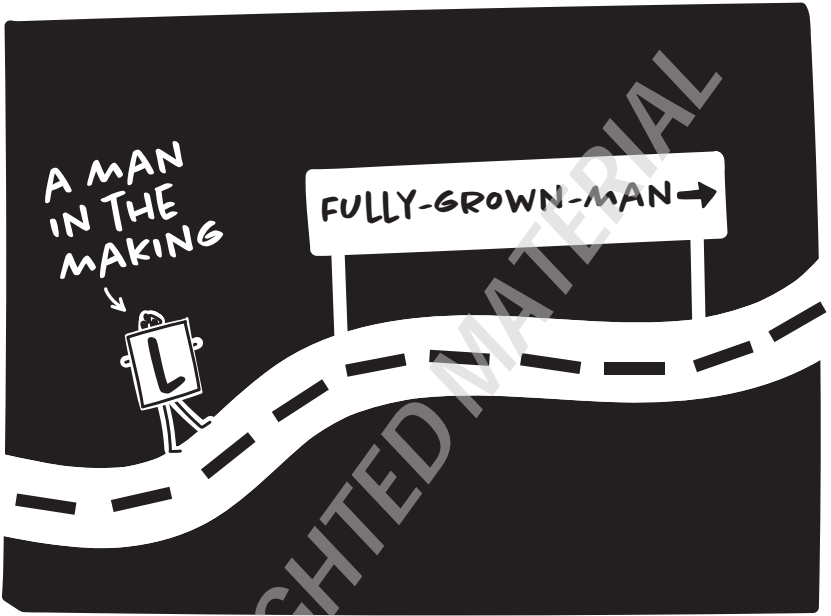


Chapter 1

A MAN DEFINED



Chapter Summary

Our puddle jumping, cartwheeling opener asks when you last ate a worm. Then it's a numbers game where we reveal the unfairness of life before attempting to define what you actually are – a man in the making. Then to the really tricky bit: what exactly is a 'man'? We get there via algae, angler fish and you'll be very grateful that you're *not* a Praying Mantis.

We introduce the concept of toxic masculinity, what it is, where it stems from and how to be the opposite. You'll learn about Dutch Disease and redefine 'cool' before moving on to some advice from the insect world. Plot spoiler: think like a bee and behave like a caterpillar – *eat great food, sleep a lot, wake up beautiful.*

It's worth hanging around for our chapter ending. Gilbert the alien, he's a joy.

But first, get revved up for something fast and furious.

Pit stop

Formula One is where the fastest drivers race the fastest cars in the world. To win an F1 race, you have to be faster and more furious than the other drivers. It's foot down, pedal to the metal all the way.

Except it isn't. *Not quite.*

The winning driver needs to come in for a couple of pit stops along the way. This is a chance to pull over, handbrake on, change tyres, refuel and get back in the race. The pit stops are crucial. If the driver fails to come in for a pit stop not only will he not win the race, he won't finish it.

You're so busy racing through life, navigating the day-to-day challenges of being a young man that you never get time out to reflect on your race strategy. *LADULT* is your pit stop. Press pause. Thinking time, refuelling your motivation and installing new habits before you re-enter the race of life.

But the Formula One analogy falls a little flat because F1 is full of glamour, wealth, exotic locations and sexy people, whereas most people's lives are a bit more bland. A more realistic analogy might be Mario Kart. Navigating through teenage growing pains has always been hazardous. Adolescence is a time of intense changes to your body, a ramping up of emotions as well as significant banana skins in your social world. Factor in the Mario Kart oil slicks of AI, neurodiversity, social media, terminally online 'brain rot' and easy access to porn, and you can find yourself spinning out of control.

So it's worth silently congratulating yourself for getting this far! You're on the Mario Kart grid. Our job is to get you ready for the craziness.

The point of *LADULT* is that you're a man-in-the-making, a male with L-plates. The book will help you sift through the excess of information there is about being a man and to help you make up your own mind about what kind of man you want to become.

That sentence is more important than it sounds because it points to potential pathways and choices that shape your future.

If you're already bursting with energy, brimming with confidence and have a backbone of steel, congrats. If you're acing school, have a dream job lined up, have hatched a plan to woo your perfect partner, have already chosen names for your three amazing children to be and have an unshakeable belief that you're going to nail an epic life, go you! You can skip *LADULT*. You have our permission to pass it on to someone else or leave it in the bathroom so your family can absorb the messages.

