

SOLIDMAN

strong · present · confident

Pillar Two

Group Exercise #6

Learning to Embrace the Void

How to Become a Man of Confidence and Courage

INITIATION

“An acorn is not an oak when it is sprouted. It must go through long summers and fierce winters, and endure all that frost, and snow, and thunder and storms and side striking winds can bring before it is a full grown oak. So a man is not a man when he is created; he is only begun. His manhood must come with years. He who goes through life prosperous, and comes to his grave without a wrinkle is not half a man. Difficulties are God’s errands and trainers, and only through them can one come to fullness of manhood.” – Henry Ward Beecher

‘Initiation teaches you that both dark and light, joy and grief, good and evil are part of the journey.’ – Richard Rohr

Initiation or “rite of passage” is a process which moves a person from one interpersonal space to another within a certain group, moving them from point “A” to point “B”.

For our consideration here, it would be moving from being a boy to being a man. The transition from boyhood to manhood is a significant shift within a man’s life. However, our culture does not have consistent processes which signify a direct transition from one space to the next in the presence of older men who have made the transition themselves.

Initiation takes you through the Void.

Instead of opening our lives up into a new world of life and understanding, which initiation provides, we are usually just given a new list of do’s and don’ts which push us into trying harder to be more acceptable. We are left with trying to figure out life on our own.

Richard Rohr says it this way;

At certain points along the way, we are prone to getting stuck unless we have 1) some kind of initiatory experience, 2) some healing rites of passage, and 3) almost always the aid of some guides or elders. Our culture has unfortunately lost the rather universal tradition of initiation, and there are now few true elders to lead us onward. Instead of rites that encourage us to let go and begin anew, we are urged--both by the Church and by society--to perform better, to do the "right" thing, and to be even more successful.

Rites of passage exist in many cultures like killing lions, spending extended time in the wilderness alone, the sweat lodge or Bar Mitzvah. These experiences help a young man know he has made a transition, it is concrete. We have some experiences that do this, but they are not clear transitional movements.

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Finishing school, playing a sport, even a time in the military create significant effects in our life, but they are still not clear transitions.

The inconsistent path for most boys is found in what the cultural message communicates about what it means to be a man. We think our manhood is found when we lose our virginity, win at football, get a job, get married, or have our first child.

Our problem is that while these things are important, they do not fully or clearly guide us through the transition from boy to man.

Because of this, most men still have a sinking feeling that they are still a boy. There may be parts that feel manly and strong, but the transition is not fully sealed. They have not allowed themselves to be initiated by the Void. Boys will do everything in their power to avoid the uncertainty of the Void.

A rite of passage or initiation usually has something to do with impending death, separation from the women, unknown scenarios, or pain; and always with opportunities to rise up and prove yourself, or to fail.

☞ **The essence of initiation is experiencing the Void.**

The Void experience resolves the core questions we all have; “Do I have what it takes?”, “Am I good enough?”, “Can I handle whatever life brings my way?” or “What stuff am I made of?”. To answer these questions you must allow yourself to purposefully engage with the Void, that is initiation.

The outcome of initiation is confidence. It is the knowledge that you’ve got this or you have what it takes to get through just about any situation that you will face. And if you can’t handle it and things fall apart, you have the confidence that you’ll be ok, even if you die.

☞ **The outcome of initiation is confidence.**

During this time of initiation it is important that you gather men around you. These men should be men who are solid and have been through their own initiation. This is your Mt. Rushmore or what some call your tribe. We don’t have many male-only spaces in our world any more. It is important to develop your own places in your life where these relationships can flourish. Finding your favorite meeting places like a good tap room or man cave is essential to building your Mt. Rushmore. If you don’t have these men, start building this in your life now.

Fragility

The process of initiation shows you in many ways that you can handle just about anything that comes your way. You will find out that you are not fragile.

The un-initiated man believes he is fragile and cannot handle much difficulty. It is as though he believes he will break or crumble. This man will withdraw or fight when moments seem dangerous.

The “lizard brain” will go off in the face of criticism or embarrassment as though these things are actually dangerous and will cause irreparable harm.

Solid Man® Integrity Group**☞ Criticism is kryptonite to the un-initiated.**

Criticism and embarrassment are not lethal. But to most men, they seem to be so. This is because we believe we are fragile and that we can only handle so much difficulty.

This sense of fragility is at the core of why we believe we cannot handle so many aspects of life. We shy away from that which we believe will expose us as inadequate or incompetent. We stay away from difficult aspects of life which the Void throws our way.

We must remember we are not so damned fragile. We can handle more than we ever realized. We can withstand hardship and pain. We are men, we can overcome.

I remember my freshman year in football. At first my body was screaming. I was being pushed way further into physical pain than I had ever experienced. I felt like I was dying. But my coaches knew better. They knew I had what it takes. They knew I could handle it. I became stronger and began to develop a less fragile mindset.

☞ Remember, you are not so damned fragile.

Any form of initiation will teach you what you are capable of. It will teach you things you never knew about yourself. Avoiding difficulties keeps you in a state of fragility, of boyhood.

Rite of Passage

Any “Rite of Passage” has three main parts. Understanding each of these stages will help you as you develop your own initiation process.

Stage One; Separation or Detachment Phase

This phase requires that you would remove yourself from the place you are in at the present, your current environment or living situation. If you chose to leave your mother’s home to be a ski bum for the winter, that would be removing yourself. In some more primal cultures, the boys would be removed from their mothers and placed in a remote location.

This is when you withdraw from your current status. This is what happens when you move from Middle School to High School or High School to College. You were a big fish in a small pond; that just changed. This phase requires a change in scenery; different job, city, setting or relationship.

Sometimes this phase will happen whether you chose it or not. Your wife may die or you are given divorce papers. You may get laid off or experience a physically damaging car accident. You may have negative or positive consequences from your behaviors; losing your license from a DUI or gaining a new degree. All these will throw you out of one place and into a new place in life. If you can embrace this process, you will do just fine.

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Stage Two; Liminal or In-Between Phase**

This next phase is after you have placed yourself in a different setting you move forward and embrace the challenges that come your way. This is about embracing the Void which requires a ton of courage because the unknown is all around you. You are right in the middle of the uncertainty of the Void. You have no idea how anything will turn out or what you need to do. This is new and unknown territory.

The liminal phase creates a world of discomfort and fear. This is right where you need to be. This is the place that will test if you have what it takes or not. You will be stretched in ways you never imagined. Will you thrive or will you wither? How is this story going to turn out?

This is the time of transformation. You are in the Void where uncertainty rules. Your core identity and understanding about life is being challenged. Your beliefs are being crushed in the crucible. Who you are is under disruption. It is being torn down in order to be rebuilt on a stronger, more powerful foundation.

During this phase you may be entirely alone. Hold fast. Or you may have solid men around you to help you along the way. They will teach you how to master new skills and navigate difficulties. Since they have been through this, they will mentor you with their combined wisdom to learn to trust yourself in the face of difficulty.

This transition phase will take an unspecified period of time and will test everything you know about yourself. You must stay present in it and as much as you can keep connected with your tribe of elder men.

Stage Three; Reintegration Phase

Since you have persevered through the Void you will reintegrate back into life as a renewed man. You will have a new confidence in your true identity, you know more about who you truly are than ever before.

Sometimes this comes with outward recognition of higher status (like graduation or awards), but usually it is just you who knows the truth.

In this phase you will walk into your family home with a different posture. When you cross the threshold of the door of your childhood, you will sense a difference in your being, as though everything else has changed, but it is just you that has changed; you will interact with old acquaintances with more confidence, you will see things differently.

Often this experience will bring on a knowing smirk because you are now awake and very aware of who you are, how your family has influenced you and now how they have no hold on you whatsoever.

Goal of Initiation

The goal of initiation is to resolve your Identity Void by consistently embracing the Outer Void with courage. It is to create a man with a solid sense of his true identity so he can move with confidence. This is what initiation produces.

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As a man intentionally interfaces with the Void he will develop a life that is defined by confidence and courage. Inviting initiation into life is the way to transition from boyhood to manhood and how to gain mastery of masculinity.

☞ Initiation is the only way to build a masculine soul.

