

***Are My Kids on Track?***  
***The 12 Emotional Social and Spiritual Milestones Your Child Needs to Reach***

by Sissy Goff, MED, LPC-MHSP; David Thomas, LMSW; and Melissa Trevathan, MRE

It is easy to track physical milestones and academic milestones in your child's development. Our culture has given us resources to track these developmental milestones easily—at the doctor, with teachers, even with other parents. However, what about emotional, social and spiritual milestones? We have little information on how to help our children develop these skills. This book breaks down four emotional milestones, four social milestones, and four spiritual milestones that our children should be working toward. Each chapter includes stumbling blocks and building blocks of reaching the milestone that are unique for boys and girls. It also includes practical ways to help build these characteristics in your child.

**Chapter 1: Emotional Vocabulary**

Emotional Vocabulary is the ability to read and articulate our own emotions as well as the emotions of others.

Practical ideas for building emotional vocabulary:

- Feelings chart placed in places throughout your home
- Books and movies that are rich in emotional content
- Conversation  
Allow emotional vocabulary to become more a part of conversation. Reflect emotions by using statements like, “It seems like you’re feeling...”. Have a person name a feeling that they had throughout the day during dinner conversations. Name one positive emotion and one negative emotion.
- Role-play  
When playing with children, pretend to be sick, hurt, or scared and observe how they react. Validate use of feelings words or respond with empathy.
- Art  
Allow your child to draw what they are feeling when they are unable to express his or her emotion.
- Resources for girls:
  - *Raising Girls* by Sissy Goff and Melissa Trevathan
  - *The Curse of the Good Girl* by Rachel Simmons
- Resources for boys:
  - *Wild Things* by David Thomas and Stephen James
  - *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* by Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson
- Play Games:
  - “How would you feel if...”
  - The Ungame
  - Table Topics

## **Chapter 2: Perspective**

Perspective allows us to understand what is going on inside and around us. Self-regulation is what allows us to have perspective. When we can regulate our emotions, we can have perspective of what is going on inside and around us.

Practical ideas for building perspective:

- **Pain scale**  
Print off a pain chart. Talk about how doctors use this to help understand a patient's level of pain. Train them how to use this scale to measure their feelings and figure out the difference between a level 2 sad and a level 9 sad.
- **List**  
Have your child make a list of practices or coping skills that he or she can use when needing to work through a feeling. Practice these when emotions are not elevated.
- **Create a space**  
After your child makes a list, work together to make these more natural in elevated moments.
- **Update the list if your child is not using one of the options on the list and add new ideas for regulating emotions.**

## **Chapter 3: Empathy**

Responding with empathy comes more naturally for some than for others. We can teach our children to strengthen empathy muscles to allow them to think more of others than themselves.

Practical ideas for building empathy:

- **Gratitude**  
Have your children write thank-you letters to those who invest in their lives.
- **Family meetings**  
Hold family meetings to discuss important decisions, evaluate daily life together, and share ideas on stewardship and giving.
- **Energy drain**  
When your child is arguing with a sibling or with you over an issue, you can simply look them in the eyes and say, "This argument is draining the energy right out of me. You'll need to give that energy back to me..." Then have them "give back" by taking on a task you needed to do (folding laundry, taking out the garbage, etc.).
- **Compassion**  
Consider sponsoring a child through an organization like Compassion International or Justice and Mercy International. Your child will have an opportunity to write letters, send and receive photos, and explore another culture.

## **Chapter 4: Resourcefulness**

We all encounter roadblocks in life. Some kids see a roadblock and think, “I’m going to figure out how to get over, under, around, or through that wall.” Other kids think, “I’ll never get around that wall. I might as well lie down in the road and surrender.” Whatever the roadblock, the goal is to help kids creatively cope with the difficulties they face and the emotions that accompany them.

Practical ideas for building resourcefulness:

- Ask Questions:
  - What do you want to see happen?
  - What do you think would help?
  - What would you like to do about that?
  - What do you think God would want you to do?
  - What does your heart tell you?
- Encourage  
Find one way that your child has been resourceful and encourage him or her in it.
- Goal chart  
Help your child create a goal and identify steps to reach that goal.
- Talk  
At dinner, have everyone identify one way that they are proud of themselves.
- Ownership  
Allow your child to take over one thing that you do (make lunch, wake up on his or her own, etc.).

## **Chapter 5: Awareness**

Awareness is foundational to relationships. Awareness comes first. It is what helps us to relate to others. We want our kids to become aware so that they can take turns. We want them to become aware so they can reach out in relationships and connect in ways that will help them not only become good students, but better co-workers, friends, spouses, and parents.

Practical ideas for building awareness:

- Role-play  
Have them choose a scenario from school and swap roles. Create a scene that raises awareness of their own words and actions.
- Play  
Teach your child about personal space by using a hula-hoop or blowing bubbles.
- Hint  
If your child is struggling with a certain social skill such as loud talking, come up with a secret password or cue. If you are with him or her when it happens with friends, you can use the cue without drawing extra attention to the hurdle.
- Use narratives  
When sitting in an airport, restaurant, or mall, point out an individual and invite your child to create a narrative based solely on what they are seeing or hearing.

## **Chapter 6: Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is understanding the give and take of relationships. Asking questions is the foundation of reciprocity. Asking questions is a way to battle entitlement. It helps a person to stop thinking about him/herself and express interest in someone else.

Practical ideas for building reciprocity:

- Play games like Simon says, freeze tag, and red light/green light that require your child to listen and follow directions.
- Share reading  
Read to your child and then have her tell you her version of what you've read.
- Questions  
Sit down with your child/adolescent and come up with a back-pocket list of question topics.
- Role-play talking with a friend about divorce, death, or a family member who is sick. This practice teaches empathy and reciprocity simultaneously.
- Throw a football, baseball or tennis ball with kids, using it as a question/answer time.

## **Chapter 7: Ownership**

Apologizing is a learned form of communication. Forgiveness means so much more when we have taken ownership of our actions.

Practical ideas for building ownership:

- Redo  
Have your kids rephrase questions or statements that assign blame rather than taking ownership. Use the phrase, "Try again."
- Assess  
As your kids get stuck blaming a person or institution, challenge them to say, "I don't like this situation." Sometimes no one is at fault, but rather situations are complex or difficult.
- Ask, "What do you think would help the situation?"  
In real-life situations, what do they want to do? Even watching stories and movies, what would they do if they were that particular character?
- Stay neutral  
At times you won't know who is to blame, especially with siblings. They can still both apologize to each other, saying, "I'm sorry that happened." And they can take over a sibling's chore(s) to make reparations.
- Lead  
If your child is young and having trouble apologizing, you can apologize for him. This models what an apology looks like and helps the other child's hurt feelings. You can process what he could have done differently later.

## **Chapter 8: Boundaries**

True boundaries begin with a sense of assurance, even when the things hoped for are not yet seen. We want our kids to have strong, kind boundaries. We want them to have confidence enough to value themselves and to value others. Boundaries do both. In essence they say, “Here is the line between you and me, and I respect both of us enough to keep it.” “I want to be your friend, but not when you treat me like that.” “I’m sorry. Here’s what I can do to make things right. Can you do something too?”

