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Society has many common misconceptions about men. Some of these myths include: men are more sexually active than women, real men do not cry, and men are less emotional than women. These myths are highly degrading and can be extremely harmful to men both psychologically and physically. Societal expectations for men to be aggressive and more dominant are most likely what leads so many of them to use violence as a means of expressing their feelings rather than engaging in a healthier emotional release like crying. Whereas men are taught to repress most emotions besides anger, women are encouraged by society to express themselves (Mckelley 7:00-7:26). These unfair expectations make it harder for men to express themselves in healthy ways, despite the fact that research of autonomic nervous system responses suggests that men are just as emotional as women (Mckelley 7:05-7:25). As prominent sociologist Michael Kimmel wrote, "No wonder boys are more prone to depression, suicidal behavior, and various other forms of out-of-control or out-of-touch behaviors than girls are" (Kimmel 470). As a result of toxic cultural myths about gender, too many men suffer in silence.

In modern society, the male touch has been sexualized (Evans 447). Men are often seen as predatory beings, which influences their professional lives as well as their personal sense of self. This stereotypical perception of men is perpetuated by the way men are socialized in mainstream society. As Distelhorst wrote, men are "acculturated to dominate and control" (Distelhorst 25). Sadly, this social conditioning leads many women to fear men even when they are nonviolent. It has also led men within the medical field to fear physical contact with their patients because of how society has stereotyped them as predators. As Evans mentions in their article "Cautious caregivers: gender stereotypes and the sexualization of men nurses' touch," male nurses who are simply trying to do their job "voiced concern that women patients might be

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uncomfortable and/or misinterpret their touch – a situation that in turn might lead to accusations of inappropriate behaviour or sexual molestation" (Evans 444). In the same article, another male nurse expressed that he felt uneasy because he could be accused of rape if he isn't extremely careful at work (Evans 444). The depiction of men as sexual predators with no self-control, which is all too common in contemporary society, makes many men in the medical field afraid of working in pediatrics, as they may be seen as pedophiles if they have to treat a child in a way that requires physical touch (Evans 447). These are a few concrete examples of how men suffer as a result of society's misconceptions about the male gender.

Just as men suffer professionally as a result of gendered stereotypes, they are also emotionally damaged by societal expectations that encourage them to be hyper-masculine and unemotional. Boys are taught to hide their emotions with anger and silence (Mckelley 8:25-8:28). This weakens their ability to form deep relationships and could also pose a threat to their physical health. As Mckelley mentioned in his Ted X talk, "Social isolation makes one three times as likely to develop cardiovascular disease in comparison to someone that has social relationships" (Mckelley 4:54-5:03). Many men are afraid to share their stories of being emotionally harmed or domestically abused by women because society may dismiss them as just another angry man (Hatfield 6:34-7:20). In these ways, men are harmed and silenced by societal myths and expectations surrounding their gender.

While society tries to paint men as being stoic and unemotional, science suggests otherwise. As Mckelley stated, "Research suggests that infant boys are more expressive in both range and intensity than infant females" (Mckelley 5:32-5:39). However, from a very young age, society teaches men to hide their vulnerability, which causes them to express three primary

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emotions: "anger, contempt, and pride" (Mckelley 6:40-6:46). This is evidenced by the behavior of a male who is stressed from work but chooses to express anger instead of crying or releasing his emotions in a healthier way. The limiting of male emotional expression can prevent men from fully experiencing any positive emotions (Mckelley 9:40-9:49). Gendered expectations can also keep men from sharing their feelings of pain and sadness for so long that they believe they would be unable to stop crying if they ever chose to let out their tears (Mckelley 10:39-11:05). These are some of the many ways men are forced to suffer in silence by harmful societal myths about gender.

By expecting men to be unemotional creatures primarily driven by their sex drive and at the same time allowing women to express their emotions openly, contemporary society has forced men to suffer in silence. As society progresses, humanity should attempt to break free of the societal myths that surround gender. Hatfield suggests that one possible solution to help society become more aware of male emotions is "to encourage boys and men in our lives to share their stories and really encourage them to stay with the feelings that are connected to those stories" (Hatfield 7:58-8:07), as well as to let them know that it is okay for them to express their emotions around others (Hatfield 8:20-8:29). Normalizing these actions could help society become a healthier place for men, especially since science suggests that men are not unemotional and stoic by nature. Mainstream culture currently does not support the idea of men being emotional or even expressing their emotions openly. Thus, men are forced to suffer in silence with greater frequency than women. If society works toward freedom of expression for both sexes, greater emotional harmony is possible for men and women alike.

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