

Bold Book Notes – Boys Should Be Boys by Meg Meeker

PARENTS – check your own PARENT PEER PRESSURE...

STOP thinking about what you can **DO** for your son... start placing importance on **BEING** there.

Schedule **FEWER** activities/commitments and **FRET LESS** (more time to just **BE**)

Activity For MOMS– take an inventory of what your son is involved in (does he enjoy them? Or are they a way for you to avoid the worry that he isn't involved enough?)

PRIMARY PARENT PEER PRESSURE AREAS: the 3 A's - Athletics, Academics and the Arts

The goal – where do you want your sons **CHARACTER** to look like when he is 25? (Do you want a pro baseball player first and a man of integrity second or the order reversed?)

MORE THEN ANYTHING ELSE, YOUR BOYS WANTS YOU (it is counterproductive to keep him scheduled up to their eyeballs)

Understand a boy's greatest need – to see their mom or dad happy with him (accepting him, being proud of who he is) **BUT** we over-rotate on the lectures. No son wants his dad's advice if he is repeatedly interrupted or criticized.

Our sons know what we like/dislike/want or expect from them. So, it is more important to **LISTEN** than **TALK**.

The **LOVE MATH:** 1 Criticism = need for 7 **HEARTFELT/SINCERE COMPLIMENTS**

Sons listen to people/parents whom they:

- Respect
- Admire
- Fear (in a healthy way)

Son's reject words from people/parents who only:

- Criticize
- Deride
- Push

Every boy needs: Time / Attention / Affection and Approval in abundance from their parents

(don't give up! The road is long, and boys don't do the best job of giving us Moms what we need for our emotional bank accounts to be full, but **DON'T GIVE UP ANYWAY!**)

*Ask yourself: Do we want to raise a son to be **HAPPY** or raise a son to be **GOOD**? (if you raise him to be good – he will be happy!)*

Do you give too much... toys, clothes, money entertainment, teaching them it's better to receive than to give?

Boys who begin on top and stay there due to parent influence robs the boy of opportunities to learn to navigate his own way, take some bumps and learn to get back up again.

BOYS AND NATURE:

- Boys tend to hide emotions and need somewhere to go when they can be alone and think – nature provides this refuge
- Boys need to press their strength, test their power and even assert it – can do this outdoors. The play there is real, its 3-dimensional and instructive in a way that a computer game can never be.
- Many boys live in a “personal fable” – the belief they can do anything they want to and have a distorted sense of their own power to change other people’s minds. They can feel overly responsible for much of life because he genuinely believes he has the power to change the immediate destiny of himself, his loved ones and his friends. Boys are primed for risk taking.
- Boys look for outlets to define their power, a very large portion of a man’s masculine identity is defined by his understanding of his power. Instead of letting him drive like a madman, pay for him to go parachuting a few times – feel the thrill by re-channel it into an activity that feels risky to him but in reality, is loads safer.

Understand this to be true – which you probably know in your gut to be true – terrible TV and violent computer games are bad for our sons. Stand up and do what’s right. Disconnect and strictly limit and supervise your son’s access to electronic media is one of the EST things you can do for his emotional, mental and physical health.

The culture’s view of teen boys: It is an ugly time of life, we will endure it until the brain tissue develops and they return to normal.

The teen boy’s view: You see so many messages that teen boys are surly, rebellious, troublesome and together they can be like a pack of wolves. You realize you are a suspect to teen life ill doings. How do you feel?

We are DEAD WRONG about WHY boys get into trouble in the first place. It isn’t peer pressure driving boys to drugs, drinking or depression or causing them to fall behind in school....

The REAL REASON? WE HAVE LOWERED OUR EXPECTATIONS about teenage boys. We accept the ideas that the culture says are true about teen boys.

We accept the idea...

They are sexually out of control!

- **Then....** We allow them to be bombarded by sex-saturated media

They are likely to be surly, sullen and aggressive!