Practical ideas for building boundaries:

- Remember. Have your child talk about a conflict he’s had and write out the four steps of healthy conflict.
- Practice. Role-play a scenario where she could practice constructive boundaries with a friend.
- Play. Use dolls or stuffed animals to act out an argument with a friend.
- Reflect. Ask him what he thinks would help a situation.
- Study. Read *God Made All of Me* as a resource on body boundaries for younger children.
- Research. Read or watch the movie *Anne of Green Gables* and talk about how Anne was both strong and kind. Watch the movie *Radio* and discuss what it means to set boundaries when a boy witnesses an injustice.
- Use your own boundaries. Make a list of Enforceable Consequences for when kids violate boundaries. This will allow you to parent with wisdom rather than out of emotion.

## Chapter 9: Foundation

Your child’s faith development matters. A child’s faith is an inherent part of who he is and a profoundly influential part of who he will become. Through relationship and enjoyment, as you are going along, you are helping your child build a relationship with God.

Practical ideas for building foundation:

- Read together. Get a family Bible and read out loud to your kids.
- Pray together. Not only just at night, but also pray in the bathtub, in the car, and on walks. Let prayer be a part of the everyday-ness of your lives.
- Play together. Use imaginative play to act out Bible stories together.
- Memorize scripture together. Let each family member choose a favorite and take a period of time to memorize each verse as a family.
- Sing together. Sing worship songs together.
- Read for yourself:
  - *Parenting is Your Highest Calling: And Eight Other Myths That Trap Us in Worry and Guilt* by Leslie Leyland Fields
  - *Intentional Parenting* by Sissy Goff, David Thomas, and Melissa Trevathan
  - *Parenting the Wholehearted Child* by Jeannie Cunnion
  - *In This House We Will Giggle* by Courtney DeFeo
- Read for yourself:
  - *How Children Raise Parents* by Dan Allender

## **Chapter 10: Identity**

Ages seven to twelve years are some of the most important ages in development. Brains are changing as quickly as bodies. Muscles are, too. What is learned in this phase of development has more potential to stay with a child than in any other season of life. This might involve muscle memory, such as in sports or music lessons, as well as cognitive abilities and spiritual truths, such as developing identity.

Practical ideas for building identity:

- Create a collage that illustrates who he or she is
- Talk to them about God and pray with them throughout the day
- Introduce them to different heroes (from the Bible, books, and movies) and help them discover more about the true identities of those heroes
- Play games that help them connect emotions and moral choices  
Emphasize respect, kindness, honest, and trust. Deepfun.com is a great resource for games, illustrations, and art.
- Reinforce  
Use other voices to echo the same truths you're teaching, such as teachers, grandparents, neighbors, coaches, and friends.

## **Chapter 11: Mercy**

Mercy is the milestone for teenagers in the early stretch of their adolescent development. We want them to know and experience God's mercy and then offer that mercy to others.

Practical ideas for building mercy:

- Wake up  
Help your teenagers wake up to the world around them. Take them to a soup kitchen or to volunteer with underprivileged kids. Go on a mission trip so they can see the pervasive need for mercy.
- Find  
Help them find safe places to talk about their feelings in this season of life. Whether it's a youth group, a small group at school, or some type of counseling group, help them find a place where they can share the confusion they feel inside of them, and hear the truth of the Gospel in the midst of the shared darkness.
- Learn  
Take a personality test that addresses the strengths and weaknesses in each of us. Take it together and talk about it.
- Stretch  
Talk about mercy around the dinner table. What could you each do to show someone in your life mercy who needs it?
- Participate  
Walk out the seasons with your child in the church calendar, particularly the seasons of Lent and Easter.

## Chapter 12: Meaning

Teenagers are not only trying to find their identity; they are trying to define themselves. They want to make their mark. They want adventure. They may be pushing for adventure, but what they're longing for is a quest. They want meaning. They want to move out of their comfort and complacency and use their innate drive for adventure to be more.

Practical ideas for building meaning:

- Talk
  - Read the following verses with your teenager as you ask him about purpose:
    - Isaiah 43:7
    - 1 Corinthians 10:31
    - Ephesians 1:11
    - Philippians 2:3-4
    - Matthew 6:25-33
    - Romans 15:13
    - Luke 6:38
    - Psalm 100:3
    - Revelation 4:11
- Experience
  - Help your teenager experience meaning in her daily life. Ask these questions:
    - “How do you think you could help your little brother?”
    - “What do you think we could do to give back to your dad?”
    - “How could we show your grandmother that we're thinking about her?”
- Give *To Be Told* by Dan Allender
- Go on a quest
  - Create a family quest. Explain the difference between an adventure and a quest. Talk about a mission you could have that you all feel passionately about, and how you could carry out that mission together – whether it's a mission trip, making a meal for a friend who's sick, or volunteering for an organization.

The hope is that your children will demonstrate each skill with consistency, not perfection. The skills will develop more through time. We're all still on track. The work is God's. The love is His, too. We just get the glad job of being their messy, fallible, hopeful, redeemed guardrails on this quest of growing up.

## ***8 GREAT SMARTS: Discover and Nurture Your Child's Intelligences***

by Kathy Koch, PhD

In the book *8 Great Smarts*, Dr. Koch discusses the theory of multiple intelligences, and how it impacts our learning and processing. Everyone is born with a distinct set of eight intelligences; however, they must be developed. As parents it is important to expose your young kids to many different activities so that their unique interests can be developed early. It is your job to awaken these smarts, and modeling is a great tool! Kids will learn that they have some smarts that are strengths, and others that are not. If kids strengths are not encouraged but disciplined they can become weaknesses. According to Dr. Koch children's smarts often first appear as interests. In order to understand which smarts are strengths for your child, you can look for what they do and how much they do it. There should be observable patterns of ability and interests, not an isolated incident. Often times when children get into trouble it is due to using a strength in the wrong way. On the next page is a table explaining the 8 smarts developed by Dr. Koch. It can be useful to understand the behaviors that accompany each of these intelligences.

The following links offer more resources such as articles and videos if you want to understand a particular smart further.

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

[www.8greatsmarts.com](http://www.8greatsmarts.com)



## 8 Great Smarts: An Overview of Multiple Intelligences

	<b>think with</b>	<b>when excited</b>	<b>enjoy/need/learning/studying/teaching</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>harm</b>
word	words	talk	reading, writing, telling stories, talking about their day, variety of books, variety of paper, many things to write with, read out loud, be expressive, listen to someone read, retype/recopy notes, read books related to topic that may be easier, meaningful discussions, journaling, choral reading, etc.	encourage, listen intently, teach, use positive self-talk	discourage, gossip, tease, impress with words
logic	questions	ask more questions	learning, researching, school, math, science, data, answering questions, experimenting, discovering, investigating, predicting, reasons, use numbers in all subjects, time to explore things, something worth thinking about, intellectual challenges, non-fiction, want things that make sense	invent, solve problems, curious, counseling	create problems, argue, test authority
picture	pictures	add to their pictures	drawing, art, designing, visualizing, doodling, imagining, creating, watching, demonstrations, displays, descriptive words, fiction, history, creative writing, photography, add color to charts, ask if something (e.g., spelling word) looks right, mind mapping, maps, dioramas, beauty, humor	create beauty, design, help decorate, make displays	judge a book by its cover, distracted by what is seen
music	rhythms and melodies	make music	playing a musical instrument, singing, enjoying music, going to concerts, rapping, rhyming poetry, listening, jingles, humming, whistling, dancing, use rhythms and melodies to learn things (e.g., Mississippi, the ABC song), tapping feet, clapping math facts, whisper silent h	enjoy music from cultures, use it to calm down, perform	idolize music/musicians, makes noise, wrong music
body	movement and touch	move/touch more	moving, touching, action, dancing, playing sports, doing crafts, hands are busy, coordinated, good dexterity and flexibility, acting, drama, charades, demonstrations, field trips, hands-on manipulatives, puppetry, cooking, construct and build, sky writing, clapping math facts, pacing w/clipboard	develop talent, chores and service	punching, wrestling, moving too much
nature	patterns	go outside	outside, plants, trees, animals, rocks, clouds, dirt, water, collecting things, based on patterns, comparing, categorizing, study outside, relate topics to nature (e.g., tracking of Native Americans), sciences that relate to nature (e.g., biology, earth science), pets, time outside	care about environment, take care of animals/plants	distracted by animals, animal cruelty
people	other people	talk to people	people, studying/learning with people, brainstorming, group work, friends, mentors, questions/answers, freedom to think and question, someone to interact with, leading, teaching, organizing, relating, mediating, partying, enthusiasm, reading people well and responding well, role plays, persuades	many friends, motivates, counsels, build consensus	gets into trouble if ignored, manipulates
self	reflection	spend time alone	time alone, choices, freedom, own opinions, privacy, space, peace, secrets, time to think deeply, time to explain their ideas, studying alone, self-paced projects, connect topics to personal lives, they know themselves well, produces original and unique work, diaries and journaling, goal setting	disciplined, happy alone, know what they know	opinionated, unteachable, doesn't share, self-centered