Initiation is the process of becoming a man who knows he can handle just about any situation possible, and he will be OK.

The initiation process is not just “one and done”. You will experience many seasons of life that will test you, deeply. It is important to experience the significant shifts in your teens and early twenties, but much of our testing will come later, as well. Embracing these processes is essential.

Misunderstanding the importance of initiation and failure to embrace the process is why so many men still feel like boys. It is true that our culture is not intentional about rites of passage, but no one really knows anything about initiation either. It is a lost art.

We do not understand that pushing a young man into the difficulty of the Void is the way to manhood. So, we shelter our sons and allow them to remain perpetual adolescents.

☞ The goal of initiation is confident men.

These men know they can take just about anything that life throws their way. They do not live in the posture of the victim where life is finished. They know they have strong influence in their world and they make life happen around them.

You come through initiation knowing who you truly are and what you are capable of. You know your true name. You are very internally referenced. When the Hobbits came home to the Shire in the *Lord of the Rings*, they were no longer these little, passive beings only concerned with what is for dinner, they had been changed. They had passed through the fire and they knew themselves and what they were truly capable of.

If you haven't gone through the initiation process, or you are only partially “cooked”, you will need to make it happen yourself.

Resolving the Identity Void

Remember that there are two parts to the Inner Void; the Identity Void and the Soul Void. The Soul Void will remain for your entire life. With that aspect of the Void, there will always remain a sense of emptiness where some things are unresolved, externally and internally. Accepting and embracing this internal emptiness is as essential for your growth as your intentional interaction with the Outer Void.

Now let's discuss the Identity Void.

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The Identity Void exists when I sense that I am not worthy, valuable or acceptable. It is the unresolved or unsettled questions that you have about who you are and if you are good enough. You have this Void in you when these categories are unresolved. The Identity Void must be resolved and will only be resolved through gaining a solid internally validated sense of self.

Like a good coach, the initiation process will push you beyond what you believe you are capable of. You will learn more about yourself than you ever knew. You will grow in your knowledge of your own depth of being. The Void will build a solid self, inside you. Initiation will help you resolve the Identity Void.

☞ **We all have deep questions about ourselves.**

To resolve the Identity Void you must know who you are. The first Pillar of the Solid Man Process discussed this. You must become internally referenced with a solid self and solid identity. Your sense of who you are must be strongly developed from the truths that exist within you.

You must also settle your unresolved questions. Those questions that haunt us and remain unsettled in our life will erode confidence and keep us silent and passive.

Here are a few of those questions that many men have;

“Do I have what it takes?”

“Am I good enough?”

“Am I acceptable?”

“Am I broken, unfixable?”

“Do I have a good heart?”

“Am I a good man?”

“Can I handle this?”

“Am I capable?”

If questions like this are floating around in you, it will be difficult to move through life with confidence. It must become a goal of yours to resolve and answer your primary questions about who you are and where your worth rests. Initiation does this for a man.

Another concept from Pillar One is your Shadow Self. You must know your Shadow Self and how it works in your life. Discerning how the Shadow Self is how you operate when you are in fear, unconscious or dis-integrated is essential in understanding your true self. If you still need help with this go back and read that chapter and discuss it with others.

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A concept that will help you resolve your Identity Void will be the concept of your Names. We will work through this concept in Pillar Three. We will identify your “False Names”, discover your “True Names” and help you to develop your own personal “Maximus” statement.

To build your confidence in the face of the Void, you must start to trust yourself. You need to believe that you can handle just about any situation that arises. You need to know that you are good enough, even more than enough. Remember that your Source will lead you to abundance. So much so that even in the face of death, it will be OK.

☞ **You will be just fine. You’ve got this.**

You will need to practice. So often we think that all will come to us naturally. But it takes practice so we need to stay with it. Stay conscious and aware, remembering the truth that you are learning.

Let your internal resources guide you; the more you move through the Void, the more you understand how your internal resources work on your behalf. Follow those internal signals and keep practicing especially after you make a mistake. You’ll get this.

Make decisions daily to stay in this. Even though the process is not complete, intentionally keep on the path to become solid. Decide to put yourself in situations that will force you to master this. Decide to become the solid, confident man you want to be. Decide to embrace the Void and actually create your own personal initiation to transition you to become a solid man.

Create Your Own Initiation

What do we do if we have never been initiated or if we feel undone in our manhood and masculinity? Since we don’t have clearly defined transitional rites of passage from boyhood to manhood, many men don’t experience a clearly defined manhood.

Right now let’s make an assessment. As you answer these questions don’t think too much about them. Go with your gut gives you and be very honest. First give a number from 1 to 10, ten being positive and one not so much. At the end add all the numbers and make an average.

Overall, how confident do I feel in myself?

What significant initiation experiences have I had that built my confidence, so now because of these how confident do I feel?

How much do I still feel like a boy (1 = boy, 10 = man) and what am I doing in my life that is boy-ish?

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To what degree are my questions unsettled and what are my unsettled questions?

To which degree do I live in fear? (What are my greatest fears?)

How frozen, passive or silent am I in life and how does this affect my relationships?

How much do I withdraw from difficulties like conflict, tension or emotions? (From what do I usually withdraw?)

How much do I try to avoid the Void and how do I usually do that?

Assess your initiation with an average of your “1 – 10” answers. What do these numbers say to you?

Exposure Therapy

One common avenue found in the world of therapy is what is sometimes called “exposure therapy”. The idea behind this is that in order to overcome a fear of something is to expose yourself to it. Then, over time, you will develop the understanding that this thing is not so dangerous as you believed.

Let’s say you have a fear of flying. You would first go to the airport. Then maybe find a way to be on a plane that is still. Then learn breathing exercises. Eventually planning travel by plane to a destination.

This is actually what initiation is. It is exposure therapy which teaches you that you actually have no need to be afraid. It teaches you that you can handle difficult situations. It teaches you that you really do have what it takes. It teaches you that you are not fragile.

The idea of Exposure Therapy is based on the idea that you will purposefully engage with whatever it is that you fear, in order to overcome that fear. It is making a decision to put yourself into Void experiences where you are not sure of the outcome. You can do-it-yourself.

Actually you will have plenty of opportunity throughout life to experience the Void. But there will be times when you can be proactive and make things happen so you can move toward growth and maturity as a man.

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Do It Yourself Initiation**

Here are some ideas to help you move into your world with the intention of transitioning yourself from the space of boyish uncertainty to masculine confidence. It will be important to develop your courage and move into these spaces even though they will push you into the unknown and undone parts of your life. Allow things to become undone and uncomfortable. Give yourself room to be stretched.

Start to do things that actually create Void experiences. People do this when they go skydiving or do something thrilling or out of the ordinary. You do this when you try new things that you have never done before or that you never have mastered. You will do this if you seek to resolve a broken relationship.

You will do this when you say you were wrong for a mistake you made. Creating your Void experiences are about pushing yourself into the unknown.

Face your fears daily. Fearlessness is absolutely essential in order to face the Void. Resolve whatever fears you have by pushing into them. Most of our worries and fears have no substance in reality. When we push through them they melt away like cotton candy in the mouth. Identify the fear and resolve to do that thing that you are afraid of. Accept the speaking engagement. Speak up if you have a question or say what you need. Ask for help.

Take time to do what you need to do in order to resolve your fear of death.

Crazy Horse often yelled “*Today is a good day to die!*” In the Battle of Little Bighorn, he yelled this once more to rally the warriors to courage and battle. His presence as a strong leader is remembered with honor because he had resolved that there were things to die for, and freedom is worth facing death.

And from *The Way of the Samurai*...

“Every day when one’s body and mind are at peace, one should meditate upon being ripped apart by arrows, rifles, spears, and swords. Being carried away by surging waves. Being thrown into the midst of a great fire. Being struck by lightning, Being shaken to death by a great earthquake. Falling from thousand-foot cliffs, dying of disease, or committing seppuku at the death of one’s master. **And every day, without fail, one should consider himself as dead. This is the substance of the Way of the Samurai.**”

If you wake every morning and know that you have no fear of death, you will engage with whatever life brings your way with courage and groundedness because you have settled your own death. You have welcomed the Void into your life.

