

Care Leads to Care

How Caring for Ourselves Helps Us Better Care for Others



Executive Summary

Caring for those around you starts with caring for yourself.

Our study revealed that when men embrace care for themselves inside and out, it creates a ripple effect that benefits everybody in society. Men's self-care doesn't just have the power to change the world today, but for future generations of boys and girls as well.

With this study, we want to redefine what self-care means to men, which challenge different stereotypes of masculinity that hold men back, and help more men care for themselves and their families, friends and communities.

Read our stats and tips below. Let's start making that change together. Today, not tomorrow.

What are the benefits of holistic self-care?

Practicing a variety of activities — including eating well, exercising, meditating, relaxing, socializing and skin and body care rituals — helps improve our overall well-being. In turn, this holistic approach to self-care, when men balance physical self-care, emotional self-care and social connection, helps us care more for others too. Here are the stats to prove it.

Holistic self-care boosts our life satisfaction.

Men who stay in regular contact with people, ask for help, meditate, read books and focus on their diet — in short, who practice holistic self-care are 2.2x more likely to feel balance in their lives, 1.6x more satisfied in themselves and 1.4x more satisfied with their partners.

Self-care could be great for the economy too.

Research by Promundo and Unilever estimates that eliminating behaviors related to stereotypical masculinity could save the US economy \$15.7 billion.

What is stopping men from making self care a part of their daily practice?

This study shows that holistic self-care can help us create a world in which caring manhood is normative. So, what's stopping so many men from embracing it?

Time demands, economic constraints, racial injustice and societal pressures to adhere to masculine stereotypes are all barriers that can hold men back from self-care. As Jady, one of our interviewees, states: "Caring for oneself can be seen as a feminine thing. And men who [practice self-care] may be laughed about or become shamed."



Foreword

How care might help me and those that I love around me to heal, grow and thrive.

When I was around 9 or 10, I lost my maternal grandfather. Eddie Powell was a Korean War veteran and single father at a time in our history when Black single fathers were veritable unicorns.

He was strong and a stoic type of cisgendered man indicative of his generation, who were instructed to keep their emotional troubles close to their vest. His troubles were rooted in a history of racialized violence that forced him to abscond, in the middle of the night, from a potential lynching in Alabama. As a consequence, he was forced to move towards the warmth of other suns and sever ties with the family that helped him “become.” He had also served as a Marine in a segregated military, enduring degradation he never spoke of that undoubtedly compounded his racial trauma.

He served his country and family with dignity, grace, and lovingkindness. But he appeared to find it difficult to extend that same lovingkindness to himself. His caring for our family superseded the need to care for himself. He perished in his early 50s from cirrhosis of the liver – a preventable illness – leaving behind women, girls, and a family that’s still reeling from the loss of its patriarch.

What I wished for my grandfather is the same as what I wish for the scores of men that I have had the opportunity to serve. To push back on the set of norms and standards that no longer

aid them in their desires to be present fathers, husbands, partners, friends, and citizens of humanity. Doing so might ignite a needed paradigm shift in the ways we and they think about gender norms, equality, and equity. It might also mean that men will not merely push through stress in their lives; rather, they could confront, metabolize, and cope with it using healthy methods like meditation.

This World Mental Health Day, let us take a moment to pause, reflect and reset. Around us, are signs that they and we can benefit from an emotional care movement. Let’s work together to make that happen.

After over a year of prolonged physical and social isolation, men and those they lovingly care for are in need of an emotional reset. As a consequence of the global pandemic and upticks in incidents of racial injustice, we are bearing witness to increased mental health challenges.

Many individuals and families are suffering in silence. While women may lean in and seek social supports, men often lean out, choosing instead to go it alone. The implications of leaning out include heightened familial conflicts, substance misuse or abuse, and labor force attrition.

Practicing care offers men a pathway towards the kind of radical healing I wish my grandfather could have accessed. I know firsthand what butterfly effect is produced in the lives of families when men forgo emotional care. There are so many things I would tell my grandfather if he were living. If I had to choose one thing to say, it would be the same thing I want to say to men reading this report: “Your life matters. Your emotional care matters.”

My wish is for all men to grant themselves the kind of radical permission required to break free from emotional imprisonment.



Dr. Wisdom Powell, director of the Health Disparities Institute and associate professor of psychiatry at UConn Health

The overall despair, disconnection from others, and burden of unemployment and distance learning have put enormous pressure on many people's psychological well-being.

About this research

Over the past 18 months, the global pandemic has shone a light on care – how we care for ourselves and for those in our lives.

Women's struggle under the substantial weight of the pandemic has been captured by several important pieces in the media, spotlighting the devastating impact of job loss and/or disproportionate childcare responsibilities. As men, the focus of this paper and research — rally to support their partners and families, there is an urgency to help chart a pathway for being effective allies to the women in their lives, equitable caregivers, and empathic supporters.

The premise underlying this work is simple: Caring for others starts with caring for yourself.

This sentiment underlies why caring for oneself is crucial in our lives. However, men often do not do a great job of taking care of themselves, often as a result of stereotypical masculinity — the instinct, learned through life, to be tough, be invulnerable, and avoid seeking help. Social activists such as Paul Kivel and Tony Porter have labeled these collectively as the “Man Box,” and previous research led by Promundo and Unilever suggests that stereotypical masculinity is linked to negative health outcomes for all. In other words, living in the Man Box makes men act in ways that hurt others and hurt men themselves.¹

Promundo, Dove Men+Care and New Macho have an ambition to change these masculine stereotypes, which hold men back from embracing caring behaviors of all kinds, and reduce the barriers to all kinds of care among men.

As this research will show, men embracing care has a ripple effect that impacts everyone for the better. To this end, as the world continues to deal with the impacts of the pandemic, we must recognize psychological well-being (including men's) as vital to our role as caregivers for the people in our lives. It's also important for the institutions in our lives to support these efforts: workplaces offering paid paternity leave and flexible hours, communities ensuring that all individuals feel safe and protected, and the TV and movies we consume embracing expanded, transformative narratives of manhood, care, and families.

