

Fathers and Sons

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By Dr. Derek Conte

I am very curious by nature and seek mainstream as well as less-known sources of information. It builds and continues my education in life. Sometimes the information is so significant that it seems impossible to have been unreported by the dozens of commentators in the mainstream media.

Recently, I came across an interview on YouTube of Warren Farrell, PhD* Dr. Farrell authored the book, THE BOY CRISIS. The interview centered on the current plight of American boys and boys in Western nations generally. It contained statistics so troubling I was moved to offer them here.

I am not a psychologist. But as a citizen of these United States of America and a doctor who cares for many children in my practice I am very concerned. If you are not already aware, I hope you will be after I reveal the grave situation our boys face. Yes, I said grave.

In short, our boys are not doing well.

A major part of the problem with the rearing of boys is not surprising: the lack of a father and a lack of boundaries. Like a running lawnmower without oil, these boys grow up in a household with only the mother to guide them and then go to school to be further guided by predominantly female teachers.

Boys are natural fighters and explorers and require boundaries. Without boundaries, without strong male leadership, boys, being tribal, are easily recruited into gangs where there is a strong pecking order and built on masculine leadership, regardless of how misguided.

Dr. Farrell says, "Male testosterone and male energy must be channeled constructively. If it is, great things can be achieved. This can only be done through male leadership. Otherwise it is rudderless and can be extremely destructive. Most of the school shooters are without male leadership in their lives. 90% of prison inmates are men who never (emotionally) developed beyond boyhood...Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts show very good results in training up male energy constructively".

Traditionally, we have benefitted from cooperation between the sexes, but we now have competition and ostracization. "Gender studies" programs are now ubiquitous and promote a fallacy that men and boys are fundamentally dysfunctional, broken and in need of "fixing", requiring "re-education" in order to more neatly fit into the very society males largely built. This is a terrible irony. Boys are being neutered. They are being tamed. "We are shaming our sons", says Farrell. A new term has been created to define genetic traits inherent in men and boys: "Toxic Masculinity". Just try flipping the gender in that term and see how it sits on the tongue.

Another part of the problem is a court system which makes it very difficult for fathers to gain equal time with their children after a divorce and have much less of a chance of gaining primary custody. It is worse for unmarried parents who account for 53% of all children born today. If those “unmarrieds” separate, 40% of those children never see their father after two years.

Dr. Farrell then talks about “roughhousing”. The lack of a dad around to “roughhouse” with his boy is much more of a loss than one can imagine because it is here that the boy learns how to physically bond with his father, to test his own strength, to learn vital skills and strategies, to evaluate an opponent, to fight, to win, to show mercy, and to control himself as well --- traits that fight wars, win territory, protect the homestead, provide food and build civilization. The son learns respect for his father’s power and will listen to him without resentment. Boundaries!

Fathers set the yardstick for discipline and achievement in their boy’s lives. Dads will insist that chores get done before rewards are handed out. This learned “deferment of gratification” develops emotional maturity and is a major indicator of future life success. This is something the single mother would be hard-pressed to provide. Moms are just too naturally protective and sympathetic. Without boundaries, the boy will learn to manipulate the mother until the cows come home.

Farrell continues with astonishing physiological facts: “When boys and girls are without a father they do worse than their peers with intact families. Scientifically speaking, by the age of 9, the telomeres (involved in cellular division) are 14% shorter in girls, but the telomeres of dad-deprived boys are 40% shorter than dad-deprived girls. The length of the telomeres are a direct predictor of lifespan” --- the longer the telomere the longer the life. In addition, Farrell cites: male IQ’s are down, testosterone levels are down, sperm counts are down, educational achievement is down, numbers of boys in college down and the general physical status of boys is declining.

Though they are the physically stronger sex, boys are much more emotionally sensitive than previously thought. “Boys suffer more than girls in divorce, change of habitat, change of schools or the loss of a relationship. They (the psychologists) just haven’t been able to measure it, so they only used female models until now...and the vulnerability boys feel in relationships with girls isn’t even discussed”.

He continues: “When a father is fully engaged in his children’s lives his brain literally changes. His hormones shift and his bond with his wife and children become stronger. The more time a dad spends with his children a long list of life advantages are conveyed upon them”.

Bottom line: the lack of father involvement and the boundaries that come with it increase the boy’s risk across a wide and steadily-progressing spectrum. Dr. Farrell offers a typical sequence: less empathy, ADHD diagnosis and the mind-altering drugs that come with it, opioid addiction, addiction to video games, isolation, later difficulty in attracting women which in turn leads to video porn addiction and a distortion of the healthy male-female relationship, leading to more isolation and more anger, acting violently, and a suicide rate 4-5X greater than in females.

And on top of all this, boys are devalued if they complain or show “weakness”.

How did we get here? That is the question for our generation. The reasons that loom in the background that created the plight of our boys are not for this column to discuss ---only to reveal it. It is for every individual to take stock and take responsibility for the well-rounded rearing of our children. This is our primary job. Maybe it's also time to attend city council and school board meetings and to vote in our local elections.

* (In 1966 Farrell received an M.A. from UCLA in [political science](#)^[12] and in 1974 a Ph.D. in the same discipline from [New York University](#).^[12] While completing his Ph.D. at NYU, he served as an assistant to the president of New York University. (Wikipedia))

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