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BUILDING THE NEXT FIVE GENERATIONS OF AUSTRALIAN MEN

Hope for those without hope

We were recently invited to speak to the men in detox in Royal Brisbane Hospital's drug and alcohol unit. The men who find themselves there are at the end of the rope; divorce, destitution, prison and worse is ahead if this last attempt to get sober fails.

Large posters of AA's and NA's twelve step program adorn the walls. Over a dozen beaten down men shuffle in. The absence of hope is palpable. The stories are harrowing.

What can The Centre for Men offer? Another snake oil sales pitch promising the secret to addiction-free living? These men have heard it all before. Cynicism is a barrier to overcome if there is to be any meaningful connection.

And connection is the key. I ask the men about step 11 on the posters: "We seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." I ask what understanding they have of that. They murmur they are still struggling with step one. Step two invites them to acknowledge that only a power greater than themselves can restore them to sanity, and step three is a surrender

to that power—but there can be no awareness or surrender without a way to know such a power accepts them as they are, and can be found. Richard Rohr calls this process breathing under water.

The success rate of AA is determined not by teaching or technique. As one recovering alcoholic put it, "the real problem lies within a spiritual or existential dysfunction that makes life extremely difficult - to the point of intolerable - in both the person's emotional and mental life, as well as their relationship to the external world."

In other words, the sense of self that these addicts had formed out of the pain of their worlds isn't strong enough to function in life. There was no point telling them they needed to trust God. That was just another thing they had to do, and they knew they would fail at that too.

Instead, I told these men that their addiction gave them a head start over all the men who could make their personas succeed in the world. I told them that the way into life was to embrace their weakness, their failure, their humiliation, as the great invitation.



The response was immediate. A man rushed from the room and urged a nurse for a white board marker so I could outline what I was saying. Later, that nurse told me it was the first time since his admission several weeks prior that this man had displayed any hope.

Not surprisingly, we have been invited to return on a fortnightly basis to explain how these men can use their alcoholism and drug addiction as a constant invitation into a whole new way of seeing reality. The programs they (and to be honest, all of us) have heard trotted out are the same consciousness as that which created the problem, which as Einstein observed, only reinforced the problem. Richard puts it this way: "If we try to change our ego with the help of our ego, we only have a better-disguised ego!"



The Centre for Men has sold its premises at Seventeen Mile Rocks.

This has eliminated our debt and will allow us to focus our energies and your giving entirely on harm prevention and building healthy communities of men around Australia.

A challenge we face going forward is how we operate as a virtual organization and build up connections. As well as our Website, we will continue to use the Brookfield Centre in 2015 for breakfasts, Stoked nights and more. The board of Centre for Men and other key leaders have scheduled a planning day on Saturday 20 December to strategise on how to better resource leaders of MALES groups. Watch this space.

Initiator Program for MROP

Becoming more intentional about inviting men to the rites of passage

Andrew said to his brother Simon “come and see” and the world was forever changed. It is the power of an invitation that builds anything to realise its potential.

So it is with the Men’s Rite of Passage (MROP) A man comes because another man invited him.

The future of this work depends largely upon men who have completed the rites inviting their friends. With this in mind, we are launching the Initiator program. It is a simple yet intentional five step process that we are asking every initiated man to take very seriously.

Step 1: Identify and invite at least one man to come on MROP. We need to hear that invitation in up to twelve different ways, so be creative. Give them a book. Get them to read Richard

Fay’s blogs on MROP that are on our website. Share your story. Invite him to a MALES group. Listen to him. Ask him if what he knows is working for him. Challenge him!

Step 2: Offer to subsidise his cost of attending MROP. Don’t pay all of it, never more than half. But make sure you are willing to pitch in financially. This will speak volumes to your friend of your love and commitment to him, as well as your confidence in the process..

Step 3: Pray for him. Tell him you are going to pray every day, and do it. You might even want to write a short note for each day he is on the rites, reminding him of your commitment to journey with him while he does MROP.



Step 4: Drive him to the station, the airport or wherever he needs to go to get to MROP. The souls of men are shy. This is difficult work to engage in and it requires courage. Your solidarity at this key point is powerful.

Step 5: Be a returning man on his rites. Show up for his final rites and celebrate with him. There are few moments as joyous as the final anointing and declaration on the Friday night. Your presence in this moment will be the culmination of all the previous steps and will help both of you journey together into the future as initiated men.

Hope for those without hope

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This reminds me once again that what we offer is what men need in order to change.

Centre for Men is a registered charity for harm prevention, and work such as this is central to our mandate. It is the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. We also need to build fences at the top of the cliff, and it is work such as the Men’s Rite of Passage and MALES groups that seek to accomplish this. Both are needed. Your donations to The Centre for Men are 100% tax deductible.

Peace,
Richard Fay, CEO
chard.fay@cfma.org.au

Soularize Brings Gifts for Men

In early November, five initiated men from Australia and NZ travelled to New Mexico to attend the Soularize conference with over 400 men from all over the world. Richard Rohr was a speaker at the event, as was Belden Lane, the first ever weaver of MROP in Australia.

The conference was held an hour north of Albuquerque on the banks of the Rio Grande river, with the Sandia Mountains as a backdrop, and a forest of Cottonwood trees blazing gold in the autumn sun for men to explore (see photo).

The theme of the conference was becoming generative men. The father of develop-

mental psychology, Erik Erikson, named the ages between 40 and 60 a time of generativity or stagnation. Richard Rohr observed that ninety percent of men who become involved in men’s work do not become generative.

Erikson’s previous stage of development is intimacy or isolation, and it is true that men struggle with intimacy, often more than women. The world of the western man does not value intimacy. Without intimacy, there can be no true generativity.

Illuman is the organisation responsible for stewarding the work that Richard started over 20 years ago. The elders of Illuman introduced to us a



way of meeting for men called “The Way of Council” that is truly transformative. More will be shared on the insights of the Way of Council in the coming months. It is a tool that allows men to build healthy intimacy and become truly generative men.



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