

THE

**MASTER THE 10 CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE COMPREHENSIVE MAN**

MAN

**THE / MOMENT
DEMANDS**

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*bestselling
author of*
BATTLE CRY



**NELSON
BOOKS**

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The Man the Moment Demands

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To every man who is tired of being
the wrong man in the moment.



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THE INITIATION

Men like to put up the facade that they're never vulnerable. Like there's never anything wrong—and everyone knows it's bull****!" That's what Joe Rogan once said to me when I was a guest on his podcast, *The Joe Rogan Experience*. Joe possesses an astute understanding of masculinity, drawing from his diverse experiences as an actor, comedian, Brazilian jiu-jitsu black belt, UFC color commentator, and host of the number one podcast on Spotify.

"No one can be strong all the time," I replied to Joe. "When we say to each other, 'Stay strong, bro!' we're subconsciously telling each other that when we feel weak, something's wrong with us."

"You're not tricking anybody," Joe said. "You're posturing."

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When you're posturing, it's really a weakness. There's more strength in just being who you are. And just because you have vulnerable moments, or just because you're emotional, or just because you're sad doesn't mean you're weak."

I paused. "Who are we . . . really?" I asked him.

I pose that same question to the men reading this right now: *Who are you . . . really?*

From the moment we take our first breaths, we arrive as exuberant, carefree boys, radiating joy and authenticity. Yet our culture molds us over time into less expressive versions of ourselves—males hemmed in by the rigid notion of "manhood." As a result, our humanity bows at the altar of masculinity, leaving minimal space for genuine transparency—and no room for those lighthearted boys.

As we grow, oftentimes our ventings are dismissed as complaints, expressions of pain are labeled as weakness, fatigue is mislabeled as laziness, resistance is denounced as rebellion, and hesitation is branded as being double-minded. When tears flow, we're called "soft," teaching us from an early age to bottle our anguish and show either indifference or strength toward whatever stresses and depresses us. As the pressure causes us to suffer in silence, we stop seeking our purpose in life and start pursuing unhealthy and dangerous outlets of release instead—or we simply give up.

You're tired of being the bad guy when you're a good man. You're tired of being misunderstood. You're tired of feeling like a failure as a father, husband, and son. And you're tired of having to be strong for everyone. Maybe you're tired of struggling with the same issues again and again. You've lost hope, and, in some cases, there may seem to be only one thing left to do. But trust me, my friend, you weren't born to kill yourself or to commit the less noticeable suicide of the heart. You're not alone.

If you are like most men I've known, at some point you've struggled with feeling confused. Over my decades of working with men of all ages, I have learned this: Confusion exists when you don't know why you exist.

This confusion reminds me of the film *Wanted*, directed by Timur Bekmambetov. In the movie, we meet Wesley (portrayed by James McAvoy), an office worker leading an unfulfilled life. After his father's tragic death, he is recruited by Fox (played by Angelina Jolie) to be part of an ancient secret society of assassins called The Fraternity.

On Wesley's first day of training, Fox repeatedly demands to know why he is there. Clearly perturbed, Wesley responds sarcastically, "I don't know, so hit me!" Fox complies, delivering a jarring backslap, then striking Wesley three times with her knee and kicking him once in the sternum. Fox even strikes Wesley's jaw with brass knuckles, causing blood to gush from his mouth.

She then grabs him by the arm, knees him again, and asks once more, "Why are you here?"

In obvious pain, Wesley responds, "I don't know why I am here."

Fox clenches Wesley's hair and violently snatches his head back, repeating the question with even more passion, "Why are you here?" This time, Wesley doesn't respond. Fox strikes him again with a brass-knuckled blow to the body.

Finally, hunched over with a heavy emotional cry, Wesley yells, "I don't know who I am!" Fox flips him over onto his back, drops to one knee beside him, and asks sternly, "What did you say?"

With voice trembling and tears welling, Wesley looks up and repeats, "I said, I don't know who I am."

The pain Wesley feels goes deeper than Fox's physical assault. In fact, I would suggest that his deeper, inner pain is

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what hurts more than anything. Maybe you have felt that pain. If you haven't (or don't feel like you are allowed to admit it), I guarantee you know someone who *has* felt the depths of this despair.

For example, one of my close friends who is a retired police officer once called me with a deep sense of concern. Out of nowhere, he had been engulfed by an intense surge of anger. The grip on his steering wheel had become so fierce that his fingernails left imprints on his own palms. On the surface, my friend is the embodiment of joviality, the happiest person you could ever meet. But beneath his smile was a man grappling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The weight of his life's circumstances would have overwhelmed the average individual.

He told me about an incident where he had broken down crying in front of his wife—a first for him. “What’s wrong, babe?” she had asked him.

His response is all too familiar for many men: “I’m tired.” When men say we’re tired, it typically doesn’t mean we need sleep. It means we want rest—there is a major difference between the two. Sleep is an *unconscious* state that provides physical and mental relaxation. Rest is a *conscious* state of *freedom*—from anything that wearies the soul.

My friend proceeded to confide in his wife about his battle with PTSD. I confess I felt a surge of encouragement when he told me because I had been urging him to acknowledge his PTSD for years. But this story is not unique. In my experience, most men are fatigued by this inner battle, this solo struggle; it’s truly a weariness of our souls.

Regrettably, the true weight of “I’m tired” often eludes many friends and family members until it’s too late. I once saw a wife’s comment on one of my videos that remains etched in my mind: “When a strong man says he’s tired, believe him. I wish I had

truly understood the depth of those words before I found myself burying my husband.”

THE ROOT OF OUR EXHAUSTION

Emotional instability is at the root of most men’s common struggles, creating this weariness of spirit. Throughout the annals of human history, this struggle has resulted in some of the most insidious crimes and senseless wars. Today, 90 percent of individuals who commit violent physical assaults are men.¹ In the United States, the suicide rate for men is 3.5 times that of women.² What else could we expect when the most commendable human traits such as caring, compassion, and empathy have been systematically suppressed in men’s hearts by the time they reach their early teens?

I firmly believe that these behaviors stem from what I call *emotional incarceration*—a self-imposed mental imprisonment where men lock away their allegedly unmasculine emotions and isolate their hearts from the world.

Consider the trend of wearing sagging pants, a style ironically born in the United States prison system where belts were prohibited; this serves as a poignant example.³ While many viewed it as blatant rebellion and obscenity, I saw the sagging pants as a reflection of “sagging” souls—an external manifestation of hearts deprived of hope. Unfortunately, this interpretation was not widely shared among teachers, mentors, parents, and pastors. Consequently, these young men were admonished both privately and publicly, which only inflamed their defensiveness and anger. Already burdened by societal expectations of what it means to be a man, and lacking safe spaces for transparency, these young men further suppressed their emotions and authenticity. This

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suppression does not merely hide their true feelings; it actively impedes their emotional stability and personal development.

Another physical manifestation of this inward condition is wearing hooded sweatshirts indoors. After the tragic passing of Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna, NBA stars like Dwayne Wade and Carmelo Anthony publicly expressed their grief while wearing a “hoodie” inside. Few people know that the hood was first added to sweatshirts in 1934 by Champion to protect athletes and laborers from the elements.⁴ Throughout my twenty years of mentoring, I have often noticed boys using hooded sweatshirts as a shield to protect themselves from the elements of life and internal struggles such as depression, abandonment, and shame. In these moments, I refer to the hoodie as a “portable cave.” When I speak at youth events, I often observe boys slouching in their chairs with their hoods pulled over their faces. With a compassionate tone, I come alongside to let them know that their choice to wear hoodies indoors may be a way of coping with inner pain. They often respond by sitting up and gradually removing their hoods, revealing a willingness to confront their emotions.

How many men today wear portable caves, trying to hide away from our pain and take refuge from the world? Do not feel ashamed if you are one of these men; I, too, once concealed my true self. I know the way out and am here to help you.

I created Emotional Stability Training (EST) in 2010. EST is a comprehensive system for males that weans the soul (the emotional seat of man) and renews the mind, empowering males to maintain self-control. EST effectively addresses the underlying causes of unresolved anger, anxieties, lack of focus, and fears. Its core focus is to empower boys and men to engage in introspection, courageously confront and overcome emotions, and effectively communicate their feelings with composure.

While it is widely believed that the mind governs the body, the soul serves as the seat of our emotions, often asserting its influence over the messages conveyed by the mind. How many intellectually gifted men find themselves imprisoned because they couldn't control their emotions in a moment of heated passion or rage? When men are conditioned to suppress or neglect a wide range of emotions, managing "masculine" ones becomes an even greater struggle.

It may help to think about our struggle by comparing our emotions to crayons. A small box of eight crayons represents the restricted range of emotions men often allow themselves to express, while a larger box of sixty-four crayons symbolizes the full spectrum of emotions we all actually possess. When a woman requests a violet emotion, for example, and all we have is a basic purple emotion in our box, we will struggle to respond in a way that meets the moment. There are moments that call for more nuanced emotions, but if we limit ourselves to those eight, we can communicate only a limited range, especially when it comes to relating to women. Men, that is why we must understand why we fear being courageously transparent. We need to expand our emotional repertoire, like adding more colors to our crayon box.

The truth is that all emotions were divinely created for all humans, transcending gender boundaries. We should focus on embracing the richness of all emotions without being restricted by two adjectives: *masculine* or *feminine*.

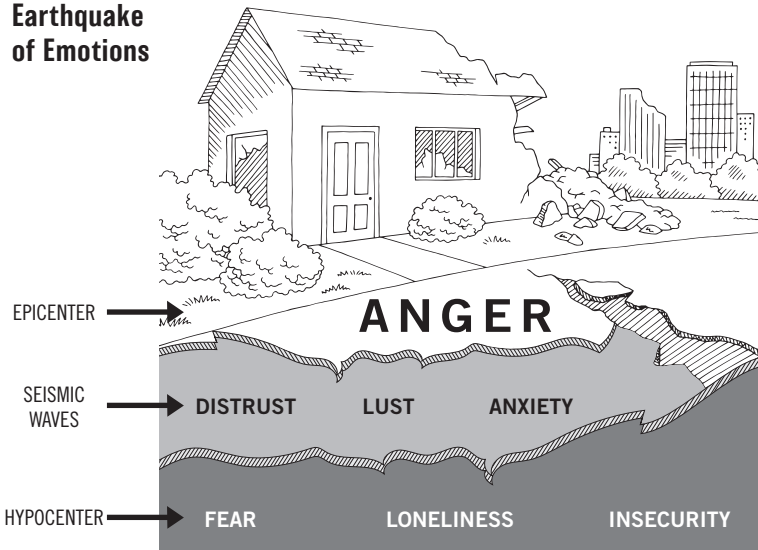
THE EARTHQUAKE OF EMOTIONS

Society has taught men to repress their emotions until they explode. It's time to relearn how to express our feelings in a healthy and productive way. I created a tool called the *Earthquake*

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of Emotions to empower men with the introspective skills needed to move from being emotionally unstable to becoming verbal processors. In the visual representation that follows, I compare our emotional outbursts to earthquakes. This tool is designed to help men understand how their intense or poignant emotions move throughout their bodies. It also offers guidance on how to express these emotions before they shake and damage the surface of their lives.

