

32 Major Problems that Men Bring into Therapy
Self-Assessment
By Daniel P. David, PhD ©

Self-reflection can be an important step for personal growth and development. Below are brief descriptions of complex problems that you will want to address with your therapist. This self-assessment is designed to help you and your therapist, Dr. David, identify areas that have caused problems for you. By identifying areas to work through in your therapy, we will be able to maximize your therapeutic process and progress. Using the scale below, please place the number (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) that best measures the problematic area that is described. Feel free to put a checkmark in front of sections (example: fear, anger, sad, etc.) that resonate with you the most. Please be aware that this is not a diagnostic tool. Please give yourself 15-20 minutes to do this assessment. Try to be as honest with yourself as possible.

5 = True of Myself, 4 = Mostly True of Myself, 3 = About Halfway True of Myself, 2 = Slightly True Of Myself, 1 = Not at All True of Myself

1. **___ Wounded warrior** – a metaphor used to understand how men are mentally wounded and carry emotional wounds throughout their lives; they suffer on the inside and may never heal their wounds; they often don't realize that they are wounded. ___ Wounded men and boys have often experienced emotional or physical abuse, shame, humiliation, or neglect. ___ Wounded men developed coping strategies from boyhood that lead to problems in manhood (e.g., suppressing feelings, medicating feelings through drugs and alcohol, using anger as a way to cope, etc.). ___ Wounded men may struggle with: depression, anxiety, anger-rage, low self-esteem, low confidence, insecurity, lack of motivation, fear of intimacy, fear of rejection or abandonment, identity confusion, etc. They may believe that no one understands their pain. ___ Some wounded men strive for perfection or high achievements in order to fill the hole in their hearts. Wounded men may also have problems with ___ trying to impress people; ___ struggle to live up to other's expectations; and are likely to become ___ codependent caretakers. ___ Wounded men may become rescuers, fixers, people pleasers, addicts, knights in shining armor, performers, etc. ___ Many wounded men struggle with authority figures; they have difficulty with structure or rules, and they may even get into trouble with the law. ___ Some men struggle with religious wounds and fears based on shame or rejection.
2. **___ Father wound and the wounded son** – men who were wounded by their fathers in boyhood may carry the wounds for a lifetime. The wounds, buried in the unconscious, keep men stuck with negative self-images and destructive behavioral patterns resulting in low self-esteem and lack of confidence. ___ The wounded son perpetually struggles with anger toward his father that may manifest in other parts of his life. He may have rebelled against his father or resented his father; he may be stuck in a pattern of rebellion that has sabotaged his life. Negative feelings about his father impact a man's choices, self-perspective, and relationships throughout life. He may be stuck in repeating patterns of trying to "prove himself as a man" to his father, to women, or others in his life. He may struggle with authority figures (e.g., bosses, law enforcement, older men, etc.) all throughout his life. ___ Many men who struggle with unresolved past hurts and difficult relationships with their fathers experienced rejection, emotional or physical abuse, and/or abandonment. ___ They may have had an alcoholic father, an absentee father, abusive father, passive father, a deceased father, or an uninvolved father; and as a result, they lack healthy male role models and skills in knowing how to be a man. A third of boys in America are fatherless. The lack of a father as a role model impacts a man's self-knowledge about how to be a healthy, productive man. ___ They often lack knowledge about how to be fathers to their sons. They also struggle with how to be a healthy, well-balanced man in relationship with women and other men. ___ Many men have "father-hunger" which is a longing for their father's approval.
3. **___ Father vow** – men who make a vow that, "They will never be like their fathers," often grow up to be just like their fathers and often feel anger, shame, and confusion about how they have hurt themselves and their loved ones. The father vow traps men in a pattern of becoming like the father that they reject.
4. **___ Stuck in boyhood** – men who have the age and body of an adult male, but are emotionally immature and emotionally unstable. ___ Men often say, "I still feel like a kid." ___ Men who struggle with finding motivation, fear success, perceives oneself as a failure, or feels lost or directionless is stuck. ___ Emotionally underdeveloped men may be prone to addictions, mood swings, impulsivity, emotional roller coasters, and have emotionally volatile relationships. Being a man is more than a chronological age in adulthood, it is also an emotional maturing process that does not always come with physical age. Emotional maturity is what men need.
5. **___ Shame wounds** – shame is a core wound impacting a person's self-identity and self-worth. ___ Shame wounds may have been caused by being consistently criticized, emotionally abused, sexually abused, physically abused, religiously abused, embarrassed or humiliated at some point in life. ___ Shame, an emotional pain, may be a direct reason for many self-sabotaging behaviors (e.g., addiction, codependency, anger-rage, etc.). ___ Men often medicate their shame with high achievements, drugs, alcohol, sex, games, internet, excessive work, material things, etc. Repression of shame is an unconscious defensive behavior that leaves men highly guarded and detached from their emotional pain. ___ Men repress their hurts and pains and push them into an unconscious Shadow-self; they keep the shadow-self hidden beneath the conscious mind until it comes out to sabotage their lives in various ways.

