

Harnessing the Dark: Violence, Domination, and Discipline

July 2, 2025 · 7 min read

or How not to become testosterone's bitch.

Introduction

It takes a village to raise a child—or the child will raze the village.

The darker face of power—the one that turns challenge into domination, anger into identity, and impulse into legacy—must be understood, not exiled. This article explores the addiction to rage, the sacred discipline of restraint, and the symbolic tools we need to navigate the surge. It is a map not for taming the fire, but for carrying it with clarity. Not all expressions of testosterone are destructive. In fact, many are essential: physical improvement, competitive drive, status motivation, sexual function, and reproductive health are all part of its design. The goal of this article is not to vilify testosterone, but to distinguish between its constructive and destructive expressions. We're not demonizing a hormone; we're naming a pattern.



While testosterone is commonly associated with male biology, its effects on dominance, competition, and emotional intensity are not exclusive to men. Individuals across the gender spectrum can experience and express these states. This article uses testosterone as a symbolic lens—not a gendered one—to explore how power can be distorted or refined. What we are discussing is not masculinity, but the consequences of unregulated power behaviors across all identities. While some of these expressions are traditionally associated with masculine culture, they are not exclusive to any gender.

Understanding Testosterone and the Call to Violence

It doesn't take much: someone speaks out of turn; disrespects you; cuts you off or otherwise challenges your authority. It's small, maybe even petty, but something old wakes up.

It starts in the throat and moves to a ready tension in the muscles. The breath shortens, the nostrils flare. The jaw locks. Thoughts stop flowing—we're beyond complex thought. It's down to the basics: one- to two-word answers. You don't plan the reaction—you *feel* it, like a reflex. Like a possession. Primal. Unrelentingly savage.

"You could eviscerate him with a word." "You could make him regret stepping up." "You could walk through this room and take what's yours."

The mind sharpens. This is the moment. The threshold. It's not about justice. It's not even about being right. It's about *feeling your own power surge* to the surface, ready to strike.

You could do it—and part of you *wants to*. Desperately.

That, my friend, is testosterone and adrenaline working together to make you ready to solve problems in the most primal way.

The Split Within and the Seduction of Power

The conscious and quasi-rational experience we typically have on a daily basis is the foundation for most of our daily lives. Underneath that rational conscious experience is a veritable cornucopia of hormones and corresponding emotional expressions that have served us throughout our evolutionary history. That cocktail by its very nature has the potential to hijack almost all of your other faculties. It reduces all decisions to a simple calculus:

"Do I fuck it, or do I kill it?"

That's the evolutionary shadow of testosterone and it is raw. It often emerges without warning, without tact, without shame. It's not evil—it's old. And it evolved to keep you alive.

Under threat, your brain doesn't say "Let's process this." It says:

"Win."

When testosterone spikes, so do dopamine, norepinephrine, and a cascade of responses designed to make you *feel right*—not to be right, but to feel like you are. Confidence surges. Risk feels good. Consequences shrink. Vision narrows. You become the action potential (Carré & Olmstead, 2015).

It isn't just physical dominance. It's sexual conquest. Control. Not tenderness, not intimacy—*possession*. The same hormone that fuels your desire to throw a punch can also whisper:

"Take them. Prove it. Leave your mark."

This is the dark energy's first language. It's not inherently wicked; it is indifferent to morality. It doesn't care if the thing you're about to dominate is a sex prospect, a rival, a business deal, or your own child. It only cares that something stands in your way (Mehta & Beer, 2010).

Testosterone doesn't just spur you to act; it makes you divide. It draws a line between *you* and *them*, between strength and weakness, between what must be claimed and what must be crushed. And eventually—if left unchecked—it will even divide you from yourself.

"That part of you is soft. Ignore the ache. Bury the fear. Win anyway."

This narrowing is a gift when you're under siege; when you need to lift a car off your child, or drag a friend out of gunfire. When hesitation equals death, the singular focus is a miracle. In daily life, however, it becomes a trap. It blinds you to nuance.

It distorts your perception: every disagreement feels like war, every challenge like betrayal, every emotion like weakness. This reduction in itself is problematic and has been the trigger for more conflict throughout history than any other. Beneath that understanding is the deeper tragedy of how many of us get stuck here. Indulging this hormonal cocktail feels powerful. Clean. In control. It's the reason so many return to it, again and again.

Especially those trained in violence: police, soldiers, guards, warriors of all kinds. They get stuck because the chemical clarity is unrelentingly addictive. Decisions become seductively simple. Power becomes a surrogate for identity. Conflict becomes the place you find meaning. Divorce rates in these professions remain significantly higher than the general population, often attributed to emotional suppression, chronic stress, and the ongoing activation of survival circuitry (Karney & Crown, 2007).