If, on the other hand, you need the cheat codes, then this book will race you through a few levels. We're unashamedly pitching in at 'best life' territory. Which, by spooky coincidence, starts by crafting your 'best self'.

The question is, how? How the heck am I supposed to 'live my best life' and 'be my best self' when the world's throwing so much at me?

It's a fair question because it's mightily easy to NOT show up in life as your best self. There are a lot of people talking a good talk and curating a virtual version of 'living the dream', but if you scratch the surface, it's a nightmare. There's a lot of smoke and mirrors. Too many people are living a 'karaoke life' where they're singing along to a song sheet written by somebody else.

As a teenager, you might have already noticed the magic withering away. Think of any under-five kid you know. Guaranteed they're skipping, puddle-splashing, duck-chasing, story-listening, hand-holding, cartwheeling, worm-eating, sandcastle-building whirlwinds of energy, curiosity and fun. Just like you used to be.

Now think of any over 35 you know. When was the last time they jumped in a puddle, chased a duck or cartwheeled in the park?

Exactly!

Thought for the day

'Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?'

Charles Bukowski (American writer)

During our teenage years, we get the magic educated right out of us. We learn to fit into what society thinks we should be. You can feel like a square peg in a society of pre-drilled round holes. We learn that life comes in phases – born, nursery, school, college, work, consume, retire, die – and if all goes according to plan there should be some brief interludes of happiness along the way.

Here's the problem with adults; they dish out a lot of advice that might or might not have worked for them 'back in the day'. Our argument is that those days are gone.

Your days are different – radically faster, more pressurised and full-on than whenever ‘back in the day’ was.

Wakey-wakey

Change doesn’t start with action. Don’t get me wrong, we need to take action along the way but that’s not where change starts. Deep, lasting change starts with us waking up and seeing things in a way that we didn’t see before. Action follows from there.

It’s a tap on the shoulder. Wakey-wakey. There’s no learning, figuring out or action without that tap on the shoulder.

So here’s your tap. Your wake-up call, delivered by some important numbers.

LAD FACT

Infinity is a concept, not a number. In actual fact, Graham’s number is the biggest number in the world. It’s mindbogglingly immense. Graham’s number is so big that if you wrote it down the numbers wouldn’t fit into the observable universe.

The average UK human lifespan is 4,212 weeks. Women tend to get a few more (4316 as against ours, which is 4108. Chill, we have got a whole section on life not being fair coming up soon)

And whereas your average cat has nine lives, humans tend to just get one. Again, not fair but life is what it is, a one-time only special offer.

This book is about the 4,000 or so weeks that the average human spends breathing.

That’s 4,000 Mondays (*boo-hiss!*)

And 4,000 Saturdays (*woo-hoo!*)

Which, straight away, gets to the nub of the problem: social learning!

Usually, by age 10, young people have learned that Mondays are bad and Saturdays are good. It's not formal learning. Nobody sits you down and explains it, but you look around at your teachers and parents and they seem to be a bit zombified on Monday, then, as the week progresses, they gradually spark into life, reaching full bloom at about 4 pm on Friday. Saturdays are epic. Sundays too, until about 7 pm when the 'Smonday' feeling kicks in.

SMONDAY
The moment
when Sunday
stops feeling like
a Sunday and the
anxiety of Monday
starts to kick in.

If literally *everyone* thinks Mondays are rubbish and literally *everyone* wakes up to the magnificence of life on Friday afternoon, guess what, it's easy to start doing the same.

We learn by watching others.^[1] Human beings are the world's greatest fitter-inners.

But here's the twist – if you want to have an amazing life you're best off looking around at what everyone else is doing and NOT DOING THAT! Instead of being a fitter-inner, you need to learn to be a stander-outer.

Which is such a simple idea but really hard to execute in real life. To stand out you'd have to go against conventional wisdom and challenge yourself to do everything a bit better than you have to. That means being kinder than you have to, working harder than you have to, being more polite than you have to, listening better than you have to, doing your homework a bit better than you have to. . .

