

Lewis & Clark College
Graduate School of Education and Counseling
Counseling Psychology Department
Spring Semester 2020

CPSY 587
Engaging Boys and Men
in Counseling and Education



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Time and Place

03/3/20 - 04/7/20

Tuesday 01:00PM - 04:00PM

York Graduate Center, Room 115

Required Texts

- 1) Mortola, P., Hiton, H., & Grant, S., (2008) *BAM! Boys Advocacy and Mentoring: A leader's guide to facilitating strength-based boys groups: Helping boys make better contact by making better contact with them*. Routledge, NY
(available on loan in class)
- 2) Other readings as assigned in the *Class outline by week* (below) and available on-line

Catalogue Description

Research has demonstrated that a significant number of boys and men are struggling with engagement: with emotions, within social relationships, and within educational and mental health contexts. At the same time, many professionals in education and counseling are challenged with the ability to stay in good and helpful relational engagement with boys and men: with understanding both the social and biological influences on male development and with knowing how to connect with boys and men in ways that help them flourish. This course challenges adults who work with boys and men to see them in new ways and to develop skills that will help boys and men to be more interpersonally engaged within counseling and educational settings.

While a class focusing on boys and men must not reinforce patriarchy, power and privilege, or a gender binary, a broad set of data from multiple fields highlights the importance of such a focus for professionals in training in the areas of health, education, and psychology:

- ADHD is diagnosed up to 9 times more often in boys than in girls
- Autism spectrum disorders are five to eight times more common in boys than in girls
- The prevalence of drug and alcohol dependence or abuse is twice as high among men (12%) as it is among women (6%), consistent for all substances and across ethnic groups
- 42.2% of adult females received treatment for mental health last year versus only 28.8% of men
- Gay, bisexual and transgender boys and men are at increased risk of mental illness and for dropping out of school, as are boys and men of color.
- Out of the 15 leading causes of death, men lead women in all of them except Alzheimer's disease, which many men don't live long enough to develop.
- More enlisted members of the U.S. armed forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan will die from suicide than from combat and the population at highest risk for suicide in the U.S. is currently men ages 45-65 years

Given these challenges that boys and men face, course goals for participants include:

- a. Engaging with the data regarding the issues boys and men face in counseling and educational contexts
- b. Engaging with the research and theory regarding the social and biological influences on male development and implications for practice within counseling and education settings.
- c. Engaging with the research and theory regarding the relational style common to many males and understanding the opportunities and challenges this relational style offers.
- d. Engaging with and applying concepts from the readings and the course to one's professional and personal life through discussion and written reflection.

Course Assignments

Participation in Weekly Class Readings, Videos, Discussions, and Reflections

Students are expected to contribute each week to class discussions. Specifically, students are asked to bring to class highlighted sections of the assigned texts, be ready to read them aloud, and contribute comments/questions/musings about them. The same expectation applies to videos and interviews shown in class in that students are asked to jot down statements from the videos and be prepared to share and discuss them later. Students will also be asked at the end of the each class to complete an “Engaging Boys and Men Weekly Class Survey/Reflection” addressing three prompts (example attached below).

Self-Chosen Research Topic: Brief Summary, Presentation & Discussion

During the last session of class, each student will briefly present and lead a discussion (10-15 minutes total) on a relevant topic that they explored independently through multiple sources (e.g. research articles, videos, books, etc.) These brief presentations and discussions will take place in small, "mixed-profession" tables in class. Student expectations for the summary include: Providing a one-page summary/ overview of the topic they have chosen (shared in Google folder by the end of the previous day including name, contact info, topic, summary of topic, take-aways, and sources). Student expectations for presentation include: Sharing quotes from readings/videos/books first before adding your own comments as to why the passages were chosen, what stood out to you, what you learned, what you found helpful for your thinking and/or practice, what you want to challenge, etc. In the presentations, please strive to: 1) be respectful in relation to the content, issues of diversity, the audience, etc. 2) demonstrate a grasp of the material reflective of an appropriate amount of preparation and, 3) present complex information clearly and concisely without oversimplification. Student expectations for discussion facilitation include: asking each participant to reflect on what you shared, addressing questions, asking follow-up questions, and respectfully accepting multiple points of view on the topic.

