

*Mankind Project Experience Reports*

**REFRAMING MASCULINITY IN A MEN'S MUTUAL  
HELP ORGANIZATION, THE MANKIND PROJECT:  
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXPERIENCE REPORTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article introduces the ManKind Project (MKP), a US 503 (c) (1) non-profit, explains the various kinds of trainings and groups it sponsors, and introduces four experience reports by members of MKP who have had different trajectories of transformative participation and involvement.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MANKIND PROJECT,  
ITS TRAININGS, AND ACTIVITIES**

The original name of ManKind Project was the New Warrior Network (NWN). The meaning of Warrior in this context is the Warrior archetype, not the mercenary warrior/soldier. Originally, the gateway to the NWN was a men's training called the New Warrior Training Adventure (NWTA) developed by Rich Tosi, Bill Kauth, and Ronald Hering. Those of us who have completed the NWTA commonly refer to ourselves as Warriors.

There were a number of women's consciousness raising groups for women in the early 1980s and Bill Kauth, in particular, thought it was necessary to have a similar kind of event for men. The NWTA was seen as a weekend for men to get in touch with themselves. The first NWTA was in 1985 and since then

over 40,000 men around the world have completed the NWTA. What the founders later discovered was that the NWTA was really a men's initiatory weekend and additional support mechanisms were needed for the men to continue to achieve transformation.

### **MKPs REFRAMING OF MASCULINITY**

Jungian psychologist, James Hollis (1994) describes 8 secrets that men carry within. These secrets are: 1) Men's lives are as much governed by restrictive role expectations, as are the lives of women; 2) Men's lives are essentially governed by fear; 3) The power of the feminine is immense in the psychic economy of men; 4) Men collude in a conspiracy of silence whose aim is to suppress their emotional truth; 5) Because men must leave Mother, and transcend the mother complex, wounding is necessary; 6) Men's lives are violent because their souls have been violated; 7) Every man carries a deep longing for his fathers and for his tribal fathers; 8) If men are to heal, they must activate within what they did not receive from without. (Barton, 2011, p. 18).

Another way of describing some of these "secrets" is: father hunger, male inexpressiveness, and lack of male friendship (Wilson & Mankowski, 2000).

Pentz (2000) takes the concepts of men's secrets/longings into his ethnographic research of the NWTA. Pentz describes some of the awarenesses he experienced and observed on the NWTA. These include feeling in a safe place to express deep personal feelings (other than just anger), learning to trust men (not just compete with them), and being able to speak honestly to other men. Pentz described five core themes from his interviews of staff and initiates which were: fathering from the men; better relationships; NWTA as a rite of passage into a deeper, more mature masculinity; increased spirituality (higher power in AA terminology); and increased feelings of personal integrity (Pentz, 2000, p. 214). All of these various factors described by Hollis, Wilson and Mankowski, and Pentz are ways that MKP reframes masculinity and allows a man to develop increased emotional intelligence.

Bill Kauth was also involved in men's groups and knew the self help benefits and transformation that could occur through men's participation in men's support groups (Kauth, 1992). Realizing that the transformative aspects of the NWTA required ongoing activities such as support groups and additional trainings to increase the healing, a training was developed called an Integration Training, which lasts 1 night a week for 10 to 12 weeks. The integration training has informational and emotional aspects of social support (Vaux, 1988). The current integration process is called the Primary Integration Training (PIT). After completing PIT, men joined the men's peer mutual support groups, called I-Groups.

The NWTAs are always a weekend retreat and cost in the neighborhood of \$700 per man. Some scholarships and payment plans are available for those in need. On the NWTAs the staff is one certified Leader and two or more certified Co-Leaders (depending on the number of men doing the NWTAs, which can range from 15 to 40 men). There is an extensive leadership training process for men on the leader track to being certified by the organized body of men who have been certified. These certified men receive a stipend. In addition, there are the costs of renting the site and food for staff and initiates. Men volunteer to staff and will also pay a staffing fee usually in the neighborhood of \$100.00. Some of the revenue from the NWTAs goes to MKP and is also used for local center operations, such as newsletters, part time administrative services, phone, postage, travel, space rental, etc.

