

7 Suggestions for Raising Boys Who Welcome Your Input as Adults

People ask me all the time for advice on raising girls, and honestly, I've got some, but they all involve a shotgun and long ankle-length dresses, so you probably don't want that. Just kidding. I always wanted a daughter, but God gave me boys.

And I think He knew what He was doing. Imagine that!

I've learned a few things about ministering to men—and understanding myself more—by raising boys. One thing I've learned is that boys are desperate for wisdom. They crave it. They want someone to speak into their life—save them from making the wrong decision.

But, equally true, they are often either too timid to ask for it or they just never know to do so.

(Someone told me guys seldom ask for directions either, but I'm having a hard time believing that one!)

I'm close to my two adult boys. We've walked through a lot of life together—mine and theirs. They are on their own, have good careers and live healthy, productive lives. They love other people with grace. Best of all, they both love and pursue Jesus actively. I couldn't be more proud as a dad.

Gratefully, as is the subject of this post, they still call me for the major decisions they make in life.

I didn't have a great relationship with my dad when I was their age. I wanted the type of relationship with my sons where they would always feel welcome and ready to learn from my experience. I'm blessed to say both my boys call me often,

sometimes daily in certain seasons of their life. They want my help making life decisions. I can only credit God's grace with that blessing.

Even still, I've observed there is something in them that wants to appear not to need the help at times. Something in a guy resists the need for help—even when we desperately need the help.

How do you get your sons to want to come to you for wisdom, long after they leave home?

I get asked that a lot. I have a few thoughts.

Here are seven suggestions for raising boys:

1. Do activities they want to do. I spent lots of time with my boys, but I did that by assuming their interests. If it was baseball or wrestling, I loved and lived what they loved. I know dads who try to get their boys to love fishing or golf because they love fishing or golf. I simply chose my interests around theirs.

2. Stay close. Boys grow to become men. That sounds simple, but it's huge to remember. They want to be independent. Some days they don't want you around as much as others. (That may sound appealing for a moment when they are colicky as infants, but believe me, you will miss them.) I tried to stay close enough that I was there when they were ready for me. Ephesians 6 says not to exasperate the children. I simply tried not to get in the way of their growth pattern, but to always be available when needed. I found I was "needed" more often that way. And the funny thing is, it almost seemed like they tested whether I was going to be there when they called.

3. Be fully present. Like all men, I always had plenty I could be doing. I tried to let the boys' time be the boys' time. Children know when you're not really being attentive. There were times my boys told me I needed to put my phone down. I

listened. I wanted them to feel I was listening to what mattered to them. If my boys wanted to kick a soccer ball or throw a baseball, I did it, no matter how tired I was from a long day. And it's amazing how much more a boy will engage in conversation when a ball is involved.

4. Offer wisdom more than solutions. This is huge. I explained this more in [THIS POST](#), but I tried to help my boys form a paradigm for finding an answer rather than always giving them the answer. Honestly, this is harder. It's easier just to do something sometimes. Give the answer and move on. Solve the problem. But they don't grow that way. And they learn to use you as a crutch rather than develop into independent young men. Boys want to find their own way. They like solving the mystery, creating a new path and discovering the answers on their own. I wanted them to always have access to me for the wisdom of experience, but to develop the ability to make wise decisions apart from me.

5. Love their friends. My boys knew their friends were always welcome in our house. They knew I'd fix them lots of pancakes on Saturday morning. They knew we stocked our fridge with every drink their friends might like, just in case our house was the hangout house for the night. They knew the doors were always wide open for anyone they brought through them. Honestly, we didn't always approve of their choices in friends, but we talked them through it and tried to steer them toward better friends. But we never turned away their friends. This did two things. It protected their hearts toward us. And it helped them learn principles of grace. Over time, we discovered that if we were building wisdom into their lives in other areas they would discern for themselves the wisest choice in friends.

6. Give solid boundaries. Ours was a house of grace; but boys need structure. Let me repeat that—before someone gets hurt—boys NEED structure. They need someone to tell them when they've gone too far in how they talk to their mom. They need

someone who will counsel them when they are falling behind in school—and hold them accountable to do better. They need to know there is someone who will pull them aside and discipline them when they do wrong—and be consistent in that discipline.

7. Let them explore. Boys are risk-takers. Most likely we have steered it out of them if it's not there. It's innate. They use potty language and wrestle and bounce balls that break lamps and pee places you never thought someone would pee. They'll jump off something and you'll likely end up in the emergency room a time or two. But that's part of being a boy. And discovering. And growing courage and faith and the ability to be a man. Of course, there's a line. And I wasn't great at finding that line. You can't let them be too stupid. (Although one of my favorite Proverbs says, "Surely I'm too stupid to be a man.") But you should let them be boys. That includes exploring. And that's a word to moms and dads.

There are probably other suggestions I could share, but if you are raising boys, you probably need to go break up a fight or stop them from jumping off something. We can talk more later!

What suggestions do you have for raising boys?

Ron Edmondson *is a pastor and church leader passionate about planting churches, helping established churches thrive, and assisting pastors and those in ministry think through leadership, strategy and life. Ron has over 20 years business experience, mostly as a self-employed business owner, and he's been helping church grow vocationally for over 10 years.*

For the original article, visit .