

Lost Boys

Five Things that Crush the Man in the Boy
Pt Seven of a Seven Part Sermon Series entitled
Escape From Never Land, by Pastor Pete Bertolero¹²

Matthew 19:12 “For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men”

As we close out this 7 part series, here are Five Things every parent, teacher, and coach should know Crushes the Man in a Boy.

A. Mocking His Masculinity

What is Emasculation?

1. The systematic removal of the male sex organs; (castration = neutering a male animal by removing the testicles)
2. The loss of masculine power
3. By extension, it also means to cause a man to feel less manly by subjecting him to humiliation.

Misandry, (sometimes called Androphobia), is **the hatred of men, for being men**. It is the hatred of classical manhood, or manliness, or chivalry. It is the hatred of maleness. While usually ascribed to women, it is also theoretically possible for males themselves to develop a hatred toward their own masculinity.

Female Chauvinism is an ideology which holds that the female gender is superior to the male gender. It is the opposite of male chauvinism. Feminism has evolved into female chauvinism (equality; sameness; superiority). Female chauvinists are often opposed to masculism (opposite of feminism); most female chauvinists are offended by pro-male gender groups such as PK. Some feminists view males as the inferior, albeit necessary, gender. C.S. Lewis pointed out the hypocrisy that this kind of double-bind puts our men and boys in when he wrote “*We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.*” **Genesis 1:27** “...God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

B. Not Allowing Him to Be Active, Angry, Aggressive and Competitive

Boys, (males) as a rule, do not do well sitting for long lengths of time in a still, stationary position. They will either fidget, cause distractions, throw stuff, or enter “the zone.” When boys sit for too long, or are still for too long – they enter a rest state commonly referred to as “**the zoning**” or **zoning out**. If you want to keep a boy’s attention, you have got to keep him active or you’ll lose him in “The zone.” **The male brain is a problem solving brain**. If you want both sides of

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a boy's brain to work more efficiently, you need to help him stimulate both halves of the brain simultaneously.

This is known as cross-lateral activity that forces both sides of the male brain to work together in sync. In fact, boys instinctually and unconsciously engage in cross-lateral movement in order to stimulate both sides of their brains. A boy may seem to be distracted or even disrespectful because he only makes minimal eye contact, and is fidgety when being instructed or taught something. But this is how the male brain best learns something: by remaining active while being instructed. Information without activity will only work for a brief time with boys before they start “zoning out.”

Masculinity and competition are synonymous. Masculine energy is stimulated and released in a setting in which focused anger and aggression is allowed to be excited and expressed. Anger and aggression in boys needs to be recognized as a hard-wired, masculine way of coiling and releasing pent up energy in their muscles. Boys need to be allowed to become angry or “power up” in the context of fulfilling a mission, objective or goal. Boys have an innate need for competitive outlets organized in the context of winning and losing and self-sacrifice for the chance at either a glorious victory or defeat. Dr. Michael Gurian wrote, ***“Boys need to compete and perform well to feel worthy...Boys compete verbally and physically, and base some relationships on competition. Competition for boys is a form of nurturing behavior.”***³

Gurian continues, ***“Nurtured competition is crucial to male development and self-image...Boys must find ways of competing and see themselves as performing well. If they do not, if society does not provide them with these opportunities, they’ll compete against society itself, abusing their community and themselves.”***

There is a definite correlation “between competition and aggression, and... anger.”⁴ In ancient cultures this was understood and honored in the way boys were brought into manhood. In Roman culture, for example, a soldier’s ability to become angry was seen as part of the makeup of what was understood to be his “**sacred anger**” or the **battle frenzy**. So anger wasn’t repressed entirely but in certain contexts, encouraged. However, **boys were initiated into manhood by being taught where and when the context called for them to release their anger, so that in a sense, along with being taught when to loose their anger (fight/flight), they were also taught when to restrain their anger; or what we call today “anger management.”**

It is naïve and unrealistic to expect boys to not be angry. **The male chemistry is an angry, aggressive, fight/flight software.** Males have been made that way by God. **Ephesians 4:26** “BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger” NASB; “Go ahead and be angry. You do well to be angry—but don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry.” Mssg).