It makes perfect logical sense because it's so obvious – over time, all these tiny changes would build up to a whopper of a difference. While

everyone else is doing 'just enough' your 'do it better than I have to' mantra means you will power ahead.

This is a great theory until you factor in the teenage virus 'can't be botheredness'. It's like flu, in that males catch it much worse than females. All this 'best life', 'do extra', 'be better' can sound like *blah blah blah*. Yes, *I get it, but I'll start tomorrow or next week or next year*.

The bare-knuckled truth? You are living your one precious life. No rehearsals. No do-overs. No re-spawning.

This is it!

Your potential is one thing. What you do with it is quite another.

LAD FACT

Tomorrow is a concept, created in the mind. It is a thought. Nobody actually lives there. In fact, nobody has ever visited tomorrow. Deciding to take action tomorrow means you're opting for no action.

Good news – someone loves you enough to have bought this book for you. You can repay them three times over. First, with a genuine thank you. Second, by reading it cover to cover. Third, by taking positive action as a result of what you've read.

They bought *LADULT* because they want you to have an amazing life which is great but not enough. *You* have to want it too.

But, hey, the modern world has added extra layers of complexity, so before we *properly* begin, we have to dive into the thorny issue of what even is a man?

What's your MAN-ifesto?

A brief word

Something we need to make clear is that this book is for *all* young men. The book will mention relationships and sometimes we will talk about relationships with the opposite sex. But we are well aware that some of you reading this book may not be interested in girls, at least not in *that* way. We want you to know that this book is for you too, because whoever you are attracted to has no bearing on our message. We know that all young men can benefit from reading this book because all young men, whatever their preference, can fall victim to the curse of mediocrity and toxicity.

Becoming a wonderful human being is independent of who you fancy.

To those of you to whom this applies, you might sometimes face challenges that heterosexual people won't face. This is completely unfair, and we're sorry if this happens to you, but it's why we think *LADULT* is vital for you.

It'll help you thrive when you encounter those who carry the bigotry gene.

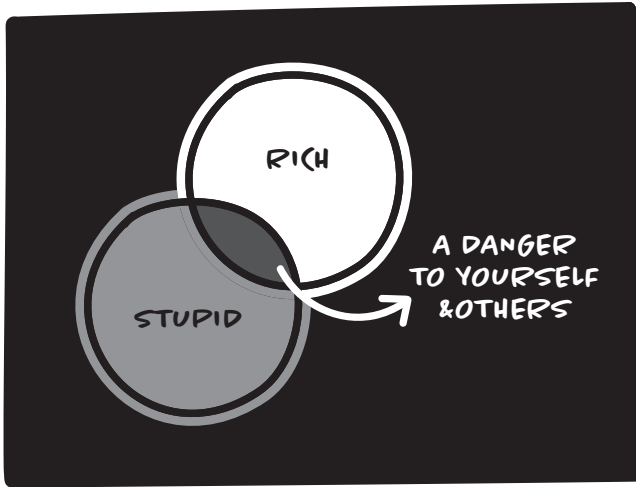
Opinions have always existed. Theories too. Oh, and idiots have been around forever.

Back in the day, you were free to share your views with your closest few. Then communication went viral and nowadays everyone can share their opinions with millions of people across the world. Experts have a platform, wise people have a voice but so do idiots and rabble rousers. Theories morph into conspiracies. The debate can get loud, toxic and downright confusing.

Some of the debate is useful: Is eating bread good or bad for you? Is global warming real? Do we actually need democracy? Is social media damaging? And some less so: Is the earth flat? Are big data companies

using our personal information to fulfil their grand scheme where the global elites enslave us all with a mind virus and turn us into brain mush puppets who will do nothing but consume to our heart's content while they feed on endangered animals and bathe in virgins' blood?

Hard to tell. Depends on whom you listen to.



This ability to hear extreme opinions on any subject means that we are struggling to come to a consensus on anything,^[2] including things that used to be rock solid such as the definition of a *man* (or indeed a *woman*).

Which begs the question, what does the word 'man' mean to you?

