



# DECODING THE MANOSPHERE

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Top Blokes Foundation regularly gets requests from schools, community groups and parents for information on terminology surrounding the manosphere.

The words below may sound unfamiliar but they're shaping how boys think, behave, and form their identities. This quick guide tells you what you need to know.

## A | B

### ALGORITHMS

A set of invisible rules used by social media platforms (like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram) to decide what content appears on your screen. Algorithms track what a user watches, likes, or clicks and then recommend more of the same. For boys, this can mean being shown increasingly extreme or harmful videos without searching for them. It's how many young men are unknowingly pulled into toxic online spaces like the manosphere.

### ALPHA/BETA MATE

A popular (but outdated and false) concept that ranks men as 'alphas' (dominant, desirable, powerful) or 'betas' (weak, submissive, inferior). Boys are told they must become 'alphas' to gain respect — often through control or aggression.

## D

### DIGITAL RADICALISATION

The gradual process where boys are pulled deeper into harmful online ideologies often without noticing. What starts as fitness or dating advice can escalate into hate, misogyny, or even violent thinking, all through seemingly harmless videos recommended by algorithms.

## E

### ECHO CHAMBER

An online environment where a person only sees content or opinions that reinforce what they already believe. Social media algorithms often feed users more of the same views, creating a 'bubble' where alternative perspectives are blocked out. For boys, echo chambers can make extreme ideas feel normal, popular, or even true, because they're never exposed to healthier, opposing viewpoints.

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I

## INCEL (INVOLUNTARY) CELIBATE CULTURE

A subculture of men online who believe they are owed sex and relationships, but have been unfairly 'rejected' by women. Many incel forums glorify violence, demean women, and promote a belief that men are the true victims of society. Some high-profile acts of violence have been linked to incel ideology.

L

## LOOKSMAXXING

An extreme form of self-improvement common in online male forums, especially incel spaces. Boys are encouraged to obsess over their appearance, sometimes turning to steroids, surgery, or dangerous diets to appear more 'masculine' or 'desirable'.

M

## MANOSPHERE

A loosely connected network of online blogs, forums, influencers, and communities that promote extreme ideas about manhood. While some claim to offer advice or self-improvement, many promote misogyny, dominance, and anti-feminist views. It's become a major influence on young men often without parents realising it.

## MASCULINITY INFLUENCERS

Online personalities, often on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, who give advice to boys and men about how to be 'alpha', confident or successful. While some share harmless content, many promote harmful views that equate masculinity with control, emotional suppression, and aggression.

N

## NEGGING

A manipulation tactic where someone insults or undermines another person (usually a woman) to lower their self-esteem and gain control. Commonly promoted in manosphere and 'pick-up artist' spaces as a way to get women to be more compliant.

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P

## PILL (RED PILL / BLACK PILL)

Terms used in some online male spaces to describe belief systems:

Red Pill: A belief that ‘feminism has ruined society’ and that men must reclaim dominance.

Black Pill: A darker, often nihilistic belief that some men are doomed to be alone and unwanted, often leading to hate and hopelessness.

T

## TOP BLOKES

An Australian charity and youth mental health organisation that runs mentoring programs for boys aged 10–24 and advocates for solutions to some of society’s most pressing issues affecting young people.

The organisation helps young men navigate harmful messages online, build respect for others, improve mental health, and become leaders who challenge harmful behaviours instead of repeating them.

## HELP US SHAPE THE FUTURE. JOIN US TODAY

We believe every young man deserves to define his own path, free from harmful influences.

At Top Blokes, we’re committed to helping boys navigate today’s challenges and become the best versions of themselves.

Together, we can empower the next generation of leaders to thrive with respect, empathy, and strength.

To learn more about our programs, success stories, and how we’re making a lasting impact, visit our website at [topblokes.org.au](https://topblokes.org.au).



# HOW TO PROTECT BOYS IN A DIGITAL AGE



What is the manosphere? How do I talk to my son about it? These are questions we get asked every day at Top Blokes. We've put together this guide to help you understand the new world our children are living in and most importantly what we can do to help support and protect boys in a digital age.

## WHAT IS THE MANOSPHERE?

The manosphere is a growing network of online communities, influencers, podcasts, and social media accounts that claim to 'help men' but often promote misogyny, emotional suppression, and dominance as essential traits of masculinity.

It includes content from 'alpha male' influencers, self-proclaimed dating experts, and more extreme groups like incels (involuntary celibates) and 'red pill' forums. Many boys first encounter this content through fitness tips, dating advice, or self-improvement videos but algorithms quickly push them toward harmful and extremist ideas.

## WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Australian studies from organisations like Movember, Our Watch, the eSafety Commissioner, and Jesuit Social Services show that boys who engage with manosphere content, even casually, are more likely to experience serious and lasting impacts:

- **Worse mental health:** Boys who regularly follow masculinity influencers are significantly more likely to report feeling worthless, anxious, depressed, or angry. These online communities discourage vulnerability and label emotional expression as weakness pushing boys to bottle up feelings instead of seek help.
- **Hostile attitudes toward women:** Research shows that exposure to manosphere and incel content is linked to more sexist, dismissive, or even violent beliefs about women. Boys may start to believe myths like: Women lie about assault, consent is flexible, men are the 'real victims' of gender equality
- **Greater emotional isolation:** The version of masculinity promoted in these spaces tells boys to be self-reliant, emotionally cold, and distrustful of others especially women and 'weak' men. This can make boys feel alone, even when they're surrounded by people who care about them. In group settings, they may withdraw, become defensive, or overcompensate with bravado.

# HOW TO PROTECT BOYS IN A DIGITAL AGE



## HOW TO TALK TO YOUNG MEN ABOUT IT:

### DO

- Stay curious, not critical. Ask what he watches online, who he follows, and why.
- Name the algorithm. Explain how platforms show more of what you click, not what's true or healthy.
- Open the conversation early. Don't wait until there's a problem.
- Talk about respect. Discuss what healthy masculinity looks like: empathy, consent, courage, kindness.
- Promote services like Top Blokes who are there for boys and give an alternative social network so boys belong and feel connected.

### DON'T

- Mock the influencers. This can shut boys down.
- Lecture or shame, boys need safety, not silence.
- Assume he agrees with the content because he may be confused or unsure.

Navigating the complexities of online influence can be challenging, but having open, honest conversations with your son is one of the most powerful tools you can use to help him make sense of the digital world.

By staying engaged, asking the right questions, and providing guidance on healthy masculinity, you can empower your son to make better choices and find strength in vulnerability, respect, and empathy.

## CONVERSATION STARTERS



What do you think makes someone a good man?

Who do you follow online that you really look up to and why?

Have you ever come across a video that made you uncomfortable?

What do your friends say about dating, sex or respect?