³ Michael Gurian, The Wonder of Boys, P. 29

⁴ Ibid, P. 30

Boys should not be expected to not be angry, but to learn to manage their anger; to focus it so as to use it as a constructive and positive energy that helps them build up or tear down things, helps them hunt to provide as well as hurt to protect their families, tribe, nation. The Bible doesn't call upon men and boys to reach some New Age, enlightened psychological state of Nirvana in which they float around in the Lotus position with a stupid, dope smoking grin on their face feeling nothing but peace and love and thinking nothing but pleasant thoughts. Rather, it calls them to manage their anger and master their passions so that they act intentionally and purposefully and obediently, according to the will of God as found in the sacred writings of the Holy Bible. **The emphasis with boys has to be on doing something rather than not being something.**

In the past, boys were taught how to **summon courage in order to face the fear of danger;** they were coached to push **past their current limitations in order to become stronger, and to face and overcome the feeling of pain in order to fulfill and complete a given task or mission (duty).** This "manhood training" became an integral part of a boy's rite of passage toward becoming a man. It was assumed by the culture that as a man, he should always be prepared at all times to sacrifice himself in the role of a protector or defender of righteousness and order, the weak, and the peace. The problem is, boys today ***"...often lack this sacred teaching and often lack the anger management training that was intrinsic to it...we need nonetheless to deepen our adult sense of how competition can nurture, and then pass that on to kids in the form of anger and competition management training."***⁵

Brain researchers agree that hard wired into our boys is the search for a masculine identity and personal excellence that can only be found through competition, hardship and challenge; where action is energized by anger, which fuels aggression. ***"Boys need to compete and do combat, they need to feel tested in the physical and interpersonal world. Our job is to help them navigate – not squash – this need"*** or we will lose them to a Peter Pan culture.

c. Not Allowing Him to be Defeated/Fail

Boys...thrive in a competitive atmosphere, even if they often lose. And as I see it, in order for us in this day and age to understand the inborn masculine love of competition and performance in our boys, it will require us to gain some distance from our **victim-based culture.** The **"I-am-entitled-to-not-feel-bad-about-myself"** works **against** the development of a man-making culture and community. Every person has the responsibility to learn how to protect and provide for themselves and that no one else is responsible to meet their needs. Period!

If we are not willing to reject a victim-based philosophy, we will view such things as competition and winning- and-losing as a bad thing,

⁵ Ibid P. 31

because for someone to win, someone else has to lose. What do you call a Game where nobody wins? One in which everyone's a loser. At least that's the way boys are wired to think. **Some parents balk if there is an element of danger or risk of injury or that someone might get hurt.** And the problem is that parents won't let this happen **if they see their job is to protect their boys from pain and injury and overexertion, rather than helping them overcome them in order to become mature men.** Boys are hardwired for testing their strength and prowess against that of other boys (and men). They do this naturally. If I left my two boys alone for five minutes, and told them to stand there with their backs to a wall and wait until I get back, they'd be having a competition to see who could spit the farthest, blow the biggest bubble gum bubble, make the loudest bodily noises, pick the biggest bugger, etc. **Competition, especially when it involves team sports, "provides an outlet for aggression and a means of connecting socially with other boys."**⁶

A big part of successfully training our boys to become men is teaching them the proper way to be competitive and combative; and to understand that for the masculine temperament, driven by testosterone, meaning and purpose – love of life – **is often found and experienced in toughness and hardness... discipline and competition...risk-taking and losing; getting knocked down and getting up again...it's in the physical and psychological wounding that occur along side of broken bones and broken hearts.** In other words, boys, as well as men, grow because they are forced to grow through aggressive competition, courageous risk taking, and pushing through pain to complete a task of mission. They need to bleed.