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## *Intentional Parenting: Autopilot is for Planes*

By Sissy Goff, MED, LPC-MHSP; David Thomas, LMSW; and Melissa Trevathan, MRE

This book is written with all parents in mind and more specifically to the parent who realizes that parenting requires self-reflection, awareness, and an openness to learning from your child. The book is engaging with questions throughout the chapters to help parents process and assimilate the information on a personal level.

The authors invite parents to always remember:

- To extend grace to yourself in the journey of parenting
- That you are going to make mistakes
- God can redeem mistakes made in parenting
- God extends grace to you (parent) so you can extend grace and mercy to your child
- When a child learning to ride a bike falls off, you encourage him to get back on. In the same way, encourage yourself to dust yourself off and continue the journey.

### **Chapter 1: Being an Intentional Parent**

“He’s a father who is aware of his daughter’s struggles but knows that they don’t just exist in a vacuum. He knows he’s a part of the problem too. And he can be a part of the solution, maybe even one of the most important parts.”

Being an intentional parent means you study your intention, your purpose in parenting – don’t lose the emphasis of enjoyment, connection and relationship with your child. Parent out of love (be proactive-- thoughtful, intentional, strategic and wise, responsive, engaged, invested, connected) not out of fear (reactive – “don’t do...”).

- Question: Why did you decide to become a parent? Most do not consider this question; it’s more or less the next logical step.

The goal should be to respond out of who you are, who God made you to be, instead of how you feel. The daily moments of parenting may take you to the end of yourself, which often leads to responding out of what you feel. Responding rightly requires dependence and leaning into God constantly for wisdom and strength.

Parenting is a transformative lovely and disruptive process. “The intensity and passion of parenting bring the potential not only for worst, but also for our very best as human beings.”...being both willing to make huge sacrifices for your child and also experiencing deep selfishness due to the varied disruptions you encounter (such as sleepless nights).

- Questions: Identify 3 different moments when you felt helpless as a parent. What did you take away from those experiences? How has parenting changed you as person?
- Activities:

- 1) Take an inventory of who you are. Know your strengths and your struggles. Try to understand how your kids experience you.
- 2) You are invited to become a student of your own maturity (or lack thereof). Find three individuals (who have seen you at your best and worst) who know you deeply and share some history. Invite them to give you some honest feedback with the following questions:
  - What have you observed about me as a parent?
  - What are the strengths I bring to parenting?
  - What are the struggles I bring to parenting?
  - What do you enjoy about being in relationship with me?
  - What are the challenges about being in relationship with me?

Acknowledge to your child that you realize you will make mistakes along the way. You might say, “Sometimes I love you so much that I get stuck on teaching you, instructing you and correcting you and I forget to enjoy you and spend time with you and I want to ask you to help me.”

- Questions to ask child: What are some things you enjoy that we do together? What do you wish I would do more of as a parent? What do you wish I wouldn’t do or do differently as a parent?

As a parent, you should gain understanding of general childhood development and milestones and the role gender plays in development. You should also seek to understand your child’s temperament and parent in tandem to it, not in opposition.

- Questions: How would you define your child’s temperament? What are some specific ways you can creatively work within your child’s temperament rather than against it?

Parents are the leaders of the family. Be intentional about casting vision for your family.

- Activities:
  - 1) Write a mission statement highlighting what you want to be about as a family. Define your core values and develop family goals.
  - 2) Make a list of the things you do as a family during a given week, eg. eat, sleep, check email, play video games. All members’ daily activities should be included. Then make a second list with the necessary things in life (eat, sleep, work/school). Combine any new items to the first list that weren’t there before. Now compare your core values to these activities – are they aligned?

## Chapter 2: Being a Patient Parent

The authors suggest the following:

- Breathe. Slow yourself and your responses down (count to ten); assess if you are frustrated with your child or frustrated in general.
- Listen. Be present.
- Give your child a chance to self-correct before getting frustrated about the wrong thing he did.
- Give your child the benefit of the doubt. The perceived difference in how you see your child's behavior can do quite a bit to dictate the difference in your response.
- Keep a sense of humor. In safe, harmless situations a little laughter can help you connect with your child. Your child needs your wisdom more than your frustration in many situations.
- Try to see your child in the most challenging moments and not only their behavior.
- Take care of yourself.
- Don't take things too personally.
- Assume the best.
- Be aware of your expectations.
- Be prepared for failure.
- Give your child tools to deal with his or her emotions.
- Say frequently –“try again”.
- Think about your child's capabilities. Be aware of children's milestones. Be aware of your cognitive, developmental, and physical abilities. Use relatable things, such as your child's favorite TV show, as a time reference for bedtime.
- Allow downtime in your child's schedule. Don't pack your days so full that you can't keep up due to running from activity to activity.
- Give yourself a timeout.
- Start 15 minutes early.
- Expect that your patience will be challenged. As your child grows and begins to transition into an independent person, he or she will push against your boundaries on the journey to self-discovery.
- Remember your childhood. Journal what your life was like at your child's age.
- Learn your triggers. They often have more to do with you than with your child.
- Watch your fuse.
- Pray frequently.

Questions: When do you get the most discouraged as a parent? How do you see your discouragement affecting your child? Which of the suggestions above do you struggle with the most? What could you do practically to give yourself an opportunity for more patience? What could you do spiritually to experience more of God's passionate patience with you?

### Chapter 3: Being a Grown-Up Parent

You will tend to respond to your child in a way that draws from your past. Parenting will awaken and trigger unresolved needs and hurts in your life. When that happens you will see, feel and reason much like a child.

- Questions: What are you aware of that feels unresolved from your childhood? When in parenting do you act more like a child/teenager than an adult? How do you act in those moments?