CPSY Departmental Attendance Policy

Class attendance is expected and required. Any significant missed class time will be made up by completing an extra assignment designed by the instructor (see below). Missing more than ten percent of class time may result in failure to complete the class. This would be 4.5 hours of a 45 hour class (3 credits), 3.0 hours for a 30 hour class (2 credits) or 1.5 hours for a 15 hour class (1 credit.) In case of extreme hardship and also at the discretion of the instructor, a grade of incomplete may be given for an assignment or the entire course. In such cases, the work to be submitted in order to remove the incomplete must be documented appropriately and stated deadlines met. Students are expected to be on time to class and tardiness may be seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

Make up Assignment

Any significant missed class time will require a standard make-up assignment, due the following week: A three page paper in which the student: 1) describes what was learned from interviewing two individuals who attended the missed class time; 2) discusses the chapters due during the week missed, including comments, questions and what was learned; 3) discusses applications of what was learned to your own life/practice.

Course Grading Rubric

The course instructor will rate student performance in class on the following items using the 10 criteria below.

Rating Scale: 4—Excellent (area of strength)
 3—Good (appropriate for practice level)
 2—Fair (area for growth)
 1—Poor (does not meet criteria)

1	The student respects and values cultural, familial, and individual differences, including those involving age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status.	1	2	3	4
2	The student demonstrates a capacity for openness to points of view, theories, experiences and perspectives in the course that may differ from their own.	1	2	3	4
3	The student relates to peers, professors, supervisors and others in a respectful, ethical and professional manner in the course that is consistent with the department's mission and standards.	1	2	3	4
4	The student is thoughtfully and effectively engaged in the course and is timely with assignments and class attendance and consistently shows strong and effective skills in verbal, nonverbal, and written communication.	1	2	3	4
5	The student demonstrates the ability to receive, integrate and utilize feedback from peers and the instructor and is able to give such feedback respectfully in the course.	1	2	3	4
6	The student demonstrates the ability summarize, present and discuss the self-chosen topic as described in the syllabus.	1	2	3	4
7	The student demonstrates the ability to reflect and reply completely and thoughtfully to each of the items on the <i>Reflection Paper: Week 1</i>	1	2	3	4
8	The student demonstrates the ability to reflect and reply completely and thoughtfully to each of the items on the <i>Reflection Paper: Week 2</i>	1	2	3	4
9	The student demonstrates the ability to reflect and reply completely and thoughtfully to each of the items on the <i>Reflection Paper: Week 3</i>	1	2	3	4
10	The student demonstrates the ability to reflect and reply completely and thoughtfully to each of the items on the <i>Reflection Paper: Week 4</i>	1	2	3	4
11	The student demonstrates the ability to reflect and reply completely and thoughtfully to each of the items on the <i>Reflection Paper: Week 5</i>	1	2	3	4

Course Grading: 30 total points possible

A	= 36	Average of 3.5 (Excellent) = 42
B	= 30	Average of 3 (Good) = 36
C	= 27	Average of 2 (Fair) = 24

Non-Discrimination Policy and Special Assistance/Disability Services Statement

Lewis & Clark College adheres to a nondiscriminatory policy with respect to employment, enrollment, and program. The College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or disability, sexual orientation, or marital status and has a firm commitment to promote the letter and spirit of all equal opportunity and civil rights laws. If you have a disability that may impact your academic performance, you may request accommodations by submitting documentation to the Student Support Services Office in the Albany Quadrangle (x7156). After you have submitted documentation and filled out paperwork there for the current semester requesting accommodations, staff in that office will notify the instructor of the accommodations for which you are eligible.

