

THE GOOD HUSBAND

HOW TO USE YOUR
MASCULINE STRENGTHS
TO BENEFIT YOUR FAMILY



HAGAI AVISAR

Copyright, © 2022 Hagai Avisar

Paperback ISBN 978-0-646-85725-1

eBook ISBN 978-0-646-85752-7

The moral rights of the author have been asserted. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in, or introduced into a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner of this book.

Disclaimer

The ideas, suggestions, and practices provided in this book are of the nature of general guidance. They are not tailored to the specific circumstances and personalities of your family and not intended to replace professional help.

The author disclaims all responsibility and liability for any loss or damage allegedly arising from using the material in this book.

In memory of my father, who touched many with his humility and kindness.

Contents

Why you should read this book	8
A positive new roadmap	11
My story	15
Part One Understanding The Good Husband Model	17
Chapter One: The Challenge	18
The attack on masculinity	20
The cultural bug	22
The cultural anti-bug	27
Meeting the challenge	30
Chapter Two: Masculine Strengths	32
Gender roles in the family context	33
Gender differences	34
Your masculine strengths	39
Masculine strengths and the Model of The Good Husband	43
Chapter Three: The Good Husband Model	45
The four masculine roles	46
The King	49
The Lover	53
The Magician	57
The Warrior	61
Your strengths and her vulnerabilities	66
The masculine roles and your dysfunctional patterns	69
Your power redefined	72
Part Two The Practice	74
Practice principles	75
Chapter Four: Activate your King to Create Order	78
The King of your family	80
Feminine chaos and masculine order	82
The King's word	83
The King in action	88
Develop and maintain family values	89

Create and enforce family rules	94
Clarify family roles and tasks	98
Ensure accountability	100
Manage financial matters in an orderly manner	103
Create rituals	105
Accept influence	107
Takeaway messages to activate your King	110
Chapter Five: Activate your Lover to Cultivate Connection	111
Brain for love	116
Enemies of connection	120
The Lover in action	121
Connect by doing	121
Talk your way to her heart	124
Communicate authentically	126
Adopting the Soft-Start tool	128
Use the magic of touching	130
Get unstuck with sex	132
Nourish 'being'	141
Takeaway messages to activate your Lover	145
Chapter Six: Activate your Magician to Transform Reactivity	147
The Magician husband	152
Why are we so reactive?	152
Becoming a Magician	157
The three Magician levels	165
The Magician in action	173
Mindful tools	174
Externalize your filter	177
Heal your shame	179
Transform your emotional flooding	186
Empathize with your wife	189
Coach her to start softly	190
Prime for positivity	193
Deal effectively with victimhood	194

Influence with written messages	196
Takeaway messages to activate your Magician	198
Chapter Seven: Activate Your Warrior to Command Respect	200
Commanding respect	204
How men lose respect	207
Barriers to commanding respect	214
The Warrior way	215
The Warrior in Action	220
Fulfill your mission as a provider	221
Take care of yourself	222
Slay the 'D' (divorce) dragon	224
Slay the 'S' (shame) dragon	229
Protect your realm	232
Swiftly end any aggressive episodes	234
Prepare for the battle over your children	245
Takeaway messages to activate your Warrior	246
Chapter Eight: Managing Conflicts - a Case Study	248
Do men respond differently to conflicts than women?	251
Managing conflicts using your masculine roles	252
The King's speech	252
The Lover's speech	254
The Magician's speech	255
The Warrior's speech	256
Your takeaway messages	257
Chapter Nine: Fatherhood	259
Changes in how the role of fatherhood is perceived	261
Fatherhood and motherhood	262
The father effect	263
Parenting by using your masculine strengths	265
Case study – the father of Serena and Venus Williams	274
My father	275
The 'bad cop' story	276
The dark side of parenting	279

Your takeaway messages	281
Chapter Ten: The Good Enough Husband	283
<i>The Good Husband</i> recap	284
The learning mindset of the 'good enough'	285
What about couples therapy?	292
Takeaway messages	293
My parting words	294
Acknowledgements	295
Endnotes	296

Why you should read this book

As a family man, I assume you aspire to create a healthy and happy home for your family.

However, your experience raising children may have exposed a challenging reality that clashes with your initial dreams. Despite your good intentions and hard work, the ideals of a happy home may seem increasingly elusive.

This gap is frustrating and disillusioning. Men like you find themselves trying to cope with new demands, expectations, and rules around power and gender roles that our male ancestors never had to face. Without knowing how to cope, you may often find the marital experience distressing and challenging.