When you care for yourself, everyone around you benefits too.

Contents

Methodology	6
Finding balance: Physical, emotional, and social well-being	7
Benefits of caring for self	12
Care for self leads to care for others	13
Roadblocks to caring for self	18
Holistic care = Caring manhood	21
Experts weigh in: Road map to the way forward	22
Appendix A. Quantitative sample characteristics	23
Appendix B. Qualitative interview participants	24

List of figures

Figure 1.	Hierarchy of types of caring for oneself practiced by male survey respondents	8
Figure 2.	Types of caring for oneself and their link to caring for others	15

List of boxes

Box 1.	Vivek's story: The ripple effect of taking care of yourself	16
Box 2.	Double burden on men who face racial injustice	20

Methodology

In this report, we present the results from a geographically representative survey conducted in March 2021 with 944 men and women in the United States.

The study included 644 men (32 percent of whom were fathers) and 300 women (36 percent of whom were mothers). Sixty percent of the sample identified as White, 13 percent as Black, 10 percent as Asian, 6 percent as Latino/a, and 2 percent as two or more races or other. The timing of the survey was particularly important given that participants had been settled into a “pandemic routine” for the past year, which allowed the study to examine their behaviors in the pandemic more deeply. We worked from the premise that the contextual realities of the pandemic have looked different for different people, which may have shifted how they have taken care of their psychological and physical well-being. [Appendix A](#) provides more information about the quantitative sample.

We also interviewed 23 individuals in March 2021 to gather insight into their attitudes and practices on a wide variety of topics related to caring for oneself and caring for others. We followed a case study approach and spoke with 17 men, five women, and one nonbinary person from across racial/ethnic, class, educational, and geographic categories. To protect the identity of the participants, only pseudonyms are used in this report. [Appendix B](#) provides more information about the qualitative sample.



Finding balance: Physical, emotional, and social well-being

For decades, the field of psychological and physical well-being has recognized the importance of practicing a variety of activities to taking care of one's overall well-being.

In line with existing research, the interviews with people of all gender identities show that they, too, see various types of activities as a form of taking care of themselves. Derek, a Black grandfather in his 50s describes caring for oneself as “mind, body, spirit, physically, emotionally, being in good health.” Similarly, Mateo, a single Latino man in his 40s, describes caring for oneself as “balance in life. In other words, eating a well-rounded meal three times a day and taking time to get out, stand up from the computer and go walk around in the yard for a little while, and make sure I have enough time for friends and family, and getting fresh air, getting out of the LA [Los Angeles] area for a while... just taking a vacation when I can, and pursuing interests at home.”

To understand how often men and women engage in activities like these, we asked survey respondents how often they participated in activities that helped them recharge, rejuvenate, and reenergize their body and mind in the two weeks before the survey was administered. Participants could respond by sharing they never did the activity or did it one to two times weekly, three to four times weekly, five to six times weekly, or every day. The list of activities was curated from

previous research and the qualitative interviews. Looking across the data, people generally talked about how they care for themselves in three categories: **physical and body care, emotional and mental care, and social connection care.** While, of course, there is overlap among the three – doing yoga with friends could be meeting all three needs at once – it's helpful for the purposes of this research to think about these as three categories.

Physical and body care includes taking care of one's body. Emotional and mental care includes doing activities that help one deal with stress (e.g., meditation and praying), activities that help bring joy (e.g., hobbies, reading, music, and baths), and activities that prioritize one's sense of peace and balance (e.g., spending time in nature). Social connection care includes activities that promote feeling close to others – including virtually – and, at times, seeking solace from their company; this category includes, for example, calling people, meeting them, staying in regular touch with them, and asking them for help.

For male survey respondents, physical care was given the most attention (on average, approximately four times a week), followed by emotional and mental care (three times a week) and social connection (twice a week).

