



MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Becoming

"The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are." — Carl Jung

**We are not
finished
versions of
ourselves**

Identity continues to unfold throughout adulthood. This final essay reflects on growth, acceptance and the possibility of becoming more fully ourselves without needing to abandon the responsibilities, relationships and experiences that have shaped us.

SPACE TO BREATHE THERAPY



Becoming

There is a temptation to think that by adulthood we should already know who we are. Somewhere between leaving school, building a career, forming relationships and meeting the countless responsibilities that life places before us, we begin to believe that identity is something to be completed rather than something that continues to unfold. We speak about "finding ourselves" as though it were a destination that, once reached, remains unchanged.

Life rarely works that way.

Every decade asks different questions of us. The confidence that served us in our twenties may not sustain us in our forties. The ambitions that shaped our early years may quietly lose their importance as relationships deepen, children grow, careers change or unexpected challenges emerge. What once felt certain may become uncertain, and what once seemed impossible may gradually become part of everyday life.

There can be a quiet discomfort in recognising that we are still changing. We often celebrate certainty while overlooking the courage required to grow. Growth asks us to reconsider long-held beliefs, to question habits that once felt necessary and to become curious about parts of ourselves that have remained unexplored. This process is rarely comfortable, but neither is it a sign that something has gone wrong. It may simply be evidence that we are still becoming.

Much of life encourages us to look outward. We measure success through achievements, responsibilities and expectations. These things have their place, yet they tell only part of the story. Emotional wellbeing invites a different perspective. It asks not only what we have accomplished, but how we have related to ourselves while accomplishing it. Have we made room for joy alongside responsibility? Have we allowed ourselves to be known by the people we love? Have we offered ourselves the same patience and understanding that we readily extend to others?

There is no single way to answer these questions. Every person's story is shaped by different experiences, different relationships and different hopes. Some readers may recognise themselves in these essays. Others may find that only one or two reflections resonate. That is as it should be. Human experience resists simple conclusions.

Perhaps that is why emotional wellbeing is better understood as a lifelong practice than a destination. It is not a state of permanent happiness, nor the absence of struggle. It is the willingness to remain connected to ourselves, to other people and to the values that give our lives meaning, even when circumstances become difficult. There will always be seasons that test us. There will also be seasons that surprise us with possibilities we could never have imagined.

Throughout this collection we have reflected on silence, responsibility, loneliness, identity and loss. These experiences are not separate chapters that begin and end neatly. They often overlap, returning at different stages of life in different forms. Yet running quietly beneath each essay has been the same idea: that our emotional lives deserve attention not because they make us weaker, but because they are part of what makes us fully human.

Carl Rogers believed that people flourish in relationships where they experience acceptance, empathy and authenticity. Those qualities are not reserved for the therapy room. They can exist within friendships, families, workplaces and communities. They can also exist in the relationship we develop with ourselves. There is profound freedom in recognising that we do



not have to become someone else before we are worthy of understanding. We begin where we are.

Perhaps that is the real invitation contained within these pages. Not to become a different man, but to become more fully yourself. To recognise that strength and vulnerability are not opposites. That asking for support and offering support belong together. That purpose and rest can exist side by side. That hope is not found in pretending life is easy, but in trusting that even difficult seasons can become part of a meaningful life.

No collection of essays can provide all the answers, nor should it try. The most enduring questions rarely have simple solutions. They remain with us, changing as we change, inviting us to pause from time to time and ask how we are really living.

If these reflections have encouraged you to look at your own life with greater curiosity or compassion, then they have already served their purpose. The journey towards emotional wellbeing is not measured by dramatic transformations. More often, it begins quietly, with a single moment of honesty, a different conversation or the decision to meet ourselves with a little more kindness than we did yesterday.

Perhaps becoming is not something that happens once.

Perhaps it is what we spend a lifetime doing.