Engaging Boys and Men: Class Outline by Week	
1 3/1	<p>Presentation/Discussion: Addressing the challenges and framing the issues</p> <p><u>Activity:</u> Animal Cards "What interests you in the class and topic?" and "How can we create a respectful learning environment with each other?"</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Syllabus</p> <p><u>Activity:</u> The "Boy Box"</p> <p><u>Video:</u> Buckman Boys Group</p> <p><u>Interview:</u> Stephen Grant, MS</p>
2 3/10	<p>Presentation: Contact and sensory engagement</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mortola, et al, <i>BAM! Boys Advocacy and Mentoring</i>, Introduction & pgs. 1-41 2) The extreme male brain theory of autism, By Simon Baron-Cohen: http://cogsci.bme.hu/~ivady/bcs/read/bc.pdf <p><u>Activity:</u> Strategic stories</p> <p><u>Video:</u> 20/20 with William Pollack, PhD</p> <p><u>Interview:</u> Howard Hiton, MS</p>
3 3/17	<p>Presentation: Social and emotional engagement</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mortola, et al, <i>BAM! Boys Advocacy and Mentoring</i>, pgs. 41-82 2) Pinares-Garcia, et al., (2018), Sex: A Significant Risk Factor for Neurodevelopmental and Neurodegenerative Disorders, v 8, Brain Sciences https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327009112_Sex_A_Significant_Risk_Factor <p><u>Activity:</u> Reading and discussing "The Bear Inside"</p> <p><u>Video:</u> <i>What's up with middle school boys?</i> Northeastern Wisconsin In-School Telecom.</p> <p><u>Interview:</u> Chris Reigeluth, PhD</p>
3/24	No class/Spring Break
4 3/31	<p>Presentation: Academic and intellectual engagement</p> <p><u>Readings</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Reading Don't Fix No Chevy's: Literacy in the Lives of Young men</i>, Smith & Wilhelm: Ch. 1 https://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/0509/chapter1.pdf 2) <i>Misreading masculinity: Boys, literacy, and popular culture</i>, Newkirk (2002): Ch. 8: https://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00445/chapter8.pdf <p><u>Activity:</u> "Are we what we read?"</p> <p><u>Video:</u> Jane Katch/Michael Thompson in "Raising Cain" (pbs.org)</p> <p><u>Interview:</u> Lori Daniels, PhD</p>
5 4/7	<p>Presentation: The body and physical engagement</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Hormones and Hierarchies, Knight, E.L., Mehta: http://blogs.uoregon.edu/spel/files/2014/02/Hormones-and-Hierarchies-tpk5fn.pdf</p> <p><u>Video:</u> 1) This American life: Testosterone http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/220/testosterone</p> <p>2) Pranjal Mehta, social-neuro endocrinology (e.g. High T, Low C) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MgQa2d3L2g</p> <p><u>Activity:</u> Self Chosen Topics</p>

Engaging Boys and Men: Weekly Survey & Reflection

Name:

Class: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5

1) I found class to be helpful today	1 Not at all	2 Not much	3 Somewhat	4 Yes I did	5 Very much
<p>Please describe at least one aspect that was helpful, not helpful, or left you with questions (use reverse as needed):</p>					
2) I found today's readings to be helpful.	1 Not at all	2 Not much	3 Somewhat	4 Yes I did	5 Very much
<p>Please note at least one passage that was helpful, not helpful, or raised questions.</p>					
3) I can apply content from class or readings today to my life or work.	1 Not at all	2 Not much	3 Somewhat	4 Yes I can	5 Very much
<p>Please describe at least one applicable or not applicable aspect of the class content:</p>					

Suggested Mixed-Program Seating for Weeks 2-5

	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4
Wk 2	Hailey C (PMHC) Tristan H (PMHC) Kait K (ART-T) Claire J (PMHC) David A (MCFT)	Abby J (PMHC) Royce M (PMHC) Liv S (ART-T) Julie K (PMHC) Dave E (PMHC)	Tee A-M (PMHC) Grace T (PMHC-A) Maddie S (ART-T) Natalie S A (MCFT) Ian M (PMHC-A)	Jennie F (PMHC) David Z (PMHC-A) Tierney H (MCFT-E) August W A (MCFT)
Wk 3	Jennie F Grace T Liv S Natalie S David A	Hailey C David Z Maddie S August W Dave E	Abby J Tristan H Tierney H Claire J Ian M	Tee A-M Royce M Kait K Julie K
Wk 4	Tee A-M Tristan H Maddie S Claire J David A	Jennie F Royce M Tierney H Julie K Dave E	Hailey C Grace T Kait K Natalie S Ian M	Abby J David Z Liv S August W
Wk 5	Abby J Grace T Tierney H Natalie S Dave E	Tee A-M David Z Kait K August W David A	Jennie F Tristan H Liv S Claire J	Hailey C Royce M Maddie S Julie K Ian M

