

Michael Ray presents

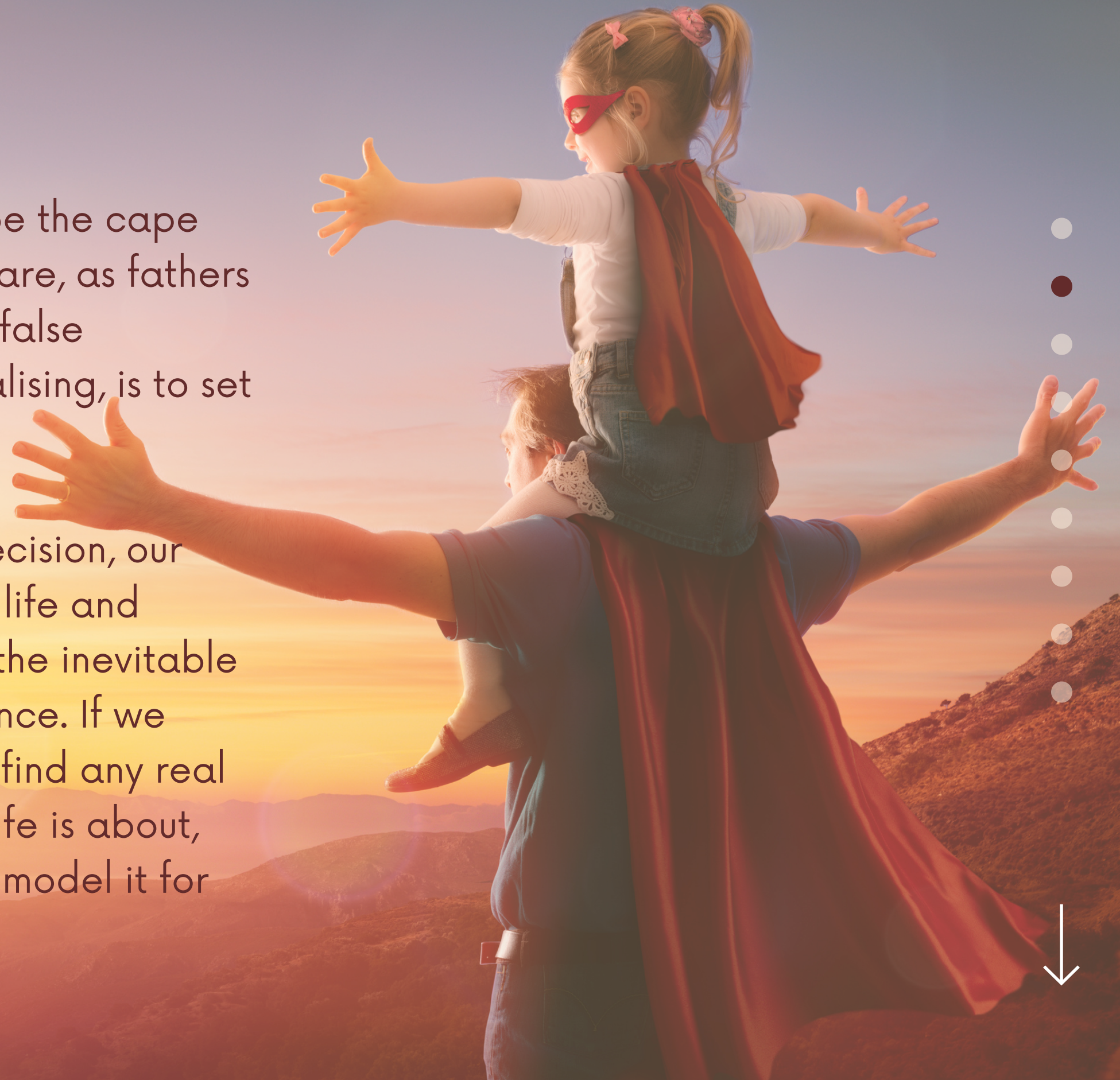
Reframing Masculinity Bravery and Courage



Cape- Wearing Superhero

Men, for too long have been required or mandated to be the cape wearing, problem solving, dragon slayers. However, we are, as fathers we are the example for our children and to portray the false narrative of invulnerability, which we can do without realising, is to set them up for self-doubt and anxiety.

Before we approach any type of action or make any decision, our authentic inner self, our values, must align with our outer life and goals. How can this happen if we deny the influence of the inevitable doubt, trepidation and social judgement we all experience. If we never stepped out of our comfort zone, we would never find any real growth or change, and at its basic level isn't that what life is about, isn't that what we aspire for our children? Then we must model it for them.



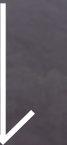
A man in a dark pinstriped suit jacket is pulling it open, revealing a blue and white striped shirt and a red tie. The background is a scenic view of a coastal town with buildings and a body of water under a clear sky. A semi-transparent grey box on the right side of the image contains text.