Parents tend to develop habits or parenting styles that aren't always helpful. The authors describe the following types of parents:

Parenting Style	Characteristics	This parent needs...	Things to consider
Peter Pan Parent	Unwilling to grow up; all play; fun parent	Courage	Children will find confidence in your courage to set boundaries. Hold them accountable; set and maintain structure.
Hovering Parent	Controlled by fear and anxiety	To develop trust in his or her child	Allow your child to experience a little of life (including a few developmentally appropriate bumps). Parent out of love, not fear.
Hipster Parent	Insecure, self-centered; values being cool and in the know; behavior appears at times like a teenager	To know that the child needs to respect you more than like you	Give your child a version of adulthood to look forward to instead of seeing adolescence as the “glory years.” Nothing is wrong with being cool; just ensure that your child values character over looking cool.
Second Chance Parent	Interdependent; sees son's or daughter's childhood as an extension of his or her own	To foster independent connectedness with the child	Remember being connected has nothing to do with being alike. Your child needs to freely connect with you in a way that frees you each to be clearly child and grown-up.
Pain-Free Parent	Has experienced profound hurt or pain at some point in life; lives in a way that isolates herself from pain	Vulnerability	Your child will bring you tremendous joy and tremendous pain. If you isolate yourself from the emotion that vulnerability brings, you also isolate from your child.

- Questions: Which parent do you identify with the most? What you feel you need in response? Where could you give God and others in your community opportunities to help meet that need?

## Chapter 4: Being a Balanced Parent

Love and Fear - Strive to parent in love in the presence of fear. Acknowledge that fear exists, yet do not parent out of that place. Support independence in small ways.

- Questions: Where are you most afraid as a parent? What is an area in which you could stop gripping and invite more trust?

Discipline and Relationships - Discipline has always been intended for teaching, shaping, and protecting our kids as a way of showing them love and care. Therefore, your parenting posture during discipline should maintain one of love, not of anger. Discipline is never about harming or shaming your child. There's an old saying that "rules without relationship leads to rebellion." One could also state that relationship without rules leads to kids feeling too much power and a lack of safety. **The goal is to "work toward having rules and relationship in place, and to parent consistently with both."**

Boundaries and Freedom – This tension arises as a result of parents' attempts to set healthy boundaries while also supporting their child's independence and allowing freedom. Look for Significant Learning Opportunities (SLO) – moments in which parents avoid rescuing and instead allow the child to learn through the consequences of his or her own decisions (good or bad). This is about developing character and strengthening resilience. If you ignore SLO's and lean more toward the parent lecture when SLO's arise, you as a parent have now taken away from your child the deep understanding that takes place when your child learns through experience.

Emotions - Balanced parents give the gift of having emotions but not parenting out of emotion. Parenting out of emotion is like grocery shopping on an empty stomach, which leads to impulsive, unhealthy food choices that you later regret. Take a break and decide if discipline needs to be part of the equation and, if so, how to do that and **let it be about instruction and not about emotions.**

- Question: What can you do or where can you go when you feel emotionally charged and need some time/space to make more thoughtful parenting decisions?

Time - Discontinue activities that are not aligned with your family values. The culture elevates activity and fast pace above connection. There is no rule that says you must have all your children participate in multiple sporting activities—which leaves you functioning as a driver instead of connected parent in a connected family.

- Activity: Have each of your family write down their idea of a perfect Sunday and drop that slip of paper into a hat. Read aloud together and decide what you'd like to do with the ideas.

Support – It seems parents tend to offer girls too much support with relational challenges. Parents get into the trap of problem solving for girls. Listen more. For boys, academic support seems to be the standout. School can be challenging for boys, which may mean that parents tend

to camp out at the table while homework is being done. While helping your son is important, give him space to explore his capability without becoming dependent on this support and belief that he will naturally need your help. Continue working on your own task within range. which lets your child know you are available when he needs you the most.

- Questions to ask your kids: What are you thinking? What are you going to do in response to that? Shift the ownership back to your child and build into his or her resourcefulness, independence and resilience.

## Chapter 5: Being a Consistent Parent

Consistency is contrary to nature and life, and yet it is important for parents if they intend to help create a sense of security in their children. Consistency with discipline and consequences play a part in enhanced self-worth for teens as they learn from their own choices.

### CONSISTENCY IN PARENTING

Domain	Age Range			Questions to consider
	Toddlers	Children	Teenagers	
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use key repetitive statements</li> <li>Use visuals</li> <li>Model the values for your toddler</li> <li>Explain your choices (why)</li> <li>Give your priorities priority time and</li> <li>Praise your child (he or she likes to please you and do well)</li> <li>Praise with more emphasis on effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be concrete</li> <li>Think literally about your own actions (children follow suit)</li> <li>Make it fun</li> <li>Focus on the positive</li> <li>Give them opportunities to be involved, however small</li> <li>Prioritize the values for your child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach with your actions and with consequences</li> <li>Use the back door –Instead of being tuned out with “Why didn’t clean your room?”, say, “Responsible kids get to hang out with their friends on the weekend.”</li> <li>Say as much as you can with few words</li> <li>Ask questions that help your child to think and learn for themselves</li> <li>Respect their values (ones that are respectable)</li> <li>Don’t be afraid to fail</li> <li>Have realistic expectations of their time</li> <li>Give them opportunities to experience your values together and separately</li> <li>Use the power of peers to reinforce your family value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What were the three main values in your childhood home?</li> <li>Do you want your home to have the same values or different ones?</li> </ul>
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start when they are very little with age-appropriate tasks</li> <li>Grow their chores with them</li> <li>Supervise them</li> <li>Make a routine</li> <li>Make it fun</li> <li>Encourage often</li> <li>Let them help</li> <li>Keep your expectations consistent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show your pride—acknowledge when they are responsible</li> <li>Make chores a part of normal family life</li> <li>Give an allowance appropriately</li> <li>Let them earn extra money/privileges with extra chores</li> <li>Match age level with responsibilities</li> <li>Slow down and let them help</li> <li>Make it a family project</li> <li>Create a chore chart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give them flexible boundaries</li> <li>Let consequences do the teaching</li> <li>Require something of them</li> <li>Give them a voice</li> <li>Require responsibility outside the home</li> <li>Increase responsibilities with age</li> <li>Reward responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What helps kids feel important?</li> </ul>



Domain	Age Range			Questions to consider
	Toddlers	Children	Teenagers	
Discipline	<p>Teaching comes first—they don't automatically know what will elicit a no from you</p> <p>Use simple repetitive statements</p> <p>Change location</p> <p>Remove offending objects (it proves that you are in charge)</p> <p>Time out (special chair, quiet room)—not their bedrooms</p> <p>Handling Tantrums (when appropriate and safe, keep walking—they will eventually catch up with you).</p> <p>Don't allow whining to work and gain power ("I only listen to children who speak with real voices, not whines.")</p> <p>Don't give in to the bedtime battle. ("Would you like to go to bed now or in five minutes?" or "Would you like to read a bedtime story or sing a song?"—choices give kids a sense of control and your consistency develops trust and security for your child in relationship to you)</p>	<p>Speak to them appropriately—when you speak to children as if they are adults, they start to believe they should be treated that way in all things... leading to entitled kids</p> <p>Don't allow them to get away with the worst versions of themselves—because they will start believing that's who they are</p> <p>Say what you mean and be able to enforce it ("I believe you are capable of more.")</p> <p>Begin at home – if you don't want public whining, address the whining at home first</p> <p>Give opportunities to learn (before consequence) self-control</p> <p>Give them choice—your warning can be a choice ("You can speak to me respectfully or spend some time in the quiet chair, calming yourself down. It's your choice.")</p> <p><u>Communicate that consequences are due to their poor choices, rather than your strict parenting</u></p> <p>Do no argue ("I love you too much to argue." or "I'll meet you back here in 10 minutes (if time permits) so we can both listen to each other and try to meet the need.")</p> <p>Provide boundaries ("You may pay your sister \$1/day rent each time you take her clothes without asking her permission." Or "There is no fighting in the car. The cost when you do is \$5. You can pay in chores, cash or toys.")</p> <p>Turn mistakes into learning opportunities ("How would you like to handle this situation?")</p> <p>Let them know you are available when they need help.</p> <p>Parent out of empathy, not emotional reactions (Empathy maintains the relationship; consequences, not your emotions, teach the lesson.)</p> <p>Be empathetic when the consequences are enforced ("We'll really miss you at the movie tonight.")</p> <p>Know when to walk away—negative emotions do not reinforce positive behavior</p> <p>Use charts as a system of rewards—repetition reinforces your message</p>	<p>Be the parent</p> <p>Leave the drama to them</p> <p>Choose your battles</p> <p>Let the consequences fit the crime</p> <p>Assume the best</p> <p>Focus on the present, not the past</p> <p>Give them hope</p> <p>Allow them to make mistakes</p> <p>Protect the good things</p> <p>Don't lose sight of who they can be</p>	<p>In what parenting arena do I need to be more consistent?</p>

## Chapter 6: Being a Playful Parent

Live lightheartedly through the lens of a child's eyes.

