

**Michael Auden's Teaching Boys**

**Interactive Training Modules**



# Setting Boundaries

for his energy, humour,  
aggression and language

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The Village Teacher

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2. Is he ready/equipped to learn?
3. His learning styles/preferences
4. Words and images
5. How much noise and movement can you stand in your classroom?
6. Setting boundaries for his energy, aggression, humour and language
7. Walk and talk – communicating with boys
8. Balancing everyone's gender preferences
9. Some winning ways with wayward boys
10. Your boy-friendly strategies
11. Mums and Dads are Important
12. Be an empowering teacher – Ways to give your boys confidence and higher self-esteem
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15. Masculinity – the grow of boys and the role of males in their development
16. Ask a man – getting the inside word on male behaviour and motivation
17. Dangerous lives – explore why boys are at risk
18. Identity – we explore the importance of personal identity to growing boys
19. Testosterone Tsunami – together, we explore the behaviour of boys going through puberty
20. His tender side – a close look at a boy's emotional development

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## Boys need boundaries

*“Being “free range” is not for many boys. I teach my boys with a barn-laid style environment. Neither caged nor free-range; but somewhere in between. “*

Boys are hierarchical and they like to know who is in charge.

Boys have two questions on their minds whether they are in a group at school:

1. What are the rules here?
2. Who's in charge?

Boys like limits and boundaries as they make them feel safe and secure. They also like to know that someone is going to enforce those rules so don't be afraid to be in charge, although you don't have to use the same authoritarian methods as perhaps your own parents used.

Teaching boys' self-discipline is difficult and requires effort on your part. Like most things worthwhile in life, it is hard. Boys learn best by what is modeled *for* them, not spoken *to* them. Teaching them self-discipline requires that *you* be disciplined. The truth is that the more you can teach them to have a strong sense of self-discipline, the happier and healthier they will be throughout their entire lives.

Boundaries are a must during the teenage years. Boundaries help instill self-discipline. Without boundaries boys do not know what the rules are and what is expected of them. They may rebel, but remember no matter what they say, the very fact that you thoughtfully and consistently enforce rules of behaviour makes them feel loved and valued. They might complain to their friends that you are mean and tough, but they will say it with a sense of pride too. I've known many at-risk young men who have told me that they wished their teachers had cared enough to make them follow a set of guidelines designed to keep them safe.

Classroom management is the teacher's responsibility and has to do with teaching, practicing, and reinforcing procedures. Discipline, in contrast, is the student's responsibility and has to do with self-control. Having clarity between these the two is necessary for both preventing and solving problems.

Too often, teachers assume students know what is expected of them. Set clear limits for boys. Discipline in class is very important. It is vital that a teacher be clear about what she wants, and quick to address boys who break the rules. Boys respect clarity and strength. At the same time, it is important not to humiliate or shame a boy. Boys are very sensitive to shame and are likely to go to war with a teacher who humiliates them publicly.

Create rules for safe play in the classroom. With young boys in particular, it's essential to set clear rules prohibiting real aggression — activities where someone could be hurt either emotionally or physically.

- 1. Boundaries provide a sense of comfort.** When boys clearly know what is expected from them, the result is a sense of comfort. They don't have to be concerned regarding what you may or may not require of them behaviorally – or fear that you will constantly change the rules.
- 2. Boundaries provide a sense of security.** Boys really do want to know what is right and what is wrong. They want some guidance in navigating life.
- 3. Boundaries mark out the “playing field” for freedom.** Boundaries actually create freedom – and boys want to be able to experience and learn to handle freedom within the boundaries that have been created.
- 4. Most boys don't really want to be totally free and responsible for themselves at this point in their**

**lives.** Boys who have no boundaries and are completely on their own regarding behavioural decisions tend to feel isolated and are at risk for giving into peer pressure. Generally, boys who have clear boundaries simply fare better behaviorally than those kids who don't have clear boundaries.

**5. Boy's want to gain their teacher's trust** – the trust that results from living within clear boundaries. Trust is a vitally important issue for boys. With boundaries in place, your boys will have a greater understanding of how to build trust with you.

### **Teachers need boundaries too**

Creating stronger boundaries is the number one way for most women to improve their lives in a classroom full of boys. The first step in learning to set boundaries is self-awareness. For example, pay close attention to the situations when you lose energy, feel a knot in your stomach, or want to cry. Identifying where you need more space, self-respect, energy or personal power is the first step.