It is a word that conjures up different things for different people. Some may think of physical strength, deep voice, a square jaw and a traditional 'real man' occupation that requires them to wear a high viz jacket and hard hat. Others may think of oppression and toxicity. To some it is a hard biological fact, something you either are or are not, to others it is a purely social category that can be floated in and out of at will.^[3]

The fluidity of the modern definition matches the slipperiness of the experience of being a male of the species. Men's role in society is

increasingly being questioned, with some people stating that men need to 'change' whereas others claim that men need to 'keep being men more than ever'.^[4] On the one hand we learn that 'real men don't cry' and, on the other, that 'modern men should express their emotions'. Teenage boys can get caught up in all this swirling debate. It's head-scratchingly confusing – are we supposed to 'man up' or 'man down'?

To untangle some of the confusion, let's rewind to a couple of billion years ago when everything was a lot less complicated. In fact, 'life' back then couldn't have been simpler, mostly consisting of micro-organisms like algae. They reproduced asexually, meaning that they could have 'babies' without the input of another organism, and it would often occur under times of stress.^[5] Imagine going back to these 'good old days' – you're feeling a bit stressed about an exam and BOOM – you spontaneously clone yourself.

At some point between one and two billion years ago, 'sexual reproduction' emerged. All sexual reproduction actually means is just the mixing of the genetics of two members of the same species to create unique offspring. Eventually, although we aren't exactly sure when, this led to some species having two distinct members. These were ones that carried sperm and ones that carried eggs. Or, as we would go on to call them, males and females.^[6]

In *most* species of animals on earth, males and females are different. This includes humans.

When we say males and females, we do not mean what individuals identify as; we are talking about *biological sex*. Males and females of species being different is something called *sexual dimorphism*, and it's something that varies between many species on earth.^[7] In some species there are only small differences between the males and females, whereas in others there are very extreme differences.

One very extreme example is the deep-sea angler fish, which is the scary fish with a lamp on its head as seen in *Finding Nemo*. Female angler fish are the ones we are used to seeing, with the scary teeth and the headlamp, whereas the male angler fish are tiny, way smaller than the

females. The weirdest part is that when the angler fish mate, the tiny male latches on to the female and permanently fuses to her body like a parasite, gaining nutrients from her in exchange for providing sperm. . . how romantic. This weird relationship occurs because of the extreme pitch-black deep-sea environment that the angler fish live in. It's a crazy example but it goes to show how males and females can be *vastly* different.^[8]

LAD FACT

However tough things might seem for the modern male, consider yourself lucky that you're not a Praying Mantis. Famously, in the mantis community, the female eats the male, often during or before sexual intercourse. Yes, you read that correctly – 'before' – headless lovemaking is a thing in the mantis community.^[9]

We'll spare you the gory boyish details; suffice it to say that the act of Mantis lovemaking is often his final act. No wonder they're called *Praying Mantis!* 'If there's a God up there, Dear Lord, please don't let her chew my head off.'

Humans are sexually dimorphic, but thankfully not as significantly as the angler fish. Female humans mature earlier than males, which is why early in secondary school most of the girls are taller than you, as well as going through menstruation once a month. Adult human males usually have deeper voices and grow more facial/body hair, and on average are bigger and stronger than females. The key here is that I say *on average*. There are some very impressive female athletes out there who can out bench-press me by a mile. But *on average* a woman's strength is between 60% and 80% of that of a man's, with men having a particular advantage in the upper body. Adult males tend to be taller, have more muscle mass, stronger bones, larger lungs/heart, and better designed joints for athleticism than women.^[10] This is why most sports are divided into genders because it's not a level playing field in terms of strength and speed.^[11]

Throughout human history, males and females have played to their natural strengths.

It's commonly believed that when we lived in tribal societies (100,000+ years ago) it made sense to harness men's strength and speed and send them to hunt *large* animals (although women would still hunt smaller animals and find other foods), and that the men would be the ones who fought in conflicts against other tribes.^[12]

Women had more of a child-rearing role, particularly with younger children. For thousands of years this was just the way it was. The difference between men and women, male and female, was written into their world. For a lot of human history, laws and rules have been written *by* men and *for* men. Women have generally been much more restricted in the things they were allowed to do or even to say. Women were forbidden for centuries from participating in politics and were also banned from doing many of the same activities as men, such as going to school or playing sports. It was even considered 'unwomanly' to read too much!^[13]

Understandably, many women were not happy with this arrangement and, thankfully, the first wave of feminism opened up women's right to vote in the UK in 1928. Education changed, legislation gave women equal rights, and we are where we are today. We can look around at parts of the world where women haven't got the same rights and freedoms, and think of ourselves as incredibly fortunate to be living in a fair society. (Note, fair doesn't mean perfect. We still have some way to go).