- **Then...** We allow them to spend dozens of hours a week with media the reinforce this

Understand **NORMAL** teen behavior:

- Frequent arguments over independence issues
- Occasional temper tantrums
- Moodiness
- Sulking
- Increased fatigue (usually due to lack of adequate sleep)
- More interested in spending time with friends than with family

VS. other clinically diagnosed disorders like...

Major Depressive Disorder*

Depressed/irritable

Change in appetite/weight

Change in sleep pattern

Change in motor activity

Fatigue or loss of energy

Trouble concentrating

Recurring thoughts about death

Dysthymia**

Profound sadness

Decreased interest in activities

Appetite disturbance

Increased irritability

Increased argumentativeness

Decreased energy, fatigue

Sleep disturbance

Poor concentration

Feelings of hopelessness

Periodic thoughts of guilt

Difficulty making decisions

Oppositional Defiant Disorder***

frequent arguments with adults

Often loses temper

Often deliberately annoys people

Often blames others for his mistakes

Often touchy or easily annoyed

Often angry and resentful

Often actively defies or refused to comply

Often spiteful or vindictive

Often angry and resentful

Persistent lying

Physical aggression

**: Longer than 2 weeks of and at least 5 symptoms of*

*** : Greater than two months of and at least two of*

****: Negativistic, defiant, and hostile behavior longer than 6 months and at least 4 of the following symptoms are present*

Why know this? Because, it is NOT NORMAL for teen boys to:

- Lie
- Hide away for hours in their rooms
- Be hostile
- Be physically aggressive to friends and family

Know what is NORMAL and what is not and see cries for help instead of passing behaviors off as normal.

A MOTHER'S ROLE:

We are their soft spots and more emotionally in tune with our boys. We can see our boys' feelings and motivations and try to understand and direct them. Help them sift through their feelings and emotions.

We are also the safe spaces for boys to safely act out in front of: (yelling, having temper tantrums and crying) that they won't do with their dads.

What do we give our sons?

- Verbally communicate love more easily
- The first experience of love - the template of how he will regard love with any woman after her
- Physical touch – easier for us to hug and kiss our boys
- Show interest in his feelings (but don't expect him to talk at length about his feelings to you. Sometimes he will, sometimes he won't, but always remain and show that you are interested.)
- Witness– do not be manipulated by your son if he says, "You just don't trust me." Deep down, boys like feeling watched over, it means we CARE.
- GIVE THEM WHAT THEY NEED, NOT WHAT THEY WANT
- We need to protect our son's innocence if we care about their mental and physical health and their character. DO NOT DISMISS or trivialize some major mischief as something to brush off.
- We can see the beauty within our sons and love him as he is
- Forgiveness, excuse, acceptance and love when no one else will
- Extend grace – give hugs and love when he has failed – it shows him that goodness in being a man isn't all about his PERFORMANCE. It is about being able to accept love from another and then return that love.

The MOM/SON relationship: From day one, we know that they will grow up and leave us to make their own way in the world. With MOM being XX and the Son being XY – they are disconnected. He has a different male mind. He experiences different physical sensations, different worries and ideas.

This is TOUGH WORK. What can you do to help make it easier?

- Take some of the pressure off and include more time to RELAX.
- DON'T compare notes with other moms (which can lead to feelings of doing too little and questions your own instincts)
- DO NOT over-schedule your boys (Your sons don't need more activities that separate them from you, they need more time with you.)

SIMPLE GOAL: Keep a roof over your head and raise mentally and physically healthy children. You are better off going for a family walk than working harder to make extra money to pay for more activities for the kids.

Boys need:

- fewer toys
- fewer clothes
- More time with Mom and Dad

- Less time in structured events
- More time being bored (to use their imagination to figure out what to do)
- Less TV, video game, screen, device time

DO NOT FALL INTO THE TRAP that if your son has problems that they are a reflection of YOU and YOUR PARENTING. Do not personalize your sons' problems as your own.

