



Wendy Trainor
communication and healing

The costs of inequality in marriage to men: The paradox of power

Just as traditional gender training has been limiting for women, it has also been restrictive for men. From the time they are young boys, men have been taught to hide their emotions. This training eventually leads them to deny their feelings altogether.

In our culture, men have achieved power through assuming their traditional role of earning money. Unfortunately, they have also been trained to sacrifice their lives for what they have been told is their duty; that is to support their family. Their family's status in society and a man's sense of worth is measured by his ability to earn money. Yet the stress of being responsible for the family's economic well being often keeps men away from the house for long hours. They are not able to participate in the day-to-day lives of their families. They experience a sense of disconnection from the family for whom they have worked so hard to provide.

This is the paradox of power. Men achieve power through their ability to earn money. Yet, they often feel powerless in their most intimate relationships because they are often not in touch with their own emotions nor those of their family members and they have not learned to relate on an equal basis. They feel isolated and alone.

In Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, we often tell men that their socialization has put them at a disadvantage in their closest relationships. The language of an intimate relationship is the language of emotions. In couple therapy, men begin to feel safe enough in their intimate relationships to reveal their innermost feelings and learn to respond to those of their partner. That is when they begin to experience the intimacy – the sense of connection – they long for.

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