



## The Personal Coach BULLETIN

balance through partnership

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COACHING POINT

### BOYS TO MEN

#### *When Does a Boy Truly Become a Man?*

No, I have not gone off the rails, nor am I losing my mind; this is not about "boy bands," although after all these years I must confess that I really, really liked them. This is just a few of my thoughts on becoming a man.

Let me start by saying that I think the question of becoming a man is really a values question. Let me explain.

A definition of values could be; "important and enduring beliefs or ideals shared or not shared by the members of a culture about what is good or desirable and what is not. Values exert a major influence on the behavior of an individual and serve as broad guidelines in all situations." *Business Dictionary*

When we are very young our view of what a man is tends toward being, dare I say somewhat immature. It really seems to be mostly about possessions and conquests! Some think that when they reach a certain age or start to; shave, drive, own a car (*the bigger and faster, the better*), drink (*sometimes lots*), have sex, get a job, make money (*lots of it*), win, and perhaps a little later possess power and position, they are men! Well, if any of these characteristics describe your orientation and/or your **complete** definition of what a man truly is, particularly if you are over the age of **40** than you need to stop, give your head a shake and ask yourself some serious questions one of which should be, whether or not discipline is a factor in your life at all?

Don't misunderstand me here, some of the qualities mentioned in and of themselves serve men well. Others like; looking out for others, building things, having a family, fighting in wars, having friends, can be an important part of what defines a man. But to truly be a man requires more, much more. Three qualities that particularly come to mind are introspection, self-awareness and self-acceptance. A man if he is honest with himself and for that matter others, continuously revisits his beliefs and corresponding behaviours, making any necessary adjustments to stay congruent with the essence of who he is and is becoming. The more he is able to do this the greater the likelihood of him truly accepting himself.

To be able to do these things well requires discipline.

Being disciplined in ones approach to their personal and professional life is absolutely critical to truly finding fulfillment and happiness and thus becoming a man. I have mentioned the four principles of discipline before in these pages: postponing gratification, taking responsibility, always telling yourself the truth and trying to keep the four dimensions of self in balance; emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual. No small task especially the balancing part. For me, the two most significant and relevant principles are taking responsibility and telling myself the truth. The other two are not possible without that level of personal integrity.



James Ladd,  
Football Coach 1982

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**COACHING POINT**

At this point I feel it only fair that if I am going to espouse my opinions on what I believe a man is, I should share some of my own journey to manhood. When I reflect back over the course of my life I can identify a number of significant markers or events that have contributed to my formation and too the man I am today. One in particular stands out and was a turning point in my life, one that freed me up to begin my journey toward self-awareness, understanding and acceptance of who I truly was and which enabled me to find my place in the world. That event was the death of my father in 1984. I was 38 years old.

Somewhere way back, I once heard it said that; "a boy only becomes a man when the father dies!" For some reason that expression resonated with me back then but I really did not understand or make the connection to its relevance in my life until many years later, after the death of my own father.



Understand this; if there was one person whose approval I sought more than anyone else's hands down, it was my father's. While he was alive if I was not trying to be what I thought he wanted me to be, I was trying to impress him with things like; my athletic ability, my work ethic, loyalty or my dependability, pick one! And somehow most of the time, at least it seemed to me anyway, I never quite measured up.

It wasn't until his death that it dawned on me that I "truly" did not know myself and therefore be myself, and had not for most of those years. I had lost myself in the shadow that my father cast.

Subsequent to his death and among other things in my process of growing, I had to learn to let go of the anger I felt toward my dad. I was able to do this by realizing that my father always lived his life with integrity and that he did the very best that he could with the tools he was given or learned, and most importantly I learned that he always, always loved me. This kind of learning and new found awareness was empowering and freed me up to become a better man for others.

And so there it is, at the end of the day; "being a man for others," is what I believe defines a man!

As I said at the beginning, the question of becoming a man is a values question. What about all of you, what do you think? I would really like to hear from the "men" out there and even a few women if you are so inclined. If any of this resonates with you, or you have a different opinion, I would like to hear from you.....and will publish (with your permission) some of your comments on my website.

**Coach Ladd**

**In the classic sense of team; "all for one and one for all," but with a twist, I would like to remind everyone of the formation of ALLIES (A Whole New Concept in TEAM) for men. For more information on how to become a team member see [www.coachladd.com](http://www.coachladd.com)**

"Who is the happiest of men?  
He who values the merits of  
others, and in their pleasure  
takes joy, even as though t'were  
his own."

Wherever you go, go with all  
your heart.  
*Confucius*

A man may conquer a million  
men in battle but one who  
conquers himself is, indeed, the  
greatest of conquerors.  
*Buddha*

Strong men can always afford to  
be gentle. Only the weak are  
intent on giving as good as they  
get.  
*Elbert Hubbard*

All great men are gifted with  
intuition. They know without  
reasoning or analysis, what they  
need to know.  
*Alexis Carrel*

"A successful man is one who  
can lay a firm foundation with  
the bricks others have thrown at  
him."  
*David Brinkley*