

# Queer eye's breakdown of toxic masculinity



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## Queer Eye: “ A Decent Proposal”

The Netflix series, *Queer Eye*, involves five determined gay men who specializes in something unique from the others, and advantageously places their talent into the lives of men who aren't essentially experiencing their full potential in life. While doing this, *Queer Eye* is trying to portray the toxic masculinity in today's society. Toxic masculinity is a brutal depiction of men, labeling them as violent and aggressive. Clemens stated in his article, “ It's the social ideal of masculinity, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness.” (What We Mean When We Say, “ Toxic Masculinity”).

Society has it to where your status as “ man” can be taken from you just by portraying feminine traits. The Fab Five believe their encouragement can break down the wall that some people hide behind. In season 2 episode 2, the director of the Netflix series, *Queer Eye*, successfully presented toxic masculinity in today's society by portraying how William had an absolute absence of self-care and needed some support taking the next step forward to be the man his wife wants him to be.

In the episode of *Queer Eye* , “ A Decent Proposal,” Shannan is ready for William to propose but she is not sure what could be holding him up. During one of the close-up scenes, William states, “ Everything in here belonged to Shannan and her ex-husband.” (2: 11). At this moment you can see how William is uncomfortable when he says that. This could be a reason why he hasn't proposed yet. William may have committal issues because even though Shannan has moved on from her ex, she may not have fully moved on. She is still hanging on to a piece of him shown by having his furniture around the house. In the article, “ Netflix's *Queer Eye* Reboot Is an Antidote

to Our Culture of Toxic Masculinity,” the author states how if you try to numb your feelings, you numb your happiness. William may feel less of a man to Shannan because she doesn’t respect him enough to buy new furniture for the both of them than to be sleeping in her ex-husband’s bed. William also not expressing how he feels about the furniture in the house, shows that he and Shannan may not have decent communication skills.

Seeing how the Fab Five interact with each other and the people they help shows how society should interact with one another as well. Both on and off-screen, they don’t pretend to be infallible. This can be shown in the scene where they have a mini fashion show in the bathroom with William’s clothes. (8: 53-9: 15). The Fab Five feed off each other’s energy and they have a good time doing so. At first William looks very uncomfortable when they are modeling with their shirts tied in the front making it look like a crop top all while doing a feminine walk. As stated in the article, “ Obviously, the ultimate goal is the complete destruction of the gender binary and the elimination of both masculine and feminine as identifiers that influence what traits, clothes, styles, or behaviors are acceptable.” William may not have wanted to participate with the Fab Five at first because they weren’t performing manly traits and were doing and wearing their clothes like women. Society has trained men or put them in the mindsets to where they have to suppress their feelings and actions that could be looked at as “ feminine.”

The Fab Five demonstrate and inspire confident, strong relationships based on genuineness while painting, grooming, and feeding their clients. Shannan explains how William never changes his style. He always wears the same

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combination: t-shirt and shorts and cooks the same meal every day because he is too tired to make anything else when he comes from work. (1: 38-2: 15). By living life on the same routine, William may feel as if men do not need all the grooming and pampering that women do. He is apparently satisfied with his one look and same meal or maybe he is afraid of stepping out of his comfort zone to try new styles. Tan, the fashion man of the group, takes William shopping to try on new outfits. (15: 15). The Fab Five constantly try to force one of the impressions that it doesn't matter if someone needs to revitalize a passionate connection, the solution is a fashionable new wardrobe and a stylish haircut. As the men slowly get William to come out of his shell and expand his style, he lets Jonathan groom him and give him a new haircut. (22: 10). Viewers can tell while getting waxed, William isn't fazed about all the pampering but in the end, he loves the way he looks.

In conclusion, all the Fab Five wanted people to realize is that there is nothing wrong with being gay and it's okay to be a man with feelings. Young boys do not get the chance to experience and apply some of the characteristics to their lives that the Fab five portray throughout their show. They are often told to hide feelings like sympathy, kindness, and weakness and substitute them with aggression and hostility. However, after all the pampering and talks with each man, William definitely came out of his shell. Seeing the grooming, new house furniture and other little things that changed in his life, he definitely feels more comfortable with himself and was able to successfully propose to Shannan. The recurring theme around this episode was that the message of self-confidence and reassurance must be

supplemented by the consumption of new items such as: clothing and furniture. Getting yourself groomed and having feelings that are not aggressive or violent doesn't make you any less of a man than the next. The director of the *Netflix* series, *Queer Eye*, portraying how even the next man may need to take a step out his comfort zone to be the man he truly is was very affective.

## Works Cited

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- "A Decent Proposal." *Queer Eye*, written by David Collins, directed by Christopher Kubek, Netflix, 2019.