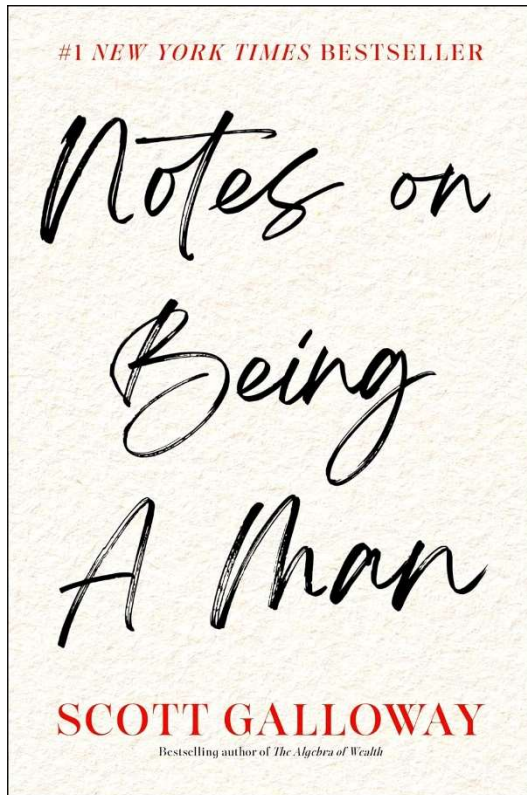


## ‘Notes on Being a Man’ offers practical actions

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“Notes on Being a Man” by Scott Galloway. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2025, 304 pages, \$29.00 (hardcover).



“Most media portray men as idiots with decent hearts or show a man overcoming his inherent stupidity, racism, or biases to become a better person,” Scott Galloway explains near the beginning of “Note on Being a Man,” his latest New York Times bestseller. “The aspirational role models for men – Captain America, James Bond, LeBron James, etc. – aren’t attainable for most of us. Rarely, either, in my experience do they include someone trying to be a good man/person and making a living and being there for his family.”

“Why are we so averse to identifying and celebrating what’s good about men and masculinity, and why does it matter?” the author continues. “Because we won’t prosper if we convince boys and young men that they’re victims, or that they don’t have to be persistent and resilient, or that their perspective isn’t valuable. If we do, we’ll end up with a society of old people and zero economic growth. If we can’t convince young men of the honor involved and the unique contributions inherent in expressing what makes them male, we’ll lose them to niche, rabid online communities.”

So begins one of the more interesting and ultimately enlightening adventures I have had occasion to pursue in quite some time, at least on a more intimate level. Galloway knows his subject matter to an extent few writing in the genre can match. He understands deeply and implicitly the struggles and challenges facing today’s young men and he approaches their plight with objectivity, empathy, and resolve. But this is not a self-help book in the traditional sense; it is much more than a recipe for dealing more effectively with the dire circumstances many young men find themselves in these days. It is an evidence-based explanation of why those circumstances exist and how moving forward will take rethinking many of the foundational social norms that have come to characterize contemporary culture, especially in America.

Extensively researched, with 18 pages of references at the conclusion of the introduction, 10 chapters, and conclusion that form the main narrative, it is obvious from the very first page “Notes on Being a Man” is a data-driven effort that succeeds on multiple levels. Galloway uses charts and graphs liberally throughout the manuscript, a nod to his academic pursuits – although the literary flavor of the volume is decidedly slanted toward a more general audience. Honestly, what he is saying can be immediately understood on first pass. Most readers will find his stories and anecdotes inherently relatable to their own lives, especially given the endless references to current and past pop culture (TV shows, movies, music). For many, reading the book will be like taking a stroll down memory lane.

