Twitter Thread by Elodes ■■



Elodes ■■
@ElodesNL

As a guy, growing up, I had precisely zero experiences where I felt like I really emotionally connected with any of my guy friends (this was high school, so of course they were guys), or anyone at all. All we did was play football & videogames, and watch bad action/comedy films.

Then, about 8 years ago, I went to a female acquaintance's birthday party, which was filled with girls actually *talking* and *having fun* with each other. To this day it remains the single most impactful event of my entire life; it showed me there was such a thing as connection.

(What do I mean when I say connection? I'm talking about feeling safe; feeling understood; feeling accepted; feeling loved; and feeling like the other person *genuinely cares* about you as a conscious being. A heartfelt conversation; a deep interest in each other's experience.)

During the years after the party, given that I'd only had this one experience, I found it difficult to find it again. Given a single datapoint, how do you create another like it? Was it girls? The activities? The talking?

As it is said: I fucked around and slowly found out.

(I was still shy & insecure, so I wasn't able to reliably find connection irl yet. A few films became fond markers showing this magic exists: Before Sunrise, The Tree of Life. They were my first hints that other people shared this, and were shouting off the rooftops to find me.)

It's a common cultural norm that boys fuck around, and girls talk.

I wonder often whether this experience is mostly unique to me, or if it's the norm for men to never have experienced a single moment where they felt like something magical was going on with another person.

For me personally, if I hadn't gone to that party, I don't know if I'd ever have found any of this. It changed me so much. It finally showed me that there was something worth living for, something that was *meaningful*.

People often make fun of nerdy guys' extreme desperation and seriousness around their media hobbies. But when anime and games are the only emotionally resonant things in your life, when there's nothing that feels more meaningful, then *of course* you focus all your emotion there.

I think a lot of women don't understand just how deeply the lack of any emotional resonance with one's peers, impacts a boy's worldview. I've seen many women mock men's extreme emotional reactions to things that seem wholly unimportant to these women.

I wish they would consider that maybe these men have never met with anything more important in their lives, because large parts of male socialization are such that they make emotional connection deeply unlikely. The greatest victim in these contexts is these men, not anyone else.

Which of course isn't to say that women always have positive experiences growing up. I've known my fair share of women whose adolescent friendships were full of drama, lies, games, betrayal, and hardship. I don't envy these experiences.

But when the norm for interaction is communication (rather than external media, or game/sports contests, or constant offensive and denigrative humour), surely the chances of something connecting on an emotional level, person-to-person, are much higher than they are for many men.

I can't tell if the "things vs. people" distinction is biological; I suspect to some extent it is. But it is certainly also deeply supported by culture. When male socialization norms make connection with people rare, a man's greatest emotional connection happens with *things*.

Anyway, maybe this is all bullshit. To begin with, I don't know if this really is more common for men (though I strongly suspect it is; much male behaviour seems most explainable to me by the idea that they've never been deeply moved or touched by something real).

And on top of that, I'm told that many men feel connected through typical male activities. That they feel most alive in sports; draw meaning from competitions, and bond as well as communicate love through superficially denigrating language. All of this I've known myself, too.

But I still can't shake the feeling that there's a key element missing from many men's lives, which goes missed by the people to whom it is a regular, unnoticeable part of their lives, as well as by these men themselves, who don't know it is there to miss in the first place.

As a result, both groups talk past each other. But most of all: the proper response to a person caring an absolute fuckton about something totally inconsequential, isn't to denigrate their level of care and emotions; it's to show them there are much lovelier things to care about.