



Breaking the Male Code: Essential Skills for Solving Men's Emotional Crisis

Robert Garfield

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A noted psychotherapist examines the critical role same-sex friendships play in helping men navigate an increasingly demanding world.

For much of the past century, men have operated under the rules of Male Code, a rigid set of rules guiding their behavior that equate masculinity with stoicism, silence, and strength. Over the past few decades, as society has experienced seismic economic and societal shifts that have forced men to take on new roles within their families and relationships, this lack of emotional skills has wreaked havoc on men's lives. In attempting to reconcile traditional views of masculinity with the modern call to step up as fathers, husbands, and sons, men are increasingly likely to suffer from depression, anger, and feelings of isolation, and, because they have not learned how to communicate or express their emotions effectively, they are unable to connect with others—spouses, children, and friends—who could provide support.

Rob Garfield has worked with men struggling with emotional issues for more than twenty years. In his groundbreaking “Friendship Labs,” clinical settings in which men engage in group therapy, he teaches men how to identify inner conflicts, express emotions, and communicate openly. According to Garfield, traditional therapy has largely marginalized men since they lack the tools to properly engage. But when men learn to open up to other men who share similar experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives, they not only build lasting bonds but learn the skills necessary to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

In this important and timely book, Garfield examines the unique challenges men face and urges them to abandon male code in favor of a masculinity that embraces male traits while championing emotional skills. He urges men to deepen their relationships with other men and shows how these relationships can help them in all areas of their lives. He also offers a step-by-step guide to initiating and deepening these relationships using the Four C's of intimacy—connection, communication, commitment, and co-operation.

Breaking the Male Code: Essential Skills for Solving Men's Emotional Crisis Details

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Matthew says

Not scintillating, but some useful information and food for thought. I have felt the last few years that I have lacked for male friends. I realized that I only needed to reconnect with some long-distance friends, which this book inspired me to do. The trickier part will be strengthening local relationships in the same way.

Jane says

I want to thank Robert Garfield, author and Goodreads First Reads Giveaway for my copy of *Breaking the Male Code: Unlocking the Power of Friendship* that I won in the Giveaway.

The pressure that men feel in our world gives them feelings of isolation and many men do not know how to talk about how they are feeling and the things that bother them. I found Robert's approach to helping men to be insightful after he experienced problems with a move to a new city, problems with his family and feeling isolated and alone. It is a powerful tool in helping others when you have experienced similar experiences and understand the deep feelings men struggle with in our society. I enjoyed the book and loved the stories of the success of his patients and how he was able to help them.

As a child development professional, I have seen the difference expectations placed on both girls and boys from a very young age. As a society we instill that males should be the strong, protector and be able to endure pain on all levels to be perceived as masculine.

One of the most insightful teacher trainings I attended over the years was called the differences in brain chemistry between male and female children. Using cat scans children were asked to multitask and the girl's scans showed lots of brain activity but the boy's scans were showing them doing one task after another but not thinking about two at once. What this translated to in a relationship between a husband and wife is that when a wife says, "I want you to go to the grocery store for bread, milk, butter, potatoes and ice cream. Then go get the dry cleaning and go to the hardware store for the hooks to hang the new picture, etc." When the husband comes home with the hooks and forgets the rest it drive the wife crazy but he really didn't hear the rest and it didn't reach the part of his brain where he needed to get all that at one time. Over thirty-five year of marriage to a wonderful man, I have observed this more times than I can count. He also often says to me, "Just tell me one thing at a time." I have to remember that he thinks differently than I do and accept what a good person he is and a good father and most of the time lots of fun, just not good at multitasking and sharing his feelings. Robert Garfield's book shows guys insights into sharing feelings and things that bother them in their daily lives and relationships.

Julie Barrett says

Breaking the male code, unlocking the power of friendship_ overcoming male isolation for a longer, happier life, by Robert Garfield (Physician)

Interesting read to find out what's behind your spouses thoughts and actions and what he really wants to say or do.

Light clicks on with some subjects and I'm still in the dark on others.
I received this book from National Library Service for my BARD (Braille Audio Reading Device).

Barry Martin Vass says

For most of the past century, men have operated under a sort of unwritten understanding, a male code if you will, that equated masculinity with stoicism, strength, and silence. Males were always expected to be the strong, silent types, the providers who never questioned things and hid their emotions as they went about their daily lives. But society has changed over the past few decades, and men have struggled to keep up with it. Doctor Robert Garfield, a Philadelphia-area psychotherapist and psychiatrist, has written a very engaging book about the role of friendship and communication in overcoming male isolation at work, in marriage, during child-rearing, and of course in adolescence. At times this threatens to become rather dry, almost like a lecture, but Dr. Garfield is quick to throw in first-person accounts from his group sessions, where men are reacting with other men, and his one-on-one therapy sessions, where men come to him with their problems, which helps to make this much more down-to-earth. This is a book that, after you read it, you'll want to keep nearby.