David Deida, the author of *The Way of the Superior Man*, encourages men to push out over the edge, intentionally and often. This is huge for creating your initiation. The edge is a place of hesitance and fear. It is the place that most of you have sat in comfort your whole lives. Fear and passivity have kept us frozen. Now is the time to push and go over the edge.

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Dr. Robert Glover talks about the concept of “getting to rejection quickly”. This means that when I am afraid of rejection in any context, push to get your answer. Find out if a woman is interested in you. Find out if your boss will give you a raise. Find out if someone will take less money for what they are selling. Find out the answers that have been unasked because of fear. You will find out that you will get rejected way less than you ever imagined.

Stand up to experiences that are not in your favor or not how you would like them to go. Start saying things like, “This doesn’t work for me” when it really doesn’t work for you. Point out when people around you are crossing boundaries or not treating you well.

Speak clearly and firmly. Create healthy conflict and let the tension rise. Don’t defend yourself or explain your position, just rest in your space unapologetically. Say what needs to be said.

The outdoors has often been a traditional place of initiation. Get yourself out there into an adventure.

Nature is uncertain and wild. As you test yourself against some of the most powerful forces known to mankind you will find out who you really are and what you are capable of.

There are a million ways to experience nature and some of those ways are in your backyard. Learn how to hunt or fish. Learn them the challenging way, like bow-hunting with a longbow or fly-fishing. Get yourself out into wilderness; backpacking, rock-climbing or kayaking. Learn surfing or scuba. Create your bucket list and then go do it.

Engage in entrepreneurialism. Read “*Rich-dad, Poor-dad*” and create your own business. You can do this while you are doing your day job. Or maybe look for another job. Get your resume out there. Get certified in something you have always been interested in and then push into it.

☞ **Take thought out risks that you know are the right thing to do.**

In your relationships we often live in fear of rejection or being exposed as stupid or unacceptable. This withdrawal into a walled-up self-protective place keeps us from truly living in deep connection. Challenge yourself to live with an open heart in every part of your life. Open yourself up to expressing your emotions, desires and dreams.

Say what is going on inside of you. Let people see your true self. This openness is about vulnerability. Vulnerability is actually an important part of being strongly masculine. It takes a strong confident man to open his heart. And it takes courage to place yourself in a vulnerable position. You will soon learn that your confident, courageous vulnerability is the door to deep intimacy with your woman.

☞ **Confident Vulnerability = Attraction.**

Accept the Soul Void but don’t allow it to shut you down or shut you up. Be present in every part of your life, be with the people you love in the face of this deep Void.

This emptiness goes hand in hand with vulnerability and limitations. You will find that walking with this Void creates a life of authenticity and gratitude. Make the right decisions even if there is potential for loss.

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This is where integrity actually pushes you into the Void. Doing what is right sometimes places you in tough spots.

What will happen if I tell my wife the truth? What if I let my boss know about how I have been shady in my dealings with clients? Or stand up to them if they have? What consequences will I face if I stand up for a co-worker who is in the right? Should I tell the officer I was speeding?

Any time that I know what the right thing to do is, my integrity requires that I do it. Every time I do it, I will put myself into the unknown, into the Void.

In the middle of creating your own initiation experiences you must create your own spaces for interacting with your men. Our society has effectively eliminated most male-only spaces. Consider what you can do to center yourself on things you love to do to have time with your men. This is a huge goal for you to accomplish. These men will be alongside you in everything that happens, them for you and you for them.

Watch or read some of the movies and stories where individuals go through initiation like, White Fang, Never Cry Wolf, Into the Wild, Fight Club, Fury, Count of Monte Cristo, or Captains Courageous.

Reflection Questions

In what ways do you still feel like a boy? How much do you think you have passed through your initiation process?

To which degree have you determined that you have been initiated from being a boy to being a man? From fear to courage? From passive to active? From silent to speaking? From withdrawn to engaged?

In what ways have you avoided various initiation opportunities in your life?

What have been your unsettled questions?

What is the thing you might consider to engage with in exposure therapy?

What are four things you can do immediately to start entering into initiation?

What other ideas do you have to create your own initiation process?

EMBRACING THE VOID

...Several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a man of achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason... - John Keats

The concept Keats is speaking of in this quote is what he called Negative Capability. It is that ability to stay in the moment of difficulty and uncertainty. This man does not need to reach for answers or to figure it out. He can holdfast in the moment.

Negative Capability is sustainability in difficulty. It is a primary part of every man. We have broad shoulders, we can carry a lot of weight and we can overcome just about whatever comes our way.

☞ **You are not fragile!**

Our problems come when we believe we are fragile, that we will crumble under pressure or that something completely harmless, as though a woman's mood will defeat, destroy or kill us.

☞ **You are strong, you will overcome.**

The challenge for every man is to actually embrace the Void; to have courage and confidence with an open heart in the presence of all fear and insecurity the Void can throw at you.

As you seek to engage any Void construct in your life, your strong internally referenced identity will guide you well. Your internal resources will give you all the information you need in real time to move and interface with the Void with wisdom and grace.

Healthy interaction with the Void always requires consciousness and awareness. When you are closed off, avoidant or "asleep at the wheel", your interface with the Void will lead to unhealthy patterns, reactions and behaviors.

The goal for the rest of your life is to continuously become proficient at embracing the Void with Courage and Confidence.

Courage is required in the face of anything in life that is uncertain and potentially dangerous or harmful. Courage is a posture which recognizes fear and risk of a situation, yet pursues wise action and movement within that difficult situation.

☞ **Courage is not fear-less, it is facing fear head on.**

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Confidence is knowledge that you have the goods to get you through just about any situation and even if you don't, you will be OK. Confidence is the direct result of collecting personal stories and experiences of initiation and overcoming insurmountable obstacles.

☞ **Embracing the Void is true adventure.**

Three Important Steps

Here are three steps to help you through your next Void experience with courage and confidence.

Step One: Recognize that the Void is Present

In order to recognize the Void you will need to begin to become more aware of what's going on in your internal world and your external world. There are plenty of things happening in you and around you that give you all the information you need to recognize what it is you are experiencing.

Many men go through life in a fog, without seeing or noticing simple things that are happening. To begin to interface with the Void in a healthy fashion, you must begin to see and notice the initial clues all around you. Your first big question is; "what is happening around me?"

What is going in my surroundings? You may be in a crisis or an emergency. Or things may just be a little chaotic. You may be in some difficult circumstance like potential lay-off, separation/divorce or maybe a significant health issue has arisen.

You may be experiencing stress because of conflict, moving, grief/loss or some kind of tension is in your life right now. Whatever it is you must become aware of it and say it out loud. "Life is very chaotic right now and I feel way out of control." Or "There are pending lay-offs at work, I have no idea what is going to happen." Just say what is happening and acknowledge whatever it is that is going on. Discern it and name it out loud. Put it to words.

Also attend to your internal indicators and ask yourself, "What is going on inside of me?" You may be feeling anxiety, angst, panic, or shortness of breath. You may have a racing mind or feel some intense pressure or expectation. Say what you feel, "I feel Anxiety in my chest." Or "Damn, I am starting to panic."

This is when our bodies go into fight, flight or freeze mode. This is the "Lizard Brain" where your adrenaline has flushed through your body. You may be feeling danger, fear or starting to become reactive.

Your body may giving you some major clues that something is happening like muscle tightness, bowel symptoms, head or body aches, chills, sweat, or cottonmouth.

☞ **When the Lizard Brain erupts, it feels like danger, but usually isn't.**

Your emotional energy may be going wild with anger, lack of patience, uptightness, grumpiness or intensity. You may sense a general decrease in your sense of well-being. Notice potential unhealthy or unconscious responses with your emotional energy.

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You will need to notice when your own personal addictive rituals are activated. If you find yourself thinking, “I need a drink.” Or “Hey what’s this side bar about Hollywood’s 20 hottest_____”

You know what your own drug of choice is and now you must become aware of the rituals you have around that. When the ritual is activated, you know the Void is present.

You will also need to be aware of your default modes. The default mode is what you have done your entire life without thinking when things get tough. The default mode is seen in certain actions or thoughts that happen unconsciously and unintentionally when difficulty exists. It is imperative to become aware of your own default mode.