As a psychologist and couples therapist over the past thirty years, I have witnessed countless men who struggle to find solutions to relationship problems. As a result, they are often left feeling powerless and inadequate. Here is a sample of common problems I have heard:

- “I work hard to support my family and help around the house, but I keep hearing that something is not quite fair.”
- “I regularly hear complaints and criticism.”
- “I am puzzled by her changing moods and emotional reactions; they are increasingly hard to cope with.”
- “I struggle to work out what she wants; she sounds vague and indecisive.”
- “Nothing I do is ever good enough for her.”
- “She is often angry, and I am unsure how to help.”
- “Our sex life is nothing like what it was; her frequent rejections make me feel despair.

As a result, I have stopped trying.”

- “When I discipline the kids, she often interferes, not realizing how disempowering and hurtful this is.”
- “I get worried when she spends too much money.”
- “She jumps to threats of divorce and it scares me. I’m worried about losing access to my kids.”

In the more extreme cases, I may hear nothing short of abuse stories, such as screaming, putting-downs, hitting, and throwing things.

How should you address such issues?

In the old days, men commonly resorted to forms of control, even violence, when challenged by their wives. Today, disengagement is their most common coping strategy. In the absence of skills to communicate effectively, negotiate solutions and settle differences, men feel a loss of power. In response, they tend to check out, shut down, and avoid. Their partners then feel even more frustrated and angry.

As the cycle worsens, men withdraw quietly into their grief and shame. They resign to that sense of helplessness and defeat. Some may develop symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are often masked by anger. To deal with feelings of despair and loneliness, some may escape to alcohol, drugs, pornography, or workaholism.

Sadly, these men often wake up too late and find themselves fighting the battle they dread the most—the fight in Family Court. Well-paid lawyers will advocate for them but can hardly guarantee decent access to their children. This tragic turn of events has a severe impact on both men’s and women’s mental health, as well as on the children’s immediate well-being and how they grow up.

It should be obvious that men deserve support and education to fulfill their essential role in the family. Instead, men find themselves under attack, and their masculinity is regularly associated with negative terms, such as “toxic,” “traditional,” “patriarchal hierarchy,” “male privilege,” and more.

‘Male bashing’ has become a cultural trend that stems from the narrative of men being perpetrators and women being victims. Like toxins in the air, it infiltrates into marital drama and weakens a man’s position in his family. Self-doubt and confusion then compromise a man’s confidence to express himself, set boundaries, and fully use his authority.

When a man feels disempowered, shamed, and emasculated, his masculine strengths are suppressed and underutilized. Everyone loses. His wife finds herself disconnected, alone, and ever more frustrated and insecure in the relationship. Due to her pain, she may act out the behaviors mentioned above, hoping that her husband will respond to her needs. Although the last thing she needs is for him to check out, in the current social climate, he is powerless and confused. Both lose out.

Your reputation as a man may have been under cultural attack in recent times, but what I witness in my professional and personal life is a very different picture—men who are highly committed to their children and wives.

It is true that when it comes to their close relationships, men generally feel less competent compared to how they feel about their professional lives. Evolution has made men more naturally skilled as providers and protectors. Even if our biology is slow to catch up with the recent cultural changes, men can learn to adapt to these changes. This ability to adjust is how ‘survival of the fittest’ has worked throughout evolution. The fittest are the best learners. And

what modern husbands want to learn is how to bring their masculine strengths into harmony with the relationship values of our culture.

Women's liberation is certainly a blessing, but in family life, women's gain of power has come at the expense of men's loss of power. This creates havoc in many relationships. We must correct this for the sake of our children and our society as a whole. This correction is a new paradigm that capitalizes on your masculine strengths to benefit your family, and what I set out to achieve with the *Good Husband* project.

Being a *Good Husband* is about serving your family. Any support provided to you is therefore also support for your family.

A positive new roadmap

To restore power to your roles as husband and father, you need a new roadmap to follow. A positive one! You want inspiration, not more opposition, condemnation, and shaming. Instead of being defensive and apologetic about your masculinity, you need to utilize the positive qualities associated with it, such as:

- courage,
- leadership,
- ambition,
- willingness to risk your life for others, and
- self-reliance.

Over time, these qualities have helped secure the freedom and prosperity many now take for granted. They can also help you consolidate your unique role as a man in your family. In this book, I will offer you an operating manual for aligning your healthy masculine instincts with the

values of modern family life. It is a framework of thinking with practical tools to utilize your masculine power.

Power is your capacity to influence your family members. It is very different from control which often leads to resistance and, therefore to a loss of power. The word “influence” comes from the Latin word *influere*, meaning “in flow.” and an indirect, imperceptible impact. Interestingly, the root of the word “influence” in Hebrew (my mother tongue) is abundance. When you try to influence members of your family, you want to operate from a place of ‘flow’ and ‘abundance’—in simple terms, from your caring heart.

