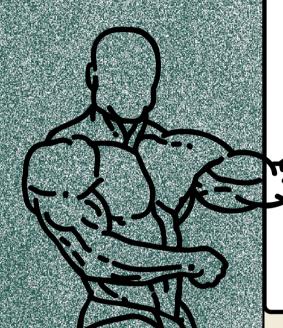# Toxic vs. Healthy Masculinity

STUDENT COUNSELLING UNIT

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SERIES
AUGUST 2022

WHAT IS MASCULINITY?

The term 'masculinity' refers to the roles, behaviours and attributes that are considered appropriate for boys and men in a given society.
Masculinity is constructed and defined socially, historically and politically, rather than being biologically driven.
There are therefore different meanings of masculinity in different societies and cultures.

There are two broad types:

TOXIC MASCULINITY

Toxic masculinity refers to the notion that some people's idea of "manliness" can perpetuate domination, homophobia, and aggression.

It derives from emotional deprivation/denial of emotions and the person's need to dominate. It has roots in the archaic traditional masculine values such as physical strength in order to conquer through dominance.

Toxic masculinity glorifies unhealthy habits. In patriarchal societies, boys' socialization often normalizes violence, as in the phrase "boys will be boys" when it comes to bullying and aggression.

The idea that men need to act tough and avoid showing all emotions can be harmful to their mental health and can have serious consequences for society, which is how it became known as "toxic masculinity."

HEALTHY MASCULINITY

Healthy masculinity involves the daily practice of engaging in a process of intentional self-growth and commitment to change.

Healthy or positive masculinity is the idea that men can be vulnerable, emotionally expressive, have female friends or mentors, and express their emotions without feeling emasculated.

Healthy masculinity means NOT using your size, strength, or power to get what you want from others. It also means treating all others with the kindness and respect that they deserve.

Healthy masculinity also involves accountability to be taken by those who perpetrate negative ideas of "man power." Open communication, availability of professional help, and therapy are all critical components for facilitating positive masculinity.

HOW TO COMBAT TOXIC MASCULINITY?

1. Educate yourself and others about what healthy masculinity entails and how to be a positive male role model.
2. Learn to be vulnerable. Vulnerability through the lens of toxic masculinity is equated with weakness. Learning to accept that you are actually vulnerable, leads to emotional awareness, resulting in being more empathic to yourself and others.
3. Stop trying to be "macho" by reproducing archaic masculine attributes such as violence, dominance, aggression and "toughness".
4. Intervene with others when you notice behavioural patterns such as sexism, oppression, aggression.

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- Morin, A. (2020). What Is Toxic Masculinity?. Retrieved 25 January 2022, from https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-toxic-masculinity-5075107