

## OPINION

# Hold Your Sons Accountable: There is No Excuse. Raise Your Expectations for Boys' Behavior

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

**C**HILDREN ARE OFTEN referred to as sponges; they are constantly watching and listening and learning from the people around them. Parents and caregivers understand that. They've probably let a foul word slip quietly, only for their toddler to hear it and repeat the word continually like an alarm.

Boys are learning what behaviors are acceptable while expectations are practically below sea level. They hear what's on the news. Brock Turner escapes serious repercussions even when found guilty of rape. They see how men act and hear how they talk. "Women are objects to collect." The boys begin to mimic this behavior. Hazing, catcalling, and sexual abuse have been able to continue because society lied to itself and said that boys can't help themselves.

The language around the topic needs to change. "Boys can't help themselves." The phrase "boys will be boys" is meant to be used when a mother finds toy spiders hidden in her bed. "Boys will be boys" is meant to say that getting muddy while playing outside is okay. The use of this phrase outside of that is unacceptable. Boys don't need people to make excuses for them. Saying "boys will be boys" when a girl is teased, abused, or harassed associates masculinity with violence, sex, and aggression. That is not what masculinity is. Boys can do better, and they deserve to be held accountable.

One of my favorite ways people avoid holding boys accountable is by saying "he does it because he likes you." Plenty of women have heard this when they were growing up. Plenty of women have told little girls this exact phrase. The boy is pulling your hair, calling you names, and pushing you onto the ground because he likes you. He doesn't know how to tell you he has a crush on you, so he is mean and hurtful. It seems cute, almost.

Again, that is not what masculinity is. Boys can learn how to express their emotions and feelings properly. They are capable of showing affection if that is what they are truly feeling toward someone. Boys should be expected to do so. It isn't right for girls to be taught that aggression is affection. If they connect two very different ideas, they'll think that their abusive partners in the future actually love and care about them. The world has enough battered women because boys were never taught how to be loving and gentle.

Then those boys, who were told they have to be powerful and aggressive to be a man, grow up to be the very men who beat their wives. So it goes, the cycle continues. Men think they're entitled to a woman and continue pestering her after she says "no." They follow women at night and degrade girls online. Ask any woman if she's been catcalled and the answer will likely be "yes."

Catcalling isn't a compliment, and locker room talk is a wrinkled old excuse. Whatever sexual or harmful thing a man just said is suddenly excusable because it was locker room talk and was meant "for the boys." In private, people show their true colors. So-called locker room talk is an exhibit of past generations' failures. They failed to hold the boys of that generation to high standards and expectations. It allowed them to grow up into men that today's boys look up to, men that disrespect women and the marginalized.

Expectations need to be higher. Rationalizing and condoning this behavior is harmful not only to girls but to boys as well. Boys need to know that they are competent. Enough is enough. No more excuses for your sons. They are guilty, and they will be guilty if you don't change how you're raising them.

Stop saying "boys will be boys" when they hurt girls, haze freshmen, call her names, or lash out. Stop pretending locker room talk and catcalling are acceptable. It is never too early. Teach your boys that they can be masculine without being crude, angry, and intimidating. Raise your boys to be real men. Don't let their harmful actions go unpunished. Don't let them grow up into men like Brock Turner. Teach them how to be loving, gentle, and responsible from a young age. It is never too early.

## Are Schools Doing Enough for Mental Health?

BY ERIKKA LANGEMO

**M**ENTAL HEALTH OVERALL has been a growing topic for a few years now. Fortunately, that is allowing people who struggle with their mental health to speak up and do so unashamedly. The stigma that for years has plagued the topic of mental health is being broken, but by doing so, new obstacles appear; one of those being students and their mental health. Personally, mental health is a topic that is extremely important to me, and school has always been something I have had issues with for so long. I have seen and experienced how badly school can destroy someone's mental health. We are getting better compared to a few years ago. Here at Concordia, there are free therapists, student accessibility services, and many professors who genuinely care for their students' well beings. Compared to even my high school, that is absolutely

amazing. However, there could be more done. We talk about depression and anxiety a lot, which is NOT a problem because they are truly horrible to deal with, but we do not talk enough about all the other mental disorders out there. With those different mental disorders comes different obstacles that the person faces. Obviously, if you are going to college with a mental disorder, it is just common knowledge that it is not going to be easy at all. However, colleges could do more to make it easier for all students. Allowing students mental health days would be a great start. They would still have to complete homework but giving them the chance to get back up on their feet without worrying about losing points would be so helpful. Luckily, CSP has Student Accessibility Services, so if students have any needs to be met, they can go there. I have used SAS before, and it made college much less stressful. I

think the biggest thing schools everywhere need to work on is understanding how mental illnesses work. Sometimes, they make simply getting out of bed almost impossible. On top of that, knowing that because you cannot get out of bed that your grades are falling makes everything so much worse. If all teachers, students, and staff understood how all sorts of mental illnesses work, it would make school so much more doable for students. Along with that, making sure the learning environments are healthy is another thing schools could implement. Putting lots of stress and pressure on students who already deal with so much of that daily can be extremely harmful. Overall, there are so many little things that the school system in its entirety could implement that would make mental health throughout a student's school career so much more enjoyable.