Your default may be getting busy, worrying, going silent or withdrawing. It may be anger or trying to control things and people around you. It may be an impulsive behavior or a quirk you have. You may start joking around or saying “sorry.” Identifying your default will help you know the Void is near.

So Step One of embracing the Void is just as simple as noticing that the Void is near. It is awareness of your surroundings and your internal processes, which will always indicate to you that something is going on. So notice it and just say it; “I am in the Void.” Or “Here comes the Void!”

Step Two: Identify How the Void is Presenting Itself

Our experiences with the Void come in many different shapes, sizes, and intensities. Step One was noticing that the Void is present. Step Two is to identify what this experience actually is and what it looks like.

First, ask the question; What is the magnitude of the Void?

The magnitude could be like an irritating pebble in your shoe or it could be a life-altering black hole. It could be a short-term happening that will be over in a few breaths or it could be a long-term experience that will be with you for your entire life.

Your Void experiences will have varying degrees of potential loss or fearful outcomes. Take some time to identify the magnitude of your experience. This will help you to decide your next move as you embrace the Void.

Next ask, what is this Void construct?

Remember the four main categories of the Void from Chapter One; Uncertainty, Limitations, Emptiness and Death. There are many ways the Void presents itself, these categories will help you know what you are dealing with at any moment.

Uncertainty has to do with unknowing, risk, unpredictability and mystery. Uncertainty involves vulnerability, exposure, potential embarrassment or being shown to be incompetent. Uncertainty forces us to be bold in the face of the unknown.

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It requires us to have the courage to speak truth and to have the confidence to stand up when things are not right. It makes us face our insecurity and fears. We have so many questions.

Limitations have to do with the fact that we are not all powerful or have much control over anything at all. Our power, choice, strength and knowledge are limited.

Our ability to accomplish anything is limited. We have so much in our wounds, traumas and struggles with which we wrestle. We experience pain, rejection, disillusionment. We have obstacles and failure with which we contend.

Emptiness is about desire, longing, grief and loss. It is expressed in life as sacrifice, delayed gratification, giving, or generosity. At times it feels like powerlessness, futility, smallness, and purposelessness. Emptiness is about not having what we desire and want.

Death or that which seems like death follows us around our entire life, we cannot escape it. Death can come in the form of conflict, health issues, loss of abilities, and tension. It looks like The Edge, the unknown, and worry. Death is separation; aloneness from self, from Others, and from your Source or God.

The construct of initiation is in here as well. Your core may be being tested, under discipline or gaining solidness. Initiation is about challenging yourself and testing yourself.

At times the Void construct could be about evil. We could be fighting a real battle for our soul and the souls of others. It could be in conflict, resistance to tyranny while being a force for good, protecting and providing for others.

Calling Out the Void

You recognize you are in the Void, it's magnitude and what it looks like. Now just say what it is. Name it and put whatever is happening into words. Let other people know what is going on in your life. Start with, "I am in the Void and here's what it looks like..."

"I am anxious about what will happen with my job, I want to be able to provide for my family. Lay-offs are pending and I don't know my options."

"I faced the Void twice in my life when I was laid off."

"Every time I pursue my wife for sex, I face the Void."

"I am sitting in a hospital waiting room, my wife is in surgery for possible cancer, I want to run out of here and get f'd up. The Doc was supposed to let me know what he found two hours ago. F**K this void stuff."

"Romance with my wife is on the decline, she is waiting for me to do something different – and she won't clearly explain to me what that "something" is."

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“Ever since Christmas I am just pissed at my Dad. I really saw how much he is a wimp. He never stood up for me. Especially when _____”

“I experienced the Void when I was choosing to marry my wife. What was going to happen? My parents recently divorced and there were broken marriages all around me. What was I getting into?”

“I was in the Void when I waited in the hospital waiting room when the doctor said my mom had cancer and there was little hope. Then I faced the void 5 months later when she died.”

“I was in the Void every morning at 2 am when I worked a very difficult job for 8 years, to keep my family fed and cared for.”

“I am feeling tons of anxiety lately, not sure what that means, but I know something is going on.”

”My son was just diagnosed with Type One Diabetes. They say he’ll be ok, but I just don’t know what this means.”

Say what it is, identify what it feels like and allow yourself to feel whatever comes up; be pissed, be sad, feel it.

Step Three: Intentionally Choose to Embrace the Void

Interfacing with the Void in a healthy way requires that you remain conscious and awake. You need to be able to identify that you are in the Void and then be able to discern how the Void is presenting itself in your life. You will need to be able to say to yourself, “I am in the Void and here’s what it looks like.”

The third step is to intentionally, with purpose and will, embrace the Void. This seems foolish as though you are purposefully swimming in shark infested waters or jumping off a cliff. Everything in you may push back and keep you from moving toward something that feels dangerous.

It is counter-intuitive to believe that moving toward your Void experiences is actually the path to health, life and vigor. But, embracing the Void is the path to developing a strong masculine presence in your world.

👁 **The more you purposefully engage with your Void experiences, the more you will grow into your manhood and strength.**

Embracing the Void will challenge your life fears and show you the truth about what you are capable of, what is truly to be feared (or not) and where life actually comes from.

Embracing the Void is the essential movement of initiation, where you will build your confidence and settle your questions. This is where your confidence is built and your center becomes solid.

There are paradoxical movements that happen within the Void. For instance, to be able to fully embrace the Void you must be internally referenced.

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However, to become internally referenced you must intentionally embrace the Void. This is how the Void works; you don't have all the answers, but it provides answers, while you're in it.

Choice

Purposefully embracing the Void is a choice. You must choose not to follow your default avoidance method. You must choose to stand inside the fire of your Void experience.

☞ The Void must be embraced and met head on.

You will need to learn the fine art of not shrinking back and actually stepping into the Void. Sometimes it looks like standing with the Void or just holding fast within the storm. Sometimes it is saying "screw it" and jumping in with both feet. Usually it needs to be a conscious choice to face the fear, breathe and take the step into the Void.

You will embrace the Void when you choose emptiness or going without something. Often the void is about the fact that you will need to embrace delayed gratification and wait patiently for something you really want, whether that is a car, a new job or sex.

☞ Choosing delayed gratification is a powerful way to embrace the Void.

Choosing to be empty and remain empty for a season for a higher purpose is called Purposeful Emptiness. There are significant reasons to move into or stay in seasons where you are not getting something that you think you need. This often results in your own growth and strength.

It may be a season where you are getting out of debt or dealing with a health crisis. Some spiritual disciplines like fasting are purposeful pursuits of emptiness; you will "fast" from food or TV for a period of time. This is a big part of the season of Lent.

There are times when a "moratorium" is in order where you go without drinking, porn, sex or other things for 30, 60 or 90 days to find out what its role in your life has been. You will gain valuable and helpful feedback as you purposefully go through a time like this.

This may look like preparing for a physical event such as a marathon or hunting trip. You'll go through purposeful times of exercise and difficulty so you are ready for strenuous activity.

You will choose to embrace the Void when you do what's right and honorable. You will have moments in your life when everybody else seems to be doing the opposite of what you think is right. These moments require facing the possibility of rejection and ridicule.

You will choose to embrace the Void when you live with an open heart. When you have an open heart you place yourself in a state of vulnerability. You are purposefully living in authenticity and being yourself.

You have experienced ridicule and humiliation before, so living with an open heart places you in a vulnerable place. Choosing to stay open hearted and not closing off in your relationships is embracing the Void.

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You will choose to embrace the Void when you create open spaces in your life. This is the concept of “Margin”. Margin is the white space on a page.

Margin in your life is open and available space in your life for contemplation, meditation or nothing.

A significant way to build space in your life is to allow yourself to be ok with waiting. It seems we are always waiting for something; stop lights, DMV, stores, traffic, appointments. Consider how you might wait well. Look forward to the moment you can check-in with yourself. In our culture no one can wait without looking or checking in with their device. We don't even check in with ourselves, we just look at emails, facebook or some other inane thing.

Wait with intention. Begin to build intention and freedom in those moments. Often it feels like we are stuck or controlled by someone or something. Redeem that time by connecting with yourself or with whoever is with you.