Earthquake of Emotions



An earthquake begins many layers beneath the earth's surface at a point called the *hypocenter* or the *focus*.⁵ This is the point where the energy released from the earth's core builds up underneath the ground. For humans, the emotions that we initially feel but rarely express are like the energy released from the core of the earth. These core emotions are the ones we need to express. However, fear of appearing "unmasculine" compels us to suppress them.

This suppression causes a buildup, much like the pressure at the core of the earth.

Now, if the energy at the hypocenter is dispersed only at these deepest levels, we won't notice any damage on the earth's surface. Similarly, if we internally release our initial tense emotions, we can avoid damaging external aspects of our lives, such as relationships (spouse, children, friends, jobs, and more). But when the energy at the hypocenter remains trapped, it will eventually create seismic waves that progress outward from the hypocenter. In the same way, our repressed emotions inevitably force their way out of our bodies to relieve the internal pressure in our hearts. In the body these seismic waves are the emotions one step removed from those you most need to express. Just as geological factors affect the strength of seismic waves, various factors in your life will influence the strength of your emotions, from subtle feelings to intense reactions.

If the seismic waves are strong enough to reach the surface, the point at which they hit the most intensely is called the *epicenter*. This epicenter lies directly above the hypocenter, and it's where the ground will move the most during an earthquake. For men, the epicenter becomes the expressed emotion, most often anger, which I call the *surface emotion*. While this is what most people would see and experience on the outside, anger is never the root-cause or hypocenter emotion for the outburst. Instead, it's the result of a much deeper feeling, such as insecurity or fear. But due to men's emotional incarceration, we are unable to identify and release the deep-seated emotions, hence our emotional earthquakes.

As further proof of this concept, I conducted polls on social media in both 2018 and 2023, where I asked men to identify the emotions that overpower them. Unsurprisingly, out of the 1,348 participants from both polls, anger emerged as the number one emotion among thirty.

THE MAN THE MOMENT DEMANDS

To master the emotions that often rule us at the wrong moments, we must first understand the root cause of our feelings. This involves addressing the underlying factors contributing to our emotional struggles, whether they stem from personal experiences, toxic thoughts, or trauma. Achieving emotional stability and effective communication requires this understanding and action.

When I finally understood my own emotional struggles and learned how to reconnect with my heart, I realized that I had been emotionally incarcerated. I understood how my upbringing had subtly ingrained in me an unyielding resistance to becoming a whole person—I couldn't be a complete man for my family, friends, and loved ones because I couldn't be one for myself. That's when I began to learn what it means to be a *comprehensive man*, a phrase I coined in 2018 when writing my first book, *Cry Like a Man*.

Back then, I was unsure how men would receive this message of comprehensive manhood. The dedication read, "To every man who is tired of not being able to say he is tired." Within days of the book's release, men began posting pictures on social media of themselves proudly holding their copies. It was like the idea of *Cry Like a Man* was a long-kept secret, hoarded in the hearts of men worldwide. This reception was truly a message from the Most High to liberate His men from emotional incarceration and encourage them to become comprehensive men.

So, why did we men allow ourselves to become imprisoned in the first place?

WHO YOU WERE CREATED TO BE

Prior to gaining a deeper awareness of who the Most High created me to be, I yielded to the culture's distorted ideas of manhood

instead of understanding the value of being a comprehensive man. First, as a younger man and then as a husband, I allowed my self-perception to be shaped by culture. During the 1980s, it seemed as if every boy in my community aspired to be the hypermasculine male or simply felt the pressure to assume that persona to be accepted. I adeptly played the role, but I was never truly a *thug*. I've since transformed that word into an acronym that accurately captures who I was at the time: a Traumatized Human Unable to Grieve. But this reality of repressed trauma explains the tense demeanor and the hair-trigger reactions we often witness among many of our brothers who still wear *thug* as a badge of honor.

Think about it. In the African American community, we don't brag about living in a safe neighborhood; instead, we boast about growing up in a dangerous one. Many say proudly, "I almost got shot yesterday!" But no one can live a healthy life in that reality. The age-old adage "It takes a village to raise a child" holds true, but a traumatized village can't raise little boys to become comprehensive men.

Here's the good news, though: The script is not fixed—it can be amended. We have the power to redefine manhood in a way that embraces emotions and authentic expression. We can create a world where young boys are free to grow into men without the burden of stifled emotions. A world where intergenerational healing, not intergenerational trauma, is passed down. But this shift requires courage—the courage to unlearn, to question, and to embrace change.

Unsure if this shift is even possible? I know firsthand that it is because I've been in the trenches of life with men of all ages for the last two decades. In the heart of Detroit, Michigan, I founded the Yunion in 2003, a faith-based nonprofit dedicated to the healing of youth and the fortifying of families at the core of

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community transformation. My wife joined me as the executive director, and together, we have impacted over seventeen thousand lives. With her at the operational helm and me steering our strategic vision, our team of unwaveringly dedicated individuals has driven profound community change.