Competition Socializes Boys. Boys usually respond well to any kind of competition or challenge if these essential elements are a part of them:

1. There are winners and losers
2. The outcome is in doubt. Anybody might conceivably win, and anybody might conceivably lose. Everything depends on how hard you play.
3. The competition is between teams as opposed to individuals.

The right kind of competition trains boys to enter into society with the proper social skills and attitudes learned. **Competition goes a long way in getting boys interested in school again.** They try harder when winning or losing is at stake. **Team competition helps boys learn how to function in society.** It teaches them to value something or someone above themselves. It teaches them to subordinate their egos for the sake of the team. Individual competition seldom teaches this, but team sports do. It's easier to give up in self-defeat when facing a bigger, stronger, faster opponent, than it is when one is a member of a team. No matter how good the individuals are on the other team, and no matter how many games the other team has won, at any given game, anyone can win. Anything can happen. **The outcome is always in question.** I get pumped just thinking about it!

⁶ Ibid, p. 45

You won't find this as often among girls. It is now a proven fact that **most girls value friendship above team membership**. Girls prefer playing alongside each other, rather than face one another off in a win or lose match. In fact, the two areas where boys actually prefer to face one another – to go at it face to face – in a “face-off.” Mano-e-mano, is in combat or competition. A girl who is on one team but has a best friend on the other might jeopardize her team's chances of winning because the most important thing for her is that her friend's feelings are not hurt. It is inconceivable for most girls to compete and against and beat into a million pieces her best friend. In fact, if she did, chances are very good that they would not be best friends any longer.

Not so with boys, I'm afraid (and bridge brains). Good natured “trash-talkin” and rough-housing is the kind of competition which, among men and boys, actually builds and strengthens, even deepens their friendship. Boys are much more likely than girls to be invested in the success of their team regardless of who is on the other team. **Proverbs 24:16** “though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again”

D • Not Allowing Him to not Emote, make Eye Contact, or immediately tell you what he is Feeling or Thinking
Boys are male. Males take much longer to process their feelings than females do, and they do so differently. Their brain is not set up as well for internalized responses. **It takes both men and boys on the average, 10 hours longer than women to process hard, emotive data and verbal responses about their feelings.** Males need the aid of their external environment to get at their feelings: how they feel and what they feel, and where they feel it.

To sit across from a boy, look him in the eye, and say to him, “Ok, what's wrong with you? Tell me right now. Look me in the eyes. Talk to me!” or “Listen, I only have a few minutes, so talk already” is the worst thing you could do and coming at a boy this way will never work at helping him open up and share his feelings. If anything, it will close his spirit rather than open it.

The thing about men and boys is that they talk inside their heads, wherein women and girls talk outside their heads. When a man or a boy has a problem, he talks to himself. Males do not have any specific brain area for speech. This is why when boys are under pressure or stress, they will clam up and stop talking. **Males are hardwired to deal with stress by using their right brain to try and solve their problems and find solutions, while ceasing to use the left side of the brain to communicate verbally.** In other words, **they stop talking so they can think, whereas women can think and talk at the same time or talk in order to think.** My wife, daughter and 7-year old grand-daughter can make up words to songs on the spot without stopping. They will be singing a made up melody while coming up with the words spontaneously, rhyming and making perfect sense while doing it. That's amazing to me. Most men are not wired that way (**Bridge brains**). Women use both sides of their brains at the same time. **Their brains are in sync.** Females can **multi-task easier** than males can. I

have to turn off the radio while driving somewhere in order to concentrate on finding directions. When talking on the phone, everyone needs to be quiet so I can hear and understand what is being said, because both halves of the male brain are not in sync, and many times one side has to be put on hold for the other side to focus.

The masculine way of solving problems and dealing with stress has many metaphorical names associated with it. One of my own is what I call "**fire gazing**." Ancient hunters used to gaze into the fire until they came up with a solution to their problems, and answers to their questions. Males do not prefer to work out their problems verbally with others listening, at least not at first. They prefer "fire gazing" activity.