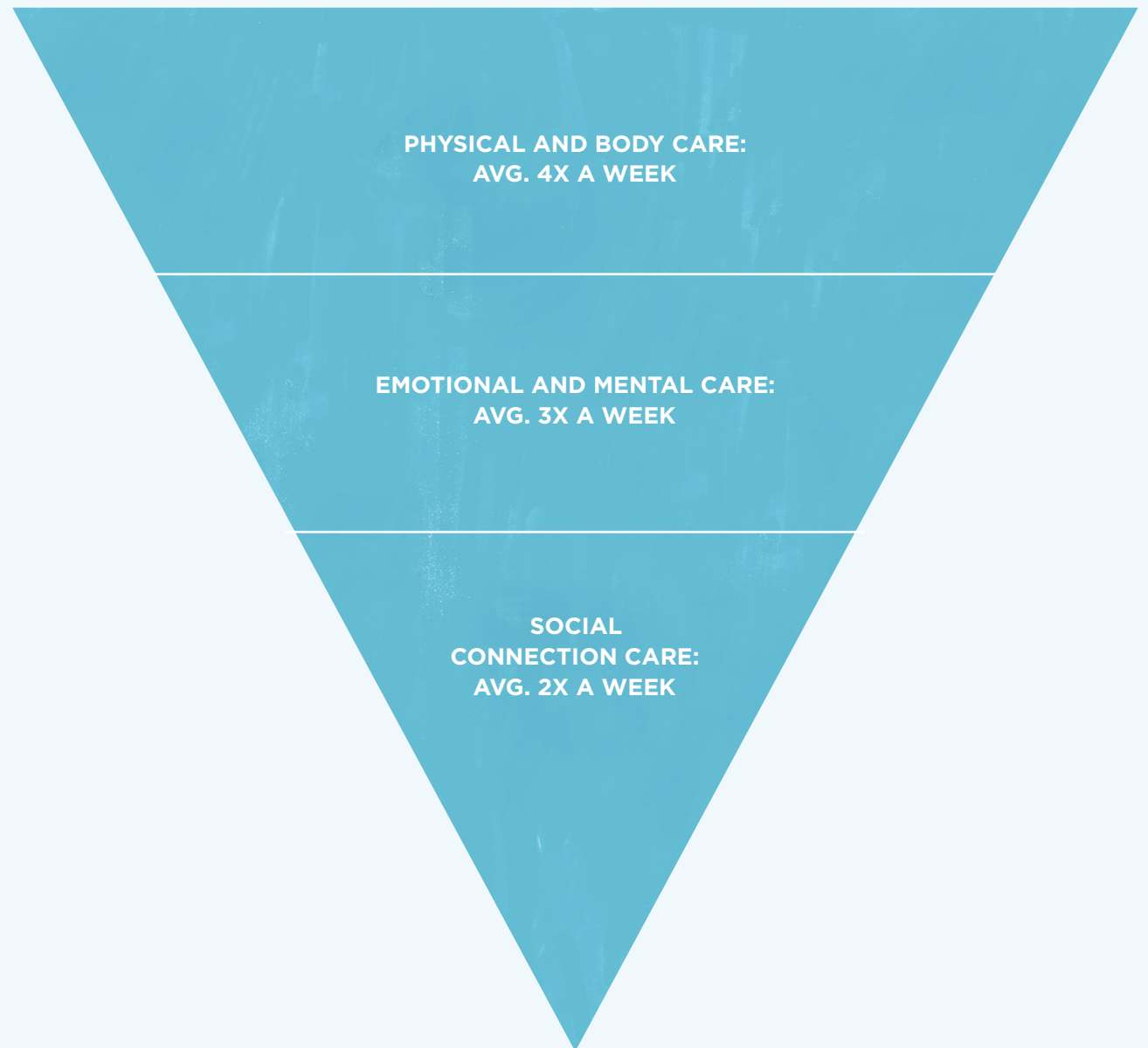
Comparing the combined score for each domain of care – basically, how often individuals do activities within each category per week – a hierarchy emerges. For male survey respondents, physical care was given the most attention (on average, approximately four times a week), followed by emotional and mental care (three times a week) and social connection (twice a week).

This hierarchy is important because it reflects one of the most fundamental barriers to holistic care that physical and body care is more important than any other type of care. We live in a world in which “care” – whether for oneself or for others – is not generally associated with traditional ideas about manhood, but at the same time, certain types of care are considered acceptable for men.

Our interviewees agreed that the current universe of caring for oneself is too limited for men and that men often feel pressure to prioritize physical exercise and related activities as their most commonly practiced form of caring for oneself.



Figure 1: Hierarchy of types of caring for oneself practiced by male survey respondents



“I’m a very open individual when it comes to caring for oneself. But society may deem caring for oneself to be a woman thing.

So, I think caring for oneself could be seen as a feminine thing. For men who do it may be laughed about or become shamed for doing activities THAT TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.”

— Jadyn, married Black man in his 20s.

While physically caring for oneself is necessary, men need the social permission to do more to care for their minds and mental well-being.

Indeed, caring for self must be holistic and intentional for society to reap it’s benefits.



Men who believe in rigid and stereotypical masculinity are 14% less likely to care for their emotional needs.

These social expectatins about manhood, often restrictive and harmful, are the foundation for why caring for oneself and others is often devalued for men, and they have implications for how men care for thers as well.

The larger culture prioritizes certain forms of caring for oneself over others reveals how deeply rooted stereotypical forms of masculinity are in mainstream society. Indeed, this study finds a startling but important link when looking at the male survey respondents' beliefs about masculinity alongside their reporting on caring for themselves: believing in and adhering to more stereotypical, harmful norms of masculinity is associated with engaging in fewer acts of caring for oneself.

This finding is true for men and women. In other words, irrespective of one's gender, believing that manliness is defined by aggression, dominance, hypermasculinity, and emotional stoicism (i.e., not showing or feeling emotions) is related to fewer acts of caring for self. Men who believe in rigid and stereotypical masculinity are 14 percent less likely to care for their emotional and social needs.

For example, Kahlil (a single Black man in his late teens) says, "I feel it's, 'Hey, physical, physical, physical, let me work out and train,' but completely neglecting a part of yourself that's more important than that physical part. Guess what, we're going to age: Our muscles are going to atrophy; we're going to be bedridden one of these days. We're going to be limited to certain ranges of movement. What is going to be with us is our mind. You're not trying to do 80 years of therapy when you're 80 to 90 years old." Kahlil expresses that while physically caring for oneself is necessary, men need the social permission

to do more to care for their minds and mental well-being. Indeed, caring for self must be holistic and intentional for society to reap its benefits.

"I mean, I think the majority of the emphasis that I've seen has really been on the physical. It's been on the physical, although I've seen here and there yoga...and so, yeah, there are a few things out there, but it's not being stressed nearly as much as just the physical portion of it."

— Andre, single Black man in his 40s.



