



Prevention Connection: Building a Healthy Community

Inside: We Can Make a Difference, Thoughts on Masculinity: Is it Really Toxic?, Perception: Thorns vs. Roses, and Adaptive Coping Strategies for Stress and Anxiety

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Unfortunately, child abuse is prevalent throughout all walks of life. It does not discriminate as it affects all races, ethnicities, socio-economic status, etc. There are all types, but most fall into one of the following categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. According to the CDC, an estimated 1 in 7 children are abused or neglected in the U.S. Likewise, in 2015, the estimated cost of child abuse and neglect was estimated to be about \$428 billion.

We can help eliminate child abuse and neglect by addressing risk factors and strengthening our protective factors. There are a number of risk factors, including child age and/or disability that may increase the burden of the caregiver, young parental age, low parental income, parental mental health issues, history of abuse, poor parental relationships, community violence, etc. Protective factors are important at the individual, family, and community levels. Protective factors include: supportive family involvement, adequate employment and housing, and access to health care and social services. For more information, please contact your VPI at 612-713-1159.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/>

Special points of interest:

For more information on Ending Child Abuse and Neglect visit:

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/end-child-abuse>

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/family-life/preventing-abuse-neglect/signs-of-child-abuse/>

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/familyrelationships/family-life/preventing-abuse-neglect/teach-your-kids-healthy-boundaries>

<http://purplecrying.info/>

We Can Make a Difference: Respect by Chayo Smith

The term respect, as a noun, is defined as: 1. A feeling of deep admiration for someone of something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements. 2. Due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights or traditions of others. As an action word, it means to admire (someone or something) deeply, as a result of their abilities, qualities, or achievements.

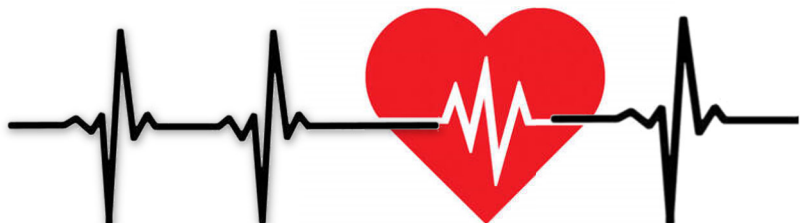
These definitions shape our values and gives us a framework for how we are to treat others. They provide a basis for the golden rule: treating others as you want to be treated. In light of this, there seems to be a cultural shift from the mindset that respect can only be earned, to respect is freely given. This shift makes respect the foundation of how we operate, a foundation that will only help us for the better.

The above definitions describe respect with regards to other people or outside situations, yet interestingly enough, none of the definitions addresses respect for the self. However, self-respect is just as important as respect for others and it is not mutually exclusive. According to the Dalai Lama's 18 Rules for Living, rule three asserts, "Follow the three R's: Respect for self, Respect for others, and Responsibility for all your actions."

These three R's can be applied to most any situation; replying to an unprofessional communication at work, asking for and giving consent in a relationship, having developmental conversations with fellow Airmen, and interacting with family.

When we allow these three R's to shine through in our relations and actions, we foster a professional environment of trust, psychological safety, innovation and ingenuity. We are actively engaged in creating a healthy environment for ourselves and fostering a legacy for future Airmen.

The value of Respect must be foundational to the 934th AW. Respect is the underlying automatic rhythm, the heartbeat of the Viking.



Thoughts on Masculinity: Is it Really Toxic?

by Liz Swanson, SARC

Today's world has expanded our traditional concepts of gender as well as become more accepting of those that don't fall within the traditional realm. This is a good thing, especially if we want respect and acceptance to be core values of our society. However, with this expansion, the term "toxic masculinity" has also emerged. This comes with questions: Can masculinity really be toxic? Is all masculinity toxic? Are masculine men harmful to society?" My short answer is no.

Wikipedia states: "Masculinity (also called manhood or manliness) is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with men and boys." It goes on to say "traits traditionally viewed as masculine in Western society include: strength, courage, independence, leadership, and assertiveness." These are all healthy traits that have benefited our society greatly. For example, our country was founded on the strength and courage of many individuals who stand up to say the way things were being run was not right. In addition, our economy thrives off of independence which has made us one of the world's superpowers. Even on an individual level, assertiveness has a positive correlation with overall well-being and strong/compassionate leadership has only benefited our communities.

So when do these traits become toxic? According to Psychology Today: "Toxic masculinity is the result of a set of strict rules that prescribe what being a man should be. These toxic 'man rules' include: 1. A man should suffer physical and emotional pain in silence. 2. A man shouldn't seek warmth, comfort, or tenderness. 3. A man should only have the emotions of bravery and anger. Any other emotions are weaknesses. Weakness is unacceptable. 4. A man shouldn't depend on anyone. Asking for help is also weak. 5. A man should always want to win, whether in sports, work, relationships, or sex." It is believed that these norms are detrimental to not only the men experiencing them but also society at large and are cited as precursors to things like bullying, hazing, domestic violence, sexual violence, community violence and self-directed violence.

It is true that the above norms are harmful and are procurers to violence.

Thoughts on Masculinity: Is it Really Toxic?, cont.

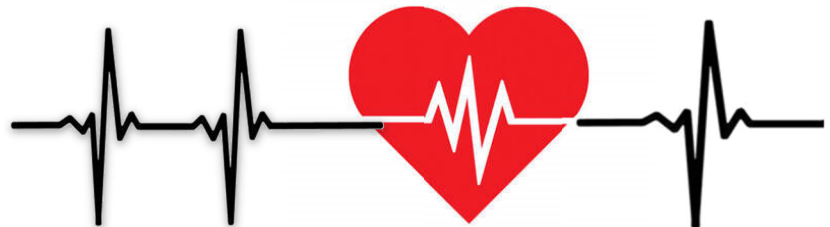
However, they are seen in many people, regardless of gender identity, and are just as toxic.

