

What We Can Do For Boys

1. Teach the importance of respect.

Help boys to grapple with the challenges of being strong without being aggressive. *Listen* to their difficulties with this. Resist the temptation to give simplistic advice.

Watch your inclination to encourage boys to be aggressive in the face of conflict. Teach effective and respectful ways to respond to taunting.

Take a stand against teasing and bullying. Do not allow disrespectful comments about other's abilities, sexual identity, etc. Teach boys what comments like 'gay and fag' mean and that they are hurtful and are disrespectful.

2. Help boys to maintain empathy and caring.

Provide boys with opportunities to keep them caring, nurturing and empathic. Encourage them to volunteer to visit with elderly, mentor younger boys, or give them opportunities to take care of plants, insects, or animals.

Offer community service as a family. Encourage and reward acts of empathy and caring.

3. Help boys to become emotionally adept.

Continue to educate and support your boys to recognize and express the full range of their emotions. Ask them how they feel about things. Listen for feelings underneath their anger.

Educate young boys about emotions. Read books and identify characters' emotions. Make faces and have younger boys guess the emotion you are portraying.

Allow boys to feel scared, sad, vulnerable, and to ask for help.

4. Stay connected to your boys.

Give boys your time. Ask open-ended questions and *really listen* to their responses. Tell boys you love them and show them your love through physical affection.

Remember the importance of positive attachment with boys in the first three years.

Know that even if your boys are acting as if their relationship to you is unimportant, IT IS. Know that your boys are watching you.

5. Help create schools that enable boys' success.

Create schools that support boys so that boys have a social structure that enforces resilience. Start a boys' group or start a parent group to support boys. Help schools to develop climates where teasing and bullying are not accepted. Encourage schools to find new ways to teach reading and writing that work better for boys.

6. Help boys to develop self-control.

Use language that rewards self-control and thinking before acting. Teach skills to slow down before reacting. Tell boys how you maintain self-control.

7. Watch what you model.

Particularly for women, give men space to be involved in the lives of their children. Step aside and support them in their roles as fathers. Be watchful for comments that put down or limit men.

Particularly for men, watch how you share domestic chores, treat women, respond to homophobia, and demonstrate balance between work, family and play. Model joy in your lives.

Remember, we teach more by what we do than what we say.

8. Help boys find an anchor.

Connect boys with mentors. Expose them to multiple points of view, different types of people, different experiences, and connections to resources.

Help boys find something they love to do. Give them something to hold onto when their peers may become disconnected.

Talk to boys about how they find meaning and hope. What is it that keeps them positive? What is it that encourages them to be their best? How do they bounce back from disappointment, embarrassment, and adversity?

9. Help boys to become aware of social influences.

Talk to boys about the pressures they face to conform to a certain model of masculinity. Support boys to step out of the box of male socialization. Listen to them as they discuss the challenges of doing this.

Ask open-ended questions that allow boys to examine the lessons they learn from playing or watching sports. Consider issues like athletes playing when injured, the importance of winning, the importance of having fun, coaching styles, how it feels to not be picked for sports teams.

Encourage boys to be critical consumers of media. Ask boys to decode the messages that media are sending and to determine if the messages are true and if they are healthy.

10. Watch your expectations. Monitor your own biases.

Show boys that you trust them and expect them to become positive men.

Women, ask yourself what have you learned about men. How does this effect the way you interact with boys? Men, ask yourself what you have learned about what it takes to be a man. How does this effect the way you interact with boys? Get support from other adults so we don't put our own limitations on our boys.

Be mindful about how we recognize boys. Do they only get acknowledged for athletics or can they also get applauded for how they dance, cook and perform other non-traditional activities? How about acknowledging them for how well they take care of themselves (physically and emotionally), ask for help, or express their emotions?