Benefits of caring for self

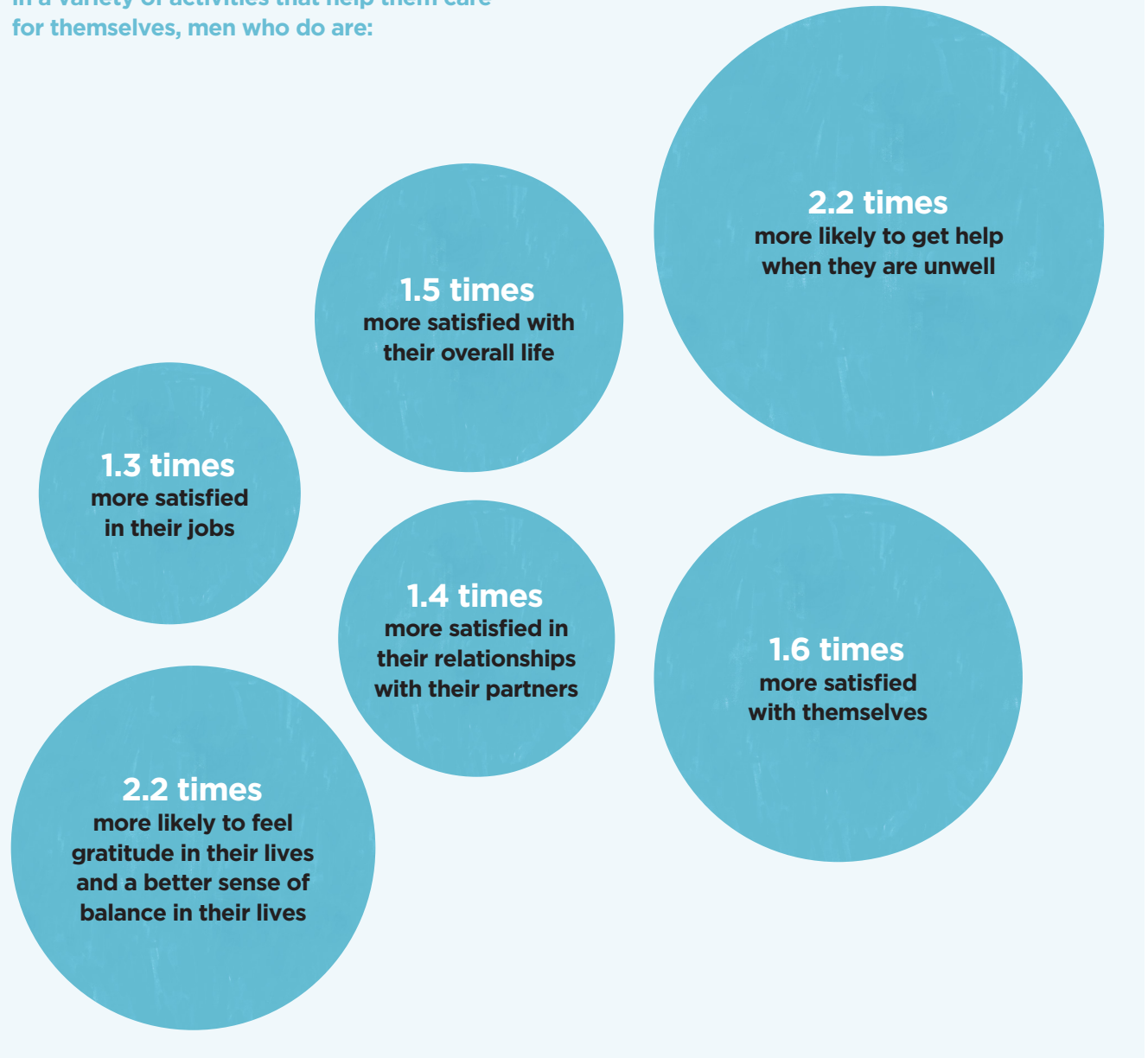
Finding time to take care of yourself is a crucial part of how we meet our psychological and physical well-being needs.

In all of our interviews, participants – irrespective of gender identity – used a variety of words to explain what the advantages of caring for oneself have been for them. Many shared words like “rejuvenated,” “peaceful,” “calm,” “secure,” “contentment,” “at ease and more comfortable in my skin,” “able to think more clearly,” “invigorated,” “happier,” and “more productive” to describe what caring for oneself leads to in their day-to-day lives.

Across the 644 men surveyed, those who call or video chat with the people in their lives to share about their day, who stay in regular contact with people, who ask for help when they need it, who are spiritual, who meditate, who read books, who focus on their diet – in short, who practice all forms of caring for oneself – experience a range of benefits. They’re more satisfied in their jobs, in their relationships with their partners and their friends, and in their overall life; they also have greater self-satisfaction, more gratitude in their lives, and a better sense of balance. In other words, they have better mental and emotional well-being.

Men who experience all form of care are more satisfied with their overall life.

When compared to men who do not engage in a variety of activities that help them care for themselves, men who do are:



Care for self leads to care for others

The typical inflight passenger safety briefing includes a simple yet profound message: In the event of an emergency, secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others with theirs.

Indeed, at a time when the media are often discussing the concept of caring for oneself, it is purely through the lens of benefits to the individual, this study highlights that the benefits of caring for oneself extend beyond men to their spouses, partners, children, families, communities, and society at large.

We find that when men practice caring for themselves, there is a positive spillover effect for families. In other words, practicing caring for oneself makes men happier and makes them feel more satisfied in their relationships, which in turn leads them to invest more in those relationships – in short, to care more for others.

According to our survey, Men who engage in a variety of activities that help them recharge also reported that they share household chores more equally with their partner.

Holistic self-care can lead to men spending 44% more time caring for others. Men who engage in a variety of self-care activities share a household chores more equally too.



Men who take care of themselves emotionally are 58% more likely to take 3 weeks or more of paternity leave.

Mike, a White father in his 30s, shares that ever since his son was born, he and his wife try to care for each other: “I’ll ask her, ‘Do you have any goals for today?’ She wants to do a yoga class or go for a run herself. Or I want to go for a run.

Then we budget our energy so that we’ll be the solo parent while the other goes and does what they want to do during the day.” This link between caring for oneself and caring for others is also articulated by Raewyn, who is a Black nonbinary person in their 30s: “Caring for oneself is important because if I honestly do not take care of myself, it will be a little more difficult to take care of other people. You know, you don’t want to try to aid somebody, whether it’s just spending time with them or actually having to physically take care of them, when you, yourself, are burned out.”