There are a number of other trainings provided by MKP. These include Staff Development Training 1 and 2, which are designed to train men who volunteer to staff the NWTAs. There are Leadership Trainings 1, 2, and 3, which are for men interested in developing their leadership and are required for men who choose to go on "Leader Track" to become certified as leaders to lead the NWTAs. Certified leadership is part-time, not something that is full-time in the nature of a career. Some centers have a certification for PIT Leaders, although most are volunteers.

Each word of the "men's peer mutual support group" is an important element of the I-Groups (Barton, 2000, p. 5). Of course, they are "men's" groups. "Peer" is stressed through the weekly rotation of the leadership; the I-Group is not professionally facilitated. "Mutual" means that the men are giving to and receiving from each other. "Support group" means that it is a group in the nature of a self help group (Kurtz, 1997), where the men support each other—mainly in the form of emotional social support.

In ManKind Project there are both open and closed I-Groups. Traditionally, all I-Groups were closed, limited to the men who had completed the NWTAs. In the last few years, more and more I-Groups have become open I-Groups where uninitiated men are welcome to sit in the circle and participate in the process. This allows uninitiated men an opportunity to see how the I-Group works and to make a more knowledgeable decision as to whether they would want to do the NWTAs.

I-Groups meet weekly or biweekly for 2 or 3 hours at a time. Some have dues, some create scholarship funds to help men cover the cost of the NWTAs, and some pay rent. It varies from meeting to meeting, though rent is far more likely in metropolitan areas where space is more limited. Leadership rotates among the members. The format consists of what are called rounds. How the I-Group operates and what the various rounds consist of are part of what is taught in the PIT Training. There is usually no cross talk, meaning that when a man is sharing, he is not asked questions, he is not interrupted. When a man is completed his sharing he will say "I'm in" and that means that he is complete and the next man, moving clockwise, has his turn to share.

Some centers have meetings for gay men, which may be a regular I-Group or a special monthly meeting for gay warriors. Women are not part of an I-Group. However, some communities have gender circles of men and women, some for husbands and wives. The Men of Laughing Waters I-Group (Kalamazoo, MI) sponsor a monthly Co-Ed Circle at Unity of Kalamazoo for men and women in addition to their regular biweekly I-Group meeting. The topics shared in a Co-Ed Circle are very similar to topics in an I-Group. They range from “father wound,” “mother wound,” anger issues, fear issues, shame issues, guilt issues, etc.

There are various constituencies in MKP. These are I-Groups, Leader Body (certified men), Elders (Warriors 50 and over), Multicultural, Lodge Keepers (of the sweat lodge on the NWTa), Centre Council (representing the various centers), and most recently the Young Warriors (men 18-35). Each of these MKP USA constituencies has annual MKP USA meetings and often meetings at the center level. I-Groups meet around the world: Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico City, Moscow, New Zealand, Switzerland, Stockholm, United Kingdom, and United States. In addition, men who have completed the NWTa live in Italy, Japan, and Spain.

## THE EXPERIENCE REPORTS

Howard Czoschke’s title is Transforming Competition to Cooperation. Howard did his NWTa in 1987 and has been active in MKP since then. Howard describes his life’s changes and enhancement through his participation in MKP and the I-Groups.

Ross Thomas Lucas shares his experience of Becoming Accountable in My Life. Ross attended the NWTa because he wanted a connection with men in a deeper and more meaningful way and how his increasing emotional maturity occurred through being challenged by the men in his I-Group.

Atiba Seitu, also known as Kevin Zeigler, tells about the changes that he saw in a friend after his friend had gone through the NWTa and decided to do the training himself. Kevin’s next stretch was to walk through his fear and staff his first NWTa. The staffing experience became, in important aspects, more powerful for him than his NWTa.

William Ratti attended the Windsor/Detroit Elder Gathering in November 2012. Bill relates his entry into the NWTa and how he learned that being an Elder does not mean one is old, but wise, and the power he felt in becoming a Declared Elder in MKP.

Another aspect of the NWTa is the development of a personal mission. My current mission is: that I create a world of love and support by healing and empowering men, women, and children. This is my passion—including work on this special issue as it allows me to share the powerful aspects of participation in MKP. Now on to the Experience Reports. Enjoy.

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