- Acknowledge your obstacle to play:
    - ~ “I look silly”
    - ~ “I’m not accomplishing anything”
    - ~ “I’m too tired”
    - ~ “I don’t want to draw attention to myself”
    - ~ “I’m afraid”
  - Be open to fun.
  - Watch your kids play.
  - Jump in and play with your child.
  - Prioritize parent play time (equally important as playing with your child).
- ~ “I can’t do that like I used to”
  - ~ “What would the other parents think?”
  - ~ “I don’t know what to do, and my kids don’t want me to play with them”

## Chapter 7: Being a Connected Parent

We all want to feel significant—that our lives matter.

- Real connection takes place with real people, through real experiences.
- Important ingredients for connection
  - ~ reciprocity (give and take in relationship)
  - ~ empathy (being aware of others’ feelings)
  - ~ regulation (not speaking every thought that travels through your mind, nor responding out of every emotion you feel)
- An invitation to play is an invitation to relationship and connection—look for invitations.
- Show interest. Study your child’s unique design, development, passions, and temperament and nurture them.
- Help your child feel safe. Reassure with consistent actions that his/her physical and emotional safety is important to you and will be protected.
- Demonstrate contentment apart from being a parent. Let your child know he or she does not have the responsibility of keeping or making you happy. It’s healthy for your child to see you thrive outside of your parental role.

## Chapter 8: Being an Encouraging Parent

Your words are more important and powerful in your child's life than anyone else's will ever be. Create positive future tapes now for your kids to replay later.

- Encouragement is not:
  - ~ Criticism
  - ~ Minimizing
  - ~ Sarcasm
  - ~ Comparing
  - ~ Quick advice
  - ~ Compensating
  - ~ Manipulation
- Encouragement is consistently helping your child see who he can be.
- Encouragement requires and brings faith, objectivity, discernment, persistence and optimism together in a way that enables you to speak truth into the darkness for and with your child.
- Encouragement offers hope to your child.

## Chapter 9: Being a Spiritual Parent

Raising a child is too hard; you just can't do it alone. As your children grow in independence, a spiritual parent grows in dependence on God. He or she...

- Stays in prayer and in God's word constantly for wisdom and guidance (also a model for your child)
- Stays in **community**
  - ~ Keeps you from believing the myth, "All the other parents have it together."
  - ~ Allows you to keep perspective and share vulnerabilities
  - ~ Reminder that you are not alone
- Stays **grateful**. Gratitude
  - ~ Is infectious and invites others to join in
  - ~ Teaches your child that peace can be found even through chaotic situations with a simple statement, "Isn't this a beautiful day?"
- Has **discernment**—understands that there is a time for everything (a time to teach and a time to allow your children to discover truth for themselves)
- **Trusts** God to take care of his or her child. Love for your child drives you to try and protect him/her from everything; it comes with many "if's," typically negative possibilities. Be reminded that our children are on loan and we do not own them.
- **Question:** How would your parenting look different if you really trusted God?

## Chapter 10: Being a Merciful Parent

In the midst of a teachable moment for your child, you can stay connected while communicating that he or she is loved enough to be found out (in fact, it is an act of mercy when the child is found out in wrongdoing).

- The same is true for parents when they are also found out and mercifully loved and disciplined by God and openly model that for their children.
- Extending mercy is also a way to teach your children empathy.
- Being a merciful parent also works to eventually get to a point when long lectures are abandoned for lessons learned from natural consequences. You want your child to have “moments of connecting the dots.”

## Chapter 11: Being a Hopeful Parent

- Every child and every family struggle. Some just hide it better than others. They hide it because there is a lie that everybody else has perfect lives. We tend to buy into that when we take on a victim mentality.
- Your children are listening and seeing far more than you can imagine. Make your words count (don't depend on long lectures). As they get older, get to the point with love. Engage them in ways which give them ownership of their growth, actions and consequences.
- You are the parent; it matters more that your child respects you than likes you. This leads to security—the child knows he or she is loved because a safe emotional and physical space is created through consistency. Do not engage your child like his or her peers do.
- Allowing your child/teen to feel like the most powerful person in the family can lead to insecurity.
- You don't have to do it alone. Your child needs other voices as he/she grows and develops.
- Explore other resources to help fulfill some of your child's developmental needs (career, extracurriculars, church groups, etc.)
- Consistency works. There are no perfect consequences. This replaces the lie that “nothing works.”
- Suffering produces good things, even in your child. Resilience is born out of suffering. Kids learn that they can get through and overcome whatever challenges they are facing. Don't become overwhelmed to the point of being hopeless because your child struggles; help your child see how each situation can lead to a greater purpose and character development.
- Find your hope outside of your children. Neither you nor your child should develop a skewed perspective that everything (including your happiness) depends on him being a “good” child.

## Chapter 12: Being a Free Parent

Be the parent God has freed you to be.

- Focus on being godly parents (in constant pursuit of His guidance) instead of wanting godly kids.
- Those who hold on to the illusion of control (especially over people) lose the enjoyment of freedom.
- Parenting is not meant to cripple you with insufficiency, but to lead you to God's sufficiency.
- Parenting is much less about your control (less about you), and more about trusting and depending on God.
- Acknowledge that you can't directly change your child's heart or behavior. You can be intentional, but you can't assuredly be perfect and always effective.