4 MATERNAL CONFLICT PATTERNS

ENMESHMENT: When a mother cannot identify where she ends and her son begins. Compulsion to fix his life b/c she feels that she is living his life. Moms who feel their life is devoid of substance are susceptible to enmeshment. The outcome? He becomes a chronic disappointment as mom cannot shape his life to her liking. Mothers who feel empty or insecure need to find their own jam (and it can't be their son).

ESTRANGEMENT: Looks at normal boyish pranks as evil. Doesn't give affection to prevent him from becoming a sissy. Pays more attention to other women (friends, daughter, mother) and brush his needs off easily. View son as other men that have disappointed her in her life. Must see son as his own person.

OVER-DEPENDENCE/MAMA'S BOY: When a son becomes overly emotionally reliant on his mom. This is misinterpreted as a strong emotional connection. Happens when a mom constantly communicates to her son that he needs her. She does too much for him. He learns he is incapable and cannot succeed on his own. Mom's lower self-esteem can lead to this.

UNAVAILABILITY: When you physically cannot be there to form the bond with your son. Usually by working long hours outside the home during early years of boys' life. Boys can form bonds or learn to trust others if their mother isn't available or dependable. Can send the message that the son isn't worthy of time or affection. Physical and emotional energy must be given from mom to son to avoid this.

A FATHER'S ROLE

The role model (to counteract how culture depicts men). Fathers need to provide healthy encouragement. Dad's words are the FINAL TRUTH. If they are positive? A boy feels he can't be beaten. If they are negative? A boy feels that he could never win.

IT TAKES A MAN TO RAISE A MAN. We need dads to show our sons how to grow into a healthy man.

A boy trusts a man more – to help him transition from boyhood to manhood, because a man has done what he has to do... become a man.

Father's set rules because they know the rules (boy point of view)

Mothers should listen to their INTUITION. Fathers should listen TO THEIR SONS.

What can a FATHER give to a SON?

- The BLESSING:
 - Answering his son’s internal question of “Am I (me as a WHOLE PERSON) good enough (for my dad)?” with a resounding YES!
 - It’s a right of passage every boy desires and only the boy himself can/will know when it occurs.
 - If they DO get the blessing – boys can grow into men that have confidence and can withstand the loss of a job or other difficult times (resiliency!)
 - If they DON’T get the blessing – boys can grow into men that feel incomplete and can interfere with their ability to become intimate with others
 - How do dad’s make sure they give this important blessing?
 - 1st: search your real thoughts and feelings about your son (your son will read into your behaviors, dads)
 - 2nd: find a way to reconcile yourself to giving your son a sincere blessing.
 - The goal for dad? Communicate to your son: I DELIGHT IN YOUR COMPANY. YOU ARE FULLY ACCEPTABLE TO ME.
 - The blessing CANNOT come from coaching, criticism or competition. It comes through HONEST expression from dad to son that he is pleasing JUST AS HE IS.
- His LOVE
 - Give TIME: sons need to be reassured that they are valuable to their fathers and worthy of their attention
 - A boy seeing his father give up time from work, hobbies, recreation to be with him knows HE MATTERS
 - Show AFFECTION
 - Do things together like work, play, exercise or hobbies
 - Refuse to NEVER GIVE UP on a son – even when they are in their teens and you are worn down from the marathon of work, marriage and fatherhood, even when they seem to push you away or seem like they aren’t interested or need you – keep connecting!
- Self-control
 - Testosterone must bump up against testosterone in order for boys to learn how to gain control over themselves and their passions
 - A boy watches his father...
 - to see what he does with his strength
 - how he controls his temper
 - how he talks with people he is irritate with
 - how and on what he spends his money and time
 - how committed he is toward his loved ones

We are afraid of really seeing what our boys are up to, not because they are bad kids, because we’re afraid of disciplining them because that takes energy and it’s unnerving. Leaving them alone is not the answer. Do the hard work. Don’t be afraid to lose your son by disciplining them. You lose your son when you let down all the boundaries that you know in your heart are the right things for the long term.

TRANSITION FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD:

Build their confidence of knowing they have what it takes to mature into a man.