There is also a clear affirmation that emotionally and socially caring for oneself are linked to an expanded universe of care – caring for many members of the family, for example – compared to only physically caring for oneself.

Figure 2 presents types of caring for oneself linked to the different types of people that men spend time in their day caring for. The left-hand column shows that men who engage in activities that solely focus on physical and body care have a greater likelihood of spending more than three hours on an average day caring for their aging parents.

The middle column shows that men who practice social connectedness are likely to spend way more than three hours on an average day, caring for their aging parents and more than three hours on an average day caring for their spouse/partner.

The right-hand column – the tallest column – shows that fulfilling one’s emotional and mental needs seems to have the biggest effect on caring for others: Men who practice emotional care for oneself have a greater likelihood of spending more than three hours on an average day caring for their aging parents, their extended families, their spouse/partner, and their children.

Many fathers first discover the spillover effects of caring for oneself during paternity leave. **Previous research has shown us that men who take paternity leave are happier and that men’s uptake of paternity leave leads to a host of positive outcomes for both women and children.²** Building on this, we started with the idea that taking paternity leave is just an act of caring for oneself and found that both the quantitative and qualitative data wholly support this.³ **Men who report feeling more balance in their lives are 58% more likely to take paternity leave, according to our survey.**

We find that when men practice caring for themselves, there is a positive spillover effect for families.



2. Van der Gaag, N., Heilman, B., Gupta, T., Nembhard, C., & Barker, G. (2019). State of the World’s Fathers: Unlocking the Power of Men’s Care: Executive Summary. Promundo-US.
3. In our study, out of the 269 fathers, only 13 percent did not take any paternity leave after the birth or adoption of their youngest child, while 87 percent took some leave (ranging from less than one week to more than one month).

Figure 2: Types of caring for oneself and their link to caring for others (among male survey respondents)

More time spent caring for:

- **Aging parents**

**MORE
PHYSICAL
CARE**

More time spent caring for:

- **Aging parents**
- **Spouse/ partner**

**MORE
SOCIAL
CONNECTION**

More time spent caring for:

- **Aging parents**
- **Spouse/ partner**
- **Children**
- **Extended Family**

**MORE
EMOTIONAL
CARE**

Vivek's story: The ripple effect of taking care of yourself

Vivek is a father of two children and caregiver to his wife, who was diagnosed with cancer last year. A South Asian father in his 30s, Vivek shares that he coaches his daughter's coach-pitch team (a "higher version of T-ball"). To take care of himself, Vivek hikes, reads magazines, exercises, takes vacations, and gets massages; he also went to therapy despite the cultural stigma against it in his parents' household.

When Vivek talks about his children, he explains that he cares for them by "talking to them about their feelings, talking to them about what's going on in their lives. Maybe picking up on clues about things that might be affecting them, but they haven't really said because they're still so young and they don't fully understand things that are going on." His cognizance that his children need his emotional attention is indicative care for them.


We see a similar level of care for his wife. He shares, "When my wife got diagnosed with cancer, I Googled and I did research on how to be a caretaker, how to help someone going through this." Once again, Vivek displays high levels of awareness that he needed to learn how to be a caretaker to his wife. He says he often

takes his kids on a walk with him since he is unable to leave them at home when his wife is also unable to take care of them.

Another caring relationship that Vivek describes is his close friendships with other men, which are characterized by being there for each other in such difficult times (through illness) and sending gifts to lift each other up. Vivek explains that he organizes a Zoom call every Friday with his closest friends, "and we'll just talk as if we were in person, sitting on a couch next to each other. That's something I've been proactively taking the lead on."

Vivek represents a clear example of how caring for oneself can have a ripple effect for people in one's life if only one has the awareness of what self-care is and why it's important. He says:





“I’ve learned, especially over the past year and [with] what I learned about my wife, that if we don’t take care of ourselves, we’re not going to be able to take care of others.

The analogy that always comes to mind is if you’re on an airplane. When we used to be able to fly places, the safety instructions, they would say: ‘Before you put on the mask for your child, an oxygen mask, put your own on, because you can’t help your child if there’s something wrong with you.

So, over the past year, I felt more and more that I need to take care of myself, take time off of work when I have to. I have a lot of days I can use to take off. Just kind of relax, veg out, and then try and take care of everyone else.”

— Vivek, South Asian father in his 30s.

“Males, we go through a lot because we have to take care of ourselves. We need to be physically and also mentally strong because life throws a lot at us, just getting up to work; getting to work; taking crap from your boss, other employees, or the work itself; or working.”

— Nicholas, single Latino father in his 50s.

Roadblocks to caring for self

Finding the time to care for oneself is challenging for different reasons.

Everywhere and at all times, people of all gender identities are juggling many different roles in their lives: parents, siblings, spouses, colleagues, pet owners, friends, community members. The more responsibilities we take on, the more we have to intentionally prioritize time away from those roles, and prioritizing is hard when there are so many competing tasks vying for your attention.

Many men feel tremendous expectation to adhere to stereotypical masculine ideals. Stereotypical masculine norms – in addition to time demands, economic constraints, and cultural expectations around asking for help – combine to create particularly strong obstacles for men to be able to care for themselves the way they would like to.

Nicholas expresses how something that we know to be true in our society – the expectation for men to hold it all together, to be breadwinners, to be strong both physically and emotionally – reflects our social norms. Others like Santiago, a single Latino man in his 40s, also share that there is an expectation that men must take care of themselves physically: “have a six-pack, have nice abs, go to a gym somewhere, have a membership, always exercise.” As Kahlil expresses, men have to “get a job, work for ten to 12 hours a day, bring home money, bring home the bacon, come back home.”

