

Book Review:

I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression by Terrence Real



I attended a training at Adelphi University recently by Terrence Real who wrote the book ‘I Don’t Want to Talk About It’. While it is true men hide their depression behind their anger, he was not the first to discover this. As a female therapist I have seen over the last five years more men coming for treatment with a variety of concerns, often relationship, bullying and sexual issues. It’s rewarding to see men allowing themselves space to cry, yell and to gain compassion for their own fathers and selves.

Many other authors have suggested our society has imposed emotional limits on our male counterparts who have also experienced trauma, abuse and neglect. Men need to be encouraged to express a full range of emotion, not hide the painful and sad parts of their experiences. Until we provide that to our men, they will have to continue to express their depression in isolation, addictions and anger. Real men cry, and need to be given latitude to do so.

I recommend this book as His illustrations in case examples invite you to go beyond the anger to the ‘heart’ of men. – Michele Winchester-Vega, DSW, LCSW-R, ACSW



Men have been conditioned to believe that expressing emotions is a sign of “weakness” thereby hindering emotional growth. These messages have influenced us since our youth and have only changed marginally over the course of time. Societal norms have allowed men to adapt defenses for dealing with internalized emotions often times resulting in covert depression. Covert depression in men differs from common depression in that it manifests itself as grandiosity and traits of narcissism. The book, “I Don’t Want To Talk About It” by Terrance Real, brings awareness to covert depression by exploring the inability for males to directly address emotional suffering and depressed feelings. Men utilize the symptom of covert depression to mask painful past experiences through an inflated sense of self in order to manage feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore, it leads males to develop unhealthy behavioral patterns ranging from toxic relationships to addiction. This process fuels their feelings of self-worth and allows them to avoid difficult emotions. The book discusses overcoming male depression through transitioning covert depression to overt depression which involves identifying the origin of the painful experience and acknowledging the emotional suffering it has caused throughout our lives. Terrance Real’s, “I Don’t Want To Talk About It”, offers real life accounts of individuals suffering from covert depression that all men can relate to and provides examples of how these issues impact men as a whole. In family therapy, it is important that emotional issues are given careful consideration particularly in men due to their reluctance to address these barriers. “I Don’t Want To Talk About It”, provides an excellent framework for exploring the effects of covert depression on family and child rearing. – Reginald Powell, LMFT



“I Don’t Want To talk About It” takes a comprehensive look at the problem of covert depression in men.

As in all patriarchal societies, men are taught to believe that displaying and talking about their emotional pain, feelings of worthlessness and unsafety, and trauma experiences are reflective of unacceptable vulnerability and weakness. Covert depression is externalized in the form of achievement, altruism or self-centered pursuits. The goal for men is to avoid the reality of the depressive condition thus reinforcing the detrimental effects of the depressive symptoms. Eventually covert depression manifests itself as an acute form of overt depression that is recognizable by others. This book illustrates the idea that men are not taught to develop skills that help them to cope with the impact of painful life events leading to disconnection for self and others. Terry Real's case study examples are a great demonstration of the power that men can tap into when they allow themselves to connect with their emotions and their loved ones from a different perspective in which they are able to acknowledge the damage created by certain traumatic events and the reality that healing can happen. I highly recommend this book to therapists and anyone who needs to have a better understanding of the impact of depression on men. – David J. Miranda, LMSW



Real provides a thorough examination of the male experience of depression. He describes the socio-cultural, family dynamic, and biological factors that intertwine to facilitate the pathogenesis of this insidious disease and exacerbate its symptoms. Real delineates between overt and covert depression and highlights how social constructs of male gender norms contribute to the creation and maintenance of the latter. He explains the transmission of depression from fathers to sons using examples from his own life and clinical practice. He thoroughly examines the reciprocal relationship between biochemistry, behavior, and environmental factors.

The work is heavily laden with clinical terminology and scientific description which is interwoven with clinical case studies and Real’s personal narrative, making it both easy to understand and relatable. The book provides valuable insights to the mental health professional and layperson alike. Real’s work is a significant benchmark in the study and treatment of male depression and its ramifications on family members and society. -Ben Greenwald, MHC-P