



**What Boys Need:
Creating a Healthy Life for Our Sons**

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We are doing a better job of helping our daughters

- Now we have to save our sons

By any benchmark, our sons are falling behind

- boys are two times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with learning disabilities
- twice as likely to be placed in special-education classes.
- High school boys are losing ground to girls on standardized writing tests.
- The number of boys who said they didn't like school rose 71 percent between 1980 and 2001
- 80 percent of autistic diagnoses are boys

Clearest indications

- In the 1970's boys were 58% of the college student body
- In 2010 they were around 39%
- In fact there are no all-male schools allowed .. There are several all women colleges

Because boys are developmentally different than girls

- They mature more slowly
- Have a different psychology
- Learn differently
- Programs such as NO CHILD LEFT “*UNTESTED*” are particularly harmful to boys

Boys haven't changed

- What has changed are our expectations for boys' performance (AP courses; test scores and rewards for more female oriented approaches)

Teachers

- Have lost control of their curriculum and speed based on each class and student
- Teacher/student ratios are up (despite the Cal. law for 1st thru 4th)
- Phys. Ed and sports programs are cut or become increasingly competitive and *specialization* is encouraged at elementary ages

Boys Brains

- “kinetic, disorganized, maddening and sometimes brilliant behaviors that likely are hard-wired.”
- 5-year-old girls are typically more fluent can sight-read more words.
- Boys tend to have *better hand-eye* coordination, but lesser fine motor skills (making it a struggle for some to control a pencil or a paintbrush)
- Boys are *more impulsive* than girls; even if they can sit still, many prefer not to—at least not for long.

Elementary Schools

- Feminine environment
- Increasing emphasis on language, sitting quietly and speaking in turn — an obvious mismatch between boys and school
- When "*Girl behavior*" becomes the gold standard, Boys are treated like defective girls
"Raising Cain"

Middle School

- Girls look 16 and boys 9
- They are outmatched and fear looking weak
- The anxiety takes the form of a fear of being weak or not knowing things
- MRI studies show that girls brains look more like adults, boys like boys
- On the positive side are more male teachers

One answer may be a return to single sex schools

Studies of these show

- Girls performance is best
- Then boys
- Then co-ed

The antidotes



- Greater parental involvement/cooperation with schools
- Quantity of time with fathers (not just good for sons)
- Talking to boys in male language styles (reducing fear of being wrong or weak)
- Looking at the world from the boy's perspective
- Recognizing and using the limits of development (full frontal lobe development is now known to occur in the mid 20's)
- Recognize the centrality of acceptance, connection and friendship
- Understand and promote reasonable competitiveness

NEED FOR ADULT MALES; Role Models

Single most reliable predictor of boys' success in High School:

Does he have a man in his life to look up to?

- **AS # FATHERS DECREASE, DROPOUT RATES INCREASE**
- **Gang membership increases**
- **Role of mentors**
- **Readings about adult males**



Boys Raised by Involved Fathers

- **Greater self control, self esteem**
- **Cognitive competence, healthier competition**
- **Better at emotional self-regulation**
- **More empathic**
- **Overall sense of well being → performance**
- **Healthier and more flexible sense of masculinity for sons; femininity for daughters**
- **Healthier sense of male intimacy**

Absent Fathers: Implications for Sons and Daughters:

- **Greater fears of abandonment**
- **Long searching for a role model**
- **Lack of positive model for male intimacy**
- **Lower self esteem**

And as Shapiro & Diamond have shown

- It's also best for the fathers and father-substitutes.
- Their personal growth is dependent on their relinquishing the role of hero and adopting the role of wise, trusted elder



To reach our sons

- We need to connect with them in male-centric ways
- What are the ways that men communicate and listen best?

Gender & Communication

men

- Time limited
- Bottom line first
- One subject at a time
- Shoulder to shoulder
- Clear expectations
- Primarily informational

women

- Time open
- Story first
- Many subjects interwoven
- Face-to-face
- Open expectations
- Primarily relational

Stereotypically,

**MEN RELATE FROM
THE OUTSIDE → IN**

**WOMEN RELATE FROM
THE INSIDE → OUT**

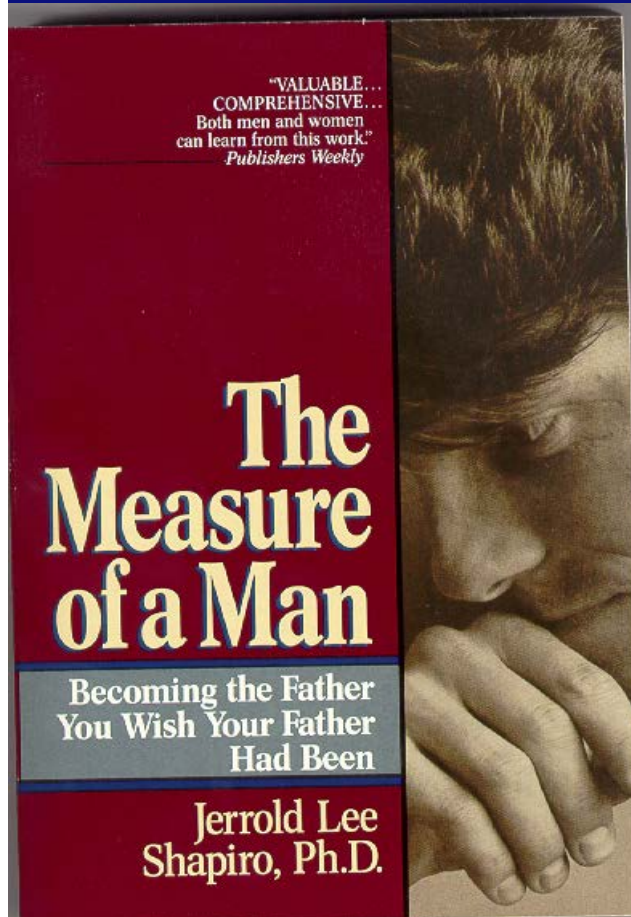
Key Themes from Men's Groups

- **Needs for friendship**
- **Relationship with father**
- **Fears of Abandonment**

CORE FOR BOYS

ACCEPTANCE

Available Fatherhood books by Dr. Shapiro



POSTER A Father's Declaration