The famous sculpture by **Auguste Rodin**, entitled "**The Thinker**", symbolized a man thinking through his problems in much the same position as that of a *fire gazer*. When a boy is working out his problems internally, he, like the thinking man in the sculpture, **sits up on his rock and thinks about possible solutions**. And most men and boys prefer and need to be left alone while doing it. The key word here is **alone; peace and quiet** while he works through his problems. Yet women almost feel compelled to invade a man or boys *space*, and go and sit on his rock with him, invited or not, to give him comfort or to get him to open up about what's bugging him. But when they do this, they will likely get treated rudely and told to leave him be! "But why, oh why, does he want to be left alone" a woman would say. "I like he is leaving me out of his world; like he doesn't want to be with me; like he just shuts me out and shuts down." Aaaaaaannnd? The answer is – "**Because he needs time to think!**"

If Rodin created a sculpture to personify females, it would be called "**The Talker**", because that is how God made them to work out their problems. But women need to understand that when a man or boy is up there on his rock, or otherwise engaged in "fire gazing activity", deep in the zone, she needs to leave him there, alone, to think his problems through. She needs to be careful not to confuse what he's feeling with how she would feel in the same circumstance. She would need someone to talk to and bond with. He does not need this nor does he want this. When he is ready for companionship, he will either come down off his rock and seek it, or invite others up on the rock with him (except bridge brains).

Rock sitting, fire gazing behaviors include: channel surfing with the remote control; listening to MP3 player; playing video or computer games; smoking his pipe out on the porch or in the back yard in his rocking chair; mowing the lawn; washing the car; fishing; hunting; camping; driving; fixing something; shooting hoops; running; working out, gazing with blank stare while your talking to him, etc.

Women need to learn how to read the signs that let her know she is beginning to overload the men in her life (husband, sons) with information, causing them anxiety and stress. Some of these are: becoming physically fidgety; eye contact begins to drift or become fixed; eyes glaze over; eyes look through you; interruptions; problem solving attempts; displaying irritation.

This is also true when having a heart to heart or disciplinary talk with a boy or man. Not looking at a young man face to face but rather encouraging a side to side, shoulder to shoulder discussion helps him assimilate what is being said. If sitting across from a young man, at a table for instance, and having paper and pencils in front of the both of you so that you both can look down instead of making eye contact, and doodle while talking, helps the whole process immensely because both sides of the boys brain is being stimulated and his attentions span is helped as well.

E. Not Allowing Him to take Risks or Get Hurt

A man's sense of significance and self-worth is often more directly defined by his actions in the larger social and work world, than by his actions as a father and husband. In the book - What Could He Be Thinking: How a Man's Mind Really Works, a psychotherapist writes "*...the life of a male...begins in the male brain's drive to prove worth against all wounding, all hardship, all challenges.*"⁷

Without a proper outlet for a boy to test, challenge and stretch himself; to take risks, and suffer pain and failure, he will be left with these inner yearnings and drives pent up and frustrated within him, causing him to become less effective if not in some cases, dangerous in his home.

This means that for boys to become men they have to be tested, banged up, bruised and hurt. Their wounds need to be calculated and limited, of course. But they cannot become men without a danger to be faced, a risk to be taken, and the experience of pain. **In other words, they cannot leave the ranks of boyhood and cross over into manhood without experiencing some kind of focused, intentional pain.** Another name for this might be *trial by ordeal*. For boys and men to be able to find a sense of identity, meaning and purpose (that is, in order for them to not become lost boys) they need to go through something that makes them feel they earned it. **If there is a sense of risk and danger to it, all the better; if there is physical exertion, and their strength and stamina are pushed to their limit, and there is some scrapes or minor injuries and even some blood shed (again I'm talking minor wounds here) all the better.**

⁷ Gurian, What Could He Be Thinking: How a Man's Mind Really Works; p. 34