Bravery is Cultivated

One type of bravery is being able to live mentally within the discomfort of uncertainty, continuing to grapple with questions before jumping to answers, and continuing to seek truth beyond social acceptance and the comfort of conformity or outdated gender expectations.

If becoming a father doesn't fill you with uncertainty, not only about the basics of keeping your kid safe, nurtured and provided for, but also that deep unsettling worry that you're not a good enough role model for children to emulate or to seek in a partner – because they will, then you must know something I don't.

As fathers, **you** must step into this doubt whether you think you're capable or not. Bravery is not a quality you are, or are not, born with. It is one that can be cultivated and honed and rather than deny our fears we must welcome them as an opportunity for growth.



Accept Vulnerability

Without doubt, the “bravest” thing I’ve done as a dad, as a person, is to realise and accept my vulnerability, my fallibility and flaws, and in fact, the very things that made me uniquely me. I remember when I was younger, thinking fatherhood looked limiting or stifling, however, I’ve found it liberating and the catalyst for discovering who I am based on my values that I want for my daughter’s example. Was I an athlete? A trainer? An entrepreneur? A writer?

All of those labels have an extrinsic set of characteristics attached to them. Now I’m a dad none of those labels take priority, I’m a parent, not a father, not a mother, I’m a parent. People become too conscious of what other people think about them, and they try, wrongly, to conform to social norms. These include how certain genders should act. Even the bravest of us experience fear and trepidation.

John Wayne said:

"Courage is being scared to death -- and saddling up anyway" Ten simple words that summarise fatherhood, by a cowboy so you know they are applicable dads!



Honest Vulnerability

“Humans respect those who seek the truth far more than those who claim to have found it.” Voltaire

I always ask: How can we move beyond the fear that destroys connectedness?

Bravery is a product of the heart. To be sure, we must learn to be comfortable with honest vulnerability that people or society might be judging us, and you may wonder: maybe I’m not as I’m “supposed” to be. This is an immediate impression. It’s not fully rational yet. You need to stop yourself from just agreeing to these impressions, so that you can figure out if they are right.

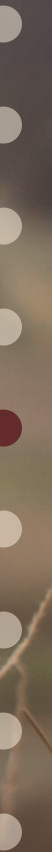
The crucial part is to discern whether the evaluative portion of that feeling makes sense. Yes, they are looking at me. But that’s not a big deal. Also, yes, I’m not conforming to social norms — I’m not as I’m “supposed” to be. But why does that matter? Why is that bad?



Parenting Traits

I have never understood the rationale that dictates the most masculine, manly, virile thing you can do is sire children, yet, if you want nothing more than to stay home, nurture and raise those children somehow, it's a feminine trait???

We need to find that feeling, and learn to separate out that part that holds that 'it's a bad thing'. It's not. Your life as a whole is not getting worse because of what "they" think. But if you give into that irrational first impression, then it just might.





Price Tag

To understand how much that is worth, consider it this way:

Can you put a price tag on living your own life? Do you want this for your children's life? If I offered, you a certain amount of money to live a certain way for the next five years. How much would you ask for?

What if it was for ten years? How much would you ask for in that case?

Then why are you giving your life away for free? Why are you right now doing what "they" say without charging anything at all?



A man wearing a red cape and goggles is holding a young girl in a white shirt and goggles. They are both looking upwards against a blue sky with white clouds. The man is looking up with an open mouth, and the girl is looking down at him with her arms outstretched.

It's Nothing Dramatic

Bravery doesn't necessarily entail doing something dramatic or astoundingly heroic. On a day-to-day basis many ordinary people summon uncommon courage to overcome both physical and psychological barriers in order to achieve a variety of necessities and goals.

You first need to muster up the willingness to do so. Before you can acquire any habit, or character trait, you must have a strong desire or willingness to do so. Contemplating the alternative, which would be to live in fear or a position of great vulnerability, should provide ample motivation.





Speak Up

When we work to develop bravery, we both empower ourselves with the ability to confront problems head on, as well as, acquire the skills required to deal with life's inevitable challenges and by showing our children our true selves, rather than some all-knowing super heroic depiction of masculinity, we set the example.

Men have been endowed with the gift of speech even though we don't use it nearly as much as we should. We must use it wisely. And when our hearts and minds authentically combine around an action, a passion, or a cause, it takes the power of speech to convey the importance of said pursuits.

A vital element of bravery is being able to speak up when it is terrifying to do so. When was the last time you asked for help? When was the last time you said, "I'm a bit vulnerable at the moment, I need to figure out why?"