In many areas women haven't just caught up, they've overtaken us! For example, girls are now 35% more likely to go to university than boys.^[14] This means that the old dynamic of the man going out to earn the money while the woman stays at home to look after the family is pretty old school.

With women now not *needing* men to have money, be successful or even to raise children, the role of men has become less well defined. Which brings us full circle to the question that kicked off this section: *what does the word 'man' mean to you?*

Beware of Dutch disease

Most people are lovely. But a small minority of males and females are toxic. There is actually something called 'toxic femininity' but it tends not to hit the headlines like its male equivalent. Toxic masculinity is a phrase that's cloaked in confusion, so let's unmask it for you.

As the name implies, it's positioned at the poisonous end of manliness. It's linked with misogyny (dislike, disrespect or prejudice against women) and the need to dominate by force.^[15]

It's definitely to be avoided. But some of the swirling confusion arises from those with loud social media voices. The shouty people have claimed that men who exercise are being toxic, that video games cause toxic masculinity, sitting with your legs apart ('manspreading') is toxic, and that liking team sports is a toxic masculine trait. At the extreme end of the argument, men are labelled as 'toxic' just for being men.

Let's draw a line in the sand here. Yes, toxic masculinity *does* exist but it *isn't* toxic to exercise, play games or to like competitive sports. Oh, and 'manspreading' isn't an act of sexist dominance, merely a comfortable way to sit when you've got a set of balls between your legs.^[16] That said, sitting *uncomfortably* with your legs crossed to give other people room is a polite thing to do.

Genuine toxic masculinity exists in the form of those guys who always need to prove something by force. You'll wince when you see it. The guy that can't take any criticism without throwing a tantrum, who always feels the need to pick on someone whom he sees as an easy target, who goes out of their way to harass girls, who takes banter way too far, and who always has to have 'their way'.

The toxics make other people feel bad about themselves so that they can feel better about *themselves*. You have to admit that having a desire to make other people feel low is pretty low in and of itself.

So where does this come from? How come some men end up being toxic but others don't? The simple truth is that it's a coping mechanism that

often stems from a lack of confidence.^[17] Someone who is *not* confident talking to girls will resort to being mean to them to hide their nerves; someone who is *not* confident in themselves will resort to putting others down to make themselves feel better; someone who is *not* confident won't be able to take jokes or criticism because they're unsure of themselves.

Which points to a big 'what if?'

Rather than men being toxic by nature, what if it's just that there are too many men who are lacking in confidence? For some men, life is one big contest of showing how cool they are and in the mad scramble to be top dog, their masculine poison bubbles to the surface.