6. **___Mother-Son Enmeshment & Male Individuation** – a man who struggles to establish an independent identity apart from his mother, which starts in early pre-adolescence, may not have completed the individuation process. Ultimately, if he cannot separate from her, he continues to struggle with feeling inadequate as a man. He may take this struggle to “be a man” into his relationships with other women in his life. Typically this results in abusive or tumultuous relationships, especially with women (e.g., girlfriend, wife, female boss, etc.). A healthy separation from his mother changes the relationship with her—she transforms from being the mother-to-a-boy into being the mother-of-a-man. The process of individuation allows the young man to become fully separated and secure in his identity as a man. Much of a boy's individuation process can be facilitated by an involved father, but when a father is not actively doing his part, the boy often struggles to break free from his mother. This can be painful for both the boy and his mother.
7. **___Boy-to-Manhood Initiation** – every boy needs to go through the transformation of becoming a man and leaving behind his boy-self. The problem with most men in our modern society is that they are uninitiated and feel lost about their identities and purposes as men. Boys need rites of passage and initiation into manhood in order to start their journey as a man. Historically, tribal initiations of young men helped their psychological and social development by giving them a milestone to mark their transformation from boyhood to manhood. A man's masculinity is his to determine and accept within a wide spectrum of men. Only men can initiate boys into manhood, not their mothers. Unfortunately, many men did not have fathers to help them with their transformation into manhood. As a result, most men have tentative relationships with other men, which create insecurities about their identities as men. Healthy men understand themselves and feel connected to “the Tribe” of other men. Mature men accept themselves and are accepting of other men. A mature man does not have to degrade, put down, or oppress women in order to be a man.
8. **___Father Acceptance** – a boy may know that his mother loves him, but he seeks acceptance from his father and other men to establish his identity as a man. When he does not perceive that he is accepted by his father or other significant male role models, he may struggle with his male identity, self-esteem, and self-confidence throughout his life.
9. **___Male Identity** – men can experience identity confusion, loss of identity, and develop a one-dimensional identity (e.g., work, career, substance abuse, etc.). The lack of a healthy identity undermines his confidence and causes social or generalized anxiety. Identity diffusion is also a problem for men who struggle with developing integrated, self-determined, and self-defined identities. Identity achievement is the goal of identity development; an arrested or underdeveloped identity usually leaves a man struggling with instability in his self-image. The key to healing and developing a healthier male identity begins by (1) identifying where a man was emotionally wounded and then by (2) working through identity development and healing process in therapy. Developing a healthier identity as a man is essential for experiencing a fuller, more balanced life.
10. **___Lack of Confidence** – men who are more concerned with what others think, seldom take appropriate risks, discount their accomplishments, and/or view themselves as ineffectual, difficulty making decisions, inability to be assertive, and fear of conflict, suffer with low levels of confidence. Confidence is self-assurance in one's abilities to be assertive, decisive in making major decisions, and able to trust one's intuition. These are the results of a healthy male identity development.
11. **___Womanizer or ___Distrust of Women**– a man who believes that he needs a woman in his life to make him feel better as a man tends to turn women into objects. Womanizers are likely to be controlling in their relationships with women (e.g., excessively distrustful, checking up on her, questioning her motives, etc.). These men frequently struggle with staying committed and faithful in a relationship with a woman. These men often have misogynistic attitudes, although they are not usually aware of them. They may struggle with female colleagues or women in authority roles. Distrust of women ___Anger toward women ___Conflict with women.
12. **___Failed Rebellion Stage** – an adolescent male (17-25 y/o) needs to achieve emotional and physical independence from his parents. A failed rebellion stage is a failure to separate from parents to become an independent, self-sufficient individual. When a young man individuates from his parents during his rebellious years, he develops his own personality and identity, which gives him confidence in himself. A failed rebellion is marked by unsuccessfully separating emotionally, physically, and/or financially from his parents. His struggle to individuate from his parents may be carried into adulthood and continued in his relationships with his spouse, authority figures (e.g., teachers, employer, law enforcement, etc.), or other significant relationships. Other signs of a failed rebellion in adulthood are: difficulty making decisions, struggling with the opinions of others, life of drugs and alcohol abuse, social anxiety, the need to please others, fear of taking healthy risks, struggle with money management/financial independence, codependent behaviors, etc.
13. **___Anger & Aggression** – anger is often viewed as a masculine emotion, although considered negative and destructive. Men often use anger as a way of coping with other uncomfortable emotions like: fear, sadness, hurt, guilt, shame, helplessness, etc. Aggression is also misconstrued as being a masculine characteristic and is encouraged in covert ways, such as in sports, military training, competition or in taking an “aggressive stance in business.” Anger, rage, aggression, resentments, and violence come from a source of internal emotional wounds. Anger management does not work if the wounds are not healed. The goal for men is to learn the difference between healthy expressions of anger and unhealthy expressions of anger related to their wounds. Psychological wound healing is a necessary part of healing anger.