Working in the mental health field, I've seen many people who struggle with expressing/experiencing difficult emotions, being vulnerable, asking for help, or a fear of failure, etc. In fact, addressing these emotional difficulties was what I did for my 40hrs every week. Because of this I believe it is safe to say that society at large has a difficult time experiencing/expressing difficult emotions, being vulnerable, and asking for help. This creates an environment that is ripe for these toxic behaviors. When paired with masculinity, masculinity takes the fall for society's shortcomings. However, this does not fix the problem and misleads us in our efforts to do so.

So maybe it's time we separate these behaviors from gender identity. Maybe a better way to describe it is that these behaviors, not masculinity, are toxic and that society as a whole has a difficult time with difficult emotions. Men in particular have experienced more pressure to express these unhealthy traits via traditional gender norms yet again society as a whole needs to take responsibility for its emotional well-being. Let's remember that masculinity is not toxic. That a person can be a strong and courageous leader while also respecting those around them. Let's remember that in today's society it takes strength and courage to be vulnerable and to ask for help. Lastly, let's remember that masculinity, when not paired with toxic behaviors, has great benefits to our society.

“The strongest, toughest men all have compassion. They're not heartless and cold. You have to be man enough to have compassion, to care about people and about your children.”

~Denzel Washington



Perception: Thorns vs. Roses by Ch. Brokenshire

I love the quote from Abraham Lincoln, “We can complain that the rose bushes have thorns or rejoice that the thorn bushes have roses.” Oftentimes in life, we cannot control our circumstances. Tough times sometimes come because of our failings and other times just happen because we live in a fallen world. Although we may not be able to control the circumstances of our lives, we can control our response to those circumstances.

It is easy during the tough days to dwell in negativity. We feed the negativity by listening to or reading negative news, being around negative people, and failing to focus on our daily blessings. In these difficult days, I encourage you to focus on the blessings rather than the struggles. What blessings are you experiencing today?

Two years ago, I began my six-month deployment to the Middle East. The most difficult thing I experienced while I was gone was not the heat (up to 128 degrees) or the work or the food. No, the biggest challenge I faced was missing my family. I remember that two weeks after I arrived, because of pre-deployment training, I had already been gone from home for two months. I was ready to go home even though I had just started.

I realize now that I took for granted all the time spent with my family. Now that my oldest is in college and my second oldest is working, I realize just how precious my time with them has been. During this past year of the pandemic, I also realize how much I need to be in community with others. Whether in worship or in daily life, I have taken for granted living in community.

I have found in my life, that when I am in a rut of negativity, that reaching out to help others is the best way to get out. Not only do I see that I am not the only one struggling, but I am blessed by being a blessing to others. Who is that person in your life today who needs encouragement? Reach out to them. You will be encouraged by encouraging others. If you find yourself unable to get out of the discouragement rut, reach out. The chapel staff is ready to come alongside you during your tough times. Focus on the blessings today. Be thankful for the roses on the thorn bushes.



Adaptive Coping Strategies for Stress and Anxiety

by TSgt Schmitz, Mental Health Tech, ASTS

A: Activities: Do something to take your mind off of stress. House cleaning, video games, taking a walk. This occupies your short term memory.

C: Contributing: Do something for someone else. Maybe simply send a handwritten note. This helps you take your mind off how the crisis is impacting you.

C: Comparisons: People love or hate this one—compare yourself to someone coping with something worse than you. You'll see that things are not as bad as you thought.

E: Emotions: Do something that elicits different emotions than those you are currently feeling. Binge-watch some comedy; don't watch the news.

P: Pushing Away: Put the situation causing you anxiety in a box on a shelf. Tell yourself that you won't touch it or think about it for the next hour.

T: Thoughts: Engage in an activity that is incompatible with your worry thoughts. Do a puzzle or read a gripping mystery. Your mind can't worry and do a skill at the same time.

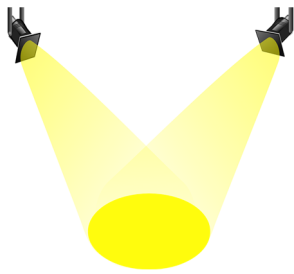
S: Sensations: Do something that elicits intense sensations. Hold ice in your hand, take a cold shower or use a stress ball. This will draw your attention away from the crisis.

***For additional information about stress and anxiety, contact anyone from the ASTS Mental Health Team.**



“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”

~ William James



Resource Spotlight

934th Airlift Wing Legal Office

The 934th Airlift Wing Legal Office provides legal assistance to active-duty members, reserve members in Title 10 Status, retired military members, and dependents who are eligible to receive military identification cards.

Contact Info:

**934 AW/JA
760 Military Highway
Minneapolis, MN 55450-2100
(612) 713-1230
DSN 783-1230**

Prevention Partners/Response:

Violence Prevention: 713-1159
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator:
713-1315
Director of Psychological Health:
713-1224
Airman & Family Readiness: 713-1516
Personal Financial Counselor:
612-297-2826
Chaplain Corp: 713-1226
Equal Opportunity: 713-1221
Exercise Physiologist: 713-1472
Security Forces (BDOC): 713-1101
Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647
DoD Safe Helpline: 1-877-995-5247
Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-8255
National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-7233
National Human Trafficking Resource
Center: 1-888-373-7888

What services are available at the legal office?

- 1. Attorney consultations**
- 2. Wills and durable health care & financial powers of attorney**
- 3. Special powers of attorney**
- 4. Notary services**

What services are not available in the legal office?

- 1. Attorney consultations for UCMJ and adverse actions.**
- 2. Legal representation in civil matters.**