

## **Bold Book** Notes – The Minds of Boys by Michael Gurian

The average boy is developmentally disadvantaged in the early school environment.

Boys self-esteem is MORE FRAGILE.

Boys learning confidence is lower and they are more likely to endure disciplinary problems.

Schools favor girls – even boys and girls in school think this (US Dept. of Education)

Parents need to take more ownership in education.

Develop a PARENT TEAM made up of parents, grandparents, other relatives, tutors, coaches, neighbors, friends, service agencies, siblings, others (Build that village!)

Boys gain toughness and tenderness by pushing the envelope others may not see or feel

**The minds of boys are carried as much in their bodies as their heads.**

Most boys carry BOY ENERGY. They see the world in game groups and learning teams. IT'S BIOLOGICAL!

Boys:

- Have more dopamine in their bloodstream = increase in risk behavior and they learn less well than girls when sedentary.
- Attach learning to physical movement / projects
- Brains not made to multitask whereas girls' brains are
- Brains have less strong neural connectors in temporal lobes = pick up less of what's going on around them, especially if said in words!
- Less verbal learners
- Do better remembering in list form
- Brains frontal lobes are less active and grow at later stages which leads to more impulsivity in their youth and = less language center development or delayed language development.
- Have less estrogen and oxytocin = impact on their use of words
- Have higher testosterone = they don't learn as much sitting and talking and don't gravitate toward it naturally
- Learning comes from action / response
- Brains are structured to learn with less multitasking – doing too much multitasking = frustration = discipline problems
- Brain is set to recharge, enter a rest state, between tasks. This can create problems in classroom. They sleep or fidget to STAY AWAKE. When they do – they get disciplined for it.

There is a mismatch of boys with conventional education where:

- Learning is done primarily through verbal learning without physical movement
- Books, not projects or experiences, are more the norm
- Fidgeting has become a liability (it used to be a sign of vitality and willingness to move TOWARDS where learning was happening)

## ***School has a lot of influence but what kind of influence?***

Brains can be shaped, but does that mean it's going to mold into what school wants it to?

**Maybe we as parents DON'T have the influence on a child's mind that we think we do. Our influence is something else... Perhaps our influence = the acceptance of their authentic selves?**

Change the MYTH of gender plasticity which is having us work against boy's natural energy and learning style!

## **Work towards these goals for boys:**

- 1. Expression and development of their NATURAL SELF/AUTHENTIC SELF**
- 2. Compensate for areas of inherent disadvantages or fragility**
- 3. Change the ENVIRONMENT – remove stressors!**
  - a. Less screen time! Doing so elevates their mood, increases their time to read, gives space for physical activity and leads to more family bonding
  - b. Clear the clutter (more stimulation, where it's more commitments on the schedule, more clutter in the house – leads to MORE STRESS for EVERYONE!)
- 4. Change the DIET!**
  - a. More water, more protein, less sugar
  - b. Practice healthy eating
- 5. Changes in the classroom (or at home for learning support)**
  - a. Sing out spelling words (5 letter spelling words to the tune of "You are my Sunshine" and 6 letter words to the tune of "Happy Birthday to You")
  - b. Use artwork for brainstorming (draw out your story points, draw out the story environment and scenes comic book style before having to write out the descriptive sentences)
  - c. Use teams and competition (run laps before tests, or homework. Use physical learning through interviews)
  - d. Push for single gender class or single gender portions of the class day (if was only boys in the classroom, teachers could concentrate on the boys' natural learning style, there wouldn't be an overly-macho display to impress girls, they would concentrate better and be open to more activities that may be labeled as "sissy" without fear of looking that way.

*The changes we made to help girls bridge the learning gap made it harder for boys and worked against their natural learning style.*

The male brain = more vulnerable to certain diseases and mental disorders. Boys have higher cases diagnosed ADD/ADHD 7:1

Boys are getting diagnosed at higher rates without understanding the male mind. Many boys diagnosed are actually “learning fragile” – Understand this and be sensitive to it.

## **Boys do not need any more diagnosing. They need understanding.**

Some men get to the top but most struggle like everyone else with standardized testing. The more behind boys get the less chance for future success. The argument to support and prop up only girls is incomplete.

Raise ALL boats, including boys / men.

It is NOT a zero-sum game.

We keep misjudging fragility for disorder.

70% of those labeled with learning disorder are boys.

If we start dealing with the male /female difference this # would decrease.

Cutting out busyness and creating more structure, employing a bit of minimalism to help destimulate schedules and spaces would be helpful.

It's not a delay. It's MALE NATURE.

Boys have less word production and word management and can lead to years of problems. If boys are expected to well in these arenas at a young age as his more developed (female, usually) peers, add in natural male brains to be slower to develop impulse control and fine motor skills = recipe for discipline behaviors.

They then experience high stress, high frustration, high failure in early years of school, setting them on a lower performing path that is hard to escape from.

REST STATES – What to do with boys' natural tendency to require a rest state between tasks?

They do it to

- renew / refresh neurotransmissions
- gain a rest from stressors
- combat boredom

The more verbal the learning, the more boys are in rest states and the lower their performance.

## **BUILD EDUCATIONAL RESILENCY! Do it by:**

1. Having many masters (just like Obi Wan and Anakin, or Yoda and Luke)
2. Getting more MALE teachers and village members in your boy's village is IMPORTANT!
3. Extended family providing positive attention

## **BUILD THEIR MOTIVATION TO LEARN! Do it by:**

- Regulating what is watched, eaten, played
- Do homework together (use some of those tips for in the classroom – you can do these during homework time – run laps, do jumping jacks together before sitting down to do it, etc.)

## **We need to help boys discover a deep reason to learn, grow and succeed as men. What is the LONG GAME?**

Boys are pack animals who are satisfied alone when necessary, but want to establish “coolness” in a small or large hierarchical pack.

Sensitive Boys – also called BRIDGE BRAINS

- They have lower testosterone and higher oxytocin.
- Basic biology – search of self not through aggression, but through empathic bonding. They have higher verbal skills than other boys.
- Encourage words for feelings in these sensitive boys

Male biology pushes males to learn a lot of life lessons through aggression (physical, verbal, social). It is not boy-friends to cut out all the teasing, pummeling (as these are a male kind of learning)

***“Everything can be taken from you but one thing – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances – to choose one’s own way.” – Victor Frankl – Holocaust survivor***

## **We all (despite circumstances beyond our control) can choose some form of success.**

Help cultivate this understanding in your boys. They have the power to choose how they experience their lives.... Including their school lives. Help support them at home and advocate for them at school.

*Other books mentioned in this book:*

Raising Cain by Dan Kindlon & Michael Thompson

Real Boys by William Pollack

The Myth of Male Power by Warren Ferrel

*Other resources mentioned:*

[www.gurianinstitute.com](http://www.gurianinstitute.com)