

THE WAY MEN HEAL



TOM GOLDEN, LCSW

About the Cover

The cover shows some of the many avenues for masculine action to be a part of healing. The background of the cover is a picture of Arlington National Cemetery which is the home of over 250,000 graves. Notice that in the upper left corner you can see the Washington Monument which stands in honor of our first president. Both the Washington Monument and each of the graves served as an honoring action and now serve as a place to visit and remember. The four slightly opaque images at the center of the cover symbolize different aspects of healing through the masculine side. The guitar is a reference to Eric Clapton's song writing in dealing with his loss of his young son Conor. Clapton's story is featured in the chapter on creativity. The statue at the center of the cover was carved by a man following the death of his wife. It is a wonderful example of healing action and is also featured in the section on creativity. The basketball refers to Michael Jordan and his healing actions following his father's murder. His story is featured in the section on practicality. The keyboard highlights the thinking mode. C.S. Lewis, the author of numerous books wrote a book on his grief at the death of his wife. His thinking actions are discussed in the section on healing through thinking. The opacity of the cemetery and the symbols of the masculine side of healing are meant to accentuate the invisibility of the way many men heal. Masculine healing actions can be very hard to spot. By reading *The Way Men Heal* you should be able to bring those actions into sharper focus.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction The Way Men Heal 7

- The Masculine Side of Healing 7
- The Masculine Side - The Invisible Emotional Pain 8
- Finding Safety 9
- Indigenous Grief Rituals 9
- The Safety of Action 11

2. Invisibility 15

- A Man's Pain is Taboo 15
- Provide and Protect 16
- Dominance Hierarchy 18
- Brain Differences and Testosterone 20
- Testosterone 22
- Invisibility Revisited 24

3. Healing Actions 27

- Practical Action 27
- Michael Jordan 27
- Creative Actions 30
- Eric Clapton 30
- Thinking Action 34
- C.S. Lewis 34
- Inaction 38

4. Tips for Helping the Men You Love 41

- Entering His Space 44
- Honoring His Loss 45
- Talk About His Action, Not His Emotion 47

5. For Therapists 50

- Talking About Actions 51
- Using an Indirect Approach 53

6. Contact 57

7. About the Author 58

Introduction

The Way Men Heal

The Masculine Side of Healing

The masculine side of healing is used by both men and women. It is not simply a "man's" way of healing. It has been my experience that about 75% of men will tend to use what we are calling the masculine side of healing as a primary mode of healing and about 20% of women also use this masculine side as a primary mode. Most people will use both masculine and feminine sides of healing but women seem to use both more easily while men are more likely to rely on the masculine side. It's not a simple split. Our job is not to pigeonhole people into one mode or another based on their sex, but instead to have tools to be able to see each person's uniqueness. The goal of this book is to help you see these two modes of healing clearly.

This book is divided into four parts. The first section will introduce you to the basic concepts of the masculine side of healing and tell the story of how I started seeing differences in men and women in their grief. Having been taught in graduate school only the feminine side of healing, the road to seeing the masculine side has been a bumpy ride. We will look at some of those bumps in order to give you a good idea of the nature of the masculine side. We will also focus on some of my mistakes and serendipitous discoveries such as anthropological research on cross-cultural grief, which was instrumental in seeing these differences.

The second section discusses the invisibility of this masculine side. A large part of the reason for so few being aware of the masculine side is its lack of visibility. We will discuss the four reasons for this

invisibility and start to understand why most of us simply cannot see it.

The third section will explain the three types of action that men and some women tend to use in connecting their action to their loss. These actions are creativity, practicality and thinking. We will offer numerous examples of each type in order for you to easily spot this sort of healing action. There is also a short section on the inactive modes of healing.

The final two sections will focus on some ideas and tips in helping men or women who use this masculine side of healing. The first section will be for anyone and the later will be specifically for therapists. Let's get started.