14. ___ **Limited Emotional Awareness** – many men experience a limited range of emotional awareness. They may be familiar with anger, but struggle with feelings of hurt, shame, guilt, fear, helplessness and sadness. ___ Addicted men often experience emotional detachment and use drugs or alcohol as a means of medicating or coping with their negative feelings.
15. ___ **Performance Anxiety** – a man who bases his self-worth on his performance and develops anxiety around being unable to perform adequately experiences performance anxiety. ___ Performance anxiety is commonly experienced at work, ___ during sex, and in ___ social situations. ___ Performance anxiety is related to an unhealthy preoccupation with the opinions or judgments of others. ___ Hypervigilance and ___ panic attacks often result from past hurts (emotional, physical) which keep the mental/emotional “alarmed state” switched on.
16. ___ **Work-Based Identity** – a man who bases his identity on his resume or his work becomes one dimensional and out of touch with the other aspects of his self-identity. ___ Having a work-based identity means that as long as a man is performing or working his identity remains intact. However, when he is no longer performing or working, ___ his male identity is threatened, which causes serious anxiety and depression. ___ Losing a job or having to change his profession can cause serious emotional problems.
17. ___ **Sexualizing Emotions** – men who are unable to connect to their emotions, especially emotions that make them feel vulnerable tend to sexualize their emotions as a way to cope. By sexualizing their emotions, men cope with feelings of weakness, loneliness, insecurity, stress, helplessness, or fears by seeking sexual gratification for a release. They may expect their sexual partner to soothe away their fears or relieve their tensions with sex. His sexual partner may feel used and harbor resentments as a result of this sort of behavior. Sexualizing emotions can lead to ___ porn addictions, ___ problems with intimacy, and ___ sexual promiscuity.
18. ___ **20-Something Lost Boys** – young men in their twenties may ___ feel lost, ___ unmotivated, or ___ overwhelmed by life's responsibilities and expectations. The decade of the twenties is a very important time for young men to set the direction and pace of their lives. Academic achievement, career development, and establishing healthy relationships are part of a central theme for men in their twenties. Young men who get ___ stuck in school, ___ have toxic relationships, and ___ fail to become emotionally and physically independent from their parents often tail spin into ___ depression, ___ anxiety, ___ apathy, and ___ substance abuse. ___ Older men may recall feeling lost during this period of their lives, which may have caused resentments, loss of confidence, and
19. ___ **40-Something Re-invent Yourself Time** – when a man reaches forty (40+) life begins to change. ___ Caught between stagnation and a need to regenerate his life; this is an important time for a man to take inventory and evaluate his life. ___ He may begin to question his purpose or the meaning of his life. ___ He may suddenly feel dissatisfied with his career or work. ___ He may feel that his life has become routine and lacks challenges. This is a natural time for a man to be honest with himself, take an inventory of his life, and to work toward positive changes in his life. Questions to consider: ___ Who am I? ___ What do I want in my life? ___ What is my purpose?
20. ___ **Poor Communication Styles** – many men struggle with poor communication, which is a reason for most conflicts within their relationships, especially with women. ___ Men tend to have difficulty expressing their feelings, fear getting angry and losing control, and fear that giving too much information about themselves or their situations will be used against them. ___ Avoidance, silence, shutting down, and making assumptions are all ingredients for communication problems.
21. ___ **Intimacy Problems & Friendships** – men who struggle with intimacy often mistakenly equate intimacy with sex. ___ Fear of closeness, fear of vulnerability, and the fear of being perceived as weak cause intimacy problems for men. ___ Isolation and loneliness are major consequences related to problems with intimacy. Having no personal boundaries or being enmeshed with someone is also a sign of intimacy problems. ___ Men who have intimacy problems not only have problems with women, but they may also struggle with building and sustaining long-term friendships with other men. Learning how to have healthy intimacy with significant partners, family, and friends is essential for a happier and healthier life.
22. ___ **Lack of a higher meaning and purpose** – a man who struggles with living a life that seems aimless or meaningless often experiences deep depression and a sense of futility. Every man, regardless of age, needs a mission or adventure in life. It is a part of man's psyche to want to live for some other purpose greater than himself. Physical, emotional, and spiritual quests help to re-align a man's energies and bring back health to his life. Clearing up the fog and confusion in his life becomes necessary in order for the man to find a new direction and purpose in his life. ___ As long as he remains in the fog, he remains lost and unfulfilled.
23. ___ **Conflict-Avoidant** – men who are conflict-avoidant struggle with conflicts for several reasons. ___ Firstly, they may fear that loss of control over their emotions in the midst of a conflict. ___ They may fear that their anger will become extreme, turning into rage or physically aggressive. ___ Secondly, they avoid conflicts because they fear “being wrong” or misunderstood. This often comes as a result of being unable to adequately verbalize their feelings and arguments so that others can understand their reasons for disagreeing. ___ Men who are conflict-avoidant often struggle with fear of being assertive because it may cause a conflict.
24. ___ **Fear of Commitment** – men who struggle with making commitments in relationships often express some sort of fear, such as: ___ 1) fear of failure in relationships ___ 2) fear of being overwhelmed with a dependent person, ___ 3) fear of “missing out” on other potential relationships after committing to a single relationship, and 4) fear of rejection.

