHH) steps throughout the book, anyone can begin the process of letting their heart grow stronger. The very first step is to learn how to “feel” from the heart. We are asked to remember a moment where we felt happy and safe and to connect with the feeling underneath that. As we connect with the feeling and let go of the thought that reminds us, our heart grows stronger. Immediately we come to realise that our whole life actually provides everything we need for our heart to be stronger and our health to improve. What we need is assistance to be directed to the sign posts so that we can see and make choices that are good for our health! This book does that beautifully. As the heart grows stronger, Baur suggests ways we can actually check our very decisions at the level of our heart.

“Science has discovered our intelligence goes beyond our mind. Brain-like neurons are found in our gut which often tell us when something feels right or not. That’s our “gut feeling” and this is not questioned. However, our non-physical heart is not limited in the same way as our body and can make even deeper and more intelligent decisions than we currently make. Science is still catching up to this reality. A list of pros and cons generated by the brain can only ever scratch the surface of showing what the best alternative is. Our heart is able to assess options we could never see or know of because our heart operates in another deeper field or dimension. Put simply, by feeling from the heart any decision we need to make, our heart and feeling can show us what direction to head in, even when it doesn't make sense to our mind!”

As the frontier of mind research grows, so too does our understanding of our heart and feeling centre and parts of our physiology that until now we have discounted or been oblivious too because of their non-physical nature and our mind-dominant world.

Baur shares, in convincing ways, that the heart can help us deal with health issues or a growing mental health crisis, that have crippled so many men. Over 40 personal accounts and heart-touching stories of deep and positive changes seem to be powerful proof of this.

Your Heart Can Help (YHCH) is available at <https://www.yourheartcanhelp.org/>

Your Heart is available online on all major online bookstores as a book or ebook. E.g. [Amazon](#) or [Fishpond.com.au](https://www.fishpond.com.au)

Contact Klaus via ... [YHCH Facebook Page](#) – [email Klaus](#)

This review provided by Steve Ray – senior groupwork facilitator. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/steve-ray-b92a4023/>



UPCOMING EVENTS

MEANING FOR MEN A Humanistic Buddhism Approach

Sunday June 23 - 9.30 am—4.30 pm

Rigpa National Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre

158 Australia St, Newtown Sydney



Is it the time to find more meaning in your life? What is actually important to you?

Are you longing to free yourself from self-doubt and negative self-belief?

Do you want to feel more passionate and powerful in your approach to life?

Do you want to learn more about self compassion, mindfulness and meditation?

This program provides a safe space to spend some time with like minded men defining what it means to be a man today and learning some new skills to help plan for a more meaningful, happy and contented life.

The program will cover:

- Brief overview of Humanistic Buddhism
- Finding our sense of purpose and the role of compassion for self and others
- An introduction to meditation and mindfulness and spiritual awareness
- Better ways of living and coping with difficulties and illness should they arise
- How we can fine tune our goals and find more support for any changes we make

MEANING FOR MEN is facilitated by Men's Health Consultant Greg Millan [Bio here](#)

COST Early Bird til May 10 \$80 | Full \$100 from May 11. You receive resources and refreshments.

To register click on [Registration Form](#)

For more information contact Greg on M 0417 772 390 or e greg@menshealthservices.com.au



Greg Millan, Men's Health Consultant, Social Worker and Affiliate Member The Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

engaging men



Australia's Only Male Health Promotion Training Course

SPECIAL MEN'S HEALTH WEEK EVENT

CAIRNS Friday June 14 2019

Holiday Inn, 209 - 217 The Esplanade, Cairns

REGISTRATIONS OPEN NOW – Early Bird \$225 til April 30

ENGAGING MEN will equip allied health, human service, education, community workers and industry professionals with knowledge and skills to work more effectively with males, with the aim of improving the health, psychological, educational and social outcomes for them.

ENGAGING MEN combines evidence based theory and practice with a focus on developing individual awareness, knowledge and interpersonal and group skills. The program is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers' health, wellbeing and cultural needs. The program will be tailored towards the participant's individual areas of interest. [Click for ENGAGING MEN Program Content](#)

Cost per program for two days of training, refreshments, lunch, all resources and ongoing support.

Early Bird \$225 Full price \$275 after April 30

A comprehensive bank of men's health articles and resources including a copy of my book "*Men's health and well-being: an a – z guide*" are supplied on completion of the course and you are invited to join the Engaging Men

Network. To register click on [Registration Form](#)

For more information contact Greg on M 0417 772 390 or e greg@menshealthservices.com.au

**Men's
Health
Week**

Our Community


**8TH NATIONAL
MEN'S SHED
GATHERING**

 10-12 SEPTEMBER 2019
MORPHETTVILLE RACECOURSE, SA

 Australian Men's Shed Association
 8th National Men's Shed Gathering | Our Community
 10-12 September 2019 | Morphetville Racecourse, South Australia


8th National Men's Shed Gathering

Morphettville Racecourse, Adelaide

Tuesday 10 – Thursday 12 September 2019.

Website: www.dcconferences.com.au/mensshed2019

The 8th National Men's Shed Gathering will be held at the Morphetville Racecourse in Adelaide, SA and is expected to attract over 300 delegates. It aims to promote the Community of Men's Sheds throughout Australia and the contribution Men's Sheds make to their own communities.

Delegates will come from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, including 'shedders', shed coordinators, health and aged care providers, educators and policy makers.

The 2019 Gathering, themed Our Community, will include traditional content such as information on Men's Shed operations, however, there will be a strong focus on acknowledging and celebrating the community of Men's Sheds and the impact they have on community capacity building. Men's Sheds are not isolated, stand alone community facilities but rather an activity that is well enmeshed into their community network.

The Gathering will encourage delegates to share, talk and discover the best ways to keep the Shed movement momentum continuing forward. Streams will be presented by experienced shedders, professional service providers and the highly skilled AMSA team.

Shedders from around the globe are invited to this gathering of the Men's Shed community in South Australia to share, connect and learn. As the event draws closer, more information and registration details will be made available.

Contact: Men's Shed 2019 Conference Secretariat | DC Conferences via telephone +61 2 9954 4400 or via email mensshed2019@dcconferences.com.au