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10 Essential Strategies for Teaching Boys Effectively

Michael Gurian and Kathy Stevens

A middle school teacher told us recently, "Boys in a classroom should be one of the most fun things in life. Boy energy can be contagious, after all. But in my school, we talk mostly about difficulties we're having with boys. We need help understanding and teaching them. We've got to stop losing that boy energy from our schools."

Everywhere around us, boys want to learn, but they aren't learning as well as girls are. Teachers know or sense the statistics: boys get the majority of *Ds* and *Fs* and the minority of *As*; they are behind on state tests in all 50 states; and they drop out of high school at higher rates than girls. Many boys feel that they are inherently defective in today's education world.

Over the last two decades, we have developed professional development systems for solving boys' low achievement in school. We first tested these solutions in a successful two-year pilot study in six Missouri school districts. Over the last decade, we've trained teachers in more than 2,000 schools and districts, developing a Logic Model for teaching boys effectively. This "boy-friendly" model focuses on improving learning for boys so that they no longer feel defective as learners, which increases motivation and diminishes rates of acting out and failure; the model increases girls' achievement and performance, as well.

A number of schools in our research base have closed gender gaps, raised student performance, and made adequate yearly progress within a year of instituting the Teaching Boys Effectively Logic Model. Among the practical strategies in which their teachers have been trained and coached, these 10 constitute both a research and performance baseline for success.

- 1. Teachers increase the use of graphics, pictures, and storyboards in literacy-related classes and assignments.** When teachers use pictures and graphics more often (even well into high school), boys write with more detail, retain more information, and get better grades on written work across the curriculum.
- 2. Classroom methodology includes project-based education in which the teacher facilitates hands-on, kinesthetic learning.** The more learning is project-driven and kinesthetic, the more boys' bodies will be engaged in learning—causing more information to be retained, remembered, and displayed on tests and assignments.
- 3. Teachers provide competitive learning opportunities, even while holding to cooperative learning frameworks.** Competitive learning includes classroom debates, content-related games, and goal-oriented activities; these are often essential for boy-learning and highly useful for the life success of girls, too.
- 4. Classroom curricula include skills training in time, homework, and classroom management.** In order to feel competent, engaged, and motivated, many boys need help learning how to do homework, follow directions, and succeed in school and life; classrooms are the primary place these boys come for that training.
- 5. Approximately 50 percent of reading and writing choices in a classroom are left up to the students themselves.** Regularly including nontraditional materials, such as graphic novels, magazines, and comic books, increases boys' engagement in reading and improves both creative and expository writing.
- 6. Teachers move around their classrooms as they teach.** Instructors' physical movement increases boys' engagement, and includes the teacher leading students in physical "brain breaks"—quick, one-minute brain-awakening activities—that keep boys' minds engaged.
- 7. Students are allowed to move around as needed in classrooms, and they are taught how to practice self-discipline in their movement.** This strategy is especially useful when male students are reading or writing—when certain boys twitch, tap their feet, stand up, or pace, they are often learning better than if they sit still, but teachers are often not trained in innovating *toward* more movement in classrooms.

8. Male mentoring systems permeate the school culture, including use of parent-mentors, male teachers, vertical mentoring (e.g., high school students mentoring elementary students), and male peer mentoring. By 16, vocationally oriented boys (and girls) need schools and communities to provide access to jobs and mentors through which students can master a trade.

9. Teachers use boys-only (and girls-only) group work and discussion groups in core classes such as language arts, math, science, and technology. Some boys and girls who do not flourish in the busyness or social distraction of coed classes get a chance to flourish in new ways in single-sex groupings.

10. Teachers and counselors provide skill building for sensitive boys (approximately 20 percent of males fall somewhere on the "sensitive boy" spectrum), and special education classes are taught by teachers trained in how to teach boys specifically. This is crucial because approximately 70 percent of learning-disabled students nationwide are boys.

In all gender initiatives in which we and our team are involved, we encourage schools and districts to conduct parent involvement sessions so that parents can work together with teachers. Research-driven, science-based, and strategies-focused innovations need teamwork from everyone, including the students themselves. The alienation of boys in our classrooms is not a one-teacher issue: it is a problem in education culture as a whole, and a problem for which there are specific solutions.

Boys are wonderful learners and can learn as well as girls. Through the disruptions they cause in classrooms and the low grades they get on report cards, through their glazed eyes and tapping feet, through their aggression or confusion on the playground, they are pleading: "We need a lot of help. We need teachers to understand how to teach us effectively, so that we succeed. We need schools to harness and challenge our powerful energy. We need everyone to remember: we're not just 'kids' or 'students'—we are boys."

Michael Gurian is the author of *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* and *The Mind of Boys* and founder of the Gurian Institute. Kathy Stevens is training director of the Gurian Institute, author of *Strategies for Teaching Boys and Girls*, and coauthor of *The Mind of Boys*.

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Teaching Boys: A Global Study of Effective Practices

Dr. Michael Reichert and Dr. Richard Hawley

International Boys' School Coalition

In an attempt to get at what actually works for boys in education, Dr. Michael Reichert and [Dr. Richard Hawley](#), in partnership with the [International Boys' School Coalition](#), launched a study called [Teaching Boys: A Global Study of Effective Practices](#), published in 2009. The study looked at boys in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, in schools of varying size, both private and public, that enroll a wide range of boys of disparate races and income levels.

The authors asked teachers and students to "narrate clearly and objectively an instructional activity that is especially, perhaps unusually, effective in heightening boys' learning." The responses--2,500 in all--revealed eight categories of instruction that succeeded in teaching boys. The most effective lessons included more than one of these elements:

1. Lessons that result in an end product--a booklet, a catapult, a poem, or a comic strip, for example.
2. Lessons that are structured as competitive games.
3. Lessons requiring motor activity.
4. Lessons requiring boys to assume responsibility for the learning of others.
5. Lessons that require boys to address open questions or unsolved problems.
6. Lessons that require a combination of competition and teamwork.
7. Lessons that focus on independent, personal discovery and realization.
8. Lessons that introduce drama in the form of novelty or surprise.

Educating Boys for Success

Are today's classrooms biased against boys?

By Dionna Ricks, who teaches at Jackson Road Elementary School in Maryland.

As a conscientious teacher and mother, I wanted to believe I did what was best for my students and children. After viewing the PBS documentary [Raising Cain](#), I was jolted into a new level of awareness and self-reflection. The film did a powerful job of exploring the emotional development of American boys and how they learn differently from girls. I observed that the students at my school who were constantly in trouble were overwhelmingly boys—and the majority of these were Black and Hispanic. I found myself rethinking how I taught and disciplined my male students. As an African-American mother and ESOL teacher at a majority-minority elementary school, I started by focusing on minority males. However, as I did more research, the numbers revealed that we must do better at educating all boys. Consider:

- Boys account for 71 percent of all school suspensions. Fifty-nine percent of Black boys and 42 percent of Hispanic boys report being suspended. (U.S. Dept of Ed and Schott Foundation Report)
- Boys comprise 67 percent of all special education students. Almost 80 percent of these are Black and Hispanic males. (USDOE and Schott Foundation Report)
- Boys are five times more likely than girls to be classified as hyperactive and are 30 percent more likely to flunk or drop out of school. (National Center for Education Statistics)
- Girls outperform boys in grades and homework at all levels. (NCES)

To complicate matters, elementary school boys have few male role models. 80% of the educators in my county, and 91% of those in my school, are female. I started using more gender-friendly instruction and proactive strategies to help my boys maximize their potential. As I continue to grow and develop, I've learned to embrace the following concepts:

Let boys be active. I often do small group instruction on a large floor rug. When boys lounged or fidgeted, I used to tell them to “Sit up! Pay attention and make sure your eyes are on me.” I've loosened my expectations on requiring students to be stationary. The bottom line is that they get their work done.