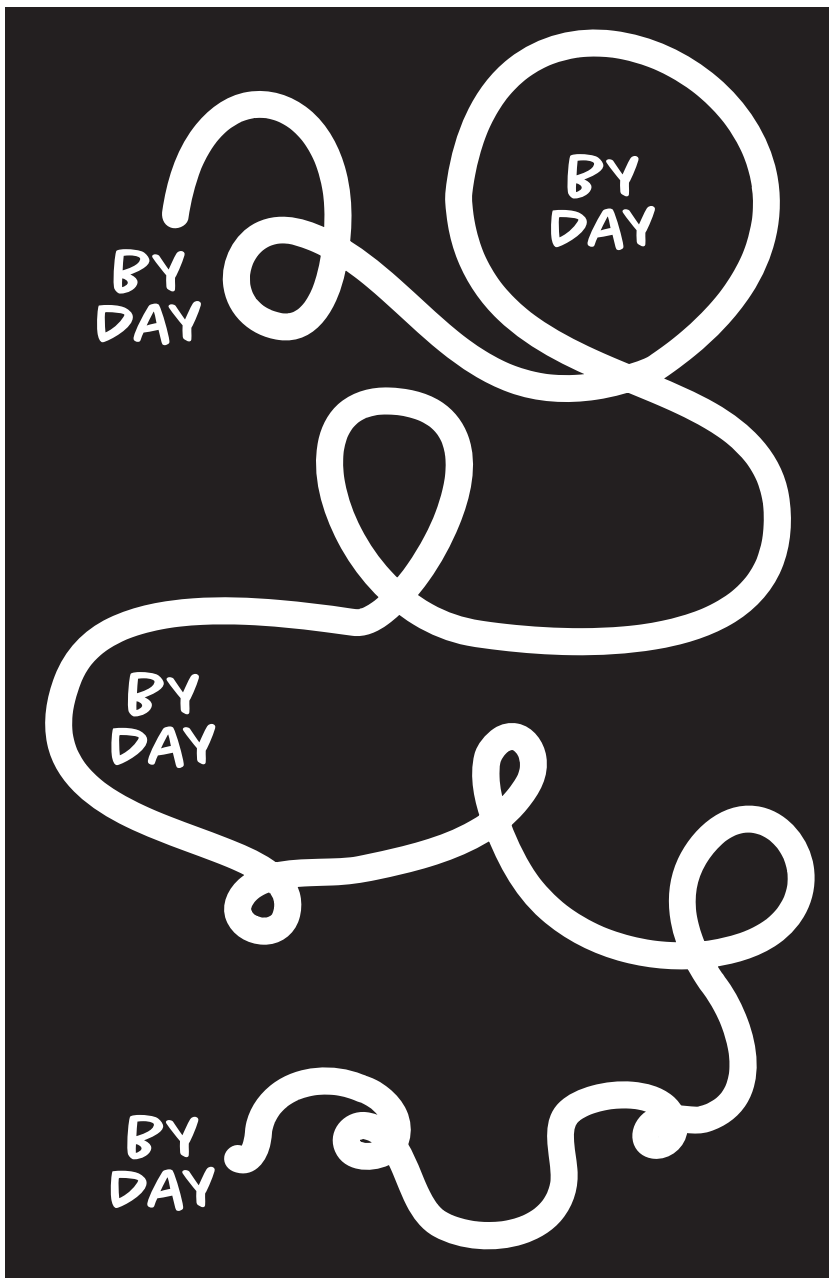
So hang in there for some big thoughts, via the Netherlands . . .

There is a concept in economics (stay with me) known as Dutch disease. The idea is that if a country's economy relies too much on making money from one thing, then the country is asking for trouble. It's called Dutch disease because it happened in the Netherlands, where the discovery of a huge field of natural gas caused other industries in the country to decline.^[18]

Putting all of your eggs into an unreliable basket can happen to entire nations but it can also happen to personal confidence.

If you're always relying on the outside world for your confidence, then you're essentially gambling with your wellbeing. Think about it – if you rely on others to feel confident but other people don't give you what you need, then all of a sudden your confidence is way down, and this might lead to some toxic behaviour to try to make yourself feel better (maybe by picking on someone or by lashing out).

Of course, it's nice to get reassurance and approval from people whose opinions about us really matter, but we shouldn't be *relying* on it. The key to real confidence is realising that it comes from within. Confidence is boosted if you have self-belief that you are becoming a better person. It doesn't happen overnight; confidence comes bit by bit, day by day, and being able to answer (honestly), *am I a better human than I was yesterday?*



There will be some backward steps but if the answer is 'yes' more often than 'no', you're heading in the right direction. It's important to understand that the non-toxic path is much more rewarding. You can choose to nourish rather than poison.

You're not a better person because you were the alpha male in the room or because you imposed yourself on others, but because you were someone who was a total pleasure to be around.

You're not a better person because you tore someone down, but because you lifted the people around you.

You're not a better person by being the loudest but sometimes by remaining strongly silent.

You're not a better person by joining the wrong crowd but by walking away from it.

You're not a better person by answering back but by showing respect.

You get the point. Being a non-toxic man doesn't mean you are passive. You can still stand up for what is right and for what you believe in; you can be a leader through positive example and encouragement rather than through force. You can still be fun and make rude/brutal jokes with your friends, but without crossing the line into unnecessary abuse or bullying. You can still be admired, but for your real achievements that mean something rather than the ones you post online.

It boils down to this: self-confidence and self-esteem should have SELF in capitals! If you have high self-esteem and you walk around knowing that you're valued, loved and worthy, then you won't feel the need to tear anyone else down to make yourself feel better.

