

# INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



## Raising Mighty Boys

*Understanding what makes boys tick helps to make parenting easier for the males in your life.*



Boys under the age of ten can be challenging for parents. It's behaviour, poor self-confidence and learning issues that keep parents of boys in this age group busy.

The straight forward nature of adolescent boys makes them easier and less complicated to raise, compared to teenage girls so the pressure eases. However, personal relationships, school-life and being organised present challenges for teenage boys.

Sometimes mothers I meet in parenting seminars get flummoxed by the in your face, direct nature of their sons. Loveable yes, but they can be hard work as well. It helps to appreciate what makes boys tick.

### They are wired for activity

It seems boys' brains were designed by a different architect than girls. While girls develop verbal, social and fine motor skills quite naturally boys are wired to be more active, boisterous, competitive and territorial, which is one of the reasons why parents are usually kept busy raising boys in the early years.

### They are slower maturers

The maturity gap between boys and girls of anywhere between 12 months and two years, seems to be consistent all the way to adulthood. Parents should take this into account when deciding the school starting age of their sons. This maturity gap is also evident when kids finish school and move into tertiary studies or the workplace. Girls are often better placed to succeed, and many boys get lost once they leave school.

### They want approval

Most boys ache for approval from their parents, their fathers in particular. Wanting the best for their boys some dads can be too hard on their sons. Better to foster a strong relationship than drive them too hard. Some boys like to talk; others like to share an activity; while others are kinaesthetic and love to be touched, cuddled and hugged.

Make sure you match your relational style with theirs so that you can get on the same wavelength.

### They want to blend in

Boys just want to fit in. They are group-oriented by nature and tend to be very loyal to their friends. As a rule, they don't like to stand out from the crowd so they respond best to private praise and won't respect you if you embarrass them in front of their friends.

### They need a disciplined approach

Boys usually like limits and boundaries. They make them feel safe and secure. They also like to know that a parent will enforce the house rules, so don't be afraid to be firm, although you don't have to use the same authoritarian methods as parents in the past may have used. Firm, fair and consistent are the keys to effective discipline for boys.

### They are pragmatic learners

Boys need a reason to learn. If you are having difficulty motivating your son then try linking learning to their interests. They may play a musical instrument when they know they can play in a band or practise their kicking if they can see it will help kick more goals. If they love skateboarding the chances are they want to know more about it, so use this as a lever to motivate them if reading is a problem.

### They are single-minded

Boys have a specialist brain, which tends to be logical and rational. They don't have the same connections between the right and left side of the brain that girls have. This can be a hindrance particularly when careful communication is needed, or multiple viewpoints need to be considered. That's why parents often have to coach boys of all ages in the finer points of communicating. However, it's an advantage as it can help them focus hard on tasks, make quick decisions and get to the point when needed.

There is no doubt that raising boys can be a challenge for many parents. Those who do best understand and appreciate how they think, feel and behave and adjust their parenting accordingly. And they feel comfortable in their company as well.

For more information and great resources to help you raise mighty boys go to [Parentingideas.com.au/parents](http://Parentingideas.com.au/parents).



Michael Grose is an ambassador for the Federal Governments **Swap It, don't stop it** healthy lifestyles campaign. Find out how you can promote good health and a better diet in your family at [swapit.gov.au](http://swapit.gov.au)