25. **Boundary Confusion** – Boundaries are physical, emotional, sexual, relational, and spiritual limitations that make people safe and healthy. Men with boundary confusion may struggle with one or more of the following: __1) difficulty setting boundaries (e.g., limits, rules, time, appointments, yes/no answers, etc. __2) difficulty following or adhering to boundaries (e.g., respecting other's limits, following rules or laws, etc.), and __3) difficulty with being able to say “no” to people without strong feelings of guilt or shame. Codependency is a common term used for individuals with relationship problems that involve boundary setting.
26. **Physical/Emotional Abuse** – many men experience abuse but are afraid to talk about it. __Boys who are physically beaten and/or verbally abused grow up to be men who are deeply wounded. __Domestic violence, racial violence, sexual violence, and emotional violence are a common experience for boys and men. If a man is abused, he internalizes deep shame and guilt which often turns into self-blame and self-deprecation. __ His fear of being perceived as weak or vulnerable is often hidden by a defensive bravado or aggressive attitude. An abused man or boy may turn to isolation and avoidance as a means of coping. Male-on-male or male-on-female violence is commonly reported, but female-on-male violence is not commonly reported because male victims tend to shy away from reporting crimes because of fear of being shamed in the process. All types of violence are harmful to a man's sense of well-being and security.
27. **Disconnect with the Authentic Self** – Your authentic self is who you are at the absolute core of your being. When a man is out of touch with his authentic self, he typically experiences a disconnect from his true self and his core needs, feelings, emotions, desires, etc. He is most likely functioning in his “false-self” which is characterized by: __1) putting on a performance, __2) people-pleasing behaviors, __3) preoccupation with how others think or feel about him, __4) perfectionism and __5) the need to impress others. __He may feel that he is inadequate, less than, or not good enough so he may overcompensate by acting or behaving overly confident, cocky, arrogant, or undercompensate by minimizing his work, accomplishments, achievements, etc.
28. **Self-sabotaging behaviors.** Men who struggle with self-sabotage often fall into patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and habits that undermine, hinder, or derail their ability to succeed in relationships, career goals, job success, college graduation, personal achievement, etc. Self-sabotage is also part of chronic relapsing in addiction/alcoholism recovery. Some self-sabotage behaviors are: __procrastination, __poor time management, __poor money management, __negative thinking, __over eating, __poor school study habits, __difficulty setting limits with self or others, __difficulty with setting boundaries, __other self-defeating behaviors.
29. **Attachment Patterns & Relationships.** Relationship patterns are about how we attach to others. Attachment styles are either: __1. Secure, __2. Ambivalent-Anxious, or __3. Fearful-Avoidant Attachment. Attachment styles are important because they influence how people think, feel, and behave in their relationships, and especially in romantic relationships. __Men with secure attachments feel a sense of security and comfort within a relationship. __Men who struggle with relationships often have difficulty with attachments. Men have different reactions coming from Ambivalent-Anxious and Fearful-Avoidant attachment styles. These reactions may include: __intense jealousy, __jealous rage, __fear of rejection, __fear of abandonment, __anxious preoccupation with the opinions of others. When attachments are unsure or not secure, __men may have a difficult time making a commitment to a relationship or they may get into cheating in a relationship. __Trust issues and control issues are common with insecure attachments.
30. **Alcoholism & Substance Addiction.** Men self-medicating with alcohol, illicit drugs (e.g., cocaine, meth, molly, pot, etc.), and/or prescription pills (e.g., Xanax, Pain pills, etc.) often struggle with coping with stress, anxiety, depression, low self-worth, or anger in healthier ways. Addictions are maladaptive coping skills that have become self-destructive habits and chemical dependencies. Which substance do you struggle with? Please check all that apply: __alcohol __meth __cocaine, __MDMA __pot __heroin, __party drugs, __synthetics, __Other: _____
31. **Spiritual Crisis & Recovery.** Spiritual crises are related to the “Big Picture of Life,” the basic questions of life, and how each individual connects to life on several levels. __Men who struggle with feeling isolated and alone often have a limited or gloom-and-doom perspective about the big picture of life. __Some men struggle with finding meaning in life. __Other men have been exposed to religious abuse, shame, and guilt which have caused them to fear or reject spirituality. __Addicts have often gotten on the wrong path with drugs and/or alcohol and experience a distorted spirituality and disillusionment. __Spiritual recovery is not about religion, although religious recovery can be a part of recovery. Spiritual recovery is about connection: connection to our authentic selves as well as connection to people, communities, the planet, etc. And spiritual recovery may include a connection to a Higher Power (e.g., God, Great Spirit, the Force, Mindfulness, physical laws of the universe, etc.). Spiritual practices like meditation, mindfulness, nature-based experiences, art, music, etc. are nonreligious ways of connecting to life.
32. **Sexuality.** Sexual identity is a major part of a man's overall identity. As a boy grows into adulthood, he is challenged with learning about his sexual self-identity. This is often a confusing time within a young man's life and may lead to __insecurity __lack of confidence __ identity problems, __ sexual function issues, etc. __Shame and fear related to sexuality may have caused sexual identity problems.