☞ **Build space and margin for the Void in your life.**

Americans seem to hate these open spaces. Space seems to create discomfort and we do all we can to fill the spaces with busyness. On the road, if you create open space with the car in front of you, someone always has to fill it. These open spaces in our lives are a type of Void. We need margin to keep ourselves centered and alive.

Sitting, resting or being with your difficult experience is a way to create these spaces. Usually these are very sacred times and so sacred space is created when we stay in it without our avoiding behaviors.

You will choose to embrace the Void when you go out over the edge in your life. The edge is where fear and the unknown meet. You will go out over the edge when you ask your girl to marry you, when you change jobs, when you start a business or when you step out your door.

☞ **It's a dangerous business, walking out one's front door – Gandalf (*The Hobbit*)**

The edge creates authentic experiences in your life where you are fully in your own life. You will begin to have presence in your life, becoming awake and alive. This is where passion will begin to express itself and move you into places you've never been, if you embrace the Void by going out over the edge.

Sometimes you may crash and burn with business or relationships. Rising from the ashes will be a huge way to embrace the Void. The last thing you want to do is not get back on the horse because failure could happen again and again. Facing the fear and moving forward with courage into a new adventure is embracing the Void.

You will choose to embrace the Void when you choose to fight evil with potential personal loss. Evil exists in our world in many different forms. You may stand up to a narcissistic boss.

☞ **Facing your fear is embracing the Void.**

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You may protect your family from a dangerous individual. You may stand in your community against corruption. You may stand up globally against modern-day slavery.

When you face evil there is always the potential for personal loss. You may die. You may lose your livelihood. Someone you love may be injured. You must prepare yourself mentally and physically to be ready to be strong and present when evil shows up in your life.

Don't Go It Alone

Gather your Mt. Rushmore. Your Mt. Rushmore is made up of four of your strongest men in your life who will go through the seasons of the Void with you. They will encourage you and call you out. They will be your support.

Let them know you are in the Void. Let them know what is going on, in you and outside of you. Let them know what they can do for support. Allow them to be in this with you. This will require that you maintain a level of openness and asking for help.

Sometimes there is no option; you have to do this alone. Many men do not have these men in your life; if not you must begin to build this into your life. But in the meanwhile, if part of the Void is being alone, stay in it and keep moving through it with courage.

The Designed Outcome

The designed outcome of our Void experiences is to bring about change in us. As we interact with the Void we will never be the same. We could falter and wither or we could rise up and gain strength. Either way we will begin to hold a completely new posture in our world.

☞ **We will never be the same as we were before.**

Embracing the Void will result in personal and spiritual growth, healing, and maturity. When you consistently move into your Void experiences you will discover that courage and confidence have become part of your core. As you consistently engage with the Void with intention and purpose throughout your life, you will experience deep inner growth toward maturity throughout your lifetime.

☞ **Remember, the Void must be embraced and met head on.**

James Loder talks about how our Void interaction results in a very unexpected outcome; when we interact with the Void, we will experience the “holy” or “sacred” aspects of life. When we pass through the Void, either purposefully or not, on the other side we will experience something transcendent and beyond our normal experience. Our experience in life will be opened up to unexpected insight, awe and connection.

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Reflection Questions**

In what ways in your life have you struggled with having courage? How has fear ruled your life?

What are some ways confidence has been building in your life?

How would you describe your ability to notice your surroundings? How would you describe your ability to notice your internal clues?

What do you think the magnitude of the Void is in your life?

What are the Void constructs you've had in your life?

What Void constructs are you dealing with right now?

If you don't have a strong support system, what can you do to build it? Who is in your Mt. Rushmore?

What have been positive outcomes of your interaction with the Void?

LIVING WITH THE VOID

“Youth always tries to fill the void, an old man learns to live with it.” - Mark Danielewski

Since the Void is and will continue to be a significant part of life, we must consider our relationship with it. We can unconsciously live in denial as we ignore the existence of difficulties in life.

We can do our best to avoid the Void though all the brilliant ways mankind has developed to escape and numb ourselves. Or we can consciously and intentionally choose how we will interface with the tough stuff of life. This choice requires that we develop our courage and intentionally embrace the Void.

☞ **Embracing the Void is embracing life.**

The following is a list of many ways we can intentionally interface with the Void. As you read them, consider in which ones you may falter and which ones you will intentionally choose to practice in your life at this time. Circle the ones you choose to engage with.

Face Tension

The Void creates tons of tension in your life. It makes you question things you thought were certain. It brings about questions about who you really are and about the strength of your life foundations. It makes you question what life is all about.

As you engage with the Void you will experience increasing tension. Most men, especially the “nice guy”, does all he can do to reduce or eliminate tension in relationships and life. We have a tendency to pull the plug and drain the bathtub of tension build up. Our challenge is to stay with the tension and at times even create more.

What creates the most tension for you?

What would it look like to stay with the tension and not pull the drain plug?

Increase Tension

Increasing tension requires that you understand the role of tension in your life. As a man, our masculinity exists in tension. To most of us, tension is uncomfortable and causes anxiety. As we face tension and become more comfortable in it, our lives become stronger. And our relationships with women develop a sense of ease.

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In its most basic form, increasing tension is just moving into fearful places, saying things that need to be said or doing what is most uncomfortable. As you notice anything that brings fear or anxiety, just intend on moving toward that which feels difficult.

What causes anxiety or fear for you?

What is something you can do or say that will increase tension in your relationships?

Remember the Consequences

If we avoid and escape the experiences that the Void creates in our lives, there are huge negative consequences. We will live a life of passivity and numbness. We will be more disconnected in our relationships. We will live from a false sense of self. We will feel powerless and lack of purpose.

Staying with the Void results in many positive consequences like developing a more vigorous life of vitality where you know more fully who you truly are, where you have more influence over the direction of your life, where you have more connection or intimacy and where you will develop your purpose or calling in life.

Which escape and avoidance patterns have been your “go to”? And what consequences have you experienced from avoiding?

What positive experiences have you seen as you stay with difficulties?

Face your Fears Daily

Fearlessness and courage is essential in the growth of a man. You must wrestle with your deep fears in order to move into life with confidence. Resolving your fear of death is a big part of gaining courage.

This is where good initiation experiences teach you what you can face and what you are capable. Go into the “belly of the whale” as often as you can.

You must remember that full, abundant life is found as you go through the Void. Turn toward whatever fears you have and push into them. One of the most common commands in the Bible is “Fear not”, so do all you can to acknowledge your fear and not shrink back.

What have been your most profound fears?

What would it look like to push into your fear?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Mourn**

Grief is a huge result of many Void constructs. Loss and separation happen regularly in many ways in our lives. The challenge is to allow ourselves to fully experience the pain of those losses. Often we will buck up and be strong during times of loss so we don't show weakness or vulnerability. This pattern locks the pain in and makes us hard and cold. Face the fear of feeling vulnerable.

☞ **The process of grieving has no rules.**

Grieve that you never really received a blessing from your father. That he never gave you a full birthright as a man. Let yourself feel the depth of that loss. Mourn that you are now in a place where you must “re-father” yourself.

Grieve the loss of your dreams, abilities, and health. Let yourself feel the deep emptiness of missing a special person who has died. Allow space in your life to allow your emotional process to come alive and full.

What experience have you kept from grieving?

How could you become a person who fully feels the losses you have?

Live in the Paradox of Life

There are so many aspects of life that are full of ambivalence and paradox. It seems two opposing things can be true at once. This is especially true with your masculinity – there is huge tension between your strength and your vulnerability. There is tension between maintaining your autonomy and your intimate connections.

As you become confident with who you are you will move in different patterns causing tension in your old systems and relationships. Challenge yourself to be more confident in the idea of paradox.

As you become more differentiated (being fully you, knowing what you need/want, speaking overtly and living with the potential conflict that comes from standing up) you will be tested by people around you. It seems like you are moving in more positive ways and expect affirmation. The opposite is true; expect push back since you are breaking the rules and you are changing the system.

Engage the contradictions. Choose to make the changes. Get it over with, move into it, and make it so with intention. Allow your woman to test if you are solid. She needs to know your solid is actually solid.