The Masculine Side - The Invisible Emotional Pain

In the late 1970s, I had just gotten out of graduate school and was looking for a job at a counseling center. I wanted to finally put my years of schooling to work and start helping some folks. After 3 months I couldn't find a job. After 6 months, I couldn't find a job. After 9 months I couldn't find a job. And after a year I still couldn't find a job but I got an offer to work at a counseling center for death and dying. I didn't know a thing about death and dying but I said, "Sign me up!" It didn't take long to notice some things about the center. One of the first things I noticed was that I was the only male therapist on staff. There were 17 female counselors and one man, me. Then after a while I started noticing that most of the male clients came to me. The women on staff didn't want to work with the men, they said things like "men don't grieve" or men "don't deal with their feelings" or things such as that. "Golden's a man, he can figure them out." But Golden couldn't figure them out. I was saddled with a caseload of mostly men and I wasn't doing so well. What I had been taught at grad school was to sit and face each other

and talk about the past. When I tried it with my female clients it worked wonderfully but with the men, not so well. I wondered if maybe the female therapists were right, there was something wrong with the men?

Finding Safety

What I have found out since that time is that eye contact means something very different to men and women. To women eye contact often means closeness or connectedness. This of course, is a good thing in treatment. When people feel connected and close they are more likely to feel safe. Feeling safe facilitates healing. But what about the men? I did my best to make eye contact with the men and it didn't take long to realize I wasn't making them feel safe at all, it was more the opposite. Men, I have since found, link eye contact, particularly with other men, as a sign of confrontation or challenge. Hockey has a "face-off", boxers "face" each other, you "face" the competition. What I was doing wasn't helping these men feel safe, it was positioning them in a place of challenge. This of course is the opposite of what I wanted to do.

I started trying to understand where men did feel safe. I knew that men tended to form close friendships with other men in hierarchical professions such as the military, the fire department, police departments, or sports teams. These were all places that men were together, shoulder to shoulder, working on a common goal. The more dangerous the goal, the closer the men seemed to get. I started to realize that the men were more likely to feel safe and connected when they were shoulder to shoulder as opposed to the traditional therapeutic face to face mode.

Indigenous Grief Rituals

I tried to learn more about men but there was very little written at

About the Author

Tom Golden, LCSW Thomas Golden, LCSW is well known in the field of healing from loss. His book, *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing* has been acclaimed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and others. Tom enjoys giving workshops in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia, having been named the 1999 International Grief Educator by the Australian Centre for Grief Education. Drawing on thirty years of practical, hands-on clinical experience, Tom brings a gentle sense of humor and a gift for storytelling to both his workshops and his writing. His work and his web site webhealing.com have been featured in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *U.S. News and World Report*, as well as on CNN, CBS Evening News, ESPN and the NFL Channel. Tom served as the vice-chair for the Maryland Commission for Men's Health and has also enjoyed helping write a proposal for a White House Council on Boys and Men. whitehouseboysmen.org. He is in private practice in Gaithersburg, MD and also enjoys doing Skype consults. Tom's newest site tgolden.com offers information on Tom's various activities and interests.

The Way Men Heal

A male positive book for men and women that
uncovers the secrets of the way men heal.
Yes, it's there, you just can't see it.

WHAT ARE READERS SAYING ABOUT THE WAY MEN HEAL?

"We have been taught to help women heal in a way that works for most women. Tom Golden's clear, practical and well-written *The Way Men Heal* is the best book I know of to help a man heal in a way that works for most men."

Warren Farrell, Ph.D.,
Author, *Why Men Are the Way they Are*

"I want every woman that is in relationship with a man that has had a loss to read it."

Martin Brossman
Author, *Finding Our Fire*

"Tom Golden's, *The Way Men Heal*," is a groundbreaking effort in our understanding of men. He shines a light on the invisible world of men's pain and in doing so puts us on a path to playing a role in their healing. If you want to understand men, read this book. If you want to help men, share it with them."

Paul Elam,
Founder, *A Voice For Men*



Tom Golden, LCSW has been working with men and boys in trauma for over 30 years. His work has been featured on CBS Evening News, CNN, ESPN, the NFL Channel, the Washington Post, the NY Times and many others. He has presented workshops in the US, Canada, Australia, and Europe. tgolden.com

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