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4 Questions about Freedom for Men

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“Patriarchy demands of men that they become and remain emotional cripples. Since it is a system that denies men full access to their freedom of will, it is difficult for any man of any class to rebel against patriarchy, to be disloyal to the patriarchal parent, be that parent female or male.”

— **Bell Hooks, The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love**

What is different about tonight from all other nights?

Question #1 On all other nights, I am socialized to suppress emotions such as sadness, fear, or vulnerability and present a stoic and unemotional exterior. I am culturally expected to be tough, resilient, and unyielding in adversity. But tonight, I will not suppress my vulnerability and sensitivity. Tonight, I will not hide my true feelings and project an image of strength and resilience even when I struggle internally.

Question #2 On all other nights, I wear a mask that defines masculinity by traits such as aggression, dominance, and sexual prowess that are not my own. But tonight, I will ignore the pressure to conform to this idealized version of masculinity. On this night, I will not suppress aspects of my true self that do not align with the distorted expectations of others.

Question #3 On all other nights, I work, or my mind is at the office. In doing so, I present a front of confidence, authority, and competence to assert myself and advance my career. But tonight, I will not prioritize my professional identity over my well-being, which may contribute to feelings of stress and burnout. Tonight, I will turn my cell phone off and ignore my email. Tonight, I will focus on the fundamental values that make me, me, and not the ones on my resume.

Question #4 On all other nights, I am a dedicated and committed father and husband. I feel pressure to embody the roles of protector, provider, and authority figure and suppress what is perceived to conflict with them. But tonight, I reject the compulsion to project success and self-sufficiency, even though I am experiencing challenges or uncertainty in my role as a provider.