What are the paradoxes that create the most tension for you?

How could you fully embrace the pushback and testing you'll get?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Stay with the Void**

Intentionally do **not** escape, resolve or fix any difficult situation in which you find yourself. Let yourself sit with it, even in the discomfort. Feel it and let it soak in. Our first inclination is to fix it. Instead, just stay with it and allow yourself to experience whatever is going on.

This is a very counter-intuitive way to live since everything in us wants to run away and make the problem go away. Stay conscious of being in the Void and how it is presenting itself. Your awareness is essential. Make the conscious choice to breathe and experience whatever is happening.

This is not about passivity, but awareness. You will still move and do what is right, but your first move is to allow yourself to be conscious and present in whatever you are experiencing.

What has been your default in Void moments?

What do you need to practice to be aware and in the moment?

Step into the Void

This practice is even more intentional than staying in the Void, it is making the moves to create Void experiences on purpose. This is where you will push out over the edge, as often as you like. Step across the threshold into any fearful place.

You may or may not have the confidence that “you’ve got this”, but regardless of fear or vulnerability you take the risk or make the move. It may be saying what needs to be said or asking the probing question or setting a difficult boundary. It may be doing something on your “bucket list” or making some risky move.

Whatever it is, intentionally stepping into the Void may feel like you are going to “die”. But as you will find out, you’re not going to die and you really do have this.

What have you been avoiding that you need to step into?

What have you already purposefully stepped into?

Force the Issue

Remember how Glover talks about “Getting to rejection quickly”. This is about the answers you need to know sooner than later by speaking clearly what you need and want to see if others in your life are willing to

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provide that for you. This can be done with women, work, or bartering. You will get your answers quickly and then you can accept the answers you get so you can make your next move wisely.

Too often we will sit in our situation hoping people will change or provide what we need without us overtly saying anything. If we just sit on it, the situation could last years until something breaks it. We can be so afraid of “blowing things up” or losing the security we have.

The call here is to intentionally force the prospect of getting your answers as quickly as possible by challenging the status quo. So say what needs to be said. Go ahead, “Blow it up!”

What have you been sitting on that needs an answer?

What is keeping you from forcing the issues in your life?

Stand Up

This is where you acknowledge that there are experiences that are not in your favor and you become an obstacle to stop or eliminate those experiences. If situations are not how you would like them to go, use your voice and say something like, “This doesn’t work for me” or “That’s not OK with me.”

Set your boundaries with a firm, respectful voice in any situation you are in where you or someone else is being disrespected or abused. Use your confident “Sam Elliot” voice with the same tone as “Beef, it’s what’s for dinner.” There is no need to yell or escalate, just state it as fact.

Be confident to be commanding and say something like, “Here’s what I need right now...” or “You need to stop this behavior.” Do or say things you normally wouldn’t do or say. Say “no” or “yes” as needed or do things differently with more gusto or verve. Ask for help when you wouldn’t have before.

Be a little rebellious, go “in” the “out” door or do something for yourself. Set boundaries where they need to be set. Teach people how you want to be treated.

Where could you stand up more?

What would prepare you to stand up more often?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Engage in Risk**

The masculine heart needs many different kinds of adventure. Get out in the wilderness and hunt or fish. Take risks you normally wouldn't take. Test yourself with entrepreneurialism and creating a possible business venture. Ask her out. Make your bucket list and get on it.

Make some moves that would test and challenge you. Try something new or restart something you used to do. Take well-thought out risks that are the right thing to do. Be more spontaneous and do things out of character. Watch the *Secret Life of Walter Mitty* to see how it's done.

What are things you've dreamed of doing?

What risks have you kept from doing and what could you do to do them?

Live with an Open Heart

This is one of the most difficult things for men because it requires vulnerability. Vulnerability is required in order to have any kind of intimate or close relationship. Living from your open heart puts you in a position to really feel and experience all that life has to offer.

Many of us fall into defensiveness, withdrawal or become walled off. We do this in self-protection since we think we are unsafe or we may be hurt in some way. That's how boys think; now that you are a man the things that could damage you are no longer the same kind of threat.

You can now live openly and with vulnerability in relationships that are healthy. There are required boundaries with people who don't treat you right, but even then they won't damage you like you think. You will have more potential for feeling very deeply with an open, vulnerable heart; both wonderful and difficult emotions, but you will be alive.

An open heart practices what Michelle Weiner-Davis calls "Real Giving". It is giving your heart and soul to loved ones. It is making sacrifices where others will be blessed and supported. An open heart is real and authentic; where you give your true self everywhere. You will speak life to people in ways you never knew you could.

What are ways you have kept from having an open heart?

What ways have you had an open heart, how has it opened up your life?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Be Present**

Staying in the moment is a strong way to engage with the Void, especially if the moment is filled with tension or difficult emotions. So often, we will do everything we can to pull the plug on tension, disengage or slip away through our escape mechanisms.

When your woman brings up a difficult subject, or when your boss needs to talk about a critical topic or you are just feeling a little off kilter; consciously and purposefully stay with it. Staying in the moment takes a lot of practice and intention. Presence requires your full attention.

Often, men will default to compartmentalizing where we stay in a certain “box” which keeps us out of the moment. We may be talking with our woman, but thinking about fantasy football. Being present means we are staying conscious. Consciousness keeps us “in” our lives even when we are experiencing difficulties.

What are your pitfalls when you often lose “presence”?

What could you do to remain more present?

Create “Margin”

Margin refers to the open space on a page. Creating these open spaces in your life is actually very difficult in this culture. Margin is a void or a place where nothing exists. Margin is space in your life where you are not producing, but just resting.

The concept of Sabbath is this kind of space. So is the “2-second rule” when you are driving, where you create more space between you and the car in front of you.

Margin is open space in your life with nothing going on. It is just allowing yourself to “be”. Creating margin is a simple aspect of embracing the Void. It is setting your own pace in the middle of the rat-race.

Margin requires not pushing so hard and allowing abundance to come to you. As you begin to ease up and create space in your life, pay attention to what you begin doing to try to fill the spaces.

In what ways could you create space in your life?

How do you normally begin to fill up spaces?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Ask For Help**

This is one of the most difficult things for men to do. We feel that if we need help we are inadequate or weak. This is true. To a degree, we are inadequate and weak. We do need others in order to live full lives. Asking for help reveals this truth.

Other people are in our lives to collaborate with us to create lives of abundance and thriving. Getting over the fear of being a burden and allowing others to be helpful to us is essential. I need others in my life to help create a beautiful life.

How have you been hesitant to ask for help?

For you, how is asking for help the same as embracing the Void?

Choose Purposeful Emptiness

This concept is similar to Margin, but different in that it is not necessarily about space. Purposeful Emptiness is about choosing to go without something for a season for an intentional purpose. It is delayed gratification and going without something so that you can accomplish a goal. It would be frugality while eliminating debt. It is patiently waiting to have sex while your wife heals from a health issue. It is pursuing training and equipping to advance your career.

Purposeful emptiness is waiting and patience. It is intentionally choosing to not get your desires fulfilled at the moment so that a greater desire can be obtained. The emptiness of not having something is embracing the Void. Purposefully choosing emptiness is absolutely counter to everything you hear in our culture of consumerism.

Purposeful emptiness is the path toward maturity. This is why there are disciplines in various religions. Lent is going without something for a season. Fasting is going without food for a time. Even the discipline of working out requires embracing some kind of pain or emptiness to accomplish your goals.

How have you shied away from emptiness in your life?

How have you seen benefits when you have chosen to go without?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Follow Your Gut**

For many men this feels like a crazy idea. It is a dangerous proposition because there have been times when things did not turn out as planned. Or people may have mocked you for taking risks or dreaming. Most of us have inhibitors that are in place because we have been teased or shamed for moving according to our intuition.

Women are seen as having legendary intuition. Why not men? We actually have the same degree of intuitive abilities. It is just that men generally don't have permission to move from or trust their gut. So trusting your intuition feels dangerous, therefore when you trust it you are embracing the Void. Allow yourself to go into that risky place. You will soon find out that your intuitive processes are a great part of you.