My passion for helping misguided African American boys led me to establish the Cave of Adullam Transformational Training Academy (CATTa). In the CATTa, we teach, train, and transform uninitiated boys into comprehensive men of the Most High—men who are physically conscious, mentally astute, and spiritually strong enough to navigate the pressures of this world without succumbing to their emotions.

When one of the CATTa's videos went viral in 2016, garnering over 350 million views worldwide, it opened doors to remarkable opportunities, including representing the CATTa at President Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" Showcase at the White House. The hit TV show *This Is Us* featured our work in a widely viewed and award-winning episode.⁶ Then, in 2018, renowned actor/producer Laurence Fishburne's film company, Cinema Gypsy, produced a documentary showcasing my story of working with young men. The film debuted at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2022, captivating audiences and earning prestigious accolades, including Best Feature Documentary. During this time, I also authored two bestselling books, *Cry Like a Man* and *Battle Cry*, which introduced the idea of emotional incarceration and offered strategies to help men begin to break free from their internal constraints.

I mention this because all the attention has created an opportunity for us to deepen the conversation about what it means to be a man today. For example, when I was a panelist at Lenard "Charlamagne" McKelvey's Mental Wealth Expo in New York, the moderator posed a thought-provoking question to me: "Jason,

how would you define a man?” A simple question with complex implications.

Without hesitating, I responded, “You can’t.” My audacious reply surprised the moderator, fellow panelists, and attendees. As everyone leaned in with curiosity, I passionately expressed, “Once you’ve allowed someone else to define you, you can never be all you were created to be.”

After that moment of clarity onstage, the fire that had smoldered within me ignited once again. This discussion along with the response to *Battle Cry* affirmed the urgency and importance of writing this book. I realized we needed to further explore the intricacies of who we are as men, the impact of societal pressures, and the journey to help us reclaim our authentic selves.

Men, it is time to eradicate the societal norms, cultural expectations, and stereotypes that confine and define us all within one rigid word—*masculinity*.

TAKE ACTION

Throughout this book, I will encourage you not only to read but also to take action. The only way you can change the man you are is to free yourself from preexisting paradigms. So, at each step of our journey together, choose to act on what you learn. Start now.

ACTIVITY #1: MIRROR TIME

Buy a pocket mirror to keep with you while reading this book. Stare into it and recite powerful affirmations—words designed to dispel self-condemning thoughts. It may feel strange to talk to yourself in the mirror (or you may already do it), but science

shows that it can help people process emotions and thoughts. Dr. Tara Well, an associate professor of psychology at Barnard College of Columbia University and an expert in self-reflection, explained that “the mirror serves as a tool to externalize your inner dialogue, allowing you to observe and analyze it from a different perspective.”⁷

You might consider this exercise cliché, but for men, looking at oneself with such a level of intimacy can be challenging. In a culture that programs us to focus on the negatives and constantly strive for improvement, recognizing the positives in who we already are becomes a significant task.

When I do this exercise with boys in the Cave of Adullam, my initial question to them is, “Do you love who you see in the mirror?” And I ask the same of you now. Take a long look in the mirror and answer that question honestly: *Do you love who you see in the mirror?* I’m not talking about the way that man in the mirror styles his hair or the clothes he wears. Think back to how he handled tense moments or situations, what he’s been through, his regrets, his triumphs, and who he is now. Do you really *love* who you see in the mirror?

If you are like most men, the answer is probably no. Maybe even an emphatic NO! If that is true for you, don’t worry. Being honest with yourself about yourself is the first step toward becoming a comprehensive man.

ACTIVITY #2: EARTHQUAKE OF EMOTIONS

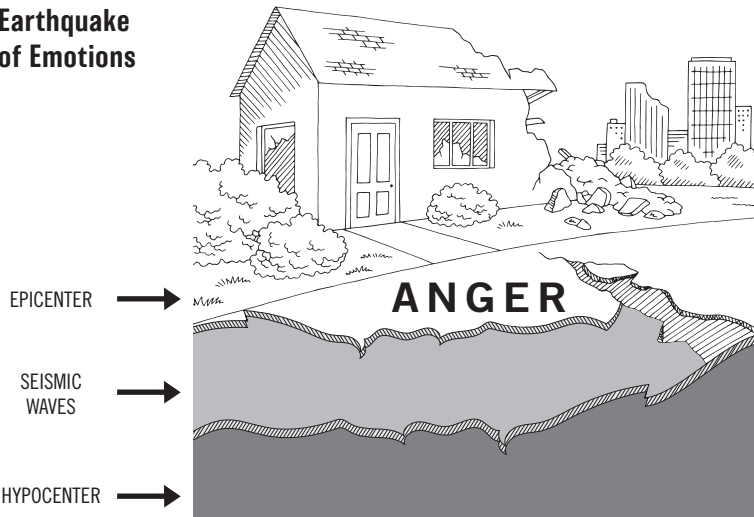
Throughout this book, we will probe deeper into our emotions and hearts. We will learn to name and feel our root-cause emotions with the intention of relearning how to express them in

healthy ways on our journey to becoming verbal processors and, subsequently, comprehensive men.

You'll find that the Earthquake of Emotions enables a more introspective exploration of your emotional landscape, offering insights into the depths of your feelings. I invite you to fill in the Earthquake of Emotions chart below to start that process.

