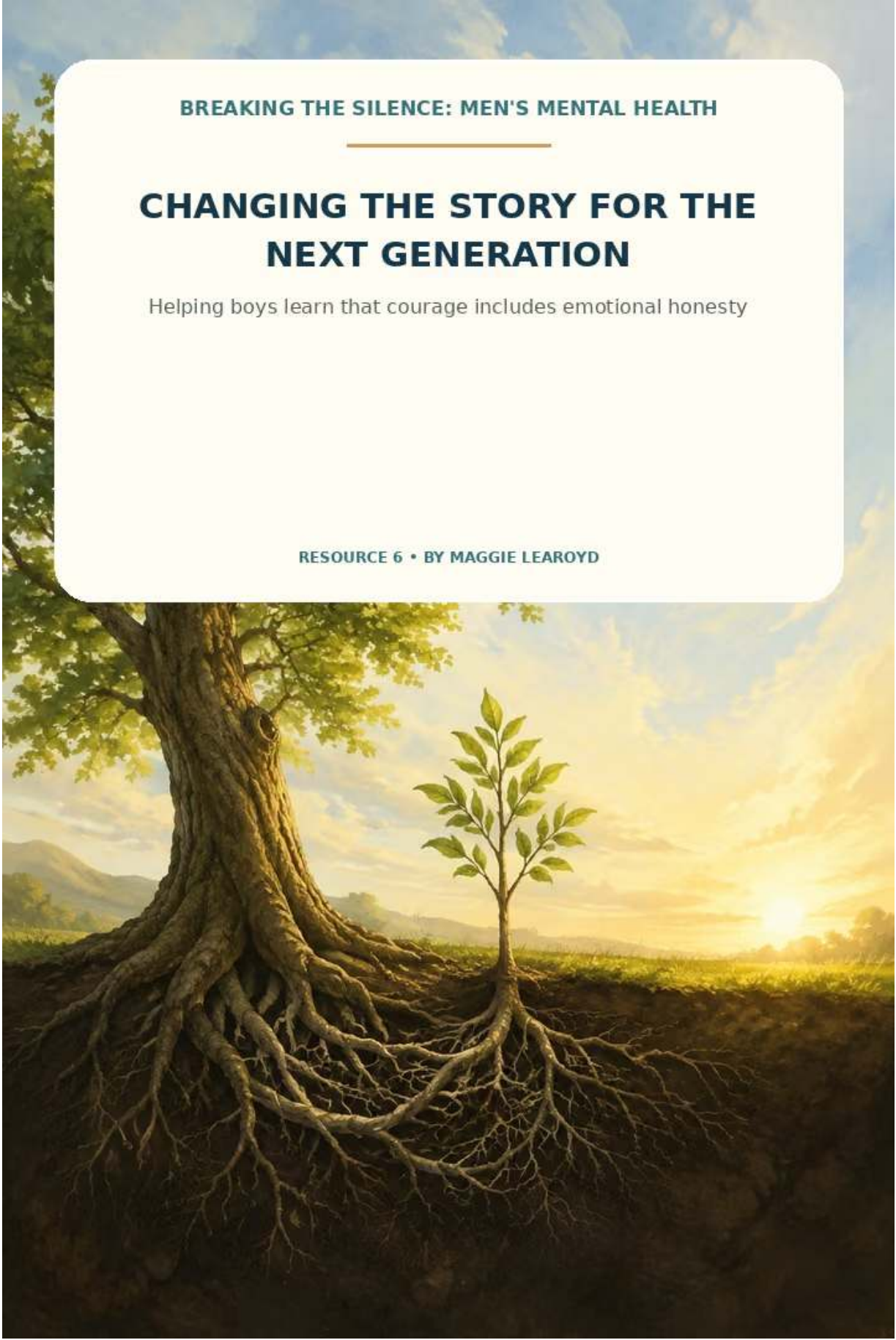




BREAKING THE SILENCE: MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

CHANGING THE STORY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Helping boys learn that courage includes emotional honesty

RESOURCE 6 • BY MAGGIE LEAROYD

Changing the Story for the Next Generation

Helping boys learn that courage includes emotional honesty

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." — James Baldwin

Every generation inherits a story.

Some stories inspire us. Others quietly shape the way we think, behave and relate to one another without us ever questioning where they came from. The story many men inherited was often simple: be strong, stay in control, don't complain and keep going. For countless men, these messages were shared with good intentions. They reflected the challenges of the time and a belief that resilience was essential for survival.

