



Navraj Brar is a 2nd-year Pre-Nursing student at CSU East Bay. In his free time, Navraj likes to play basketball, go on pointless drives while listening to Punjabi music, and find hidden spots around the bay area. His interest in advocacy against toxic masculinity and the fight for equal treatment of all genders, creed, or background comes from being raised in a society where toxic masculinity prevails and from always feeling that wasn't right.

My mother is an optimist of getting past the suppressive culture against female success and independence. She was the oldest daughter of six siblings and grew up watching her own mother slave for her husband and not have any independence for herself. I remember listening to stories of her childhood as she grew up in that small village in Punjab and being in awe of how much adversity she had stacked against her growing up. She was constantly told to quit school and to drop any dreams of being independent by her OWN family. She knew from that point that she would not stand to be dependent on anyone but herself. My mother disregarded all this negativity being imposed onto her and when she got married she migrated to America and began to pursue a career in accounting. She soon realized that she was being overwhelmed as she was studying, working, paying for rent, and sending money back to India. She had to make a grueling decision that not many mothers could make, the decision to send her 1-year-old son back to India so he can be raised there for a while as she got settled in America. She understood she had to sacrifice a lot at that time in order to create the best future for her family. This sacrifice paid off tenfold as she now is a CPA and owns her own accounting firm in Fremont, CA.

As a first-generation child in America, I grew up being “taught” outdated mindsets about the world and always felt weird about the concepts I was being introduced to. I feel like as men there are these negative connotations implanted in us that tell us to suppress our thoughts and feelings because if we showed them we would be seen as less “manly”. Quite frankly, that’s such a disgusting idea because now you have a generation of men that are depressed and hurting, that won’t seek help because they feel like society will judge them for it and that is the furthest thing from okay.

I also believe that as men we need to help advocate for our women who are so crucial to our lives. As the great Tupac Shakur once said in his song Keep Ya Head Up, “*Time to heal our women, be real to our women and if we don't we'll have a race of babies that will hate the ladies that make the babies*” which is so powerful because as Millennials I feel we can be the generation who pushes change and creates a society where all genders could get equal opportunity to chase dreams of success and independence.”