Give boys books that appeal to their interests. I used to pride myself on the range of books in my classroom library that represented a variety of genres, ethnicities, and cultures. Then I realized I needed books that would grab boys' attention. I've expanded my collection to include more animal and “How To” books, as well as titles like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *The Adventures of Captain Underpants*. This is not to say that girls aren't interested in these books as well, just that I'm more conscious of titles when I select books.

Create hands-on learning activities. When I assign special projects, I provide my students with more “boy-friendly” options, such as a “biography box” in lieu of a book report. Students bring in a box with 10 objects connected to the person they've been researching, then write a list of the objects and a brief explanation of how the object is connected to the person. My boys prefer this option as opposed to just writing a paragraph. Collecting the objects (or even making them) permits them to be more active.

Stop eliminating recess as a punishment. When boys don't have a chance to work off their energy, they can end up acting worse. Research shows that the average boy in a classroom is more active than the girls. Furthermore, most active girls don't seem to express their energy in the unrestrained way characteristic of most boys. Instead of taking away their entire recess, I choose an alternative consequence that doesn't end up punishing me and the student—such as running two laps around the blacktop or picking up 10 pieces of trash before going to play.

Reduce out-of-school suspensions. According to the Schott Report, Black boys in elementary and secondary schools are punished far more harshly for the same infractions as their peers. Also troubling, Black and Hispanic youth are disproportionately suspended from school, increasing their chances of falling behind in class and disengaging from school altogether. When appropriate, let's replace out-of-school suspensions with disciplinary strategies less disruptive to learning.

10 Tips To Help Your Teenage Son Find Motivation

May 17, 2011 By Uriah Guilford, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

So what motivates teens?

Teenagers are often motivated by the three F's – friends, freedom and fun. In contrast, parents are often motivated by the desire for freedom from anxiety. Teens want to feel connected and accepted within their peer group, which may often feel like it is more important to them than eating, sleeping or breathing. They want to have a sense of freedom to make decisions, go where they want to go and generally choose for themselves. And lastly, teenagers want to have a good time, which is why often times school, work & responsibility takes a backseat to the more pressing matter of chillin' as they might say. But, ultimately teens want to grow up and they want to feel empowered. If you can find out what motivates your teenage son, you can be successful in supporting him through these important transitions. Here are some possible ways to motivate your son.

1. Provide an incentive. For better or worse teenagers often have a me-centric view of the world with a strong now-orientation. If they can figure out “what’s in it for me” they may just be willing to work hard. This may not be a character flaw. In truth everyone one of us needs a reason or a purpose to accomplish any task. Your teenager may need some help finding a reason to get himself moving. Some people would say that providing an incentive is the same thing as a bribe, but that may be very appropriate. The incentive can be a material object or money, as we all know that teens are motivated by money. It could be something else, such as an experience or an opportunity, like earning the privilege of driving Dad’s classic car or something like that. The incentive could even be Mom or Dad’s approval, some sort of honor in the family or even bragging rights.

2. Issue a challenge. Teenagers, especially boys, may respond to a friendly challenge. “I bet you can’t wash all those dishes in ten minutes” or “I wonder if you can beat your score on that last Science quiz.” Competition with others can be healthy at times. Encouraging your son to compete against himself may just be the trick to get him going. When I was a teenager, my mother provided me with a challenge that included an incentive. She told me that if I could get a 3.5 GPA in school that she would buy me a new drum set. Now, I loved playing the drums and still do, but my set at the time was not impressive and I really wanted that new Pearl World Series drum set. I worked extremely hard to earn it. It was an amazing accomplishment for me and I had all kinds of positive self-esteem as a result.