1. In the Seismic Waves row, write down the emotions that you believe are directly beneath the anger you've identified. Remember, these should be the emotions closest to how you genuinely feel (the hypocenter), but they are not the ones you need to initially express. Use a pencil so that you can erase, as these emotions may change over time.
2. Then, in the Hypocenter row, write the emotions you believe are the root cause of your anger. Identifying and internally releasing these emotions first will help prevent

Earthquake of Emotions



unintentionally affecting those you love or quaking your life. This process will help reset your mind and bring rest to your soul—promoting a more mindful and considerate approach to expressing your emotions.

ACTIVITY #3: REDUCE THE RISKS

Although we cannot prevent natural earthquakes from happening, we can significantly reduce the likelihood of our emotions triggering tremors in our lives. Take a moment to meditate on the emotions you identified in the Hypocenter row. Then contemplate strategies to reduce the risk of emotional earthquakes. Construct a stronger emotional infrastructure of friends and confidants to lean on when hypocenter emotions begin to destabilize you. Educate yourself by seeking professional help from either a counselor or a psychotherapist to fortify your knowledge and resilience, ensuring your foundation remains solid even when times are unsteady.

WHATEVER THE MOMENT DEMANDS

As a popular DJ in Detroit in 1986, my expertise was primarily in hip-hop. My reluctance to play other genres of music was driven by a desire to maintain a tough, exclusively masculine persona. Consequently, I never was hired to spin at events like wedding receptions and graduation parties, which required a broader musical selection. To make more money, I had to collaborate with other DJs, playing a “set” at their parties—a specifically

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timed sequence of songs mixed continuously. A pivotal moment came during a backyard party when the main DJ left to buy more beer, leaving me in charge. A girl I'd been watching all night asked me to play house music, but my crate of records was devoid of dance songs. To mask this limitation, I proudly proclaimed, "I only spin hip-hop!" and played another rap song.

She walked away, clearly unimpressed. I acted unfazed by her exit, but that was a turning point for me as a DJ. I realized the need to evolve, to become capable of playing to the moment and rocking any crowd. Once my music selection became comprehensive, I emerged as one of the most sought-after DJs in my city and commanded the highest fees.

Becoming a comprehensive man extends beyond a mere mental battle; it also delves into the depths of the spiritual realm. Throughout this book, I refer to Jesus by His Hebrew name, *Yahushua*, and acknowledge God the Father as *Yah* (a shortened form of YHWH / Yahuah / the Most High). The truth is that the word *masculinity* could never define the comprehensive nature in which Yah created man. And while I cannot claim to possess all the answers, my life stands as a testament to the profound potential Yah has placed within us to overcome and evolve. You, too, can achieve triumph by dismantling the deceptive beliefs that have held you back.

During my transformative journey, I have faced numerous moments of weakness and the temptation to surrender, yet I have consistently discovered renewed strength in the Scriptures. Embracing Yah and His Word has been instrumental in guiding me toward righteousness and preventing me from becoming ensnared by my past. It has propelled me toward the fulfillment of the purpose bestowed on me (Acts 20:24). But I want to be clear—my intention is not to proselytize; instead, I want to equip you with tools that have proven effective for me and many other

men. Then it'll be up to you to make the choice of who you want to be. In my pursuit of becoming a comprehensive man, I recognized the need to transcend the confines of the stereotypical male identity. Initially, I defined a comprehensive man as one who embodies both courage and compassion, strength and sensitivity—a man guided by the good in his heart, rather than fear of how he could be perceived. While I've outlined ten characteristics of the comprehensive man in this book, it's vital to remain open to evolving. Remember, once you've allowed someone else to define you, you can never be all you were created to be.

Therefore, instead of simply conforming to perceived expectations, the comprehensive man becomes *whatever the moment demands*.

As I embarked on the journey of writing this book, I delved deep into personal experiences, stories of others, and the wisdom of experts in various fields. I aimed to delve into the critical role that self-definition plays in fortifying mental well-being and empower men with ten characteristics that can enrich and evolve their lives.

It is encouraging these days to see more men learning how to *speak* about emotions, but sadly, most of those same men do not know how to *feel* them!

That is why I advocate for freeing us from predefined notions. I encourage embracing the uniqueness that lies within each of us. Becoming the man the moment demands is a call that starts with rejecting the limits set by others and embarking on a path of self-discovery, empowerment, and mental wealth. By challenging the notion of defining myself based on external standards, I found the inspiration to write this book to share my insights and empower you to embrace your true self, to live authentically, and to become a comprehensive man.

This man is not defined by societal demands. In fact, this

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man typically chooses the opposite path of the one laid out for the “masculine” male, as you can see here:

| The Masculine Male | The Comprehensive Man |
|--|--|
| Suppresses his emotions and hides behind a facade to appear strong | Expresses his emotions freely without fear of being judged |
| Exudes only masculine characteristics | Exudes both masculine and “unmasculine” characteristics |
| Feels threatened when another man is more successful | Is not threatened by another man’s success but is inspired by it |
| Views women as subservient and sex objects | Respects women and values their superior qualities |
| Feels fear but will do anything to prevent anyone from knowing he is scared | Feels fear but openly admits it and thereby makes wise life decisions |
| Is a slave to his thoughts and emotions | Masters his emotions <i>before</i> his thoughts become toxic |

In the pages that follow, we will explore the ten characteristics of the comprehensive man, covering each vital area of a man’s life. I like to think of these characteristics as part of three general themes:

WHATEVER THE MOMENT DEMANDS

The Dynamic Characteristics *call you to take action.*

The Deeper Characteristics *inspire you to look within.*

The Devotion Characteristics *focus on your closest relationships.*

Within these three themes, we'll explore the following ten characteristics:

The Dynamic Characteristics

1. The **Fighter** discerns when to engage and when to walk away. He masters his ego and emotions to ensure he stays in an advantageous position.
2. The **Provider** ensures the provision of essential resources, guidance, and support for his family, friends, community, and himself.
3. The **Leader** guides and inspires others. He knows when to speak and when to listen—leading by example, not intimidation.

