Joshua Saetern

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# Understanding Masculinity and its place in society

Transitioning from a teen to an adult is very stressful. I’m finding more and more responsibilities I have to deal with each day. Not to mention as an adult male there is such a high standard for myself. In society we have many social constructs, and an Adult Male is one of them. And that’s what I as a young adult am currently trying to live up to.

What is expected of a man? You know those stereotypes such as being tough, independent, assertive, and rich. Am I supposed to have those traits? Men are expected to be leaders. They are expected to be the ones who do the hard work without a single complaint. Don’t show emotion because it will make you look weak, they say. There is nobody there to listen to your problems. Deal with it yourself. “women are diagnosed with depression twice as much as men. However, suicide data from the CDC shows that the rate of suicide was four times higher for men than women in 2020. (THE IMPORTANCE OF MEN’S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | 2nd paragraph of WHY MEN’S MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT | by the Hawaii Pacific University). This evidence shows that there are a lot more men that are depressed than we think. A lot of men seem to hide it because it is just what they were taught to do. And the results are proven catastrophic.

"It is no wonder then that after the Great Depression—the greatest threat to one’s sense of manhood at the time because it threatened men’s positions as providers" (American Masculinity After World War II | 1st paragraph | by Jordan Pitt). Men are expected to be the breadwinners of the family. Post World War II many soldiers came back to their original jobs to find women had taken their spot in the factories. This was a threat to their masculinity, because they thought why are women doing a man’s job? Now what is there for men to do? Well, society has always told us that men are supposed to make money so what are they supposed to do now?

In today’s day and age, we have social media. And the way social media works is that it makes these people who are often very different than your average person become popular because nobody wants to see a regular person, they want to see something extraordinary. And it’s easy to look at these people and their lavish looks, traits, money, and lifestyles and compare yourself to them. It’s not a healthy thing, but it’s unavoidable because people find themselves scrolling through Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok every day. This has created something called Toxic Masculinity, which represents how the stereotypes and expectations of masculinity negatively affects the mental health of men.

Growing up I had a hard time finding my place in society. I was always a bit of a shy, timid, and skinny kid, far from the expectations of a masculine male. I was often teased and sometimes made fun of, but I never fought back. You’ll find that living through those struggles as a young teen that there is nobody there to help you. It’s frowned upon to be emotional and try to rely on others as a male because it's just not what men do. Men fight and stand up for themselves. Right? To this day I still try to live up to these expectations because it’s just ingrained in my mind that it’s what I have to do. However, I look at other men I know and worry for their own mental health. Its not a topic that men talk about, because it’s not “masculine” to talk about your mental health. You are supposed to just tough it out.

Back to the idea that men are expected to be leaders. In war, in businesses, and anywhere where there is a leader, you’ll find that it's predominately males. Why? Because that’s just the expectation. In households too you’ll find that the father is generally the leader of the family. “One time in my life I felt that what was my purpose?... life is very very challenging for a man they expect us to be leaders... and how can you do that if you don’t know what your true purpose is?" (0:55 | 1of3 finding your purpose | Kevin Levrone)—toxic masculinity. People look at you and expect you to be a leader. An example for others, but how can you be a leader if you don’t even know who you are? Living as a man you are under the expectation that you have everything figured out and that you are ready to live as an example. But the truth is many men don’t even have the slightest bit of their lives figured out. Life is so complicated and so vast that some might not even find their purpose in their own lifespan. Living under the stress of having to lead others at the same time as having to find yourself is such a daunting task.

This is important because every day there are men out there who struggle with finding their purpose and having to live up to these expectations of masculinity. The journey is not easy and it’s not something that should have to be done yourself. Men should be able to ask for help from others and not have to feel ashamed of it. They should be able to not have to be the breadwinner of the family and not be ashamed of it. Men shouldn’t be expected to be the perfect leader. We all only have one shot in life, and I don’t want men to feel as if they have failed just because of a mistake you shouldn’t have to live perfectly to this unrealistic expectation of masculinity, because in the end, all that matters is your own happiness and finding your own purpose.

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