

*Heart & Soul  
Community Counseling, Inc.*

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**HEART & SOUL COMMUNITY COUNSELING, INC.**

**Our Mission**

The mission of Heart & Soul Community Counseling, Inc., is to educate, empower and care for those individuals, groups and communities who have suffered dependency, illness and oppression. Heart & Soul is a counseling and community center that offers individual, group, family and couples counseling. It also offers classes, groups and workshops. If you would like more information or would like to schedule an appointment call 631.321.7011.

*Heart & Soul Community News* is a publication of Heart & Soul Community Counseling, Inc. It is published a few times a year to provide education, the sharing of ideas and research, entertainment and community organizing.

To receive this FREE publication please send your address to: 17 Fordham Rd. W. Babylon, NY 11704 or e-mail *heart-soul@att.net*

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**CALENDAR**

**Psychodrama  
March 2015  
Call for more  
details.**

**Call Heart&Soul for  
more information  
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*Community News*

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*Sexism: It's effect on Girls and Boys*

*Written by Tina Calabrese, LCSW-R, CASAC  
Executive Director*

The summarized definition of sexism according Merriam-Webster is a prejudice or discrimination based on gender and behavior, conditions or attitudes that support stereotypes of social roles based on gender. This belief system often affects the way we treat girls and boys and when internalized by the child sends a message to the child about their role in life as a result of their gender.

Gender, it has been argued, is a social construct; meaning it's what the society has taught us and not necessarily what gender means. For example our society still tends to believe women will not do as well as men in positions of power and men will not do as well in positions of child rearing.

Here are some of the beliefs that are sexist and may be social constructs:

**Girls:**

- Cannot lead
- Aren't funny
- Cannot do science or math
- Are not mechanical
- Are too emotional
- Cannot make decisions because of hormones
- Should not be single or child less
- Should like girl things
- Fake cry
- Cannot be tough and/ or angry
- Cannot handle finances

**Boys:**

- Cannot be nurturers
- Are often bad and/ or angry
- Cannot be trusted as a primary parent
- Cannot be soft
- Cannot be afraid or vulnerable
- Should like boy things
- Cannot cry
- Cannot show too much affection to other boys
- Should have the control

Girls and boys can grow up believing these myths and then acting them out. This is not allowing them the freedom to be who they really are and it is not good for their mental health. It's so sad that this would be imposed on them when they are developing both physically and emotionally.

## ***Sexism: It's effect on Girls and Boys cont.***

*By Tina Calabrese, LCSW-R, CASAC  
Executive Director*

Here are some examples of how you might see this sexist behavior being enacted:

More boys than girls are accepted into engineer training or college programs.

A girl and a boy have a fight in the school yard no teacher is present the girl cried the boy is blamed without knowing the details of the fight.

Girls/ women are not seen as viable for combat missions.

Boys are not preferred as baby sitters.

It is important for all of us to notice if the girls or boys in your life are victims of sexism. If you see it then discuss it with those in authority and especially with that girl or boy. Once they realize what is going on and they feel permission to have other options they can redefine themselves.

Quite often a gay or transgender child feels so unacceptable that they hurt themselves. They internalize subtle societal messages about gender and choices despite having a loving family.

There needs to be discussion, teaching, celebration and pride messages for and about these children. Instead they may see or worse believe this:

God hates fags  
Is that a boy or girl?  
That's not natural  
Stay away from him he's weird

Not only do these children feel the pain of these hateful messages but also are frequently bullied as well.

Can you imagine what this feels like while so much is going on in puberty and adolescence?

Roles for boys and girls need not be so defined. If we approached roles and behaviors that have become social constructs as interchangeable then our children would have greater self esteem and confidence. They would not have to feel rigidly boxed in to certain ways of being.

I would ask you as adults to also look at your beliefs and practices to see if you have internalized these sexist constructs. If you have then try to fight against them and try some new behaviors that you felt were "not allowed."

Being a boy/ girl or woman/ man does not have to be so clearly pictured. First and foremost we are human beings with heart and soul. Why should it matter so much if a girl likes to fix cars and a boy like dolls? What matters most is that we support and love these children for who they really are freely and naturally.

In the long run, regarding mental health, what is most important is that the girl and/ or boy in your life likes who they are and feels comfortable with that. We have seen too many children and young people take their own life for believing they are too fat, too weird, too gay, too smart or not liked. We need to make it a priority that young people feel accepted and embraced for who they are. Holding onto old constructs and beliefs should not be more important than their lives.

For this new school year lets all try to accept children and adults for whoever they want to be. If we can just allow them to express themselves and get through their journey of development without self judgement and self critical thoughts and behaviors we will see a generation that achieves mental health.

## ***Recovery from being in a Narcissistic Society***

*By Tina Calabrese, LCSW-R, CASAC  
Executive Director*

Selfies, Facebook posts, Instagram, the newest and best sneakers, pictures of horrific events with a smile, who is happiest, who has the most, who looks the best. These current social practices make us overly involved in ourselves. This over involvement can be a form of narcissist or self absorbed behavior.

While going through psychotherapy it is important to look inward and outward. Your therapist may ask you to look not only at how you have been treated but how you treat others. Considering others feelings is a sign of emotional maturity. Striking the balance of the two is the goal.

Thinking and being there for others should not be sacrificial. You are not narcissist if you take care of yourself and get your needs met. The narcissism occurs when you focus so much on yourself that you hurt and/ or neglect others and worse don't even know others are present around you.

One day there was a horrible accident on the streets of New York City. Right after the accident people passing by took a selfie with the accident in the background. After being disgraced on Twitter they later apologized but the fact that at the moment they took the picture they were more concerned with their selfie than the victims of the accident is an example of this social narcissism.

### **Recovery**

Recovery from this is about resisting the impulse to do what others are doing that is "in." By not having to be "trendy" you can then evaluate whether or not you agree with the social practice. Thinking for yourself is the key. Ask yourself what are the motives to your constant picture posting. Is it about being better than others? Is it about being liked? If it is then you are reinforcing a negative not a positive view of yourself.

You need to define who you are and what is acceptable or not. Just doing what others do does not help you think for yourself.

Take a moment and evaluate your posts, your pictures, your tweets and ask yourself if you feel good about it. Are your posts a real reflection of who you are or how you really feel about yourself and your life and even your partner? Is it a lie or the truth? Are you looking happy but are you really sad? What would it mean to you to stop the pictures, the posts, the illusions? Are you addicted to social media? What could you be doing instead?

Another aspect of recovery is about helping others. Many studies have proven that helping others helps the giver feel good. There are many groups, organizations and communities that need your help. Consider doing what you can. This can help take the focus off of you and put it onto another.

Instead of the SELFIE and all these self absorbed practices becoming the norm in our society consider the ELFIE and give the gift of your time and your heart and soul as we approach the holidays and always.