## *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys*

by Stephen James and David Thomas

### **PART 1: The Way of a Boy44**

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Chief Characteristics</b>	<b>Principal Needs</b>	
<b>The Explorers ages 2-4</b>	<p>Endless drive to independently understand how things work and operate</p> <p>Constantly moving</p> <p>Stubborn, self-determined learners</p> <p>Aggressive—rough housing, tantrums, as well as snuggling</p> <p>Curious</p>	<p>Activity and experiences</p> <p>Boundaries</p> <p>Caregivers to set limits and then give choices</p> <p>Space to explore and be active...where are they allowed to be wild?</p> <p>Consistency/routine</p> <p>Tactile stimulation combined with verbal and visual contact</p> <p>Specific directions with fewer words</p>	
<b>The Lovers ages 5-8</b>	<p>Maintain their Explorer characteristics and begin to engage their environments with attention to detail</p> <p>Relationally vested and artfully expressive</p> <p>Chattier than their younger counterparts and curious about their environments in a new way, asking as many questions as they can to grasp understanding</p> <p>Definitive, using concrete labels</p> <p>Emotionally sensitive, often extremely open with both positive and negative feelings...this can result in increased fears of new situation/things/people</p> <p>More aware of right and wrong, with a keen sense for rules and justice</p> <p>Often wanting to please those in authority and sensitive when in the wrong</p> <p>Open to understanding the why behind choices and decisions</p> <p>Competitive, benefitting from the push and pull of competition to keep egos in check and give a sense of accomplishment</p>	<p>To play with purpose, being more expressive with their perspectives through pretend</p> <p>Attachment to Dad—beginning in this stage, male role models become paramount as the setting for gender identity</p> <p>Mercy, compassion, and control from the adults in their lives</p> <p>Reprieve--young boys are not wired for the traditional academic/behavioral requirements of school (most experts suggest boys not starting kindergarten until 6 years old), so they need a retreat at home after a day of fitting into a mold that is not geared for them, and to recharge before starting homework/chores</p> <p>Relationships, though they may want to spend more time alone...they begin to crave more one on one time with each parent to gain new perspective on who they are and how relationships can be different</p> <p>Routine, which provides a sense of accomplishment, independence and self-satisfaction</p> <p>Poor choices to be identified and redirected...name the behavior (e.g. rock throwing) with a trait (destructive) and redirection (put it down, pick something else) to give context for the situation and opportunity to correct independently</p> <p>Natural consequences (e.g. not playing outside the next day), if remorse is <u>not</u> shown...if remorse is shown for missteps, no further communication needs to occur, move forward as scheduled</p> <p>Regulation, learning to differentiate when competition is appropriate for the context and to manage their own behavior and impulses</p>	
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Chief Characteristics</b>	<b>Principal Needs</b>	<b>Parenting Tips</b>

<p><b>The Individuals ages 9-12</b></p>	<p>The start of puberty...unstable emotional displays are often present and can take caregivers of sweet Lovers by surprise</p> <p>Anger...the primary expressed emotion as an umbrella for loneliness, sadness, fear, and hurt</p> <p>Searching out what it means to get older...some still play with toys, others more engaged in team building, others become curious about sexuality</p> <p>Changing hormone levels... caregivers see physical changes including acne, emotional outbursts during conflict, and sexual changes with pubic hair, nocturnal emissions and erections</p> <p>Experimenting with the status quo/risktaking...boundaries will be tested, and caregivers get first glimpse into the boy's manhood</p> <p>Comparison of self to others... highly critical of most things, including themselves</p>	<p>Social guidance for emotional expression, especially from other men</p> <p>Caregivers who lean into this transitional phase with confidence, providing opportunities to try new things while maintaining limits of family values as boundaries for experimentation</p> <p>Loving supervision with check-ins (safety as primary responsibility)</p> <p>Honest, but age appropriate, information behind your reasoning for certain limits</p> <p>Encouragement to ask questions</p> <p>Caregivers who stay involved...they are looking to see who will stay involved despite unkind and erratic behavior</p> <p>Expansion of their involvement in the family and community in order to learn empathy and responsibility</p>	<p>Be intentional with summers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send your boy to an excellent camp.</li> <li>• Allow your boy to experience appropriate risk-- physically, emotionally, and relationally—in a completely different way than they can at home.</li> </ul> <p>Keep the dialogues going.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifically address some important issues head-on.</li> <li>• Express your views on sex, drugs, alcohol, and suicide</li> <li>• Teach him how to handle these issues.</li> </ul> <p>Engage with him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dads should consider taking their sons on an experiential day or weekend, interspersed with conversation and doing something fun and meaningful.</li> <li>• Moms should figure out a specific ritual for her and her son (like stopping for doughnuts on the way to school or going to a batting cage)</li> </ul> <p>Enlist the doctor's help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt your son's pediatrician to begin talking with him more openly about the upcoming changes with his body and emotions. A boy can't hear about this from too many sources.</li> </ul> <p>Get ready for a steak dinner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your sons about wet dreams when they are 8-10, and instruct them to wake you the first time they have one. Go out to celebrate the next day.</li> </ul> <p>Make him read the book before he sees the movie.</p> <p>Don't follow the crowd.</p> <p>Keep him active.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He should never spend more time watching sports than playing actively...or texting his friends than seeing his friends in person.</li> </ul>
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Age Range	Chief Characteristics	Principal Needs	Parenting Tips
<p><b>The Wanderers ages 13-17</b></p>	<p>Everything is running high...often contentious years in which many wonder where the boy they used to know has gone</p> <p>Two opposing challenges: Keep your distance or come towards me</p> <p>Chaotic or explosive, if the Individual stage was uncertain and unstable,</p> <p>Seeking consistency and pleasure as a source of comfort, often in the form of substance abuse, sex, masturbation, and pornography</p> <p>Self-centered and full of arrogance as a mask for insecurity and cluelessness</p>	<p>Exemplars for manhood...they will piece together and toy with various habits/traits until finding “what fits”</p> <p>Limits on big ticket values and grace in between</p> <p>Growing independence...sometimes in the form of arguing and using definitive statements like “always” and “never”</p> <p>Caregivers who continue to give input and information, but allow space for processing</p> <p>Additional support given to maintaining values from those outside the immediate family</p> <p>Physical outlets to help cope with chaos...get them doing and they’ll talk more</p>	<p>Enter his world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As much as your boy will allow, involve yourself in his outlets.</li> <li>• Boys are more apt to talk when they don’t feel cornered and they talk well when they are in motion.</li> <li>• Don’t cling, nag, or pester him for affection or attention if he clearly wants to let go. You must get good at picking your times to connect emotionally and physically.</li> </ul> <p>Commiserate with him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It’s helpful for a wanderer when the adults in his life show that they know how difficult and painful adolescence can be.</li> <li>• With compassion and understanding, show him that you haven’t forgotten your own journey through the teenage years.</li> </ul> <p>Partner with friends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have friends who have boys your son enjoys, sign up together to work on a volunteer project for others.</li> </ul> <p>Affirm your son as much as you can.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for and create opportunities to tell him you love and respect him (emphasize specific things you respect about him).</li> </ul> <p>Feed him—it’s one of the best ways to engage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your boy out to his favorite place with no agenda other than to hang out with him.</li> </ul> <p>Make him get a job.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of the lessons he needs to learn for the next stage of development he can learn at an after-school or weekend job.</li> </ul> <p>Make regular dates with him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play with your son—go to a game or to eat or to see a movie.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to him about romantic relationships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach him about birth control and your views on sex and dating. This is not a season for the faint of heart.</li> <li>• With care and compassion, it is possible to help your son successfully navigate these waters.</li> </ul>



Age Range	Chief Characteristics	Principal Needs	Parenting Tips
<p><b>The Warriors ages 18-22</b></p>	<p>Tested for manhood (before now they've been trained and pruned, but untested) More analytical and goal focused...they begin to reflect on what they have been and imagine where they want to go emotionally, spiritually, and in relationships Look to their parents more as peers than teachers</p>	<p>Parents/caregivers who let go, becoming more of a sounding board to provide reassurance and praise for the positive steps towards manhood Training ground in which they can make mistakes with little assistance Freedom to make decisions while having emotional comfort from parents/caregivers</p>	<p>Don't squash his dreams—even if they seem impractical to you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He has more ambition than experience, but it's more helpful for you to blow wind into his sails than to clip his wings. Would you rather he remembers your encouragement of his dreams or you not believing in him?</li> </ul> <p>Let him overload.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't rescue him when he takes on more responsibility than he can handle. He needs to learn to recover from his own bad choices.</li> </ul> <p>Recover the basics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the family rules with him and invite his feedback.</li> <li>• Affirm his voice and show how you value his ideas in the decision-making process regarding his life and affairs.</li> </ul> <p>Welcome significant others with open arms. Initiate and engage him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send him on a trip by himself and talk to the men in his life about rites of passage.</li> <li>• Don't forget to keep tabs on him when you are able; he still wants to know you care.</li> </ul> <p>It's okay to have rules and expectations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As he wanders in and out of the home more with friends, school, and work, don't be afraid to set limits and be firm with an explanation.</li> </ul>

## **PART 2: The Mind of a Boy**

### **Chapter 6: A Boy's Brain**

Boys are different from girls. Their genetic makeup and brain chemistry set them apart from day one.

