

Boys Will Be Boys

Why do boys act the way they do? Why do they push, shove, yell, or pout? Why do they “leap before they listen”? Why do they tend to take foolish chances? Dr. James Dobson, in his helpful book: *Bringing Up Boys*, shares an extreme case.

Two boys found a coffee can full of gasoline in the garage. They decided to have some fun so they poured some of the gasoline down a manhole in the street. Then they lit matches and threw them down the manhole. Nothing happened. So they poured the rest of the gasoline down the hole. Suddenly there was a rumbling sound like an earthquake. The manhole cover flew through the air and landed in a neighbor’s driveway. “What happened was the gas ran down the sewer lines for a block or so and vaporized with all the methane in there and blew up all our neighbors’ toilets. I’m a plumber now; that’s how I know exactly what happened.” (Dave Washington), Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, p. 3. Well, “boys will be boys.” But why are they so different from girls?

Dr. Dobson says, “The first factor to be considered is the hormone testosterone, which is largely responsible for maleness. . .” *Ibid.*, p. 19. At puberty boys experience a flood of testosterone. A current problem is that many boys spend 80 percent of their time with women and consequently they don’t know how to act like men. When my oldest son was about eight years old, I used to spend considerable time on the floor wrestling with him. I now recognize how valuable that experience was.

The sexes are very different. This was the Creator’s idea. God intended that they should compliment each other. The on-set of puberty is a very critical time in a boy’s life. Another critical time for boys is between the ages of three and five years. Their maleness nudges them out of the mother’s nest to the world of their father. This is a time when they need a male model. (*Ibid.*, p. 58.)

Disciplining Boys:

Boys, especially, need to know who is in charge. They need to know the rules. State your rules kindly, but firmly. If Johnny goes on playing blocks after he’s asked to pick them up, get down on his eye level and ask: “Did you hear what I said?” Some parents start counting: 1, 2, 3, etc. This is not a good idea. It provides a movable goal line.

Teaching boys to work is a top priority. Don’t pay them for ordinary chores about the house, such as yard work, keeping the car clean, indoor duties like dishes, vacuuming, etc. Self-esteem is best learned by a job well done with appropriate affirmation. This gives the boys a taste of the

real world. Give your children an allowance. The time to begin is at about six years of age. Visit with your children about money: about saving it, spending it, and giving it. And don’t forget to remind the children about God’s part — ten percent plus offerings. Encourage entrepreneurship. Both of my boys had paper routes when they got to be about eight or ten years of age. They learned to earn money and spend it. “The spendthrift boy will be the spend-thrift man.” *Child Guidance*, p. 136.

Probably the most important element in discipline is unconditional love. This is especially needful for boys. Firmness with kindness and consistency should be the rule. Give lots of eye contact and appropriate touching. This will greatly reduce unpleasant confrontations.

Single Mothers and Boys:

God has a special place in His heart for single Moms. “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling” (Ps. 68: 5, NIV). Millions of men have grown up with single Moms and turned out gloriously. It takes much prayer, common sense, and some help from others.

How can the single mother help her boys think like a man? What can she say about male sexuality? Do some reading in the area. There are lots of books available on single parenting. Look for role models. Find a church that has an active Pathfinder Club, and offer your help. In the Pathfinder Club, the boys will be rubbing shoulders with men. Look for father substitutes — grandfathers, uncles, cousins, etc. Share your concern about your sons. Give your boys good books that feature male-role models. Biographies are a rich source of information and inspiration for boys. Get interested in what boys are interested in: bugs, butterflies, snakes, soccer. Be there at their games. Become a booster.

When my oldest son was about sixteen, I asked him to take the car and go down a dirt road and pick up some firewood I had cut. When he came back he acted kind of guilty. “What’s the matter, Fred?” I asked. “Dad, I have a confession to make. I was doing some tricks with the car and gunned the engine on the soft dirt before I hit the pavement. When I hit the pavement I think I tore out second gear. Dad, I’m very sorry. Please forgive me. I’ll try to pay you back some day.” I was shocked, of course, but I was impressed with his repentant attitude. Yes, it did cost “big bucks” to fix it, but at the time I remembered some foolish driving I did when I was a teenager. I am so thankful I controlled my anger.

“A father holds awesome power in the lives of his children, for good or ill. Families have understood that fact for centuries. It has been said, ‘No man stands so tall as when he stoops to help a boy.’” Dobson, p. 57