

# Student Views

## What are your Valentine’s Day plans?



**Virginia Fishe, Sophomore**  
“I’m going to my boyfriend’s house.”



**Lucas Alcantara, Senior**  
“I’m hoping to go on a date with my significant other.”



**Talia Schacht, Sophomore**  
“I’m going to spend time with my friends doing ‘Galentine’s Day’ – like Secret Santa but with Secret Admirers instead.”



**Graham Rhodes, Senior**  
“I plan on spending the night with my family and doing a face mask because self-love is most important.”



**Matt Walsh, Junior**  
“I’m not really sure. I want to plan something, just not sure yet.”

## Is talking about loving ourselves making us hate ourselves?



*by Mia Sherin*

When I say that I love my body, that I think it’s great, totally poppin’, or all of the above, people usually think I’m being sarcastic. They sometimes think I’m joking, caught off guard by someone actually saying they’re feeling themselves. But there is a third type of person, the one who knows I’m not joking. Them? They say they are impressed. Why is it impressive that I love my body? I wonder. Is there a reason I shouldn’t?

But let’s backtrack a little. Growing up, my mother, older sister

and I never talked about our bodies. We all have similar features but different figures, and it was always a given that they were all equally awesome and embraced. But it was never a topic of conversation. When my mom went on a diet, I never heard about it. When she frantically came into my room asking if she should wear Spanx under her dress, it was always accompanied with a “but I know it looks great either way! I’ve had three babies for crying out loud!” And finally, when she told me I looked beautiful, I always knew she wasn’t talking about how good my arms looked in that tank top. In my house, we just didn’t talk about our bodies. I guess it never came up. So now you understand why I never thought twice about loving my body. I never learned another option, never thought that this feeling was abnormal or even uncommon. But now, society says that this is impressive. As much as I wish this

wasn’t the case, this has given me a more critical eye when it comes to how I view myself. Why are people impressed? Would they have been surprised if a Victoria’s Secret model said she loved her body? All valid questions, but my bedroom mirror had no response. As these questions flowed through my mind, one emerged among the rest: Is all this talk about loving ourselves really just making us hate ourselves? Talk about self-love is everywhere. We take classes on it, listen to speakers, see TV advertisements - it’s unavoidable. Being the girl power fanatic that I am, I initially ate this all up. “Yas!” I screamed at the TV. “Yas! You go, Dove Real Beauty girls!” But where I feel these self-love promotions have gone wrong is when they start to treat loving your body as an accomplishment, that “Yes, you can do it too!” This insinuates that it’s difficult. That maybe, if you try really hard, you

might be able to do it. In reality, I have found that these lectures, classes, or advertisements have done quite the opposite of encouraging people to love their bodies. While the messages are typically positive, I feel that this constant talk about our bodies is causing people to reevaluate their own. Attention is always being drawn to loving yourself, so much importance is being placed on feeling good in your skin, that we are forced to question. Forced to consider, “Do I love my body?” So, I have begun to wonder what would happen if we started talking about it less. Would future generations grow up not knowing an alternate option to embracing their bodies? What if we shifted our focus away from our bodies? What if we stopped treating it as an accomplishment to love yourself, but rather a given? For women

especially, I would hate for us to feel like our biggest accomplishment is loving our bodies. Because there’s a lot of cool stuff we are going to do with our lives. It is important to mention that I am only speaking for myself. It is quite possible that something said during a lecture on body image is exactly what the person next to me needed to hear that day. It is quite possible that hearing, “Yes, you can love your body too,” sets off a completely different reaction in someone else. There is no true way for me to know. So I’m merely formulating a guess. Now, let’s make a deal. Let’s vow to never be impressed when someone loves their body, and to never “understand” when someone doesn’t. And while we’re making deals, I promise that this will be the last piece I write about body image. Because it’s time we talk about something else.

## Male double standards are often tossed aside



*by Arjun Thakkar*

It takes real guts to discuss gender, a topic that’s incredibly easy to diminish to simpler terms, and face our own assumptions. Most would rather maintain the status quo, and, unsurprisingly, this rings most true among children. This was no clearer than when I was a summer camp counselor last year. Kids didn’t really care about challenging their gender roles as much as they wanted to know who had the cooties and whether or not the boys were ruling or the girls were drooling. As much as I joke around, it was fascinating how campers conformed to traditional expectations we have of men and women. The boys got involved in large-scale sports out on the field, trying to flex

their undeveloped muscles at the girls who, annoyed, spent time in smaller groups playing games. Since I had a boot on my leg and didn’t want young Timmy to kick my ankle instead of a soccer ball, I spent more time around the playground chatting with the girl campers and trying to bring a smile to their faces whenever they pouted. It was rewarding to connect with some of the counselors and campers while there, but I consistently felt an unspoken social pressure. Parents sometimes gave me a strange look as if I was some creepy individual, acting formal when interacting with me, but when they talked with female counselors, their faces lit up with excitement. I recognize that I still loved last summer and I wasn’t really in a dangerous situation, but I’m sure that hundreds of men who are in “pink-collar” careers – jobs traditionally given to women – face much more intense judgment. Male nurses and elementary school teachers consistently have to deal with scoffs by other men and even women who think them unfit for their career, or as just plain creeps.

The typical story about subverting gender roles is that of women going against societal expectations, pursuing commonly male-dominated STEM careers and ultimately rising up against oppression. This is a uniquely empowering view, especially with recent developments like women standing up to centuries of injustice with the MeToo movement. As much as I commend this progress, I fear that our culture doesn’t give proper attention to the men who face their own battles, their own difficulties in challenging commonly held views of who they should be. We’ve all heard about and supported women who have faced sexual assault, yet there’s an alarming disparity in this attention should a man seek to share his story. The mainstream media often neglects to give men a proper audience regarding the oppression that they face when they deserve it just as much as a woman. Of the many friends I’ve asked, all well-informed, only a couple knew that Terry Crews – the man whose physical stature thousands hope to replicate – faced sexual assault as an adult. This is just one of many men who’ve likely dealt with

similar issues and never got their story out to the world. If the MeToo movement really seeks to be welcoming and facilitate discussion about exploitation, then men like Crews shouldn’t be excluded from this conversation. I recognize this wasn’t a deliberately malicious decision, as I’m sure anyone, male or female, would want to hear any and all accounts of victims, regardless of their gender. I also get that women have historically faced such issues more often than men. But to assume that men simply cannot face sexual assault because they are men and thus face less insecurity than women, or to say that one gender has more pertinent issues than another, is a misrepresentation of reality. To overcome this disparity, we must acknowledge the consensus perception of who a man is supposed to be. Our culture teaches men that they should be confident, cool, and muscular. Our entertainment reflects this stigma, whether it’s Batman’s absurdly chiseled abs or how every movie ever teaches us that guys are supposed to ‘make a move’ in rela-

tionships and ‘pick up chicks.’ We’re conditioned to think that men should be unfeeling; “Don’t cry like a girl,” as if only women are allowed to express emotion externally. Anyone knows how agonizing it feels to hold in tears when they need to come out, so to be told from a young age to “man up” creates a society where women are allowed to be human and men must act like statues. I suspect I’ve misjudged what a woman precisely faces in her own life, and us men can never quite know that and will have to resort to listening to their experiences with an open mind. But that empathy should not come at the cost of the male story being relegated as unimportant. As a community, it should go without saying that such stereotypes, such labels for who a man or a woman should be, must be done away with. If we are to create the more equal, more just, more fair society of our dreams, then we must upend the status quo and be willing to have these difficult conversations and not dismiss any one side as invalid. That’s the way it’s men to be.