Take the Results to Therapy

Now that you have completed this assessment, please bring it with you to your next therapy session for you and your therapist to begin the process of determining what you will want to work on. You will want to discuss goals that will help you to achieve emotional and psychological healing and well-being.

Assessment-Based Treatment Goals

Now that you have completed your self-assessment, you will want to review and discuss your answers with Dr. David. Together you will identify any major problems that hinder, sabotage, and impede your ability to achieve peace of mind, confidence in yourself, healthy relationships, and/or job and career success. After completing and reviewing your assessment answers, any issue that you gave yourself a 3, 4, or 5 may be what you want to work on in your therapy.

What are your treatment goals?

- What would you like to change about yourself? (Habits, thoughts, behaviors, perspective, outlook, attitude, etc.)
- What behaviors would you like to change? (Habitual behaviors, angry outbursts, aggression, shyness, reactions to things, etc.)
- What patterns have you identified in yourself that you would like to change? (Avoidance, procrastination, self-sabotage, etc.)
- What thought patterns would you like to change? (Negative, guilt, shame, self-criticism, etc.)
- What emotional problems would you like to change? (Excessive: anger, guilt, shame, anxiety, etc.)
- What emotional wounds would you like to heal? (Past hurts, past traumas, etc.)
- What past or present relationships would you like to heal? (Father, mother, sibling, friend, colleague, etc.)
- What addictions would you want to overcome? (Alcoholism, drug abuse, food addiction, porn, etc.)

Your Therapy Goals:

Goal 1. _____

1a. _____

1b. _____

Goal 2. _____

2a. _____

2b. _____

Goal 3. _____

3a. _____

3b. _____

Recovery Statement:

It is my intention to improve my _____ in order to achieve a happier, healthier life.

(Behaviors, Thoughts/Thinking, Feelings, Situations, Relationship, etc.)

It is my intention to change: _____ in order to raise the quality of my life.

(Behavior, Thoughts/Thinking, Feelings, Situations, Relationship, etc.)

I make a sincere commitment to do all that I can to improve and maintain my recovery from substance addiction.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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