- Typically boys are
  - spatial but not connected
  - aware of objects, but less of faces
  - action-oriented instead of emotion-oriented
  - masters at imagining a picture, creating a clear vision and honing that goal
- They have
  - less serotonin than girls, thus lessening their impulse control
  - more spinal fluid, which makes them more physically active
  - high testosterone levels, causing them to take risks and behave more aggressively
  - on average 15% less blood flow in the brain as a result of lower estrogen, making their critical thinking ability lower in comparison to girls
  - an occipital lobe of the brain that develops slower than in girls, generating an inability to take in multiple sources of info
  - a one track mind
  - a tendency to work sequentially instead of multi-tasking
  - a brain that is less active than girls' during emotional processing and expressed often as little verbal expression

8 mistakes parents/caregivers make with boys:

1. Confinement- they need room to move
2. Verbal/emotional flooding/lecturing
3. Sparring- do not go head to head
4. Reciting
5. Squelching- let them be messy
6. Shaming
7. Guilt-tripping
8. Sabotaging

#### **TIPS for forming a boy's mind:**

1. **Cut out energy drinks.** The more caffeine your boy takes in, the more ramped up his brain is. Caffeine stimulates motor activity; boys don't need help with more activity.
2. **Create ways for him to exercise.** Being active primes his brain for maximum functioning. Get him moving before homework, and occasionally have him take breaks to keep his mind focused.
3. **Limit TV and video games.** The more visual media a boy takes in, the worse off his sleep, learning, and memory. Visual stimulants inhibit the development of the emotional center of the brain.
4. **Make sure he gets enough sleep.** Studies are indicating a correlation between snoring and increased inattention and hyperactivity among children.
5. **Teach him about his emotions.** Boys have hard time recognizing, processing, and verbalizing emotional content. They need a large bank of feeling words with an

understanding of their meanings in order to decrease the amount of physically aggressive outbursts.

6. **Create opportunities that draw on his cognitive strengths.** Get him involved in projects that require reasoning, games and activities that involve imagination and tasks that utilize his ability to find a solution. Validate and affirm his strength.
7. **Pick his brain.** Continue to reach out and be a student of your son. Be invested in who he is and what he thinks as he ages. He may surprise you with how much he has thought about certain topics.

## Chapter 7: Different Learning Styles

- Boys are tactile learners; they must be physically engaged.
- Talk through the motions; show what needs to be done.

### TIPS for teaching boys:

1. **When you give a boy a new concept, ask him to close his eyes and picture it in his mind's eye.**
2. **Teach a boy to close his eyes** at each punctuation mark and picture what he just read.
3. **When working with spelling words,** ask him to picture words in his mind and make wild and crazy pictures out of the letters. Ask him to spell each spelling word backward by looking at the picture. If he can spell the word backward, he can spell it forward.
4. **Help him to use his imagination to make a lesson or an assignment more interesting.** Can he make a graph out of the information? Can he draw a picture of it? Is there a story to tell about it?
5. **If he has trouble memorizing math facts,** ask him to try drawing a picture to represent the ones he finds most difficult.
6. **For help creating outlines for papers, suggest that he organize it visually.** Developing a thought map or drawing pictures and moving the icons around makes it easier to organize the information.
7. **Less talk, more action.** Get him involved while talking to him; he will remember the feeling of closeness and caring as well as process information better.
8. **Schedule his days.** Before the age of 13, boys are not able to structure their time well. Give them things to be doing to create a sense of personal responsibility and structure.
9. **Use reminder cards.** Rather than nag him about specific tasks, try putting reminder cards in different rooms. You can prompt him to check the cards or even to reward him for successful completion or dock him for not completing task.
10. **Allow him to experience natural consequences.** Life can be his teacher without you saying a word. A lecture after a natural consequence often does little but make him feel judged.

## Chapter 8: “Sit Still! Pay Attention!”

- Academic settings are often geared towards girls rather than boys. Therefore, boys tend to struggle in school.
- Parents and teachers must
  - work closely together to understand a boy’s unique learning profile
  - support each other
  - expect healthy physicality and aggression among boys at times

### TIPS for helping your boy succeed:

1. **Get him on the chain gang.** Keep a running list of work options for your son when you need to give a consequence.
2. **Be concise.** Keep your verbal instructions to under a minute. Boys are better suited to symbols, pictures, and experiences.
3. **Keep good notes.** Make a list of things you’ve learned about your son over the course of his academic journey. Identify areas of strength as well as deficits.
4. **Let him move.** Give him a larger space in which to work and plan active movements.
5. **Parent his brain.** Help him think through situations; use many hypothetical scenarios.
6. **Join forces.** Work in tandem with, not in opposition to, those who educate your son.
7. **Get moving.** Plan activities; have conversations while in motion.

## Chapter 9: Deficits and Disappointment

Allowing boys to struggle is one of the greatest tasks and biggest challenges of parenting.

- Parents will sometimes go to great lengths to help their kids avoid experiencing pain or having to struggle, generally falling into one of two categories:
  - Helicopter parent
    - operates based on fear
    - tends to rescue children from natural experiences of sadness/fear
    - some go so far as to do assignments for their children, talk to teachers to argue grades, check in on children on play dates/sleepovers
    - children do not feel empowered to make decisions without parental approval
  - Drill Sergeant parent
    - commands and directs all aspects of children’s lives
    - operates based on shame—often using degrading comments to humiliate
    - dictates how to feel, and when and what decisions to make
- As children grow in these intense environments (both helicopter and military), they learn avoidance of any responsibility, disappointment, or emotional interaction.
- Parents/caregivers, intentionally or not, send messages to their children that they are not capable of handling life.
- Parents/caregivers must normalize negative emotions as part of life and give their sons tools. If not, they perpetuate a cycle of avoidance and toxic relationships with others.
- We spend too much time on behavior modification and not enough on character development (working through struggles intentionally)
- Parents need to be guides, mentors, and models for their sons.

- Strength through struggle, responsibility through regret, diligence through duty, insight through incompetence, compassion through community—these are natural life lessons; we need not generate them.

**TIPS for putting the principles into practice:**

1. **Teach responsibility and compassion through a pet.**
2. **Don't wait for kindergarten.** Preschool programs cover foundation relationship structures such as sharing and awareness of other's needs, patience, personal space, and taking turns. These are harder to model at home without peers.
3. **Allow him to suffer.** Don't shelter him from the greater sorrow of life. Learning compassion through the stories of others and the realities of life generates a caring heart.
4. **Don't run his show.** Evaluate where you are overly invested in his academic performance in ways that stand to hinder him rather than benefit him.
5. **Help him evaluate.** Help him generate a list of his strengths and weaknesses at different stages of his life. Have a conversation about how you see each of those in him and where he wants to focus.
6. **Be kind.** It is important to recognize that the world will do its part in toughening up our boys. As caregivers, one significant role we play is in working to soften their hearts. Boys will inevitably be hit by life's disappointments and difficulties. When they experience life's pain, the best way we can help is by offering them compassion, support, and tenderness.
7. **Take a deep breath and count to ten.** Boys are inclined to anger. It works best to remain calm and respectful when dealing with problems and providing discipline. Call a timeout if you need it or wait a few hours to think through your response. It is important to steer clear of yelling at or shaming a boy, as this will only escalate the tension and incite his anger.

