

How Men Get Penalized for Straying from Masculine Norms

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When women behave in ways that don't fit their gender stereotype — for example, by being assertive — they are viewed as [less likable and ultimately less hireable](#). Does that same hold true for men? Are they similarly penalized for straying from the [strong masculine stereotype](#)?

The short answer is yes. Research demonstrates that men too face backlash when they don't adhere to masculine gender stereotypes — when they show vulnerability, act nicer, display empathy, express sadness, exhibit modesty, and proclaim to be feminists. This is troubling not least because it discourages men from behaving in ways known to benefit their teams and their own careers. Let's look at each of these behaviors:

Showing vulnerability. Men are socialized to not ask for help or be vulnerable — and they can be penalized when they challenge this notion. An informative [set of studies](#) from 2015 finds that when male (but not female) leaders ask for help, they are viewed as less competent, capable, and confident. And when men make themselves vulnerable by disclosing a weakness at work, they are perceived to have [lower status](#). This is problematic, as not seeking help when you need it or admitting areas for improvement inevitably leads to mistakes and less development.