Answer these questions:

1. Boys may not \_\_\_\_\_
2. I have a right to ask for \_\_\_\_\_
3. To protect my time and energy, it's OK to \_\_\_\_\_

When setting boundaries, there is no need to defend, debate, or over-explain your feelings. Be firm, gracious and direct. When faced with resistance, repeat your statement or request.

Back up your boundary with action. Stay strong. If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs.

## **Bony Bum Syndrome**

Did you know that boys produce less serotonin than girls do? This can cause them to be more antsy and fidgety when forced to sit still for long periods of time. Serotonin/dopamine dysfunctions cause physical discomfort, anxiety, and panic - what I call “Bony Bum Syndrome”.

Boys are active learners. In most instances, the act of doing a specific task or lesson is far more beneficial for boys than learning about that task through reading. Boys tend to be visual, tactile learners. They succumb easily to distractions, which makes reading quietly especially difficult. When an adult hands them a book, they may look upon it as some sort of punishment.

## **Moving kids do better at school**

More **oxygen in the brain increases self-control**, reduces behaviour interventions, creates fun more engaging classes and improves academic performance. There is a positive correlation with physical activity and the positive impact in terms of academic learning.

**Fidgeting helps boys focus**. So just like grown-ups need a cup of coffee before tackling a problem, teen boys may tap their feet, swivel in their chairs or bounce in their seats while their brains are busily figuring out that maths test.

As they work boys spin around in their chairs. They tap their hands and feet and jiggle around. Everybody moves more when they're concentrating on tasks.



## Why?

Just as adults drink coffee to stay alert during a boring meeting, boys jiggle and wiggle to maintain alertness. Boys will sit very still if the activity is intriguing to them - because they do not have to concentrate.

Many boys are "under-aroused" - their brains do not produce enough dopamine to keep them alert during normal day-to-day activities - so the boys move around to jiggle or wake their brains and bodies up. These boys have to move. It can be any kind of movement - some part of their body, it doesn't even matter what part.

But at some **schools**, such **movement is frowned upon**.

Some boys need to squeeze a ball, some need to tap a pencil while they work. Many boys may be stifled by the sit still, be quiet methods, but when allowed to move a little, they thrive.

*"Some boys in my class need to move a lot. I call them 'high energy boys.' These boys simply can't sit still as long as most of the girls. They don't have the fine motor skills girls do, so many will make big constructions like block towers, while girls will work on smaller, more delicate pictures."*

Are you able to create opportunities for movement during your day-to-day lessons?

## **Boys Writing Genres**

Many boys have powerful gifts of the right hemisphere. They are visual spatial learners. These children learn best when they are allowed to wallow in the right hemisphere, the source of creative thinking, humour, and imagery.

Now, for the actual act of writing. Many boys that you teach have difficulty with the physical act of writing legibly. Images come to this type of learner so rapidly that the hands cannot keep up. Letters are mentally viewed as 3-D objects and it is difficult to remember the correct direction or even positioning on a flat, two-dimensional piece of paper.

Make sure the process of creating written documents is fun. Humour engages the right hemisphere so use it liberally.

Beware your gender filter.

**Boys write about violence and action.**

As a teacher, does your gender colour the way you perceive boy writers and their stories?

Look at your classroom through the eyes of boys.

What is and what isn't working for them in your writing classroom?

Let boys write while lying on the floor, in a corner of the room, at a stand-up desk. It helps them concentrate

Build in free choice zones from time to time to give boys complete choice in bringing their interests and obsessions into the writing classroom

## **Violent writing**

Boys will gravitate to aggressive and violent kinds of expression – do you allow it?

Boys have a natural pre-disposition towards aggressive behaviour. Most boys grow out of their guns and war stages.

Give boys a voice in the rules they comply to.

Revisit the cut-and-dried rules about students are allowed to include in their writing.

What writing rules can you change to give boys more choice?

What rules would you like to introduce to curb non-acceptable themes or language?

## **Boys and Humour**

Humour in writing

Boys are willing to break rules to get a laugh. Humour is a basic genre of communication for males. As teachers, we seem tolerant with oral humour because spoken words dissolve quickly in the air.

Humour in writing is permanent, an indelible record for others to criticise

Boys want to write “funny” because they love to read “funny.”

Being friendlier to boys’ humour is an important way we can widen the circle and invite boys to be fully involved in our writing classrooms.

Give yourself permission to enjoy their humour.

Boys can be very funny.

Laugh!