The Deeper Characteristics

4. The **Lover** knows that love is demonstrated through action—devotion to Yah, loving his neighbor, and maintaining his own well-being.
5. The **Nurturer** cultivates growth and development, caring for individuals and environments within their influence and beyond.
6. The **Gentleman** exudes respect for others and himself through deliberate and appropriate etiquette without compromising his values.
7. The **Friend** loves at all times and is steadfast in the face of adversity—willing to lay down his life for his companions.

The Devotion Characteristics

8. The **Husband** emulates Christ's love by sacrificially giving of himself for his wife's well-being, treating her as he would like to be honored.
9. The **Father** desires his children's trust and provides a safe space for them to receive love, learn from their mistakes, and conquer their fears.
10. The **Son** unwaveringly supports his parents despite challenges, embracing the journey and honoring them with his words, heart, and actions.

As I show you how each of these characteristics contributes to the journey of becoming a comprehensive man, I will guide you to confront the depths of your own life and experiences, urging action as you awaken to the truth. This may be painful, discouraging, or, frankly, something you don't want to do, but trust me when I say I have been there. And remember, you will not be alone. Yah has given you the strength to become the man you were always meant to be; you only need to believe it.

You are worth this fight.

COMPREHENSIVE MANHOOD

In the early 2000s the idea of comprehensive manhood was unfathomable and, I believe, would have been widely rejected by men of that day. Hypermasculinity dominated the cultural landscape of my community, though I now recognize it as a facade masking deep-seated insecurity.

During those years I owned and operated a ceramic and marble tile company. One morning I received a call to provide

an estimate for two bathroom remodels. When I arrived a tall man, seemingly incapable of cracking a smile, welcomed me into his home. As I tallied up the materials, I inquired about his preferred color scheme. He sat back in his chair, fixed his gaze on me, and responded with surprise, “I ain’t no [expletive]! I don’t know how to pick no colors!”

This man’s passionate response caught me off guard. I couldn’t fathom why he reacted so insecurely when I was only asking about color choices. Suppressing my laughter, I retorted, “Are you suggesting that I’m somehow less of a man because I excel at coordinating colors for various remodel projects?”

“Nah, dog!” he replied. “I’m just saying I don’t have that kind of sensitive side.” I wanted to say more but felt that replying would just be doing what Yahushua called “casting pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6, paraphrased). So I simply completed the estimate and left.

While I was a far cry from the man I am today, I could still see through that man’s facade. The person who had referred me to him later told me that the dour homeowner was like many men today: lonely and harboring deep-seated anger, resentment, and fear. He struggled with a misconstrued understanding of masculinity. Instead of becoming a comprehensive man, many men embrace this myopic view of manhood and adopt harmful or unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, or traits in an attempt to conform to societal or cultural expectations of men. It leads to negative outcomes for individuals and society as a whole and lies at the heart of emotional incarceration.

But many men who’ve begun to break free from emotional incarceration struggle to maintain their newfound freedom. They often mistakenly think their liberation was solely for the benefit of their wives, children, friends, or others in their lives. But allow me to be unequivocally clear: The journey from a

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purely masculine male to a comprehensive man is *a path you take for yourself*. When your motivation to change is driven by pleasing others, especially women, you risk emotional recidivism the moment you feel your efforts are unappreciated.

True transformation occurs when the driving force is not external but *internal* validation. While external encouragement can certainly play a role in our introspective victories, relying on it for motivation is like driving a car with a hole in the gas tank—you'll soon find yourself running on fumes. It's important that you undergo this transformation for your own sake. Will others benefit? Of course. My wife, children, friends, and those I serve have all benefited from my transformation. Nevertheless, I had to embark on this journey primarily for myself.

And that is what you must choose to do now. You must fight this battle with the same masculine energy you conjure up when someone tries to harm you or your family or when you feel disrespected. When you feel discouraged and tempted to surrender to the prevailing culture, don't give up. Strategically fight for the life you deserve and prove you have what it takes to evolve into a comprehensive man.

Growing up in Detroit in the 1970s and early '80s, I developed a deep fascination with martial arts movies and competitions. The flying kicks, one-inch punches, and impressive choreographed movements captivated my imagination. Even the mystical pressure-point techniques that could supposedly render an attacker powerless captured my interest. At the age of twelve I began practicing ninjutsu, a martial art developed in Japan, but I didn't fully commit to serious martial arts training until I turned twenty-one.

While I may not have been particularly adept at artsy punching and kicking, I eventually discovered that I possessed a natural strength and an innate ability to wrestle opponents to

the ground and subdue them. During a friendly sparring session with my best friend in his front yard, I decided to try a different approach—something rarely seen at the time. I rushed in, clinched for control, and naturally executed a takedown. To my surprise, it worked without much effort at all.

However, this practice was not always appreciated by the traditional “masters” on my martial arts journey. When they would stress the importance of not relying on strength, I would feel irritated. I eventually realized that this de-emphasis of strength kept strong men in the dojo from exposing the flaws in certain martial arts styles that relied on compliant attackers for the techniques to work. These rigid styles were not comprehensive and had no defense against an attacker willing to take the “death touch,” rush in, invade the defender’s space, and take them down to the ground. And if you wanted to advance in the belt ranks within many dojos, you had to conform to the established systems. The gatekeepers of traditional martial arts were considered untouchable.