Help develop SELF CONTROL (emotional adulthood) where he can refrain from arguing when he thinks he's right and has control over his impulses. Teach him how to separate his feelings from his behaviors. Do NOT indulge your son and make pleasure his primary goal. ***Perpetually making your son happy only keeps him from maturing into a man.***

REMEMBER: YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR SON NEEDS. GIVE HIM WHAT HE NEEDS, NOT WHAT HE WANTS.

Help him move from YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE to I'M RESPONSIBLE

- Immaturity in a nutshell – “I’m a victim. I’ll blame everyone else besides myself.”
 - This is not a character flaw, it is a developmental issue – one to grow beyond. This is normal for a boy/teen but not normal for a man.
- As parents, we have the ability to hard-wire our son’s brains for maturity – by holding them accountable.
 - If they are not held responsible for their wrong doing/bad choices, they are in danger of never leaving adolescence.
 - If they are not emotional adults – they will lead lives of constant frustration and discontent, always blaming others and never realizing the control they genuinely have over their own lives.
- **SHOW YOUR SON THAT LIFE IS BETTER WHEN HE IS IN CHARGE – OF WHAT HE DOES WRONG AND WHAT HE DOES WELL.**
 - We do not want a boy to grow up thinking that if only others would act better on his behalf, then he could be happy or successful. He will never enjoy life with this mindset. He will always feel like he is a victim, powerless and incapable.
- Men want to lead, and as a teen, a boy is trying to figure out where to lead himself.
- As a boy: Moral reasoning is black and white – parent authority poses no threat to his identity
 - So... give your young boy a solid moral foundation and help him practice it. He’ll have a “beliefs blueprint” from which to work
- As a teen: questions his masculinity if his morals and beliefs are not his own.
 - So... don’t be threatened by his questions. They are about him figuring things out, testing the “beliefs blueprint” Let him. If you’ve taught him well, and the “beliefs blueprint” is true for the long term – it will withstand his testing.
- Ask your teen what he THINKS – encourage him to exercise his moral thought process. He is practicing knowing how to do what’s right, how to find out that virtue is its own reward and become an emotional adult.

A PARENT’S ULTIMATE GOAL? RAISE THEIR SON TO BECOME A MAN OF CHARACTER.

Mom Exercise:

- 1st: Create your mental picture of the man you want your son to be. You can plug in all the externals (height, weight, sports, hobbies, college, profession, home, car, bride (or groom))

- 2nd: No strip all the superficial components away. Take away his spouse, home, car, hobbies, etc. What man do you have left?
- 3rd: Recreate his internal self. What do you want to find? Examples:
 - Lives truthfully and works hard?
 - A scoundrel willing to crawl over anyone to get ahead?
 - One that puts his family above himself
 - One that puts himself above all else
 - Be respected by his friends
 - Be seen as a braggart who cuts moral corners?
 - If you feel he will live a happier life if he is honest, crush deceitfulness in him immediately
 - If you want him to be respected and honored for his character – teach him humility

YOU NEED TO TRAIN YOUR BOY TO BECOME A MAN OF CHARACTER. THIS TAKES TIME!

- Time to discuss, think, wonder, dream, question, think
- How do you give the gift of TIME?
 - Simplify your son's life – space to be bored to find ways to fill his time (not with sports, video games, tv, etc.) and forced to THINK.

PILLARS OF CHARACTER – start training and make these part of your “Beliefs Blueprint”

- Honesty / Integrity
 - Encourage him to be a man of HONOR – encourage and reward honesty as honesty = honor.
- Courage
 - A boy who does the right thing under pressure knows he can control himself – a source of honor and self-respect. This is going to go against the grain of culture. Help your son be courageous
- Humility**:
 - Boys with an accurate perception of life and themselves spend little time worrying about themselves.
 - They look outward, not inward.
 - They enjoy a healthy respect for themselves and respect others.
 - It teaches them NOT to be arrogant – it is a quiet strength.
- Kindness:
 - Find a happy young man and you will find a kind one.
 - Boys see kindness as requiring action. Give them opportunities to engage in KIND ACTIONS.
 - Encourage using KIND WORDS/KIND LANGUAGE (or RESPECTFUL WORDS/ RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE).
 - Insist that your boy stop talking negatively about a friend, or pull back on the complaining, or don't use disrespectful nicknames, etc.
 - Train verbal complaints out of their system (as negative feelings come before the complaint is verbalized and follow after as well – it can get them stuck in negativity quicksand).

