Gender Norms: "I Must Break You"

Sexual wellness is something we don’t often think about as contributing to our overall health and wellness, but it can make a larger impact than we are aware of. Sexual wellness is about learning to be okay with your body and empowering yourself through your body. One way that has been used for some to accomplish this is through breaking the role of gender norms.

Gender norms are present in our society even at a very young age. Boys are supposed to conform to more masculine roles of strength, aggression, toughness, and even dominance while feminine roles are associated more with being passive, nurturing and subordinate. Although establishing norms can be helpful to some people in our society, it excludes anyone who may be different, and it creates pressure to conform to these societal standards. Some ways that gender norms impact our sexuality and ways that we can help fix them are:

Communication Style

Women from a young age are often taught to communicate using more emotions or in a more passive manner. Men are often taught to communicate using a more dominate style and to keep their emotions bottled up, which can lead to confusion and even form patterns of anxiety. If we choose to not completely conform to these styles of communication, we can actually increase our ability to communicate with our own identified gender and others. Being able to express ourselves openly and assertively is paramount to our wellbeing.
Body image

We are constantly bombarded with imagery of what the perfect male or female body should look like. Men are supposed to be muscular, clean-cut, and have a strong stature. Women are supposed to be skinny, dainty, and fit. These beauty standards are detrimental to the way the majority of our society views their bodies. Viewing different body types and ideas of beauty as attractive is another way that we can ensure how comfortable we are with our body. We must be open to many definitions of beauty and break the stereotype that there is only one type of beautiful in society. In a world that is so diverse, it's absurd to think that one definition can apply to everyone. If we become more accepting of ourselves and others, we can take that next step towards eliminating negative body images.
Sexual Activity

Men in our society are viewed as more outgoing with their sexual activity as well as aggressive about their prowess. Women are taught to be more reserved and to not seek sexual encounters as often as men. Eliminating these standards will lead to men and women both being more comfortable with their sexual experiences because they can just accept their sexuality. This is another situation where men and women are not treated equally, and when someone tries to fix that gap, society pushes back. The key element to this gender norm impact is to bridge the gap between men and women and make sure that we
are not making something okay for men but not okay for women. By treating the two sexes equally, we are helping to eliminate the oppressive gender norms that exist in society today as well as creating new ones that include everyone.

All of these negative aspects of gender norms contribute to members of our society feeling less comfortable with their bodies and cause deep amounts of stress and anxiety. Learning to overcome these barriers set by gender norms will help allow everyone learn to be comfortable in their own bodies and accept who they are. Sexual wellness is something we should all try to take a moment to focus on to become comfortable with ourselves, our minds, and our bodies.

Sources: