



Boys Will Be Boys

Issues in tutoring male students and general concerns raised by teachers/tutors about boys

- * Communication difficulties between female teachers and boys.
- * Boys physical presence – intimidation in the playground
- * Aggression shown by boys when they are frustrated.
- * Labelling and branding of boys – educational male stereotypes continue where girls are encouraged to break their mould.
- * Resilience – self esteem of boys is low
- * Lack of acceptance or recognition of their areas of weakness.
- * Cultural backgrounds – struggling with concerns about traditional cultural behaviours and beliefs that are instilled in males.
- * Ability to relate to the opposite sex –expected at a younger age.

Why are we at these points of concern?

A great percentage of the last century, 'Educational Society' concerned itself with the fight for equal rights of women and the feminist movement. Much emphasis was placed on developing curriculum and educational opportunities that would help to 'break the shackles' of oppression that women had suffered for hundreds of years. However, by doing this they unwittingly neglected both the learning needs and educational requirements of boys.

In Sudanese Culture, and most cultures since the Industrial Age, the father or Alpha male is the provider, and increasingly the mother's role became the raiser of children. It is here that the break down in communication between boys and their fathers really began. Men had little time to spend listening to, nurturing and guiding their sons. They became more of a disciplinarian in their role. Statements such as; "Wait 'til your father gets home!" "If your father was here..!"; epitomised this.

Physiological facts about male and female development.

- * Estrogen (found in girls) help to stimulate brain cell development.
- * Testosterone (found in boys) hinders brain cell development.
- * Both of these hormones are released into the respective foetuses from an early age.
- * When both a baby boy and girl are born the boy is not as neurologically developed.
- * At the age of 5 years the brain development of boys can be anywhere up to 8 months behind.
- * Boys will not catch up to girls until the age of 19 years.

Implications for Education

In the future, to compensate for this lack of initial physiological development, it is believed that boys attending their first year of schooling will be a year older than girls in the same class. Both a boy's fine and gross motor skill will be assessed at pre-school ensuring that only those truly ready for primary school will attend.

Communication Vacuum

A communication vacuum has developed between sons and their fathers and this is passed on from generation to generation. Out of 100 male immigrants in Australia between the age of 18 - 25

- * 40% are estranged from their father. (No contact what so ever)
- * 30% see and talk to their fathers only on special occasions.
- * 25% talk to their fathers regularly out of a sense of duty.
- * 5% have a close and flourishing relationship with their fathers.

This is vastly different to the relationship that most females have with their mothers. Females are extremely social beings and learn from an early age how to effectively communicate. This begins with the interaction they have with their mother, aunties, and other female friends and relations. From this lack of communication, boys and men, find it difficult to deal with their feelings and emotions and can in turn become insecure, and also unable to express this.

Symptoms of under-fathered boys – lacking male role models

1. Style of relating – Aggressive.
2. Interests – Hypo masculine; games, talk and actions all masculinely exaggerated.
3. Repertoire – Only participates in activities of competence. Less likely to take risks for fear of failure.
4. Poor attitude – towards women, gays and minority groups (other cultures, elders) Often quite derogatory. Finds these people a threat to who they are.

Boys and school

Boys approach school with a very different demeanour to that of girls.

- * Girls are extremely enthusiastic, open and accepting.
- * Boys are defensive, uncomfortable and unsure.
- * A girls behaviour will generally be consistent both at home and school.
- * A boy takes on a different persona, less considerate, less understanding and self-protective.
- * Boys take on a persona of how they think a man should behave.

It is important to ensure that boys are exposed to as many positive male role models as possible to demonstrate to them that it is all right to be yourself, make mistakes and display empathy towards others.

To help develop and stimulate growth in the left side of a boy's brain it is important to read them stories from an early age. This encourages them to utilise the creative side of their brain and develop their ability to make connections and abstractly visualise things.

Teaching boys

If a boy thinks that you do not like him then he will not learn.

The following are qualities needed in all teachers to ensure that boys will learn to the best of their ability.

1. Friendly
2. Firm
3. Focused
4. Funny

Boys, intrinsically need to know why they are doing something. If you inform them as to the purpose of the task they are more likely to engage themselves.

In any new environment the first three questions that any boy or male will ask himself is;

1. Who is in charge?
2. What are the rules?
3. Will the rules be enforced fairly?

When chaos is evident boys will fight to take control.

(It is essential to be firm, but fair in order to gain their trust and respect.)

Personal disclosure with children, especially boys, helps to break down barriers. It is important for children to share in your life experiences as they want to know what lies ahead for them when they are older.