

Summer Reading - *Raising Cain*
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In their introduction to the New York Times bestseller, *Raising Cain - Protecting the Emotional Lives of Boys*, authors Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson make the following statement: "We believe that boys, beginning at a young age, are systematically steered away from their emotional lives toward silence, solitude, and distrust." How all of this takes place during the lives of boys and young men and what teachers and parents should do as they raise and educate boys is the subject of this engaging and very readable book.

The authors have given their professional lives to counseling and trying to connect with boys of all ages - boys whose lives are full of contradictions and whose parents and teachers are often at a loss to figure out how best to help. The authors make the following assertion early in the book: "Whatever role biology plays (and that role is by no means clear) in the way boys are characteristically different from girls in their emotional expression, those differences are amplified by a culture that supports emotional development for girls and discourages it for boys. Stereotypical notions of masculine toughness deny a boy his emotions and rob him of the chance to develop the full range of emotional resources." The chapters that follow contain story after story about boys who long for connections at the same time they are trying to pull away, creating an emotional divide that is often at the root of the difficulties many boys experience along the road to becoming healthy adults.

In the final chapter entitled *What Boys Need*, Kindlon and Thompson offer advice for teachers and parents. "What boys need, first and foremost, is to be seen through a different lens than tradition prescribes. Individually and as a culture, we must discard the distorted view of boys that ignores or denies their capacity for feeling, the view that colors even boys' perceptions of themselves as above or outside a life of emotion." The authors close by offering seven points that are crucial in our attempt to transform the way we nurture and protect the emotional lives of boys:

Give boys permission to have an internal life, approval for the full range of human emotions, and help in developing an emotional vocabulary.

Recognize and accept the high activity level of boys and give them safe places to express it.

Talk to boys in their language - in a way that honors their pride and their masculinity.
Be direct with them and use them as consultants and problem solvers.

Teach boys that emotional courage is courage, and that courage and empathy are the sources of real strength in life.

Use discipline to build character and conscience, not enemies.

Model a manhood of emotional attachment.

Teach boys that there are many ways to be a man.

I highly recommend this book to every parent and teacher as a valuable resource and long-needed insight into the emotional life of boys. It will serve as a guide to help all of us as we raise and educate boys to reach their full emotional potential as they grow into manhood.