EXPERT INSIGHT

Joe Ehrmann, former National Football League player and president of the InSideOut Initiative, shares the harmful impact of such messages on men:

“Unchallenged gender socialization and these remarks are extremely debilitating to the healthy development of boys into healthy men. They deny the full humanity of boys and girls and override positive self-care messages. Playing hurt, ignoring trainers, and pathological drives for success diminish self-care and performance. Since a team is a set of relationships, these messages limit the relational and moral development of athletes and their capacity to fully develop relationships and depth of being a teammate.”



Another intersecting barrier with gender stereotypes is the cultural and historical expectations among some ethnic groups that constrain men's ability to seek out care for oneself. Vivek, the South Asian man discussed in Box 1, explains about therapy: "In my culture, it's seen as a weakness, especially for a male, to sometimes seek assistance emotionally. There's a lot of people I think that could benefit from it but who don't do it, specifically because they think there's some negative connotation associated with it."

EXPERT INSIGHT

Dr. Derek M. Griffith, founder and co-director of the Center for Research on Men's Health Equity, shares that Black men may experience the rigidity of the Man Box's expectations more strongly than men of other ethnicities:

"Notions of role strain and precarious manhood suggest that men are judged and valued because of their ability to fulfill these roles in their families and communities. These judgments and efforts are not viewed to be something that one earns and achieves like educational attainment, but it is precarious because it is a status that must constantly be proven and reinforced. This is an important foundation because the stress, struggle, and potential thriving is something that Black men must constantly grapple with, not something that they achieve. Failure in these efforts is not seen as one having a bad day or difficult season, but as a failure of character, integrity, and fortitude."

Double burden on men who face racial injustice

“We live in a world where there are different levels and values placed on...people of different ethnicities. And it impacts me to do more for me and my people because no one else is going to do what we do for our people. The media is ruthless when it comes to condemning and victimizing Black and brown people. So the way that I care for oneself for my people and my family is just to be – we do a little less media, a little less news, a lot more positive affirmations in our own collective circle.”

— **Jadyn, married Black man in his 20s**

Dr. Rashawn Ray, a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park, points out that Black men are significantly less likely to live in predominately White neighborhoods because of criminalization, which he defines as “the inability for people to separate Blackness from criminality.” He says, “Even when Black people are behaving as others [are], it is perceived they do not belong. Criminalization increases profiling, surveillance, and police contact.” In other words, “the stress and strain and racial bias that manifest in all aspects of society results in ‘illness

spillovers’ that influence the ability to properly engage in and benefit from caring for oneself.”

For Nicholas, being brown means working harder to get ahead. He says: “Being a brown man, I have to be triple-tougher. I have to go through more hoops than the average White person does. I have to beg for help, as opposed to asking for help. It’s a big difference. So right away, I have to become a scientist, an inventor, cright away on the spot, with no knowledge, no nothing... I’ve got to figure things out on my own. I’ve got a stick anda string. How am I going to make this work?”

— **Nicholas, single Latino father in his 50s**

In this survey, no major statistically significant differences were found among racial groups vis-à-vis caring for oneself practices. However, many in the Black community experience some practices differently. As Dr. Derek M. Griffith explains, “Many of the common caring-for-oneself practices in public spaces – walking in one’s neighborhood, running in a park, shopping in certain places – are often associated with

questions about why the Black people are there and if they should even be there. This hypervisibility not only may make the experiences of trying to relax difficult, but these experiences can also have a particularly dire consequence.” Many of these “hypervisible” moments have been documented in the media for decades. For instance, Jadyn recounted a recent incident in which a White woman called the police on a Black birdwatcher in New York’s Central Park and falsely claimed he was threatening her:

“The educated Black man who was birdwatching, just doing his thing, right – that’s, maybe that was his way of relaxation, you know – but somehow, it turned into an ordeal that could have gone either way.”

— **Jadyn, married Black man in his 20s**

Holistic care = Caring manhood

This study clearly shows that even during a pandemic, holistic care for oneself – in a way that prioritizes emotional, mental and social connection – is crucial to creating a world in which caring manhood is normative.

In our call for men to be allies for equality for women, in homes and workplaces, this research suggests that supporting men's well-being so they can be better supporters of the people in their lives may be a way forward. To do this, men need to and can overcome performing a certain stereotypical masculinity and instead ask themselves what they need to truly show up for the people in their lives. Doing so will not only benefit men and the people in their lives, but will also have tangible impacts on our society: **In the United States alone, one estimate suggests that eliminating behaviors related to stereotypical masculinity could keep an additional \$15.7 billion in the economy.**⁴

It is clear that a culture of physical activity as part of caring for oneself in the United States already exists. This survey shows that the majority of women and men in the United States are highly aware of the importance of physical activity and practice it nearly every day.

The other forms of caring for oneself are practiced less – emotional and mental health and social connection. However, it is also clear that those forms of care are most associated with care for others. Caring for one's own emotional and social needs, when practiced by people of all gender identities, pays itself forward.

We need to remind men and those around men – at their workplaces, at home, in their peer groups – that all men need social and emotional care and that in seeing our human need for connection and care for our mental well-being, we become our best, caring selves.



In sum, men do not seem to need our help in understanding why self-care of the emotional and social kind are very important.

They need to see others around them supporting them to carry out and seek emotional self-care and make it possible for them.

They need nudges and a narrative shift that make this sort of change possible and imperative, not an afterthought.

4. Heilman, B., Barker, G., & Harrison, A. (2017). The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico. Promundo-US & Unilever.



Experts weigh in: Road map to the way forward

Emphasizing emotional care and social care alongside physical care for men is a way to overcome the pressures of stereotypical masculinity.

Dr. Wizdom Powell, director of the Health Disparities Institute and associate professor of psychiatry at UConn Health, shares, “Men should be thinking of their mental health as deeply connected to their physical health. They should also consider focusing on mental health as a way to demonstrate masculinity (e.g., as a way to take control of or ‘be a man about’ one’s mental health). Meditation should be framed as a component of a holistic self-care routine. Men are interested in adopting self-care strategies. But messages and content need to focus on specific self-care pillars. They also need to strike a balance between reframing self-care and simultaneously embrac[ing] progressive norms and push[ing] back on those that are more stereotypic.”