Can you stretch your personal boundaries to being more acceptable of boys’ humour?

## **Boys and Language**

Of the four language arts – speaking, listening, reading and writing – speaking is the strong suite for boys

Boys are eight (8) times more likely to call out answers or comments during a class than girls. Males use conversation to compete, to establish a pecking order.

Assess the health of your classroom conversations.

Do boys contribute on a regular basis?

Is one gender dominating the classroom?

Make a point to actively engage boys in classroom conversations.

Strive to create a safe environment where all kinds of ideas, responses, and other conversational styles are welcome

Many boys feel judged during a writing conference.

The feel judged about

- what they choose to write
- how they write about it
- and how the writing looks

Conferring well with boys requires new understandings, new skills, and a new openness to the passions boys reveal in their writing

### **Give and take**

To the extent that a teacher is willing to listen and accept the strong, strange, or unsettling elements in boys' writing, we show students our willingness to be flexible and meet hem halfway.

# Boys and Aggression

## Understanding Boy Aggression

What did the boys play at recess today? Luke Skywalker vs. Darth Vader. Batman vs. the bad guys. And Batman won.

In most games, young boys clobber, kill, or cream someone. If four girls are playing house in a preschool classroom, it's not uncommon for four boys to go in and rob them. These games and fantasies, while disturbing to some, are not unusual. In fact, they are the norm. However if someone gets hurt during this play, a boy gets in trouble and is often labelled aggressive. But is he? And is this cause for concern?

What does it mean to be aggressive? According to Webster's Dictionary, aggression is "a forceful action...the process of making attacks...hostile, injurious, behaviour...caused by frustration." Real life boy examples include physical fighting, name-calling, and rough-housing that results in injury. Aggression is part of the human repertoire. All human beings have the ability to protect themselves and attack others when in danger.

Why do boys become aggressive? Sometimes boys are aggressive because they are frustrated or because they want to win. Sometimes they are just angry and can't find another way to express that feeling. And some may behave aggressively, but they're not aggressive all the time.

An active boy is not necessarily an aggressive one. We often see young boys playing out aggressive themes. It's only a problem when it gets out of control.



Competition, power and success are the true stuff of boys' play. Many young boys see things in competitive terms and play games like "I can make my marble roll faster than yours" "my tower is taller than yours" and "I can run faster than you." But these games of power and dominance are not necessarily aggressive unless they are intended to hurt.

Fantasy play is not aggressive. A common boy fantasy about killing bad guys and saving the world is just as normal as a common girl fantasy about tucking in animals and putting them to bed. Most boys will pick up a pretzel and pretend to shoot with it. If a boy is playing a game about superheroes, you might see it as violent. But the way he sees it, he's making the world safe from the bad guys. This is normal and doesn't indicate that anything is wrong unless he repeatedly hurts or tries to dominate the friends he plays with. And sometimes an act that feels aggressive to one child was actually intended to be a playful action by the child who did it.

Only a small percentage of boys' behaviour is truly aggressive. While all boys have normal aggressive impulses which they learn to control, only a small percentage are overly aggressive and have chronic difficulty controlling those impulses. These are the boys who truly confuse fantasy with reality, and frequently hit, punch, and bully other kids. They have a lack of impulse control and cannot stop themselves from acting out. They cannot contain their anger and have little control over their physical behaviour and this is when intervention by parent or teacher is needed.

Older boys can tell the difference between fantasy and reality. By age seven, most boys can distinguish media violence from real violence. However, some may become over-stimulated by violent media experiences. But some boys won't behave aggressively at all as a result of media exposure. Some people

assume that girls can filter out this information, but boys as well — particularly older ones — can tell right from wrong.

In what ways can you create boundaries that keep all students physically safe in your care?

Do you know of a way to handle boys who are out of control?

Do you feel that you over-react to boys' physicality?

## **Four Page Plan – Setting Boundaries**

*To help you set your personal boundaries and determine your true priorities, create your "Absolute Yes List." This list is about setting new priorities for yourself, managing the male students the way you really want.*

Where will you stretch your boundaries to allow boys to explore learning possibilities in their use of

*Movement?*

*Humour/violence in writing?*

*Aggression?*

*Language?*

How can you reinforce your boundaries with boy's behaviour in your classroom?

What rules do you want observed by all your male students?

What process will you use to create and share rules within your class?

What style of consequence will you use to support your new boundaries?

What culture are you wanting to create for boys whose learning and development are under your guidance?

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