
**About the authors:** Kindlon and Thompson are two of the country’s leading child psychologists. They have specialized in treating boys for more than thirty-five years of combined practice. Kindlon spends much of his professional life as a professor and researcher at Harvard Medical School and the Harvard School of Public Health; he also has a clinical practice and is a father himself. Thompson has been a middle school and high school teacher, a counselor and clinical psychologist. He, too, is a father. The authors note that their professional experiences have shaped their views about the nature of boyhood, but whatever understanding of boys they possess is also built on their own personal experiences growing up as boys (from the *Introduction*).

**Summary:** All boys are born with emotional potential, but many obstacles avert boys from giving expression to the range and complexity of their emotional lives. Kindlon and Thompson have seen many troubled boys in their classrooms and clinical practices, they all share a disturbing theme of emotional ignorance and isolation. They lack what the authors call “emotional literacy.” This deficit in emotional skills results from the limitations on boys in expressions of emotions. Expectations for manly, tough behavior, paired with the often harsh discipline that boys receive, deny them the opportunity necessary to fully develop their range of emotions. Boys need to believe in the authenticity of their feelings, and that it is normal to express these emotions. Feelings belong in the life of a man, according to the authors, and they describe seven strategies that can help parents to raise boys who are comfortable with their feelings.

Boys must be given permission to have an internal emotional life, and help in developing an emotional vocabulary so that they may better understand themselves and communicate more effectively with others. Further, parents must recognize and accept boys’ high level of activity give them space to act. Parents are encouraged to talk to their boys in the boy’s language, but also in ways that honors their masculinity—by dealing with them directly and by encouraging their skills as problem solvers. Boys need to be taught that an emotional life is a courageous life, and that courage and empathy are sources of real strength. Discipline, the authors suggest, must be used to build character and conscience—not to discourage or punish behavior. Finally parents are encouraged to model emotional attachment and to teach boys that there are many ways to be a man.

**Reviewed** by William Heisler, a former graduate student at Northern Illinois University.