

Discover 'why boys will be boys' by understanding hard-wired brain differences, gender differences, and the influence of testosterone. An inspirational guide for implementing lasting change at home and school. Includes journal and communication exercises, and practical strategies for parents and teachers.

**Boys Alive! Bring Out Their Best!**

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# Boys Alive!

BRING OUT THEIR BEST!

*Why Boys Will Be Boys And What  
You Can Do To Bring Out Their Best*



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## 11. Gender Differences

As you begin, thank yourself for taking the time to understand and practice some basics of communication. How will you adjust your expectations and your communication with your boy? How will these insights influence your other relationships?

Take a moment to do that now...



### Exploring Gender Differences

One of the many fascinating books exploring gender differences is *Why Gender Matters*, by Dr. Leonard Sax. An advocate for single sex education, he highlights scientific research that sheds light on crucial differences between genders.

He emphasizes that... *Gender differences in childhood are larger and more important than gender differences in adulthood.*

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Yes, gender does matter...at home...and even more at school!

But is anyone paying attention?

## Hearing Differences

Dr. Sax reports on a study of adults humming the Brahms lullaby over and over to premature babies as musical therapy. The girl babies were able to be discharged, on average, 12 days earlier than girl babies who were not hummed to.

There was *no* difference, however, among the baby boys because the boys *did not even hear the higher frequency humming!* The study concludes that females hear a *wider range of sounds* than males.

What does this mean for your boy? If he has a soft-spoken female teacher (or mom) and is showing signs of inattention, perhaps it is because he isn't hearing her soft voice!

Dr. Sax says...

*Some boys diagnosed with ADD may just need the teacher to raise her voice a bit.*

Profound, isn't it?

## *BOYS ALIVE!*

Furthermore, Steve Biddulph, in *Raising Boys*, reports that when 11-13 year old boys experience a rapid growth spurt, their ear canals are affected. As the ear canal stretches, thins and often blocks up, he may have some temporary hearing loss. Make sure your boy hears you by checking in with a light touch on the shoulder and making brief eye contact.

### Crying Differences

Michael Gurian reports on the difference between the structure of male and female tear glands. He explains that women have higher levels of prolactin, resulting in larger tear glands. So, even in a tear-friendly culture, you'll see fewer tears falling from a male's eyes.

### Differences in Art

According to Dr. Sax, young girls typically draw symmetrical pictures of people, pets, flowers and trees. They prefer the warmer colors: red, orange, green and beige. They use, on average, 10 or more colors in their pictures.

Young boys typically draw action – planes shooting flames, robots attacking, and aliens eating each other. They prefer the cooler colors:

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black, gray, silver and blue. They typically use only about 6 colors in their drawings. (I once had a boy in my class who used only brown for an entire school year!)

Teachers have been trained to encourage children to draw colorful pictures with a focus on people and relationships. Feedback from an unaware teacher or parent may give boys the subtle message that their drawings are somehow not okay.

Parents and teachers need to accept 'gross' from boys. Otherwise, boys soon figure out that 'art is for girls' and, once again, they may feel disconnected from the school experience.

### A familiar gender dilemma...which toy?

We used to think that if boys were given dolls to play with, they would learn to be more nurturing and if girls were given trucks to play with, they would learn to be more physical and tough.

Well, research has confirmed what parents of both boys and girls have already figured out...give a boy a doll and he'll play with it *much differently* than a girl.



## BOYS ALIVE!

Dr. Jane Healy, in *Your Child's Growing Mind*, quoted a mom of 5 year old twins...

*"I'm doing my best to raise them in a 'nonsexist' environment, but G. spends a lot of time playing 'house' with her friends, and B. only wants to build things and run around the neighborhood. No matter how much I encourage them toward other activities, they seem to be stereotyping themselves!"*

Both boys and girls benefit from toys that are 'open-ended'. If you give a child a fire truck, complete with ladders and bells, that toy can only be a fire truck. But if you give a child a simply-formed wooden block with wheels, that toy can become a fire truck, a space ship, a boat or an ambulance!

Providing toys that spark the imagination and allowing ample time for his free play is the best early education you can give your boy.

Albert Einstein, who had many hours of free play as a child said...

*"The greatest scientists are artists as well.  
Imagination is more important than knowledge.  
Knowledge is limited. Imagination circles the world."*

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And while you are considering *what kind* of toys...consider simplifying his toy collection, too! Kim John Payne, in *Simplicity Parenting*, states that the average child has over 150 toys! That's overwhelming for an adult! Imagine how overwhelming (and stressful) it is for your child. Too many choices and too much 'stuff' is stressful for your boy! Simplify!

Still not convinced? In a study of why siblings fight, reported in *Nurture Shock*, the most common reason cited was sharing toys. Almost 80% of older children, and 75% of younger children, said sharing possessions and claiming them as their own, caused the most fights.

As gender differences continue to be revealed, it is imperative that we educate ourselves and share with others...

so that all children are nurtured for their unique qualities.

**Meanwhile...keep lovin' your boy!**

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