- ***With our culture's focus on extra-curriculars and resume building activities for our kids, we make a critical mistake. With the goal of building their self-esteem, we teach them the importance of doing better and performing better – all for the sake of bettering themselves. INSTEAD... teach them to BETTER THEMSELVES in order to BETTER THE LIVES OF OTHERS. We have focused too much on giving our boys opportunities to excel at sports, education or the arts at the expense of developing their character.*

LAST WORDS: 10 TIPS FOR GETTING IT RIGHT:

- **Know that you change his world**
 - If you feel, from his lack of communication with you and his focus on spending more time away from you and with his friends, that you are not that important.... CHANGE YOUR THOUGHT – it will change your feeling and then change your actions towards your son.
- **Raise him from the INSIDE OUT – CHARACTER COUNTS MORE THAN PERFORMANCE!**
 - Boys want parents to see deeper into their lives. They want their character to be admired more than their performance because they know that their character is WHO THEY ARE. If their character is SOLID, they will get more satisfaction out of that than anything else.
- **Help his masculinity EXPLODE**
 - Boys want to lead, talk to them about what it means to be a leader, how he can show the qualities of a true leader, about how he can show the qualities of a true leader, about the responsibility that comes with power, about how leadership is learning how to HELP, not hurt, others
 - Help your son expunge SELF-DOUBT
 - Teach him that trying, and failing is part of becoming a strong make leader.
 - Tap into their need to be protectors (help a friend struggling with math, if he's a big guy, help him stand up for the skinny kid, if he's dating, teach him to honor his girlfriend by keeping her out of dangerous situations.)
- **Help him find PURPOSE and PASSION**
 - Look for signs and help put opportunities in his path for him to discover his purpose... passion will follow.
- **Teach him to SERVE**
 - Volunteer opportunities – together when young, on his own when older. Service organizations – Boy Scouts, etc.
- **Insist on SELF-RESPECT**
 - Treat your son with respect (in words, tone of voice, actions)– as more than just a teen boy.
 - Boys learn self-respect by extending respect to others (family members, classmates, teachers, etc.)
 - Manners make the man, so does the language he uses
 - Make courtesy a habit – helps them pay less attention to themselves and more attention to others (leads to self-satisfaction, happiness, and more respect given back to them.)

- No young boy deserves to be called names, constantly criticized or put in his place repeatedly. Boys who live with this spend their lives proving to others that they deserve respect (and make themselves and their loved ones miserable)
- **PERSEVERE**
 - Parenting is exhausting. Take a rest, have your own jam to build up your emotional energy so that you NEVER GIVE UP. Stick with him. BE THERE! If your son is a good kid, enjoy him and let him know it. If he is troubled, know that you are a large part of the solution!
- **Be his HERO**
 - They are looking for examples – so be the example. They need to see courage, integrity and nobleness acted out – they look first to their fathers
- **Mom Exercise: Discuss this with your husbands. Let them know how important they are for your son. Assist them so that they can be the leaders you want to have for your sons. Or find, connect with, and encourage other father figures in your boy's life.**
- **Watch, then watch AGAIN**
 - Our kids pay a heavy price when we don't pay attention
- **Give him the BEST of yourself**
 - Boys are more sensitive than girls, just don't verbalize it
 - Be the safe space for your boys to communicate their emotions
 - Fathers, don't be afraid of your son's feelings
 - Teach him to acknowledge his feelings and understand them

Our boys need us to see them, invest in them and teach them about life, work and what his life is REALLY all about.

Love your boys FIERCELY because the world he sees is confusing and painful. Be his ally.