3. Make it fun. As I said before, teenagers live for the three F's, which again are freedom, friends and fun. Fun is an essential ingredient and it is surprising what teens will do when they are having a good time. Jump in and do the task with your son. Use humor and playfulness to motivate and engage him. Help your son to imagine his future and make it fun. You could go on a road trip to visit colleges, play video games with him and talk about life together or just find any reason you can to laugh together.

4. Speak his love language. Find out what your teenage son responds to and what helps him feel loved and supported. Does your son prefer words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time or physical touch? Does he need to hear you say, “You’re doing a good job son.” Would he respond to a gift that is given to help him explore life options, such as an iPad? Could he use more hugs or pats on the back or even more wrestling time with Dad to feel connected and supported? Teenagers will often respond more positively when they feel cared for and encouraged by their parents. This may be challenging, but creating a strong relationship with your teenage son is essential to having an influential voice in his life.

5. Help him think about the future. For a teenager, considering the future may involve figuring out what they are going to eat in the next 15 minutes. It can be difficult for them to envision what next year will bring or even what they want to accomplish after high school. Even though he may think he has it figured out, your son needs you to walk this road with him and assist him in planning for a meaningful and successful life. The truth is that he needs your help with this step, because his brain is still developing and building an orientation towards the future is a definite skill. But of course, keep it fun, because this step can easily become a lecture and a sure way for your son to tune you out.

6. Use his peer group. If there is anything sacred to a teenager it is their connection to their community. This peer orientation can be damaging and lead your son down the wrong path, but it can also be used for his benefit. Talk to your son about his friends and what they are excited about. What types of activities are they involved in? What kinds of interests do they have? Praising respectable or honorable qualities in your son's friends may actually encourage him to follow along. This may be hard at times if your son's friends don't seem respectable, but even kids that are rough around the edges can have a good heart. You may be able to use their influence in a positive way. And of course, if all your son's friends are getting good grades and headed to college it is easier for him to adopt similar goals that are acceptable to his social group.

7. Use modern technology and social media. I was only half joking about the iPad that I mentioned earlier. With young people today, if you add technology to any pursuit it can make it more engaging and interesting. This could mean using the internet to research various careers, the military or colleges to attend. This could mean encouraging your son to "Like" the Facebook pages of influential people, or colleges or other social causes. This could mean texting your son with supportive comments or reminders, but only if he is OK with this of course. I don't often think of the TV as technology, but there are some great documentaries, movies and TV programs that could influence and encourage your teenager in positive directions. Whatever the application, it may be critical to use technology to communicate and motivate him towards a fulfilling and interesting future.

8. Provide opportunity for small successes that he can build upon. When teenagers think about the future with their sense of uncertainty and all the unknowns can be truly overwhelming. It is helpful for all of us to find ways to feel successful with each step on the long road to our goals. This has been referred to as the snowball effect, because the progression builds confidence and self-esteem in the same way that rolling a snowball increases its size, little by little. You can help your son to make small achievements and feel acknowledged and positive about each one.

9. Encourage your son to "re-invest" in a passion or interest that he was formerly excited about. This point is self-explanatory, but your son may have had a previous interest, such as drawing, music or sports that he may benefit from picking back up. Often adolescents, caught up with school and peer culture, forget what they loved as kids. Often these things can be adapted to be acceptable to the teenage mind. A passion for doodling could turn into interest in graphic design, playing in the school band could turn into playing in a garage band with friends and interest in sports can of course be applied to any phase of your son's academic career. This is the key part about finding out what he loves and helping him take steps towards those things.

10. Give your son a structured way to consider his future. As I mentioned before, whether they accept it or not our kids do need our help in this process. Providing a structured way for your son to engage on the topics of motivation and future planning may be easy or it may be quite challenging. This could take many forms, from volunteering at the Humane Society to getting a job or participating in a summer program. Often teenagers don't know what they like until they experience it first hand. I thank God that my Mom didn't let me off the hook every time I complained about doing something unpleasant. So giving your son a structured way to consider his future can be a very positive and crucial experience.

