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CHANGING THE WORLD one man at a time

by S. Alison Chabonais

MANKIND PROJECT TRANSFORMS MEN'S HEARTS This year another 3,000 men will join a worldwide brotherhood of 30,000 adult males who are helping each other make the interior journey into manhood. Transformation from a life of the head—"What I must do"—to a life of the heart—"What I must be"—takes commitment. It also requires a community of men.

The Mankind Project, started in the United States two decades ago, offers hundreds of such communities linked through a network of 32 independent educational training centers on four continents. Local groups of men regularly meet to mentor one another, express themselves and share experiences. Their candid heart-songs tell of changed lives, including the lives of everyone around them.

"I remember the day I met one of the most admirable men I know," says Stan Sherman, a national sales manager from Philadelphia with a Barcelona-based textile company. "He asked, 'What is the most important thing in your life?'"

Listening to the younger man's long list of masculine priorities, the elder bluntly interrupted, "You're wrong. The one thing you must do is learn to take better care of yourself. Then you'll be able to start taking care of what's on your list."

That pivotal moment set Sherman on a road to self-discovery that's improved every facet of his life. He now devotes hours each week helping to pass along such wisdom as enrollment coordinator for The Mankind Project, believed to be the oldest and largest group of its kind.

THE JOURNEY FROM HEAD TO HEART

Group leaders liken each man's odyssey to that of being lost in a dark forest with no way out. In a New Warrior weekend initiation, 30 to 40 compassionate volunteers lead 32 newcomers out of the woods to a road that will take each one home to himself. At that point, a man has three choices. He can turn around and head back into the forest. He can sit by the roadside. Or he can start walking up the road.

Les Sinclair, a life coach and Mankind Project global support team coordinator from Los Angeles, explains the concept. "Society's old definitions of a warrior meant life-

long physical battles with external enemies," he says. "A new warrior enters spiritual battle with inner demons. He becomes a man who is awake, conscious, loving and fiercely alive." He also embarks on a self-defined mission that enables him to step into his life in a totally different and more satisfying way.

The fruits of this new way of life may look like a higher sense of purpose, a better marriage, good fathering, fresh career direction and community volunteerism. Results show in less anger and more compassion. A new warrior has an inner smile. He listens and communicates better. From any measure, once he's set on the road, "He's not the same man," says Jeffrey Goldwasser, a chiropractor in Asheville, North Carolina.

Benefits start with the first weekend of training. Personal growth continues through eight weeks of follow-up Integration Training, which later morph into local Integration Groups known as I-Groups.

Trust is a huge issue for men schooled on competition as the road to success. "Men need to feel safe with each other," says Goldwasser, who serves as I-Groups chair for the Carolinas Center. "They need a place where they can freely express anything they need to, without having to explain or censor themselves." In his own I-Group experience, several men have become close confidantes, a sort of surrogate family. He asks, "If we can't get along with people at home, how can we hope to get along with people on the other side of the world?"

Paul Fiske, a real estate investment consultant and Enrollment Coordinator for The Mankind Project in Santa Fe, says that knowing how to look another man in the eye jumpstarts the journey. Having permission to open his heart to articulate hurts, hopes and dreams allows a man to bump up against what scares him. "When he feels a point of resistance, it's a prompt to examine what's inside that's holding him back," says Fiske.

Like a good therapist, fellow warriors provide a safe context for a man "to touch the deepest, most essential truth of who he is." All

"I'm seeing things, good and bad, about myself that I either had long since forgotten about, taken for granted, rationalized, excused, grown numb to, or written off as standard behavior."

~Ken Lessley

understand that everyone's a work in progress. Holding up a clear mirror and sounding board can be a veritable "spa for the soul."

"People can't attack you when you speak from the heart," says Sinclair. "I can now speak honestly rather than putting on some show."

NEW WARRIOR PRINCIPLES
Responsibility. Accountability. Personal truth. Living a life of integrity. These are among the themes that characterize the conversation of a new warrior.

Mankind Project co-leader Phillip Beverly, a Chicago college professor, asks weekend warriors a key question. "Is your life working for you?" Hard-won answers can open new realms of healing.