### **PART 3: The Heart of a Boy**

#### **Chapter 10: Noble Creatures: Nurturing a Boy's Heart**

When was the last time you saw your boy? Really saw him? ...for who you think he is, appreciated who he is now, and dreamed of who he could be? In order to see him for who he is now, there must be a curiosity. Become a student of your child. We spend so much time teaching them that we forget they have so much to teach and show us.

Can you answer these about the boy in your life?

- What does he love to do?
  - What is he afraid of?
  - With whom does he spend time, and whom does he avoid?
  - What is he like when you're not around?
  - How does he perform for coaches and teachers?
  - What is his favorite cereal?
  - Who are his three best friends?
  - Who is his favorite comic book hero and why?
  - When he is disappointed, what does he do?
  - How well can he celebrate his own victories? What about the victories of others?
  - Is he empathetic?
  - What are his favorite and least favorite things? cereal, food, movies, TV shows, music?
  - What state or country does he want to visit?
  - What really makes him mad?
  - How does he hold his pencil?
  - What does he like on his pizza?
  - How does he relate to God?
- 
- At each age, a boy must be challenged to grow towards **integrity** and **intimacy**. If we do not take time to encourage them to live from their hearts, all of their stereotypical successes will be meaningless.
  - Boys need help determining the balance between **sensitivity** and **aggression**. Often we find men hiding sensitivity behind aggression, not able to share their hearts without fear of judgment.
  - When disciplining young men, have their punishment be more focused on character development, helping them to gain understanding of why what they missed was important.
  - Obedience is a result of trust, love and safety. Compliance comes from fear.

## Chapter 11: A Boy and His Mother

- Mothers play a vital role in a boy's life. She is an anchor of safety, but also challenges him by being in so many ways different. She will model what his future relationships with women will look like.
- Mothers should be encouraged to explore their own insecurities about men in their lives because they will likely project those images onto their sons as they age.
- Explorer and Lover moms are still often a boy's go to for anything emotionally based. Use this time to encourage his expression and expand his vocabulary by helping him label feelings in the moment.
- Mothers should push emotional development further by modeling character traits they want their sons to practice and pointing out in the moment when they see the desired traits exhibited.
- Wanderer mothers will often get the best and worst of their sons. They must start to let go as their sons push away, but provide gentle reminders of your openness.
- Getting creative and being attune to the changing interests of sons is key for mothers. Keep up with them if you want a relationship.

### TIPS for mothers:

1. **Soak it up while he's young.** Enjoy your son while he's so into you. Take lots of pictures and video of the two of you together. Once he starts to pull away, you'll need both to remind you of who he was and who he will become.
2. **Don't panic.** Toward the end of the Individual stage and the beginning of the Wanderer stage, wear a rubber band around your wrist to remind yourself of what's happening.
3. **Mum's the word.** A close relationship with your teenage boy can feel shaky. Parents are most successful when they understand why their sons are reluctant to open up to them and when they work hard to develop an environment in which teens feel that it's safe to talk about themselves. It is imperative to keep your son's confidence and that you honor his privacy.
4. **Kidnap him.** One way for moms to connect with their boys is to take them on errands in the car. Talk to him, listen to his favorite music and laugh at things you see on the way.
5. **Be unpredictable.** Play jokes on him. As he gets deeper into adolescence you must learn to handle him with humor. If you meet his intensity and sullenness with your own frustration, you'll get nowhere.
6. **It's not about you.** You are preparing your son for his relationship with other women and what kind of relationship he'll have with you during that time.
7. **Check your heart.** If you recognize that you're carrying contempt toward men in your heart, find a constructive way to deal with it or it will impact your relationship with your son.
8. **Respect him.** Even the most skilled conversationalist can't force a teenager to communicate when he doesn't want to. If he does open up, talk with him in ways that encourage conversation.

## Chapter 12: A Boy and His Father

- Fathers, and men as a whole, tend to struggle with being emotionally or physically present with their families or even themselves.
- Key reflection for fathers of boys: “Where did I learn what it means to be a real man?”
- Boys will mirror their fathers, for better or worse. Fathers, like mothers, should be encouraged to reflect on their struggles with manhood.
- Explorer fathers need to be physical with their sons. They feel the physical presence of their fathers through play. At this age, fathers model how to support and love mothers.
- Fathers of Lovers need to be intentionally focused on noticing their sons. Find their strengths and weaknesses, encourage growth.
- Individual fathers need to call out their sons and push them to their limits, but catch them when they struggle.
- Wanderer fathers often need to release their sons to the care of mentors who support the familial values.
- Warrior dads regain their fun friendship with sons. They become more equal and share more openly than ever.

### TIPS for fathers:

1. **Pass on a legacy.** Throughout your son’s development, ask yourself what your own father gave to you that you loved—and then do the same things for your son. Then ask yourself what you didn’t get from your dad that you wanted and needed and give those things to your son as well.
2. **Don’t go it alone.** Find a community of other men and boys to plug into. Boys need to see their dads interact with other men and have other men in their lives. Put him in situations where he sees you interacting in relationships with other men.
3. **Reach out often.** It’s important for a boy to know that his dad is thinking about him. Sending him or leaving him messages that you remembered him and were thinking of him building bridges.
4. **Have a ritual.** Dads can develop regular rituals with their boys. It doesn’t have to be expensive, just quality time.
5. **Be involved in his life.** Get to know his friends, be invested in the things he is interested in so you always have something to talk about and teach him. If you invest in something he loves, he’ll be more open to learning something new from you.



## Chapter 13: Rituals, Ceremonies, and Rites of Passage

- Rites of passage and rituals are invaluable in the lives of boys.
- Our current postmodern culture rooted in relativism has left boys with little truth to anchor a boy's heart.
- If we don't create rites of passage for our boys, they will create their own.
- Initiation into manhood is about providing boys with a compass of meaning.
- Essential truths for initiation into manhood include:
  - Life is hard
  - You are going to die
  - You are not that important
  - You are not in control
  - Your life is not about you
- Initiation into manhood should be:
  - Primarily spiritual
  - Defined corporately and rooted in tradition
  - Not about proving oneself, but about discovering oneself
  - Prepared for, not spontaneous
  - Mysterious
  - At the right time, not rushed
  - Not easy or hollow, involving some element of suffering
- Celebrate your son! Make certain to keep your son's interests at the center of the celebration.

## Chapter 14: Sailing for Home

- Be present and available to your son.
- Shelter your son from the storms of life. Bear the weight of life on his behalf while he is learning to stand.
- Offer comfort to your son when life delivers cruel blows.
- Make sure your son experiences your pleasure and delight in him. Give him your affection.

There is a **Hot Topics** section at the end of the book, with short excerpts covering the following:

- Spanking and Discipline
- Screen Time
- Sensitive or Intuitive Boys
- Competition and Relationship
- Talking with Boy about Sex
- Dating
- Masturbation
- Boys and Money
- Substance Abuse
- Homosexuality
- ADD and ADHD
- Five Ways to Help Boys with ADD
- Bravado and Depression
- Emotional literacy
- Boys and Sexual Abuse
- Single Moms
- Boys and Pornography