Benjamin Wallace says

Thought provoking. Comforting.

Aidan says

2 stars is maybe a bit harsh. It wasn't really that bad. The book does offer decent advice, and it makes several good points about male friendships I wholly agree with. It also has a decent aspiration, and I am glad a book such as this one has even been written. We need more books like this!

But, I feel that books such as this one need to have less of a 'self-helpish' vibe and feel more like something solid to hold on to. Involve less institutional talk, and be more about personal affect and approach through free-flowing text. Books like these should feel more natural when you read them. This one felt like it was trying too much, and it lost a lot of that spontaneity in the process. As a result it was too formal for its own good.

Also, for something that is targeted at men, *should* be targeted at men, this book reads like something a female partner/friend of a man might like and then drop it on his desk. Not that there's anything wrong about that, but a more obvious appeal towards the intended target audience -- men -- should have been made.

Another thing the book suffered from were what looked like direct transcripts from therapy sessions. It all came down as too superficial and uninvolved in those parts. You cannot convey adequate understanding when presented the way they were. Instead, examples quoted would have benefited from a bit more elaborated plain descriptions. Or, if you want to do it like a page out of a screenplay, then you have to provide the atmospheric and emotional cues of the context, and not leave them out of your script!

So, that makes it a 2 out of 5 for me. It has a lot of room for improvement. I applaud the author for having

written the book, and on this subject particularly, but I deplore the superficiality and unnaturalness of his treatment. I would recommend it to my male friends, though.

Jonathan Karmel says

The Male Code includes three friendship "dementors," according to this book. The first is Machismo: all of the stupid stuff that completes the sentence "Real men . . ." The second is Homophobo: fear of being emotionally close to another man. The third is Dumbo: willful ignorance and laziness regarding the skill and effort that is involved in maintaining friendships with other men. If a man rids himself of these dementors, he can have more male friends, less emotional crisis, overcome isolation and lead a longer, happier life.

I think it's true that a lot of men don't have close male friends. A lot of married men don't have close male friends that are independent from their married life. I don't think this is necessarily a problem, but I think that the author is right that a lot of men's lives could be greatly improved by having more real friendships with other men.

I don't think I've ever subscribed to what the author calls the "male code." If anything, I think that I have at times thought that there was something wrong with me for not wanting to follow the male code. My take away from this book is that perhaps I should be more confident in believing that there is something wrong with other men following the male code, and perhaps I should be less defensive about my natural inclination to be the way this book is telling men they should be.

There is a lot of practical advice in here about how to make friends and improve friendships. Some of that stuff seemed kind of obvious to me. Also, most of it seemed like it would be true for men or women, not just men. I liked the idea that a friend is someone who stabs you in the front. In other words, a true friend is someone who points out your flaws to your face and helps you deal with them, instead of ignoring them.

I think there are other books in the tradition of Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People, that do a better job of teaching the skill of making friends, but I don't think that's what this book is about. I think this book is more about the need for men to change their attitude about the importance of maintaining male friendships. Male friendship is not just something you do for fun when you have free time. Male friends are important in the same way that your wife, parents, siblings, children and profession are important. You need to strive to love your male friends in the same way.

I wonder if attitudes about male friendship are changing. It is now common to see "bromance" movies. I think we may get to a point where this is something we take seriously and don't just treat as a joke. Maybe in the 21st century, men will start acting in a way that was common in the 19th century, when men wrote sincere, non-ironic, non-homosexual love letters to each other.

Affad Shaikh says

A bit overkill at times. I may say don't spend time on the background, but then I feel like most guys aren't ready to understand and appreciate that certain models of masculinity are just downright idiotic. So that would make the beginning portion a salient aspect of warming up to the advice that follows, that for me was

probably the most informative aspect of this book. I think I have allowed friendships to atrophy, or I just don't know how to make new guy friends now that I am in my thirties- its that conundrum that gets oft-written about: "how hard it is to make new friends in your professional life"- and so this provided a good basis of how to take everyday interactions toward a more meaningful and longterm friendship. I don't know, part of me thinks "This is common sense," yet if that were the case, I wouldn't feel compelled to read this, nor would I be thrashing about the thoughts that "its so hard to make (guy) friends" and "where are all my (guy) friends gone."