For most, it takes a personal crisis to smack a man into awareness of the need to radically change the way he lives his life. Inevitably, he runs up against unwanted consequences to his behaviors. By owning up to the good, bad and ugly parts of himself, he commits to being accountable for changing those behaviors and to stop hiding behind masks of anger, distrust, isolation or addictions. As he drops old habits for healthier choices, his whole being responds. As he comes to see himself as good and worthy, and good enough, he emerges from the shadows of old wounds to find a good man

inside. Life finally feels good.

"Too many men's bodies hide a lost little boy inside," observes Fiske, "One that's still finding his way, not yet grown into the rich fullness of the man he is meant to be."

Soul-challenging discussions, exercises and activities in the new warrior's training toolbox include team-building workshops, classes, coaching, journaling, light-hearted games, visualization and meditation. Trainers and support groups offer a banquet of suggestions and possibilities. Each man's choices decide how he'll embrace the essence of his own masculinity.

Men are thirsty for this work," says Sherman. "It gives them permission to live from the inside out. And it empowers them to carry out a personal mission of service to the world. I've never seen anything like it."

The Mankind Project crosses and connects cultures, economic and political boundaries, and spiritual practices. It attracts ordinary men of all ages from all walks of life who are tired of feeling demoralized, dispirited, depressed or aimless. It appeals to men who are tired of stuffing down the unacceptable worrying parts of themselves into the subconscious realm. For these men, the New Warrior movement supplies a clean invigorating

"Doing the New Warrior training gave me back my life. Without it I was living half a life."

~ Aboodi Shabi

tonic.

"The power these men emanate is a grounded centeredness," says Frederick Whitmeyer, Mankind Project center director for the Carolinas. "They know their truth. They are calm, clear and confident in their speech. They have faith in their mission and their essential contribution to the world." Often they are found sharing the



What does a man do
when his life isn't working?
Where does he start?

redeeming power of men's work in prisons, juvenile detention centers, residences for traumatized children and young men's mentoring programs.

To join, all a man needs to do is sign up for a weekend. Many hear about it from a friend.

Through establishing local circles of men, The Mankind Project not only is expanding inner boundaries, it's opening international borders. "Imagine," says Beverly, "in countries here and abroad, men sitting in a circle opening their hearts to someone they may have had in their gun sights. It shows us that anything's possible."

For more information on the nonprofit Mankind Project and a monthly schedule of regional New Warrior training weekends, visit mkp.org. Centers are located in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Europe. In the U.S., the weekend training typically costs \$650 depending on accommodations.

Wives and girlfriends of Mankind Project members are welcome to attend new warrior graduation ceremonies. Some also pursue their own complementary path to a better life through weekend seminars sponsored by Woman Within. For information see WomanWithin.org.

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What Women Say about New Warriors

It's no secret that women respect men who love good and demonstrate responsibility. They love to live with a man who has the true shine of manhood upon him. The Mankind Project has a track record of delivering such men, and women are rejoicing. Here's what they're saying.

"I remember the fear, isolation and anger that I saw in my partner's eyes when he left our house for his weekend. I also remember the look of grim determination I saw on his face. He said he wanted to change his life because whatever he had been doing was not working. I sat with my fear all weekend.

"A joyous man returned to our house Sunday evening. His eyes were bright and clear. His inner peace and excitement for life were visible. He had a gentleness in his spirit that he had revealed before only occasionally and guardedly.

"I was witnessing a transformation I could not even have imagined! And that was just the beginning..."

~ Carmen Stallings Finn



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"My husband hid behind work rather than being a complete partner in our family. He missed swim meets, Little League games...and I think his excuse (making money for them) was really an excuse to keep intimacy away. After he did the New Warrior weekend, a new man began to emerge, one who was still scared and scarred, but also tender and no longer afraid to show his deep love for his family."

~Abby Lederman

"My man came in the front door and looked into my eyes and stayed there long enough to see my heart and soul. He'd never done this before in all the years we've been together."

~ name withheld

"My husband came home a new person. Now, what he says and what he does consistently 'line up.' The experience was such a gift to both of us. Thank you!"

~ Deborah Saas

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