



Julian Mireles is a recreation coordinator for the City of Pleasanton. He enjoys being part of communities that allow him to facilitate community. He believes it is one of those things that is all-encompassing; the more he engages and participates, the more he begins to see how his efforts impact others and change the community for the better.

I cannot deny the presence of toxic masculinity and its implications. It exists and harms both men and women. Rather than directly combating toxic masculinity, it is important to begin managing all environments, stages, and arenas so that all participants have an equal opportunity to succeed. With this sort of thinking, toxic masculinity, along with other social inequities, will have less traction in our society.

This idea manifests in schools, where we must re-evaluate messaging and policies. The adage, ‘boys will be boys’, and dress codes targeting mostly females are unable to coexist. The idea that clothing is more distracting towards male students is inaccurate and puts an unnecessary burden on female students. As the well-educated society we assume we are, we cannot let our institutions reinforce remnants of toxic masculinity and other inequalities. If this status quo continues in schools, our students will voluntarily or involuntarily accept these narratives and behaviors at home or in the workplace.

Meanwhile, in the workplace, it's impossible to have a pillar of equality when two individuals with the same levels of education and experience are paid differently because one employee has the biological blessing to bare children but the societal pressure to stay home and care for children. Workplaces should not afford women at a discounted rate to men. Employees at all levels of an organization should recognize the power they have in creating a workplace that is fit for all.

I believe that issues like toxic masculinity may be the result of what one observes in the environments they are a part of, including home. A child within a home rife with domestic violence will bear the psychological impact one way or another. How does this translate as he or she goes to school, work, or when they are old enough to initiate intimate relationships? These issues are exacerbated if they are not appropriately addressed at an early age.

This is no easy task. Who is responsible? As difficult of a question it is to ask, I can only respond with all of us. Maitri (the non-profit organization) took responsibility as they heard countless stories from South Asian women being domestically abused. Some schools identify certain behaviors and provide the correct resources to students of concern. Businesses have been editing their mission and vision statements to promote equality and inclusivity, along with policies that uphold those ideals.

As an adult, I must continue to support and validate my partner's concerns. Yes, these things are difficult and uncomfortable; however, this work needs to be done and has the potential to yield powerful, life-changing results. Could we do more? We absolutely can!