So do what your intuition says to do or say, even if it seems crazy or might result in embarrassment. Allow yourself to be a little goofy or humorous. Let your inhibitions loose. Don't live so much in the world of "should". Embracing the Void this way brings tons of vitality to your life.

What have been ways you have kept from trusting your gut? And when has your intuition been wrong?

What could you do intentionally to listen and follow your gut?

Face Resistance

There are always going to be obstacles in your life. There will be times when it seems the universe is conspiring against you to thwart every move forward. It is in that moment that you will need clarity of mind; "I am in the Void, and this is my moment to move toward strength and wisdom."

If you are able to recognize that this resistance is not here to thwart you, but to bring you to maturity, you will experience outcomes you could never imagine otherwise. Resistance and obstacles become your ally in your journey rather than your nemeses.

👉 **Read more about Resistance in Steven Pressfield's book, "*The War of Art*".**

Turning to face your obstacles and seeing them as the way into strength creates a new kind of posture. You are no longer a victim, but now a co-conspirator in your own story. You will be present in a new way.

What obstacles or forms of resistance have you experienced?

How would things be different if you were to embrace these experiences?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Get Into Shape**

This category is a conglomerate of a few already mentioned; delayed gratification and facing resistance. You must develop a completely different mindset in order to make the lifestyle changes for long term change. As you build a strong internally referenced life, remove the external ways you have soothed yourself, and deal with the ways you have avoided the Void you will be prepared to take your body back.

Lose the gut. Start to care for yourself. Get the sleep you need. Remove crappy foods from your life. Get a medical and dental check-up. Get your body moving with regular exercise. Face that beast and kick it in the teeth.

Remember that your body is you. So often we see our bodies as an extension, vessel or appendage that just carries us around and does the work for us. It is as though our bodies are just a machine to get our stuff done. It is so much more; it is an integral part of our being.

Begin to treat your body as “holy” and good. Make the internal shift that will begin to give your body the care it needs.

In what ways have you neglected your body?

How could you embrace the process of getting your body back?

Don't Quit

Rise from the ashes of failure. Be resilient. Get back on the horse. Show some resolve. Stay with whatever it is and push back. Throughout our lives we will find ourselves in many various predicaments. We will find ourselves in the dust bin or trash heap. We will feel like a failure, discarded and set aside.

As with many other times to embrace the Void, this is an opportunity to build your core. Pushing through takes resolve and intention. Find your center and move through the failure. See that this is not failure anyway, that it is just good, solid feedback for learning and wisdom.

Or maybe it is time to quit. If it is time, if it is wise or if whatever you're doing is holding you back; it may be time to move on. Moving on may take more strength and resolve than staying with something. People may see you as a quitter or weak. Notice the externals involved and make your move.

When do you wish you would have stayed with something longer?

What could you do to develop stronger resilience?

What is going on that you should quit and move on to something wiser?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Do What is Right and Honorable**

There are times in our lives when you know that if you do what is right, you will face very difficult consequences. If you stand for ethics at work, when you speak up when no one else will, when you step into the gap for the powerless, or if you speak your needs in your relationship. There are a few pivotal moments in your life when integrity is essential. This is when truth is a prime directive.

Even if it hurts, let your word be impeccable and fully honest. When this moment comes time will stand still for a very short period. You will sit in that millisecond and have a choice. You will see the possible difficult Void consequences. You will know what needs to be said or done. You will choose. Will you embrace the Void in that moment? Or be safe?

It may not be a tight moment, but a long-term decision. It may be choosing to confess something you did wrong that will have consequences. Making the choice to do the right thing is trading your comfort for your honor.

☞ Sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same. – The Fray

These are moments where there is great potential for regret. You probably can think of a few moments when you failed to act or speak. Allow these moments of regret to motivate you to be prepared for the next critical opportunity. Be ready to embrace the Void.

What moments in your life do you regret?

What could prepare you to speak or move next time?

Prepare Yourself to Face Evil

This is very similar to doing what is honorable. Recently it seems like a new story of some act of violence is in the news every other day. As well, often enough, we hear of someone stepping in to thwart a potentially devastating act; a teacher tackles a kid out to kill his classmates, a woman with a concealed weapon stops a shooter in a church, a guy in a cowboy hat rescues a man whose legs were shredded by an explosion, on the way to France a couple soldiers save a whole trainload of people, or the manager of a sandwich shop steps into the street to stop a couple from being beaten only to be stabbed.

Since evil does exist in our world, stories like this will continue to be told. The question is, “Are you prepared to be a force for good, when evil shows up around you?” What have you done to prepare yourself to have the readiness to stand up to evil?

☞ You are a force for Good.

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Initially it takes a shift in mindset to be prepared. You must see yourself as a force for good. You must see that you do have power to make a difference in the outcome; especially if there are a number of ready men as in the “Let’s Roll” scenario. It also takes preparing yourself physically with learning self-defense. You may want to gain a concealed-carry permit. Maybe becoming more proficient with first-aid is in order.

Whatever you choose to do for preparation, if you engage evil, there will be high potential of personal loss. It may mean death or injury. This is truly facing the Void and it requires true courage.

Often all it requires is to use your voice, to yell “Stop!” or “Call 911”. Whatever the face of evil looks like when you encounter it, stand up to it with your voice and your presence, with all you have. Be ready.

When have you seen evil?

What could be your ways to prepare yourself?

Create Healthy Conflict

To most men conflict is a very fearful endeavor. It puts us in a place of danger. We feel as though we will lose something valuable and that there will be no positive outcome. The tension that exists during a conflict seems unbearable as though it is sucking out our soul. So we run away, withdraw and avoid conflict at all costs.

If done well, conflict is one of the healthiest interactions in any relationship. It achieves powerful outcomes and has the potential to increase the well-being of everyone involved, for long sustainable periods.

So it is imperative that you take the time and energy to learn how to do conflict well. You must learn to stay with your emotional process to discover the depths of your deep needs and wants. You need to learn who you are so you can communicate clearly. It is in this clear communication that healthy conflict exists.

Since we are individuals, as we interact with others our differences create conflict, it is part of relationship.

So our goal is to let the tension rise by communicating clearly what we need. Or what we have as non-negotiables. Stay in the tension of the moment. Since we have avoided conflict and tension for so long, it will take practice to do conflict well.

How has conflict seemed like the Void for you?

What can you do to become more proficient with conflict and tension?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Stand Up to Foolishness**

Fools are around us everywhere. Sometimes we will just ignore them and not give them time of day. But there are many occasions that it is quite appropriate to speak clearly against how they may be negatively influencing your environment.

There are those people who enter a peaceful place like a coffee shop talking on their phone loudly as though no one can hear them. There are people who will do things that will put those around them at risk. There are people who are oblivious to how others are just enjoying life and they engage in foolish, obnoxious behavior.

Stand up and say something. You don't have to be aggressive. Just say something to the people in the room like "Does anyone else here think this is wrong?" or "What should be done about this?" You can firmly speak to the fool, "We really don't want to listen to your conversation."

When was that last time you wish you would have said something?

How have you seen this done well? What would it look like to do this?

Let Your Woman be a Woman

So much energy goes to managing our woman's moods. You do everything you can to make sure she is happy so she will still like you. We won't say what needs to be said or do what needs to be done if it might piss her off or make her "go off".

By being nice, you keep her calm. This is managing moods. Remember that her moods are her responsibility, so let her be her. Don't hold back with what needs to be said or done. Women actually want to be allowed to be in whatever mood they are in. Stop walking on eggshells. Let it happen.

When do you think you have managed her moods?

What will it look like if you were indifferent to her moods?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Hold Your Woman Accountable**

This one creates tons of tension, but is absolutely necessary when your woman has unbecoming behavior or is treating you poorly. Calmly, in your best Sam Elliot “Beef, it’s what’s for dinner” voice, say “That is not ok with me.” or “This is not right.” or just plain “no”. Your woman needs to have a sense she is not the strongest person in the room and you standing up to her poor behavior does just that. As Dr. Glover says, you need to stand up to her, so she will know you will stand up for her.