How to improve your likeability

‘Narcissism’ is a big word that’s got a long history. It’s being talked about because it’s becoming more common, so what is it?

Back story. . . Narcissus was a very handsome young man from Greek mythology. As the story goes, one day he was wandering in the woods and discovered a pond. Narcissus leant down for a drink, saw his own reflection and fell in love with himself. Plot spoiler, it didn’t end well for the lad. He died and his name lives on, but not in a good way. Narcissists are people who are preoccupied with themselves. They are self-centred, selfish and lack empathy.

Younger children tend to go through a phase that borders on narcissism. A toddler has to learn to share, empathise and master all the caring and listening skills that are required to be a good friend. Except, once again, today’s ‘selfie culture’ conspires to push you the wrong way. ‘Self-love’ is all well and good, but it can go too far. Posting endless selfies, chasing followers instead of friends, being overly interested in yourself, thinking you’re the bee’s knees, talking about yourself all the time.

A word of warning. Please don’t become that *me-me-me-me-me* person.

By all means respect yourself, like yourself, be kind to yourself and talk nicely to yourself, but don’t fall head over heels in love with yourself. It didn’t end well for Narcissus and it wouldn’t end well for you. Narcissistic adults tend to be attention-seeking, arrogant and difficult to love.

Rather than ‘selfie’, it pays to be ‘othery’ because here’s the number one thing that shoots you to the top of the popularity stakes, and it’s probably not what you imagine. Being popular is less about confidence, intelligence, good looks or charm. For people to like you, it helps to like them first. If everyone in your class writes down a list of people they like, the key to your likeability is that the list of ‘who you like’ is longer. Of course, your list has to be genuine. You actually have to like people and,

if you do, you become genuinely interested in them and, in a bizarre twist of the universe, they will also like you.^[19]

Obviously, you don't have to like everybody and not everyone has to like you. There will always be a couple of unlikeable jerks, but if you can see the good in most people and become a person who likes others, you'll reap the benefit.

How to be cool

There's always a handful of people at school who seem to have got the memo on how to dress, act and, for the lack of a better word, be 'cool'. There are others who were at the back of the queue when 'cool' was being handed out.

It's all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that to be accepted, you need to conform to some arbitrary standard of what 'cool' is. You try and water yourself down, to hide your quirks and fit into a cookie-cutter shape that is not really you at all. The irony is that in many people's attempts to be 'cool' and 'stand out', they just end up becoming like everybody else because they're desperately trying to hide their uniqueness that makes them who they are.

Paranoia is a feeling that people are talking about you behind your back, most probably saying nasty things. But here's its wonderful opposite, *pronoia*, when people are saying nice things about you. Imagine, just for a second, that people are bigging you up behind your back.

Then imagine, just for another second, what kind of person you'd need to be for people to be saying amazing things about you when you're not in earshot. Teachers, parents, friends, classmates, lady next door, bus driver, bloke on the checkout, lunchtime supervisors, gran, sister, Auntie Kylie . . . what would you have to do to make all these people go 'Wow'?

This is about consistency and something we call ‘trademark behaviours’. These two factors combine to build your reputation. We’re not talking about being the typical popular kid at school. This is much more powerful than being the alpha male. We’re talking about having character, compassion and connection that tell everyone else who you are and what you stand for. A lot of people believe that accumulating achievements, honours, medals or ‘followers’ is the only way to establish a solid reputation, whereas the reality is that a really exceptional reputation is built on the tiniest acts of kindness, the time spent listening, the support and encouragement you give and your willingness to help others. Consistency in these trademark behaviours marks you out as someone special.

We think it’s worth redefining ‘cool’. Being cool means knowing when to say ‘no’ when something doesn’t seem right. It’s about maintaining your values when others don’t. It’s having the courage to be nice in a society that occasionally glorifies cruelty. Cool is being the friend who makes sure everyone gets home safely after a party.

Be genuinely interested in other people

The next time you have a conversation with a friend or loved one, set your intention to listen with your full attention. Phone away, eye contact, interested face on, ears pinned back, mouth closed, tuned in – be genuinely interested in the human and they’ll think you’re amazing.

Oh, and the best question you can ask to show you’re interested is this: ‘Tell me more...’