The focus on psychological well-being starts with simple day-to-day ways of caring for oneself.

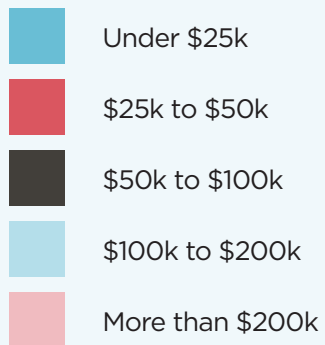
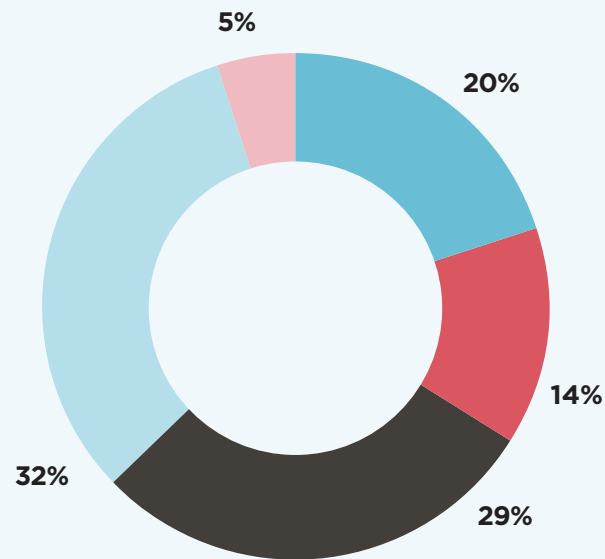
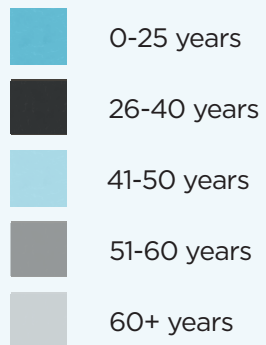
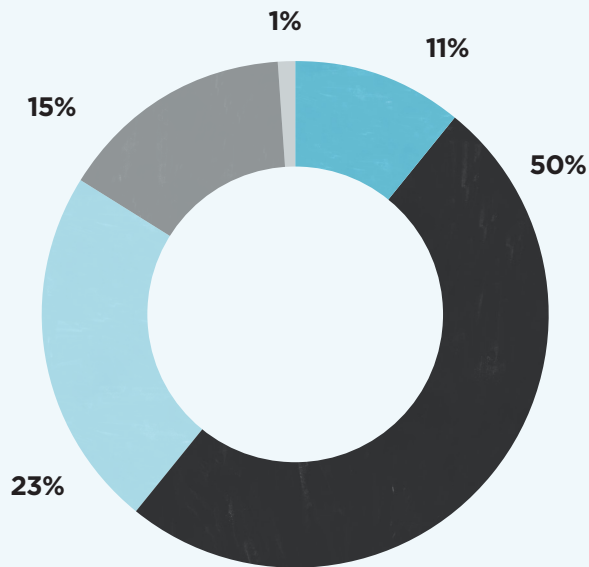
Dr. Rashawn Ray, professor of sociology at the University of Maryland College Park, suggests, “It is important to manage pain and emotions by laughing every day. Talk to the funniest people you know on a daily basis. Communicate regularly with those you love and who love you. Refresh yourself by doing things you enjoy, like hanging out with friends, watching films, and exploring new hobbies. Finally, embrace experts, whether this be spiritual experts and/or counseling experts. It is important

to recharge by resetting.”

As some people go back to work and other pre-pandemic routines while others do not.

the messages people receive should help them prioritize their psychological well-being and keep the positive lessons learned during the pandemic at the forefront. Dr. Gary Barker, CEO and founder of Promundo, suggests that we need to create “new phrases for a healthy masculinity and market them like crazy so that parents and caregivers have the new phrases in their head when their son cries, or is hurt, or needs to sleep because that’s what connected, healthy humans do. They cry, they connect, they listen, they care, they sleep when they need to, they are brave enough to walk off the field when they are hurt and when playing more could cause more harm. We need to find ways to make all those qualities the ones we all agree our sons (and daughters) need.”

Appendix A: Quantitative sample characteristics



In the quantitative sample, 50 percent of participants were between the ages of 26 and 40; the next-highest percentage - 23 percent - were aged 41 to 50. In terms of socioeconomic status, 32 percent of the sample self-reported their annual income as being between \$100,000 and \$200,000, followed by 29 percent self-reporting their annual income as being between \$50,000 and \$100,000.



Appendix B. Qualitative interview participants

Name of expert	Expertise	Title and organization
Dr. Wizdom Powell	Mental health and mindfulness	Director of the Health Disparities Institute and associate professor of psychiatry at UConn Health
Dr. Gary Barker	Fatherhood and masculinity	CEO and founder of Promundo
Dr. Jackson Katz	Sports and masculinity	Internationally acclaimed educator, author, and social theorist and co-founder of Men in Violence Prevention (MVP)
Joe Ehrmann	Sports and masculinity	Former National Football League player and president of the InSideOut Initiative
Dr. Rashawn Ray	Racial justice, masculinity, and caring for oneself	Professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park
Dr. Derek M. Griffith	Racial justice, masculinity, and caring for oneself	Founding co-director of the Georgetown University Racial Justice Institute; founder and director of the Institute's Center for Research on Men's Health Equity

Background of participants in the qualitative study.

