

HEALTHY MASCULINITY: EXAMPLES FROM FILM

SERIES, POST 2

Is Kristoff from Frozen the perfect man? If you haven't seen Frozen 1 or 2, two things: 1) watch them, and 2) here is a quick recap of the characters we will be talking about in case it's been a while.

Elsa: Poised and dutiful yet moody and somewhat insecure. As the future queen, Elsa was raised to think of others first, especially after her powers proved potentially harmful. Without being comfortable showing her emotions, she bottled up her anger and insecurities. Elsa is loosely based on the titular character of "The Snow Queen", a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen

Anna: Goofy, optimistic, loyal, and a hopeless romantic. Anna might not have the elegance of royalty, but she has the pure and loving heart of a true princess. Sweet yet tenacious, Anna is a courageous and determined woman willing to do anything for her sister.

Kristoff: Gruff but loyal loner. Kristoff grew up with almost no human contact, and he sees no reason to change that. But though his aloofness can make him seem grumpy, he does care deeply about those he loves.

Now onto the main event. Is Kristoff the perfect man? No, but he is great! There are no perfect people, my mom told me that a long time ago. There is one scene that encapsulates him as a great man: In Frozen 2, Anna is about to be crushed by a stone giant, and Kristoff rides in on reindeer back and saves her from death.

He doesn't say "You're safe now", "What's going on?" or "What did you do?" as is often the case with other masculine characters. He says, "**I'm here, what do you need?**" He doesn't tell her what she needs, he asks what she needs. While this may seem to fall into the too-common trope of a man saving a damsel in distress, this scene actually illustrates something important: we all need a little help sometimes and there is nothing wrong with that. Anna is no damsel. She has proven herself capable many times. As soon as she is saved, she expresses what she needs. Men who save the damsel rarely relinquish power but Kristoff instantly turns and asks how he can support Anna. Kristoff wasn't always like this.

So, what got him to this point? If you read the character description, then you know Kristoff has insecurities. I think great men are made up of flaws. In the first movie, he is a loner and doesn't really want to change that. He is happy by himself - BUT he realizes everyone needs love and community, and we learn this when he introduces Anna to his family of trolls. While he is often aloof, he recognizes the power of supporting your loved ones, and he even excels at something that we all (not just men) need to learn more about: "Shelving your agenda." This concept comes from John Gottman, a leader in relationship therapy.

SHELVING YOUR AGENDA

When dealing with someone going through extreme emotions like sadness, anger, or frustration, instead of thinking about what you want to say and how you want to counter them, you take all that and put it on a shelf. Meaning you listen to understand. Even if we are talking and I disagree with your points and method of sharing, I can always validate your emotions. After validating and discussing the other person's feelings, we can then talk about our perspective, and the person may be more willing to listen.

Kristoff is a great man because puts the needs of others first when appropriate, while still maintaining his boundaries and priorities. He recognizes his flaws and knows he needs to work on them. He wants to talk with Anna and ask her to marry him but knows now is not the time because Anna is going through a difficult time with her sister. Kristoff steps back, recognizing that he needs to prioritize Anna's needs at this specific time, without stepping away. He is there for Anna but isn't overbearing. During most of the movie, Anna is only thinking about Elsa and the mysterious origins of her ice powers. She wants to break the ice spell that has left the whole country in eternal winter. Despite being focused on this objective, Anna realizes she has work to do regarding her relationship with Kristoff.

Anna is a great partner because she takes ownership of cutting Kristoff off in conversations, and leaving him behind in the woods when he was trying to propose. When given some space, she was able to admit her own shortcomings and apologize for her actions.

Life isn't a Disney movie, but we can learn from these characters. Charlie Chaplin once said our "humanity to each other is greater than our inhumanity to each other." We all have flaws, but if you want to be great, listen to others to understand their perspective, even if it is not your own. When we understand, we engage our empathy and want to help. We just might find that by helping them (even if it is just listening), we often feel better about ourselves. This builds our own emotional capacity and emotional intelligence. If you would like to learn more about emotional intelligence, [click here](#).

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**HUMANITY TO EACH OTHER IS
GREATER THAN OUR
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CHARLIE CHAPLIN

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This is a continuation of the healthy masculinity series. If you enjoy this post, consider reading my first post about Aragorn from Lord of the Rings. If you enjoy these types of topics, check out the channel [Cinema Therapy on YouTube](#). I have no affiliation with them but I like how they break down popular films such as Frozen and inject therapy into them. This post is based on their post about relationships in Frozen.

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