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Men More Affected than Woman by Ups and Downs of Relationships

Guys Take it Harder, Turn to Drugs and Alcohol



Contrary to popular belief, the ups and downs of romantic relationships have a greater effect on the mental health of young men than they do on women, according to a new study by a Wake Forest University. (Getty Images)

Big Boys Don't Cry, They Drink

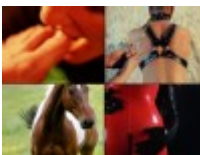
Though these findings run counter to popular wisdom about the way men handle their relationships, gender and relationship experts were not surprised by these results.

"Women are more naturally expressive," says Audrey Nelson, author of "Code Switching: How to Talk so Men Will Listen." "We'll cry, show our feelings – when a woman is having a hard time, she has two or three friends she can talk to, to ease the pain. Men have the same feelings and emotions, but they have no outlet."

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"One of the ten commandments of "masculinity" is 'thou shalt not be vulnerable,'" she says, "so they self-medicate the feelings with drugs and alcohol and drown their vulnerability, rejection, sadness."

Nelson says the difference between the sexes has to do with both how women and men are wired neurologically and taught socially.

Research shows that the region of a woman's brain related to compassion and empathy is larger than a man's, she says, so "straight out of the womb she's more nurturing."

Then, society trains girls to express their feelings -- though not their anger, she notes -- while men are taught not to cry, not to show vulnerability. In fact, she says "the only sanctioned emotion for men to express publicly is anger. It's no surprise that men turn to alcohol to numb the [unwanted] emotions."

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