Yet every generation also has the opportunity to rewrite the story.

Today, conversations about men's mental health are becoming more visible than ever before. Schools are beginning to teach emotional literacy. Workplaces are recognising the importance of psychological wellbeing. Communities are creating spaces where men can meet, talk and support one another. Families are becoming more willing to discuss feelings around the dinner table rather than only when a crisis occurs.

These changes matter.

Not because they remove life's difficulties, but because they change how people experience them.

Imagine a young boy growing up believing that courage includes kindness.

Imagine him seeing his father apologise after making a mistake.

Imagine him watching a coach ask the team how they are coping as well as how they are performing.

Imagine teachers helping children name emotions rather than dismiss them.

Imagine workplaces where men can say they are struggling without fearing that they will be seen as less capable.

These experiences become powerful lessons.

Children learn far more from what they witness than from what they are told.

When boys see trusted adults expressing emotions respectfully, asking for help when they need it and supporting one another without judgement, they begin to understand that emotional wellbeing is a normal part of everyday life.

This is not about encouraging boys to become emotionally overwhelmed.

It is about helping them become emotionally aware.

There is an important difference.

Emotional awareness allows people to recognise what they are feeling, understand why those feelings may be present and choose healthy ways of responding. It helps children become adults who can build strong relationships, resolve conflict, communicate openly and seek support when life becomes difficult.

Breaking stigma is not only the responsibility of men.

It belongs to all of us.

Partners who create space for honest conversations.

Friends who ask twice when someone says they are "fine."

Managers who understand that wellbeing affects performance.

Schools that teach emotional vocabulary alongside academic subjects.

Communities that value compassion as highly as achievement.

Each of these contributes to changing the culture surrounding mental health.

Change rarely happens through one dramatic event.

It happens through thousands of ordinary moments.

A father telling his son that crying is not something to be ashamed of.

A football team checking in with one another after training.

A grandfather sharing stories about his own struggles rather than pretending he never had any.

A colleague encouraging someone to seek support instead of suffering in silence.

These moments may seem small.

Collectively, they shape the world the next generation inherits.

One of the most encouraging aspects of today's conversation around men's mental health is that many men are already leading this change.

They are speaking openly about anxiety, depression, grief and trauma.

They are supporting one another through peer groups.

They are becoming role models who demonstrate that emotional honesty and resilience can exist side by side.

Every one of these conversations weakens stigma.

Every one creates permission for someone else to speak.

Perhaps the greatest legacy we can leave the next generation is not the expectation that they should always appear strong.

Perhaps it is the confidence to know that strength includes compassion, honesty, connection and the courage to ask for help when they need it.

The story is already changing.

And every conversation we choose to have becomes another sentence in that new story.

Take a Moment to Reflect

As you finish this collection, you may wish to consider:

What messages about emotions would you like the next generation to grow up believing?

How do your own words and actions influence the people around you?

Is there one conversation you could have that might encourage someone else to feel less alone?

What kind of legacy would you like to leave when it comes to mental health?

Changing culture begins with individual choices, repeated consistently over time.

If You'd Like Further Support

If this collection has encouraged you to continue learning or to seek support, the following organisations provide information, guidance and opportunities to connect.

YoungMinds

Supporting children, young people and the adults who care for them through resources, education and advice about mental health.

Place2Be

Helping children and schools create emotionally healthy environments where young people can develop resilience and confidence.

ANDYSMANCLUB

Weekly peer-support groups where men can speak openly, listen to others and build supportive connections.

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

Offering confidential support, practical advice and resources for anyone experiencing emotional distress.

Samaritans

Available 24 hours a day for anyone who needs someone to listen without judgement.

NHS Talking Therapies

Professional psychological support for people experiencing anxiety, depression, stress and other common mental health difficulties.

A Final Reflection

Breaking the silence is not about changing what it means to be a man.

It is about expanding what it means to be human.

A man can be strong and ask for help.

He can be resilient and still need support.

He can protect others without neglecting himself.

He can lead with courage while speaking honestly about his struggles.

Every time we replace judgement with understanding...

Every time we choose curiosity over criticism...

Every time we ask, "How are you, really?" and stay long enough to hear the answer...

We help create a future where fewer men suffer in silence.

Because the greatest change rarely begins with a national campaign.

It begins in homes.

In friendships.

In workplaces.

In communities.

And in one courageous conversation that tells another man:

"You don't have to carry this on your own anymore."