Tristan Morse

In the movie, “The Mask You Live In,” the so-called “mask” that this film refers to is a created personality or character that a person ‘masks’ over their true self to fit in or to hide their true feelings so no one can see them. I think that this is a very important aspect of social interaction and how we view ourselves. It’s very true that sometimes, we don’t want to be seen in a certain way and want to be someone that fits into a certain social standard. In relevance to the film, men are putting on a ‘mask’ to cover up feelings that may not be deemed as “manly” or “masculine,” which is a big problem with any possibility of men showing their true emotions or how they think they should be.

What is usually taught to men, as explained by Joe Ehrmann as three lies that make up the image of a man, is to achieve masculinity “through athletic ability, economic success, and sexual conquest.” Not only is this a narrow-minded way of trying to fit in to a masculine image, but it dehumanizes men. A man doesn’t have to be athletic, be economically successful, or do sexual conquest to be categorized as their own gender. Men should be able to pursue what they want to be and have the ability to not get bullied or to be discriminated against because of it. This goes along with another concept that is pushed, which is the idea that men need to suppress their emotions because “only women show emotions.” In turn, males are trying to put on this emotionless “mask” which gets rid of a huge portion of what makes them human. This only contributes to the image staying strong as it gets passed down generation to generation as fathers who get completely molded into this image leave imprints on their sons. The only way we can try to make the image of masculinity more flexible and accepting of other ways of life is to spread awareness to areas that are heavily influenced by this mold at early ages. By doing this, they won’t fall into a rut when they grow up, conforming to a constrictive, narrow-minded, dehumanizing image of masculinity.