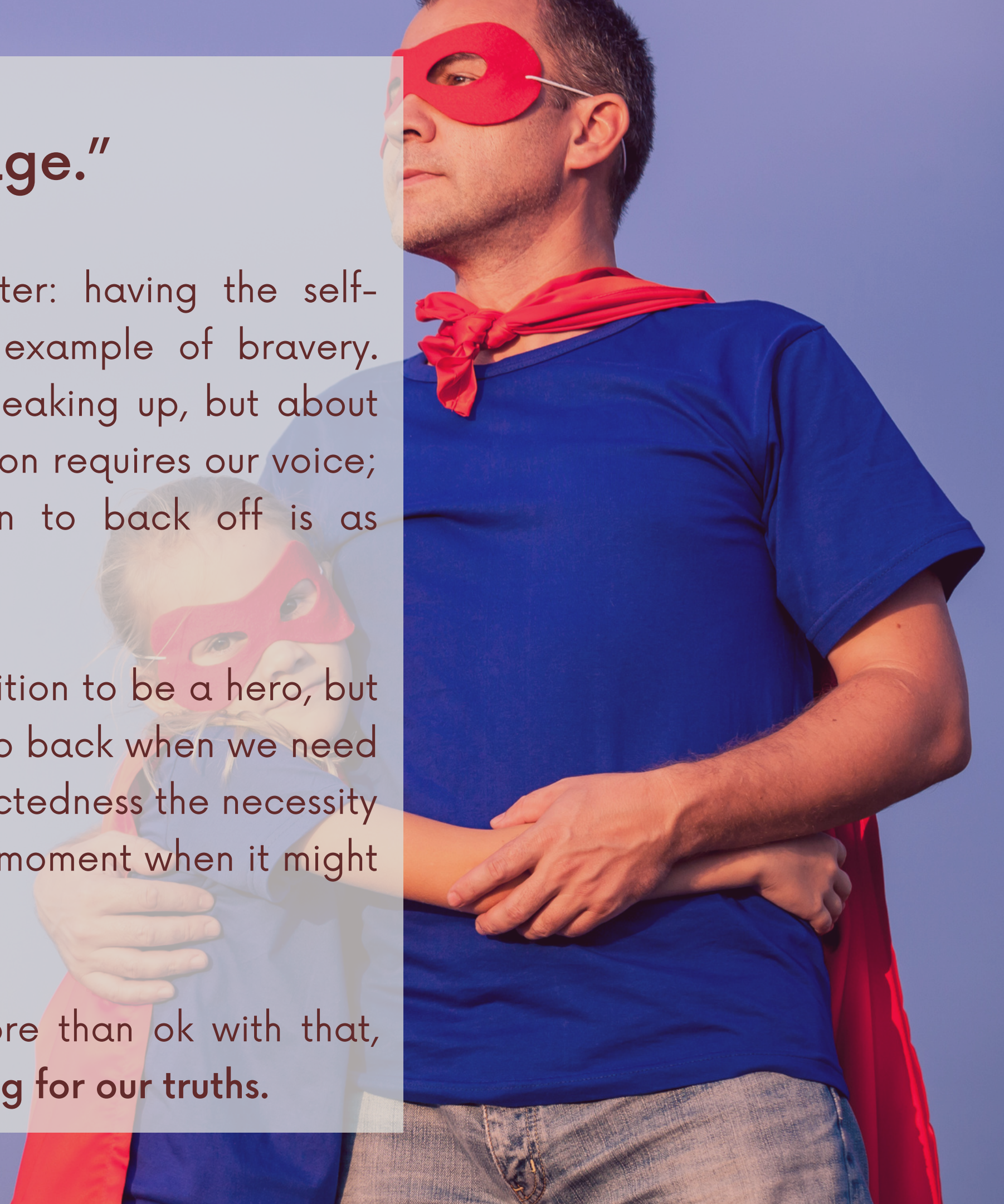
Lao Tzu, teaches:

"From caring comes courage."

Bravery isn't always an outward display of character: having the self-awareness to restrain oneself is an underexplored example of bravery. Bravery is not only about acting publicly or about speaking up, but about being silent when the times call for it. Not every situation requires our voice; not every pursuit needs our opinion. Knowing when to back off is as important, maybe even more so, than to stand up.

When we don't start from the masculine, ego-filled position to be a hero, but with the compassionate conviction of love, then we step back when we need to. To do this, we often need to rebuild trust and connectedness the necessity of harnessing the will to not act on our fear, even at a moment when it might feel most appropriate.

Do I have all the answers? Definitely not and I'm more than ok with that, because together my daughter and I will keep **searching for our truths.**





Male Stereotypes and Stigmas

"If your behaviour is governed or influenced by what is typical, expected or popular, rather than by what is required for your family, ethical and authentic, you don't have a problem with your masculinity, you have a problem with your character."

Michael Ray

About the Author

Michael speaks about his insights from his personal journey raising his daughter and the profound impact being a solo dad has had on his outlook.

He conveys his important message to organisations and individuals, brimming with concrete, actionable research and guidance with a passion that inspires. (He also has a breadth of dad jokes!)

Michael addresses the gender and societal roles that are no longer applicable and the negative impact on organisational, business and personal outcomes. He speaks straight from the heart and his ability to connect, resonate and inspire people is obvious. "

www.michaelray.com.au

Watch for his first book on sale in June 2021