But in 1993, everything changed. In the annals of martial arts history, a defining moment emerged at the Ultimate Fighting Championship (later renamed UFC 1: The Beginning) held at McNichols Sports Arena in Denver, Colorado. On November 12, 1993, Royce Gracie, a member of the legendary Gracie family, forever altered the course of martial arts.

Royce faced off against Art Jimmerson, Gerard Gordeau, and Ken Shamrock. These fights culminated in a breathtaking display of skill as Royce decisively defeated all three fighters in the first round. Royce had showcased a revolutionary approach that went against the norms of the time—Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ), a grappling art developed by his family that emphasizes leverage, technique, and submissions over flashy styles and raw strength. These victories sent shock waves through the traditional martial arts community.

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Movies like *Five Deadly Venoms*, *Enter the Dragon*, *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin*, *The Last Dragon*, and *Bloodsport* predated BJJ, which is why millions of martial artists never questioned the effectiveness of kung fu, aikido, karate, tae kwon do, Wing Chun, or ninjutsu. But Royce's dominance required the martial arts world to reevaluate and recognize the effectiveness of BJJ. It was a wake-up call to evolve and be willing to embrace new techniques and ideas.

Just as BJJ transformed the martial arts landscape, discovering the broader characteristics of manhood can similarly transform our perception of masculinity. The traditional definition of manhood cripples our identities, leaving us empty and unfulfilled. When we acknowledge the comprehensive nature of men, we expand beyond mere stereotypes to appreciate the full spectrum of their identities and purpose in today's world.

Men, it is time to break free from the shackles of societal expectations. It is written that there is a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1–8), but unfortunately, we as men have allowed this culture to coerce us into *misconstruing* masculinity. As a result, we have relentlessly and foolishly fought to preserve a life that many of us now admit is a miserable, limited, unfulfilled journey to death.

One of the most influential martial arts instructors in my life, Kajana Cetshwayo, often said, "A warrior must be anything and everything he has to be at any given moment." Sadly, when men succumb to society's pressure to perform strictly as masculine males, we sacrifice our authenticity and emotional depth for the sake of maintaining a superficial facade—thus losing our ability to be "anything and everything" the moment demands.

Behind every strong man's smile, there are internal tears from a story untold. Men, let's stop suffering in silence and become comprehensively strong. It's important that we "man up"

during adversity, but it's vital to open up when we're about to mentally crash. We are human too.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

My friend, there's no need to suffer in silence anymore. You're not alone in feeling like you have more days where you'd rather stay in bed than get up. You're not alone in feeling like you're valued only for what you can do instead of who you are. You're not alone in feeling like everyone asks how you're doing only because their own well-being rests on your mental stability. Fear, doubt, shame, and self-condemning thoughts—these are common experiences. You may feel like you have reached a tipping point, but don't give up—because you're not tired of living, you're tired of *not* living.

Many men like you and me—just like the brothers you see on TV, in movies, or playing sports—feel the same. We must unite and fight as one. Without such unity, change will remain elusive and the burden wearisome. A man standing alone can be defeated. But two can stand back-to-back to wage war—and win (Eccl. 4:12). Believe me, there are men just like you waiting to help you break through the same barriers they've confronted—but you must be willing to remove the superhero cape that is strangling you.

But it won't be easy. In an experiential psychotherapy session that my wife and I attended with nine other married couples, a husband suddenly collapsed before his wife and bellowed at himself, "What the hell is wrong with you, man!" For a brief but intense moment, he pounded the ground and cried out, "Why can't you get yourself together?" Sound familiar?

Men, the greatest battle takes place within us. Our relentless thoughts drive us to the precipice: *I'm tired of battling my*

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own insecurities. I'm tired of feeling like I'm failing as a husband. I'm tired of feeling like I'm the same father to my children that mine was to me.

To be candid, one thought I really struggled with is this: My son looks up to me more than I look up to myself. Maybe you can relate.

And when these thoughts feel overwhelming, we may find ourselves, without warning, flirting with thoughts of suicide or of having an affair that self-sabotages our beautiful marriages and families.

If you're honest with yourself, you must acknowledge that it's not your family causing this turmoil—it's your mind and heart. The apostle Paul emphasized the significance of renewing the mind—a renewal that leads us to discern Yah's will (Rom. 12:2). As long as your mind remains conformed to the societal constraints of traditional masculinity, you'll persistently seek escape routes instead of becoming the comprehensive man that Yah made you to be, living the life you truly deserve.

In a world where the essence of manhood is often obscured by facades and ego, a new path emerges. This journey is more than introspective—it's a revolution, an invitation to join the ranks of men who have yelled their battle cry, fought for freedom from emotional incarceration, and won their internal wars. But be forewarned: This journey will challenge every preconceived notion you hold about manhood, revealing a more profound truth about what it means not only to be a man but to be authentically human.

As we delve deep into the ten characteristics of the comprehensive man, I will empower you with the knowledge, statistics, personal stories, and historical insights to confront the entrenched misogyny, misleading mantras, and often unchallenged hyper-masculine behaviors that have deeply influenced our lives. I break the unwritten rule of suffering in silence, a code that too often

dismisses the crucial role of transparency in a man's life, sometimes acknowledged only in the finality of a funeral.

