

MENTAL HEALTH & MEN - HOW TO HANDLE IT ALL?

Men's Mental Health and how to live with it.

If you walk into any classroom, you will be able to see a variety of students, of different genders, with different cultures, and different primary languages, but something that may not be as noticeable is the mental health of everyone.

Although mental health is an insanely broad topic that could be talked about for hours on end, I would like for us to focus on the mental health of men.

Although this topic has been brought up a lot during these times, it has also been neglected, and I would like to shine some light on to this situation and help any other students and young men struggling with mental health.

According to the CDC, last year, more than 45,000 people took their own life away. A little over 9,4000 of these were women, and more than 36,000, were men. Why is there such a big difference?

"Males, they don't really speak up about it..." senior Kaitlynn Asher said, when asked about the difference between female and male mental health.

But this still doesn't answer the question, as to why men don't seek help.

Well let's first try to define what it means to be a man, although there are many opinions on this, I believe we can agree that a man, simply put, is someone who helps others. A man helps his family, a man helps his extended family (their partner, the family of their partner, and their own children), and a man is always helping others, but this doesn't just mean being able to move heavy equipment, moving giant pieces of furniture with ease, helping their partner with house chores, or solving their kids' problems instantly, it also means being there emotionally. If this is what a man does, it would be logical to think that, when one man needs help emotionally, they will seek help between other men, but that is not the case.

With the rise of cinema, media, and the internet, the idea of what a man should do or be, has been distorted, and the rise of toxic masculinity came to be. Toxic masculinity is a set of certain male behaviors that harm society and even men

themselves, usually these behaviors are overly exaggerated masculine traits that are accepted or glorified in other cultures.

"That kind of mindset was indeed associated with more negative social media use, and higher levels of depression," said Mike Parent, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, when interviewed by Fatherly.

But it isn't just social media or entertainment that's at fault, but also old ways of teaching. Daniel Briggs, a 44-year-old man, when interviewed by The Guardian, said "The pressure to uphold the traditional idea of masculinity stopped me from getting help earlier. I come from the north, and work in a shipyard. Among those I worked there with there was an old-fashioned view of being a man- we don't talk about our feelings. If you get upset about anything other, then football you are considered a 'sissy'. When people say, 'how are you doing', if you say, 'A bit crappy' the classic response is: 'could be worse.'"

But mental health isn't an issue that is far away from us, but it is a global problem, and it could be present right in front of us, but sometimes it can be hard.

"Society doesn't typically allow men and boys to express emotions freely in the way that women are often allowed the latitude to do- and so because of that it turns into bottled up emotions, and that's not healthy," principal Qynne Kelly said when asked if male students have a harder time dealing with mental health.

In a Latino household, when a boy tells their parents, that they are sad, the answer is usually, "Ponte las pilas," meaning to be alert and not to let that bring them down, and although this is said with good intentions, this does not help, because they are already trying their best, and talking to their family could've been a last resort.

And coming from an immigrant background can also be difficult because of how we are brought up.

"Since my parents come from a bad background it puts more pressure on me to try to impress them and

make it better for them," junior Adolfo Patino said.

And it is similar in other immigrant families.

"My dad is from Morocco, Africa, and his idea of mental health is, it just doesn't exist, it's not a problem, he thinks 'just get a job' or 'get out of the house' or 'get out of bed, and you'll be totally fine', for him it's just not a thing," Spanish teacher Mariym Martinez said.

Although dealing with mental health is a struggle for men, there is a way to cope with it. One way to deal with it is to understand and reject or balance certain male social expectations. For example, needing to be seen as strong. Yes, men must be strong, but it's also okay to be weak at times. Sometimes holding everything together can be exhausting, so if you need time to relax and let go, do it.

Another male stereotype to avoid is having a lack of emotions. Men are human, and humans have emotions. Sure, there is a scientific difference between the hormones that make us feel emotions between men and women, but the truth is we do have emotions, and we as men must be able to control them. That is the difference, it's not showing emotions, it's not bottling them up, it's not suppressing them, it's simply controlling them, not letting our decision making be fogged up by our emotions. That is what happens with men that have a toxic masculine point of view, they are filled with anger or other emotions of past traumas or current ones, and they simply let that control them.

What else can we do as men to deal with our mental health?

One way is to talk about it. Yes, it can be hard and even uncomfortable for one to open to another person, that is why it must be a person you trust immensely in. A parent, a sibling, a friend, or your significant other can help you simply by listening and, if desired, give some advice.

But maybe you don't have anyone to turn to, or you just simply are very uncomfortable with talking to a person, well there is no problem because there is always going to be someone for you, and they are always available, and that person is you.

"But how can I help myself" you may ask.

Journaling. ***"Journaling?"***

Yes, journaling.

Journaling is the act of writing down or drawing anything really, onto a notebook.

But why would you want to do that?

Well, for starters, it has been linked with helping to deal with trauma, stress, or just complicated emotions. An article written by Karen A. Baikaie and Kay Wilhem from the Cambridge University Press discovered that journaling could improve, not just mental health, but also physical health.

People that journaled regularly were seen to have fewer stress-related visits to the doctor, an improvement in their immune system, their blood pressure reduced, their lungs functioned better, as well as their liver, alongside other benefits.

The only reason we have so much information of some of the greatest men in history is because they left journals filled with all their experiences, and their discoveries.

"But those were important men, they had stuff to write about." Do you not have a lot on your mind? Do you think these people wrote all of that down thinking that some day they would have millions of people reading it? Sure, maybe you aren't inventing the next big machine, or discovering a new animal or land, but wouldn't it be nice to have something written down, letting your family members to come know that you were a real person, or maybe even helping them by letting them see that they aren't alone in their struggle with mental health? Even if that wasn't a cool enough reason as to why, think of this, you will become virtually immortal.

Another thing that helps with mental health is working out. It doesn't have to be extreme exercises either, it can be as simple as a quick walk.

Mental health is a serious topic, and everyone has the right to be happy. So don't be afraid to speak up and seek help.

You are not alone.