Accountability has been a problem since the beginning of time. It all started with Adam and Eve. The story says that Adam was standing right there when the whole serpent/apple thing went down. All he had to say was “This is not right.” and we would all not be in such deep doo-doo. So don’t be like Adam, speak up when your woman behaves demeaning or disrespectful or any other way that looks really bad on her.

When do you realize that you have not spoken up before?

What would be a good time to speak and what would you say?

Waste Time

We are a nation of efficiency experts. Huge expectations of doing things and keeping busy have haunted us for our entire lives. If we do something that is wasteful of time, we feel guilty.

Go ahead and feel the tension of that guilt and do things intentionally that are wasting time. Stop and read a book. Sleep in. Play the video game you haven’t played in a while. Rest. Do something for yourself or do nothing.

Wasting time creates the Void in your life by opening you up to empty space where nothing is going on. Consider what makes you feel most guilty and consider doing that.

What are those things which cause guilt?

What could you do to let efficiency go for awhile?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Delayed Gratification or Moratoriums**

Delayed Gratification is very difficult for many people. It is purposefully waiting for something. It is not frantically grabbing for something that I think I need.

Another way to put this is to go on what is sometimes called a “moratorium”. This is intentionally not doing something for a season in order to see what kind of role the thing has in your life, to break its hold on you or to just do without something for no specific reason.

Go without something for that period of time. To do this you may purpose to go without porn for 30 or 60 days. You may fast from eating for a day or two. You may go without screen time or tech for a certain period of time. You choose what it is, but the purpose is to learn that you can do without something.

What is the first thing that comes to mind to go without?

What have you done in the past? What was the outcome?

Master an Art

They say it takes 10,000 hours to master something. That is a lot of time and would take some serious intention. If you were to master something you have always been interested in or dreamed of, what would it be?

Consider things you regret not doing. Think about that which you have kept at arms length. Most of us have many things we wished we had spent time getting good at. It may be learning the guitar or any musical instrument. It may be learning MMA, Aikido or any martial art. It may be writing poetry or calligraphy. It may be public speaking or tantric sex.

Whatever it is, it will take time, focus and energy. It will be embracing the Void of not having something for a long period. It will have times of numbing plateaus and excitement. It will require intent and purpose. The most frustrating thing for many people is that before you see the fruit of your labor and intention, you will experience incompetence in many different ways. This is the journey of mastery through the Void.

What comes to mind that you would like to master?

How could you make time to begin the process of mastery?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Take Ownership**

The words, “I was wrong” are actually the three most powerful words that can be spoken in a relationship. They represent that you are responsible for your actions and behaviors. If you choose to take ownership in your life you will choose to take fault and blame for any outcome in your life.

Ownership means you are not a victim, nor ever been or will be a victim. Your life is yours and your responsibility. Ownership is embracing the Void because you will be facing things that have caused anxiety in your life. Most of us become defensive and explaining of any of our behaviors because we are fearful of the repercussions if we are found to be at fault or blame.

When you take ownership, you are just owning your behavior. Own your responsibility, own your decisions, own your past. Find out what happens when you reject the defensive posture of the victim.

To what degree do you take a posture of defensiveness?

What could you do to own your actions more profoundly?

Live With Passion

Passion is a significant definer of any masculine man. It is living with desire and intense pursuit of what you want. Passion creates deep drive and purpose in life. Without passion, a man is a drone, just getting through life without “life”. Passion creates life and vitality.

But passion also exposes you to the world. When you live with passion, your desires and drives are seen by everyone. This is what is most difficult with most men and why we hide or withdraw. See how living with passion is living with the Void? Being exposed or seen reveals who you really are. And if people see who I really am, they will not accept me. Therefore, I cannot live passionately.

Embrace the Void by letting your heart guide your next move or by allowing your true passions to be revealed to others, especially the people you love.

How have your passions been restrained in your life?

What are your greatest passions and how can you set them free?

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Smirk More**

Every good movie that men love has a man who will smirk at the most brilliant moments. That little curl of one side of the lip, almost a smile, is a look of confidence and indifference to all the danger and nonsense that is going on around him. He is able to have a solid posture in the face of the direst circumstances. Every man appreciates that posture, we love the smirk.

The smirk says, “Bring it on!” or “Is that all you got!” It is laughing in the face of danger. It is a deep knowing; that whatever happens I’ll be OK. The smirk is the product of a life of initiation, he knows he has what it takes. He also knows that what most people believe is BS. Some say a smirk is arrogance, I say it is humble confidence.

Developing your own smirk will require your own growth into strength and confidence. So create your initiation and push into the Void in any way you can. You don’t have to force it; it will come to you, just embrace it. Play with the fire. Have fun with this.

What do you think of the idea of smirking?

What do you need in your life to feel more confident?

Reflection Questions

Of these 31 ideas to purposefully embrace the Void and actually intentionally live with the Void, which are your top five you can engage in today?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5

What can you do with each one to get started?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5

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What are five more you can engage in in the near future?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What's is something that really stood out to you about this list of actions?

Pick one you did not pick earlier that actually really scares you. What steps can you make to engage in that behavior in the next week or so?

CONCLUSION

The Void is anything that has to do with uncertainty or death. It is revealed in your limitations and moments of deep emptiness in life.

Even though the Void exists throughout life experiences, people do not talk about it or even acknowledge its existence. We dance around it as though it is a ghost with no substance.

☞ **The Void is a powerful part of life.**

The designed outcome of your Void experiences is to bring about deep change in you. As you interact with the Void you will never be the same. You could falter and wither or you could rise up and gain strength. Either way you will begin to hold a completely new posture in your world.

☞ **The Void creates men.**

Embracing the Void will result in growth, healing, and maturity. When you consistently move into your Void experiences you will discover that courage and confidence have now become part of your core.

☞ **You must intentionally engage the Void.**

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As you consistently engage with the Void with intention and purpose throughout your life, you will experience deep inner growth toward maturity throughout your lifetime.

People are masters of avoiding; we numb out, escape, try to figure out mysteries, try to get it right and try to explain everything away in proper form. But this just creates more problems.

☞ **Most of your problems exist because of how you choose to avoid the Void.**

The Void is about entering into the tension of life. Your experience in life will be opened up to unexpected insight, awe and connection.

☞ **Embracing the Void develops confidence.**

The Void is about redemption. It is a deep reclamation of your true self. It is the path through which your life is made whole and complete. As you embrace the Void, your true identity will become clear and you will find out who you are and what you are capable of.

☞ **The Void will introduce you to yourself.**

The Void is about transformation. As you engage with the Void in your life you will experience true change in a deep, core place in your being. This deep change is something real and substantive that will never happen if you continue to avoid the various ways the Void shows up in your life.

☞ **You will never be the same as you were before.**

The Void is about confidence. As you allow your Void experiences to guide you, you become initiated and your confidence in who you are and your capabilities become solidified.

☞ **Meet the Void head on.**

As you choose to embrace the Void and engage it purposefully, your confidence grows. My hope is that many men will begin to grow into new forms of courage and confidence.

The outcome of this is actually what looks like a new race of men, men who actually engage in life like men, real, healthy, strong men.

What is sometimes called “The Global Masculine Crisis” exists not because there is something wrong with masculinity, but because men are not engaged with their hearts, with life or courageously with the Void. True masculinity is revealed as a man intentionally moves into the Void.

From here on out in your life, begin to observe and see what is actually happening in your life. Notice discomfort and pain. Notice joy and excitement. Live in whatever life is bringing. Embrace life fully.

☞ **You are not fragile.**

Actually create moments of discipline and discomfort. Find out what you are really made of. Create your own initiation. Remember that, you are not fragile. You’ve got this.

Solid Man® Integrity Group**Group Presentation Questions**

What has been the most difficult thing to hear as you learned about the concept of the Void?

What has been the most encouraging thing?

What will you do to begin to embrace the Void in your life?

What's been your top three defaults to avoid the Void?

How has the Void shown itself in your life? How about presently in your life?

To which degree have you determined that you have been initiated from being a boy to being a man? From fear to courage? From passive to active? From silent to speaking? From withdrawn to engaged?

What do you still need to do initiation style to develop your confidence in life?

What are the top five ways you can begin to choose to embrace the Void?

What observations and insights do you see from this exercise?