



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

PARENT RESOURCES

A Guide to Understanding the Impact of Harmful Male Stereotypes On Teens

In the digital age, trends like 'HVM' (High-Value Male), 'SIGMA', and 'Alpha Male' are shaping young people's perceptions of masculinity. While these terms are often used casually on platforms like TikTok, they can also reinforce harmful stereotypes, promote misogyny, and discourage emotional expression in boys and men.

As these ideals gain popularity, it's important for parents to be aware of their potential influence. These concepts often present a narrow, unrealistic vision of what it means to be a man—emphasising dominance, isolation, and extreme success while downplaying emotional intelligence and empathy. By understanding these trends and discussing them openly with their teens, parents can help foster a healthier and more balanced view of masculinity.

WHAT DO 'HVM', 'SIGMA', AND 'ALPHA MALE' REALLY MEAN?

If you've heard your teen using terms like 'HVM', 'SIGMA', or 'Alpha Male', you may be wondering what they truly represent. At a surface level, the High-Value Male (HVM) is portrayed as a confident, successful provider with emotional intelligence—attributes that seem positive. However, a problematic side emerges when influencers attach characteristics such as emotional suppression, dominance, and extreme independence to the concept. This distorted portrayal can pressure young men to conform to rigid and potentially unhealthy gender roles.

Similarly, the SIGMA and Alpha Male personas promote an alternative version of masculinity that rejects societal norms in favor of an individualistic, often rigid moral code. Figures associated with these ideologies, such as Andrew Tate, frequently advocate for male dominance and reinforce misogynistic attitudes, shaping young men's beliefs in ways that may negatively impact their relationships and self-image.

THE REAL-WORLD CONSEQUENCES OF HARMFUL MASCULINITY STEREOTYPES

These online trends are more than just internet chatter—they can influence real-world behavior. The normalisation of harmful masculinity ideals may discourage boys from expressing emotions, reinforce unhealthy power dynamics in relationships, and perpetuate outdated gender roles. While many teens use these terms without fully understanding their implications, exposure to such content can subtly shape their worldview over time.

How parents can address these trends with their teens

If you're concerned about your teen's engagement with these trends, the best approach is to initiate a conversation. Here's how:

- **Start with open-ended questions:** Ask your teen what they think about these terms. Questions like, "What does being a High-Value Male mean to you?" or "Have you seen any videos discussing SIGMA or Alpha Males?" can provide insight into their perspective.
- **Encourage emotional intelligence:** Reinforce the idea that expressing emotions and showing vulnerability are strengths, not weaknesses. Let your teen know that true confidence comes from authenticity and emotional connection.



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

PARENT RESOURCES

A Guide to Understanding the Impact of Harmful Male Stereotypes On Teens

- **Highlight positive role models:** Share examples of men—whether from history, media, or personal life—who embody kindness, compassion, and respect. This helps counteract the rigid and often toxic portrayals of masculinity found online.
- **Teach media literacy:** Encourage your teen to critically analyse online content. Help them question influencer motives and recognise how social media can promote unrealistic, one-dimensional portrayals of masculinity.
- **Create a judgment-free space:** Ensure your teen feels comfortable discussing these topics with you. Listen actively, without immediately dismissing their viewpoints or imposing your own.
- **Seek additional support if needed:** If these trends appear to be negatively affecting your teen's self-esteem or behaviour, consider reaching out to a school counselor, therapist, or other trusted professional for guidance.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHY ARE TERMS LIKE 'HVM', 'SIGMA', AND 'ALPHA MALE' TRENDING AMONG TEENS?

These terms gain popularity through social media, where they tap into young people's desire for identity, self-improvement, and belonging.

ARE THESE TRENDS INHERENTLY HARMFUL?

Not always. While some content promotes self-confidence and success, other aspects encourage rigid gender norms and unhealthy attitudes toward relationships and emotions.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY TEEN IS BEING NEGATIVELY INFLUENCED?

Watch for behavioural changes such as increased aggression, withdrawal, or a fixation on dominance and status. Pay attention to the content they engage with online and the language they use.

WHAT IF MY TEEN RESISTS THESE CONVERSATIONS?

It's natural for teens to be defensive. Approach discussions with curiosity and understanding rather than judgment. Your goal is to help them think critically, not to police their interests.

SHOULD I LIMIT MY TEEN'S SOCIAL MEDIA ACCESS?

Instead of outright restrictions, focus on educating your teen about critical thinking and media literacy. Encourage them to explore diverse perspectives and question idealised portrayals of masculinity.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE RESOURCES ON HEALTHY MASCULINITY?

Look for books, articles, and documentaries that explore gender roles and emotional intelligence. Professional guidance from therapists or educators specialising in adolescent development can also be valuable.

By fostering open conversations and encouraging balanced perspectives, parents can help their teens navigate the complexities of online masculinity trends while developing a healthy and authentic sense of self.