I was struck by the authenticity Galloway displays throughout his story-telling. The man is not afraid to be brutally honest about his own teenage years and early adulthood. Witness the following from “Things Get Hairy: Adolescence,” the second chapter and one of my favorites:

“My drift into unremarkableness continued. Not excelling at anything, few friends, no real sense of self. Invisible. Scott the Friendly Ghost. My grades were all B’s and C’s, and I didn’t test well, either. No teachers, skilled at pattern recognition and sensing my infinite potential, took me under their wing. In eighth grade, I was downgraded from Calculus to Algebra 2, then Algebra 1. I just couldn’t figure it out. I ran for sophomore, junior, and senior class student body president and lost all three times. I was also cut from JV baseball. Basically, I was a mediocre kid (being generous) at a mediocre high school (again, generous) in Santa Monica, surrounded by kids who used to steal cocaine from their parents and race their parents’ cars on Sunset Boulevard. Not so much ‘Fast & Furious’ as ‘Lame & Entitled.’ The only remarkable thing about me was my willingness to endure repeated failure.”

Feeling better about yourself?

A Professor of Marketing at New York University’s Stern School of Business, Galloway is a serial entrepreneur who was named one of the world’s best business professors by Poets&Quants. He regularly reaches millions of followers through his Prof G Pod, Prof G Markets, and Pivot podcasts, his No Mercy/No Malice newsletter, and his YouTube channel. His previous books include “The Four: The Hidden DNA of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google,” “The Algebra of Happiness: Notes on the Pursuit of Success, Love, and Meaning,” “Post Corona: From Crisis to Opportunity,” “Adrift: America in 100 Charts,” and “The Algebra of Wealth: A Simple Formula for Financial Security,” which I reviewed in the August 11, 2024, Daily News. A 1987 graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles, he currently resides in London with his wife and two sons.

Seriously, “Notes on Being a Man” is chock full of alarming statistics that should be cause for all of us to stop and consider the direction we seem to be headed in this country. This is illustrated compellingly in “Work,” the fourth chapter:

“The United States today doesn’t have a housing crisis; it has an affordability crisis. Roughly one-third of Americans rent, and nearly half are ‘cost-burdened,’ meaning that they spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing. Since 2019, rents have increased 1.5 times faster than income in most U.S. metro areas. In purely economic terms, increased housing costs reduce labor mobility and productivity, as workers can’t afford to live in high-growth areas. When human capital can’t be invested in the regions offering the greatest returns, it dampens growth; one research project estimates that removing housing constraints (i.e., lowering costs) to increase the liquidity of human capital would increase GDP by \$1.4 trillion. In sum, there may be an economic as well as a social justification for government investments in housing.”

Galloway then goes on to explain the implications for young men in a way that should get the attention of anyone concerned about our collective future.

Another feature of “Notes on Being a Man” I found appealing are the numerous little tidbits of advice Galloway provides, usually linked to a short example from his own formative years or from his experience as a father. Consider this excerpt from “Man...ners,” the ninth chapter:

“My older son is at boarding school now – we knew he’d thrive being away from home – and I see good changes in him, too. Sleepaway schools are basically outsourced parenting, but no one can accuse them of doing a bad job. When he comes home on the weekends, he’s kinder, more polite, and disciplined – better man...ners, in short. Both my boys make me so proud. Manners are the escutcheon of a man who knows who he is. Practice them so they become as unthinking as tying your sneakers or answering in monosyllables when your dad asks you about your day. They give you a head start in creating surplus value, help you make friends, get women, get hired at work, and become a role model and a generally impressive human being.”

Oh, before anyone fixates on “get women,” you’ll need to read the rest of the book for context; it’s not meant in a derogatory sense.

Finally, after considering all the reviews submitted for “Notes on Being a Man,” Amazon’s AI assistant produced the following:

“Customers find the book easy to read and helpful for young men, with one noting it's particularly valuable for parents of boys. Moreover, the writing style is well-received, and customers appreciate its thoughtful content and humor. Additionally, they value the book's insights, with one customer highlighting its well-researched information and another noting its refreshing, candid view into the author's life. Customers also appreciate the book's emphasis on kindness, and one review mentions how it offers practical actions to help restore relationships.”

I found all these comments eerily reflective of my own encounter with Galloway’s work. The deteriorating prognosis for young men has been a tangential theme throughout many of his prior contributions, so I was glad to see him devote an entire volume to the topic.

Well-done and highly recommended.

*Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, WKU.*

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