TAKE ACTION

Are you ready to deconstruct society's narrow definition of manhood? To live a life unbounded by limitations, becoming the man every moment demands? If so, gather yourself—mentally, physically, and emotionally—as I take you down the narrow path that leads to a fuller life!

ACTIVITY #1: THE FOUR R'S

One of the techniques I've developed to help you embrace the freedom to fail, to let go of setbacks, and to live in the moment is called the Four *R*'s. I suggest you get a journal to use for this purpose or use the Notes app on your phone or whatever means you find best to write down your thoughts.

1. **Reflect** on the challenges that have shaken your soul.
2. **Release** each negative thought before it becomes toxic.
3. **Reset** yourself mentally and emotionally.
4. **Rest** in the moment instead of being traumatized by the past and anxious about the future.

In this way, you are letting go of the past and allowing yourself to live in the present. Over time, I recommend inviting another trustworthy man into this process to share your Four *R*'s, but get started now by tapping into what is already happening inside you.

ACTIVITY #2: TREE OF TRAUMA

I created the Tree of Trauma to help boys and men easily identify the root causes of their struggles, helping them understand why they feel the way they do. The following is a breakdown explanation of the Tree of Trauma and steps to help you identify your cause and effect, resolve trauma, and unlock the potential for growth and thriving as a comprehensive man.

Healing is possible when we delve introspectively, identifying our issues and then courageously confronting them.

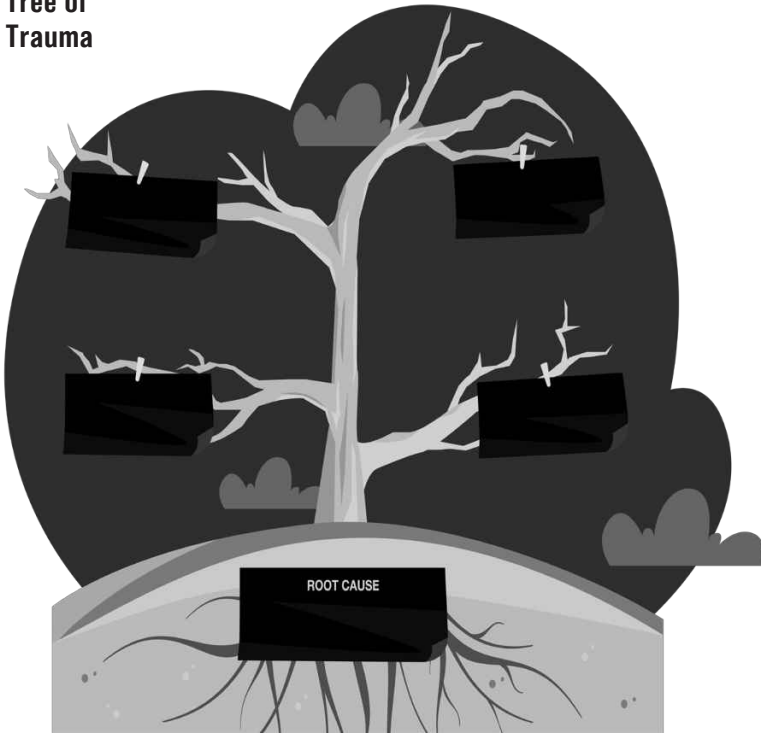
The Soil symbolizes our physical and social environments that influence our development and overall well-being. These surroundings significantly impact our life experiences. Ideally, our “soil” should consist of supportive friends, loving family, a healthy workplace, and a nurturing community.

The Roots symbolize the cause and effect on our emotional and psychological well-being, stemming from experiences like mother and father wounds, childhood abuse, or abandonment. Identifying and uprooting toxic roots is essential for a more fulfilling life. Just as nurturing a tree is necessary for growth, men require therapy and self-maintenance to overcome challenges from life’s roots—a process that ultimately leads to a more fulfilling life.

The Tree Trunk symbolizes our mind, influencing our mental and emotional well-being, providing stability, and supporting cognitive function. Just as the tree trunk supports branches and leaves, a healthy mind stabilizes thoughts and emotions, aiding personal growth, learning, and decision-making.

The Branches symbolize our issues and negative thoughts, such as fear of failure, self-hate, depression, rage, and suicidal ideation. Often, people opt for a quick fix, cutting off these branches. However, similar to a tree, the mental branches tend to regrow over time. The only lasting solution is to uproot the tree and replant it in healthier soil.

Tree of Trauma



THE WORK

Step One: Reflect on your soil. Is your environment nutrient-rich or is it nutrient-deficient, neglectful, and burdened

with traumatic memories? If it's the latter, note where you believe your tree should be replanted to thrive with purpose.

Step Two: Take a moment to reflect on the negative thoughts you're experiencing. In the space provided, use a pencil to write down their root cause—whether it's a breakup, childhood abuse, the death of a loved one, parental abandonment, or another significant event.

Step Three: On each branch, write in the four provided spaces the issues that grow from your mind that make life miserable and hard to live. For me it was unresolved anger, depression, lack of focus, and fear of failure.

Now you have in front of you a cause and effect layout, the blueprint to show to your counselor or therapist to help you uproot and relocate your tree, enabling you to embark on your healing journey.

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out the mirror you borrowed or bought and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then affirm that man with the following statements:

- I am more than masculine.
- I will unlearn the misconceptions about masculinity and embark on a journey to becoming a comprehensive man.
- I will tear down the facade.
- I'll take off my mask and cape, acknowledging that I can't be a superhero, but I can be human.