Caterpillar soup

Businessman Rory Sutherland points out an interesting fact about bees. There are a certain number of bees in every colony who will disobey the orders of the other bees. These ‘maverick’ bees don’t follow the swarm.

They do their own thing, taking risks by flying into uncharted territory in search of new flowers. Scientists struggled to explain this for a while, but eventually they realised that if it weren't for these bees that broke the mould and acted differently from the crowd, the entire colony would die out when their usual flowers ran out of pollen.^[20]

If you become a confident man who openly expresses his positive emotions, you will be like one of those maverick bees. You won't do what the crowd is doing, and a lot of people might not understand you, but we need you more than ever.

It's not toxicity, it's confidence. *Bee that man.*

Which reminds me, speaking of insects, here's one more thought.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar is one of the best kids' books ever. The clue's in the title but here's your plot spoiler . . . a caterpillar gets the munchies and scoffs its way through traditional caterpillar fare – pears and apples and plums – before progressing to cupcakes, sausages and cherry pie.

Taken literally, it's a powerful message about what happens if you eat too many cupcakes, sausages and cherry pies, although I'm not sure that's the point?

The twist for under-fives is that the caterpillar locks itself away in a chrysalis and shapeshifts into a beautiful butterfly.

What goes on inside the chrysalis is private. The story remains quiet as the caterpillar goes through an identity change. The book doesn't illustrate this bit because, I would imagine, kids would have nightmares. Inside the chrysalis, the grub's organs and tissue dissolve into some sort of caterpillar soup which then somehow reconstitutes itself into the body of a butterfly that bears no resemblance to a caterpillar at all. All throughout this pupa soup stage, the creature remains alive, with just enough strength left over to break out of the chrysalis, flap its amazing new wings and get eaten by a blackbird.

It's a radical shift of identity from chubby grub to winged butterfly.

How does it know?

It's what the French call 'élan vital', a life force or 'impulse of life' that every organism has. The cells have instructions. There's a plan. A template. And all the while that the struggle is going on inside the chrysalis, the process is reliant on external conditions. The weather, the rotation of the earth so the right amount of sunlight, the length of the days . . . there's a cosmic rhythm.

Ultimately, the successful metamorphosis depends partly on what's going on inside the chrysalis and partly on the conditions outside. We'll be looking at what's going on inside of you, but the next chapter focuses on the world out there and how it might be impacting on the life inside your head.

The invasion

Imagine you are at home, one eye on the game you're playing, the other eye on the view from your kitchen window. Suddenly, your jaw drops open and the controller smashes on the floor as you watch a spaceship land in your back garden. A hatch opens, some smoke billows out, and a small purple alien shuffles down a ramp. A few seconds later there's a soft knock at your door. You're frozen to the spot until a second knock brings you to your senses.

You open the door, just a crack and sure enough, the small purple creature is right there. It's about half the size of a human so you crouch down to eye level.

'Hi there. Have you c-c-c-come to take over planet earth? Are you here to k-k-kill the humans?'

'Gosh no,' beams the little creature. 'Whatever makes you think that? I'm Gilbert and I come in peace. But I need your help.'

The intergalactic traveller explains that it's from Planet Glee, where everyone is impossibly happy, all of the time. 'It's unbearable,'

chuckles the small grape-like creature. 'We're literally laughing all day long, having sweet dreams, and then doing the same next day.'

I'm guessing you've got a surprised look on your face. Planet Glee sounds amazing, right? 'So why have you come knocking at my door?'

'Well,' smiles the alien, 'all this happiness and laughing is making our sides ache and we have a terrible incontinence problem'.

You gawp at Gilbert. 'You're wetting yourselves with laughter?'

'Oh gosh, yes,' chuckled the alien. 'And of course when someone wets their pants it's so funny that it sets off a chain reaction and before you know it your family's ankle deep. So we're interested in finding out about sadness and negativity. My people have sent me to earth on a fact-finding mission. I've got to find the secrets of grumbling and misery. What pointers can you give me? What can I do to lower my levels of happiness? I'm going to scribble your ideas down and take them back to Planet Glee. I'll be a hero because it'll end our incontinence problem, we won't have to walk around in wellies, and there will be no more aching sides. So, dear human, please tell me, how can I feel glum?'

What advice would you give to the alien?

Now go do the exact opposite of that!