Pseudonym	Age range	Gender	Self-identified ethnicity/race	Characteristics
Mateo	40s	Male	Latino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditates • Holds a senior position in workplace
Vivek	30s	Male	Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works in social justice sector • Coach for kids' sports team
Hashim	40s	Male	Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver to others
Anita	30s	Female	Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent • Meditates
Kahlil	Late teens	Male	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College athlete • Meditates
Mike	30s	Male	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent • Has high-stress job

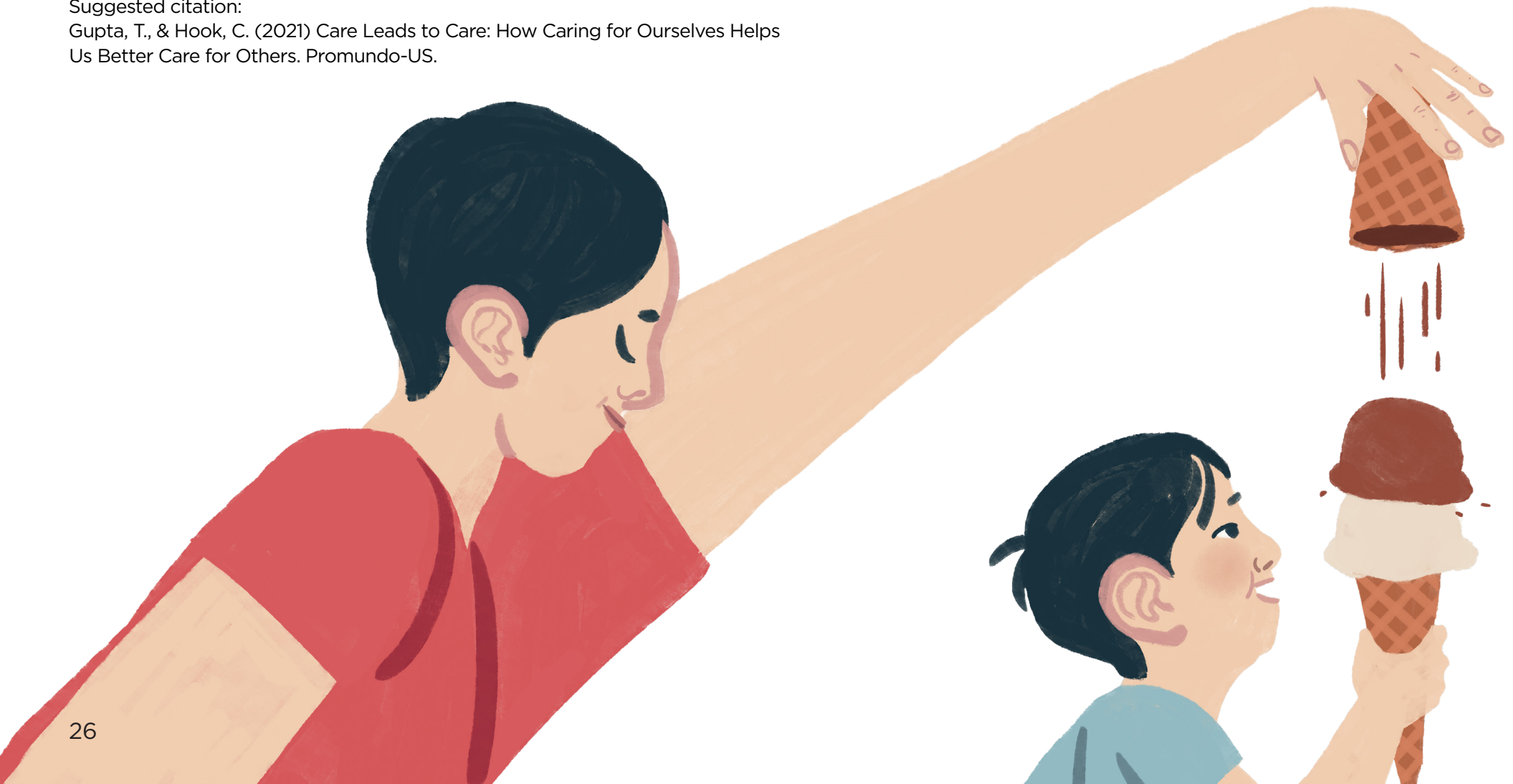
Pseudonym	Age range	Gender	Self-identified ethnicity/race	Characteristics
Josh	20s	Male	Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single • Has a disability
Brian	40s	Male	Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-heterosexual father • Works in social justice sector
Raewyn	30s	Nonbinary	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works in social justice sector
Lisa	40s	Female	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent
Antonio	30s	Male	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single
Derek	50s	Male	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandfather • Holds senior position in workplace
Santiago	40s	Male	Latino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiving profession • Living in poverty • Caregiver to someone close
Jadyn	20s	Male	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a disability • Self-reported little interest in caring for oneself
Whitney	30s	Female	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single
Andre	40s	Male	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parent • Meditates • Holds senior position in workplace
Martin	40s	Male	Latino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay-at-home parent
Benjamin	50s	Male	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older and single • Meditates
Noah	50s	Male	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reported little interest in caring for oneself
Jennifer	50s	Female	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works in a caregiving profession
James	40s	Male	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditates
Nicholas	50s	Male	Latino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single father
Olivia	40s	Female	Latina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the full team of contributors who supported this publication, including Tolu Lawrence, Dr. Gary Barker, Brian Heilman, and Roma Richardson of Promundo-US, as well as the Dove Men+Care brand team, the extended Unilever team, and Dove Men+Care brand partners New Macho and Edelman for contributions in producing this report. Last, we'd like to thank the many experts, including Dr. Wizdom Powell, Dr. Gary Barker, Joe Ehrmann, Dr. Derek M. Griffith, Dr. Jackson Katz, and Dr. Rashawn Ray, who provided insight into the findings.

Suggested citation:

Gupta, T., & Hook, C. (2021) Care Leads to Care: How Caring for Ourselves Helps Us Better Care for Others. Promundo-US.





By

