



#EngagingMenAndBoys

Men won't sit back and be silent in the movement to end gender based violence, domestic violence and abuse. Maitri is engaging men and boys through this social media campaign so that together we can raise awareness and work toward prevention.

Thank you Sparsh for joining this Maitri campaign

Here is a message from Sparsh:

Throughout the last few days, I have spent a lot of time with people discussing relationships; what is acceptable in a relationship, but more importantly, what is not. The main issue that I faced was that there was no clear answer to what an acceptable relationship was (in terms of the ages of underclassmen at college). I did notice that there were two main sides to this story: people who believed that it is reasonable (and acceptable) to “play around” with relationships, and people who believed that “playing around” is unacceptable in relationships — but happens far too often.

The first opinion comes from the idea that there is no “one person” or “soulmate” for anyone — that it is okay to date people knowing that it is to come to an end eventually. While this may have become acceptable in today's college culture, I believe that for this to work, both parties in a relationship should know that a relationship is of this nature. Often, I see

relationships end because one side is more committed than the other. And here is where the problem lies: *commitment*. I believe that commitment is the key to a relationship to last. Lack of commitment leads to emotional pain, which no doubt can cause problems in mental health — and I believe that this is a form of violence that is often overlooked.

The second type of relationship mindset revolves around improvement and involvement. In this type of mindset, a couple's aim is not to "browse around," but rather to improve themselves to make their relationship stronger. Unfortunately, from my experience, people decide to take the easy path and not put in the effort to pursue a relationship of this nature. I believe that the main reason for this is *fear of commitment* — people doubt themselves and ask *how can I be sure he/she or they are the right one for me?* Truth is, you can't. However, if people spent time trying to be their best selves in a relationship, it would be so much more fruitful in the end.

How can we bring about this change to see healthier relationships around us? We need to be open to change and evolve to be better. For a relationship to last, a couple must have an open mindset and understand that there is no easy way to a relationship. However, no matter whether a relationship is long distance or not, no person should have to tolerate or live through physical or mental abuse from their partner. I believe during the time frame that people are exploring their compatibility as partners, they should foster an environment of respect and safety. In any relationship (let alone dating relationships), the key is to create mutual respect, which can only come through fostering safety, being consensual, and communicating clearly.

Unfortunately, because of the culture that surrounds college dating, I see that girls fall victim to this complex a lot more than boys. Whether this stems from emotional maturity coming a lot later in boys, or whether it be simply because boys are raised differently than girls, this phenomenon should be pondered upon, and something should be done about it.

About the author:

Sparsh Garg is a freshman at Santa Clara University studying Business and Computer Science. He is part of the Ignatian Fellowship, which aims to provide help and serve the community in and around Santa Clara County. Throughout his fellowship, he has worked with MAITRI to gain a broader perspective on Domestic Violence and the issues that surround it from the point of view of a younger audience.