Based on thousands of my male clients, the picture is clear: They perceive their ideal self as being caring and protective men. When I ran a survey among my workshop participants to help me choose a name for the project, they selected *The Good Husband*. It reflected both their aspiration and what they hoped to learn.

“Good” might be incorrectly interpreted as being ‘nice’ or ‘positive’ towards your wife. This is not what I mean. There is a difference between ‘being a good man’ and ‘being good at being a man.’ When I say *Good Husband*, I mean being good at being a husband and manifesting your masculine strengths. The expression of your strengths is not always ‘nice’ in the conventional sense. For example, confronting family members and setting boundaries is not always nice and easy. But it is good when it serves a good purpose—the well-being of your family.

What’s in it for you

This book offers you perspectives and tools that my clients find to be most useful for them. You can learn in this book what I normally cover with clients over a year of counseling. I speak to

you plainly, man-to-man. Men generally love the no-nonsense approach with clear directions, useful tools, practical advice, and... challenges!

The book will support you in the following ways:

- On the moral level, you will feel acknowledged for your unique strengths and contributions as a man.
- On the emotional level, you will better understand the needs of both yourself and your wife, leading to less judgment and shame, as well as more acceptance.
- On the intellectual level, you will deepen your understanding of relationship issues and get new perspectives on your role in the family.
- On the practical level, you will find useful tools, strategies, and solutions to common relationship problems such as conflicts, loss of respect, threats of divorce, struggling sex life, criticism, and more.

In Part One of the book, you will begin to understand the roadmap for expressing your healthy masculinity. The model of *The Good Husband* is based on four classical masculine roles (archetypes):

- King
- Lover
- Magician
- Warrior

Each role comes with its own set of strengths and actions to exhibit.

Part Two of the book is all about the practice. This is your training ground. You will learn how to activate each of the four masculine roles through various practices and tools.

Language and cultural issues

Throughout this book is a generalization that it's the husband who fulfills the masculine role in the family. I believe that this role is equally aligned with a woman's biologically driven needs when she raises children. If not, I would not be writing this book. The healthy expression of masculinity contributes positively to the lives of both partners.

I mention it here because I am aware of the social sensitivity to the subject of men and power. The current cultural climate makes it hard to provide men with relationship guidance without the risk of upsetting some people. The discussion of gender roles is often loaded with passion and ideologies. Certain words may trigger different interpretations, different reactions, and strong feelings, and sadly when they do, we lose the ability to engage in a constructive conversation.

My humble aim is not to preach any ideology here, but to focus on **what works for couples** and to be as pragmatic as possible. I am neither pro-men nor pro-women. I am pro-family; I am pro-children. As a couples therapist, I am committed to both husbands and wives. Marriage is a story about connection, and the role of a couples therapist is to help partners maintain a strong connection while holding an empathic perspective towards their flaws and their struggles.

When I use the words "husband" and "marriage" in this book, I refer to men in committed relationships. I may interchangeably use terms such as "partner" and "spouse." I trust you not to let language issues compromise the benefits you will receive from reading the book and applying its tools.

My story

I grew up and studied clinical psychology in Tel Aviv, Israel. This is where I also met my wife Judy, who migrated from Melbourne, Australia. When our kids were 5 and 6, we moved to her hometown to be closer to her family.

After twenty-five years together and several ups and downs in our relationship, we reached a stage in which we had drifted apart, and the marriage was beyond repair. Our children were young adults, and the option of separation was viable and appropriate. I can gratefully say that our friendship and care for each other have remained strong.

I regard my long marriage as a corrective relationship experience that helped me heal from my traumatic childhood experience. At age eight, I was placed in an institution for children from dysfunctional families. I experienced abandonment and neglect, and along the way I honed my resilience and Warrior spirit. My marriage taught me that a partner could be your best psychotherapist. We heal through a secure and committed relationship.

I am grateful for a rewarding and meaningful marriage. Together we did good things for our families and our community. For example, in Israel, we helped set up a parent helpline, started a community of adoptive families for children of Ethiopian origin, and supported the Ethiopian community.

When a marriage is unraveling, it is often the result of many complex factors. Unfortunately, most of those factors are not known to us at the time. Only with the perspective of time can we realize our mistakes.

I wish I could say with pride that I did a good job using the tools I share with you in this book. I didn't. Wisdom and awareness grow over time. I would have done things differently had I

known what I understand now. But I have no regrets if I can pass on the insights and tools I desperately needed at the time.

And if you wonder about my 'hero journey' from that powerless child in an institution to where I am today, I believe you can find the answer somewhere within and between the lines of this book.