The challenge of course is that rage rarely solves the problem that summoned it. It burns the field but leaves the roots; the conditions that provoked the anger remain untouched, waiting to surface again. It wins the moment but loses the future. It protects what's precious but is incapable of the vulnerability required afterward. It refuses to stand down.

Obedience to impulse creates damage; repression breeds resentment and shame. Both are a kind of servitude—because you forfeit your agency either way. You end up living in the wreckage of your instincts, or cut off from the very energy you need to move your life forward.

So we need tools and skills to reclaim agency. We need ritual, reflection, and restraint.

A sad reality of testosterone and its expression is that we often meet it for the first time as victims. On the receiving end of someone else's outburst or in the guilt of our own unchecked behavior. We typically meet it through pain, humiliation, or force and as a result we grow afraid of our own capacity, or in the worst case normalize it to traumatize the next generation.

The path of mastery begins when you can feel the surge and stay present. This is where Freemasonry offers a path forward: a Freemason crafts his conscious experience and transcends the tyranny of emotion—not to deny emotion, but to ensure it does not control behavior (Gross, 2015). A brother sees the *unfinished stone* and begins the real work—not by attacking it, but by understanding where to begin.

Symbolic Tools for Self-Mastery

Freemasonry offers symbolic tools for self-mastery—refined over centuries. Here are four that speak directly to this challenge:

The Gavel — Break only what no longer serves. It is not a hammer for dominance, but a tool of removal. What habit, what fear, what addiction must be chipped away?

The Plumb — Are you upright? Are you aligned? Not just with strength—but with truth, dignity, and honor.

The Square — Does your action align with virtue? Not instinct. Not impulse. Virtue.

The Rough Ashlar — This is you. Not weak. Not wrong. Unfinished.

The Elder's Task: Teaching Power with Restraint

It's a myth to think it ever leaves you. The fully integrated man is not without testosterone. He hasn't slain the beast. He has tamed it. He knows the surge and can ride it, channel it, and release it.

And most importantly—he can teach the young how to do the same. Because what the tribe needs most is not more warriors.

But fewer lost boys with guns in their hands and fire in their blood.

A skilled change agent who has mastered his own darkness has overcome the hardest enemy—the one within.

Closing Reflections

The goal is not to become docile. Not to neuter the fire. The goal is to integrate the darker energies of our biology—to know their power, to name their cost, and to wield them only in service of something worthy. That is how the warrior becomes the elder. And that is how we begin to heal.

□ Annotated Bibliography

Baumeister, Roy F., and John Tierney. *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. Penguin Press, 2011. Offers a broad psychological and behavioral framework for self-regulation, including how willpower can be cultivated to overcome impulsive behavior.

Carré, Justin M., and Nathan A. Olmstead. "Social Neuroendocrinology of Human Aggression: Examining the Role of Competition-Induced Testosterone Dynamics." *Neuroscience*, vol. 286, 2015, pp. 171–186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroscience.2014.11.029>.

A peer-reviewed exploration of the biochemical responses of testosterone in aggressive contexts, particularly during competitive situations.

Gross, James J. "Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects." *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>.

A foundational paper in the field of emotion regulation, supporting the notion that emotional awareness and modulation is central to behavioral self-control.

Karney, Benjamin R., and John S. Crown. *Families Under Stress: An Assessment of Data, Theory, and Research on Marriage and Divorce in the Military*. RAND Corporation, 2007. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG599.html>.

Provides context for elevated emotional and relational stress patterns among high-testosterone, high-stress populations like soldiers.

Mehta, Pranjali H., and Jennifer Beer. "Neural Mechanisms of the Testosterone–Aggression Relation: The Role of Orbitofrontal Cortex." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, vol. 22, no. 10, 2010, pp. 2357–2368. <https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn.2009.21389>.

Demonstrates the connection between testosterone levels, aggression, and the inhibition mechanisms governed by the brain's frontal cortex.

Slatcher, Richard B., and Christopher J. Trentacosta. "Influences of Parental Emotion Regulation on Children's Emotion Regulation and Adjustment." *Emotion*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2012, pp. 236–240. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026352>.

Establishes how adult emotional regulation directly affects the emotional health of the next generation, reinforcing the elder's task of restraint and modeling.

Related Podcast Episodes

- [The Trowel and the Limits of Patience](#)
- [When Willpower Fails: Rethinking the Virtue of Struggle](#)
- [Ditching Vices & Superfluities: A Life Edit with the Gavel](#)

© 2025 A Mason's Work Press. All rights reserved.

amasonswork.com/harnessing-the-dark-violence-domination-and-discipline/