

Myths and Realities for (Young) Men Considering Non-Traditional Vocational Studies & Careers (draft)

The NETSAVE Program

Myth: Men are not (or are less) nurturing and thus cannot make good nurses and teachers.

Reality: Many men are nurturing and are successful and effective in careers like nursing and teaching. Many men also want to be active fathers and involved with their families. Sometimes boys and men are discouraged from expressing their nurturing toward others because it is not masculine or “macho” for men to show their nurturing side and skills. Young boys may get teased for playing with dolls or having a favorite teddy bear. Nurturing is more a matter of personality and skills, not gender.

Myth: A man’s place is in the workforce making money and as the breadwinner in the family.

Reality: Although more women than men are the main caregiver in their families, more and more fathers are becoming the primary parent for their child(ren). More fathers are staying home and taking care of their children while the wife/mother works, more fathers are participating equally in the housework and childcare in their family, and more fathers have sole or shared custody of their child(ren) in situations of divorce. With most wives/mothers working full-time, fathers need to participate fully in the important job of raising their children.

Myth: Creativity and the arts (music, dance, visual arts) are not masculine.

Reality: Boys and girls, women and men have equal capacities to be creative. Many of the world’s most talented and successful artists have been men. There are many ways to be creative, both in more traditional ways (such as the arts) and non-traditional ways (designing/creating new technologies, services, businesses, approaches to solving problems).

Myth: Men are not emotional.

Reality: Boys and men have all the same feelings as girls/women have. The masculine stereotype has discouraged males from acknowledging and expressing any sort of “vulnerable” or “weak” feeling, such as sadness/crying, fear, insecurity and tenderness. When boys/men experience these feelings, they are encouraged to distort and express these feeling into anger and violence, protecting them from being vulnerable. Everyone needs the permission to acknowledge and appropriately express all the feelings that all of us experience.

Myth: All boys and men who are interested in non-traditional studies and careers (such as nursing, cooking, childcare) are gay/homosexual and sissies.

Reality: Homophobia (the fear of homosexuality and homosexuals or being perceived as being homosexual) has reinforced restrictive gender role stereotypes for both males and females. Our sexual orientation is an important part of who we ARE, but has little or nothing to do with what we DO, such as what we study and what kind of career/job we have. Gays and lesbians go into all different kinds of careers and jobs, just as heterosexual women and men go into all kinds of jobs and careers. Just as everyone's sexual orientation is their private business, so it should be everyone's freedom to explore and pursue whatever studies and work they find interesting and rewarding.

Myth: A man can't make enough money if he goes into a non-traditional career or job.

Reality: While it's true that traditionally female jobs and careers often pay less than traditionally male ones, men can make a good living supporting themselves and helping to support their families in non-traditional jobs and careers. Although money is important in deciding what work to pursue, it is not the only (or even the most important) consideration. Just as the women's movement has helped women achieve greater employment opportunities and equal/fair pay, men need the permission to pursue studies and careers based on their interests, skills and satisfaction, not solely on how much money these jobs/careers pay.