Why boys get into trouble and why most discipline measures do not work

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Why are boys the focus of discipline issues?

• Biology puts them at risk
  – They are loud
  – They get actively involved with their world
  – They need to interact physically with each other
  – They are impulsive – frontal lobe issue

• Society puts them at risk
  – Focus of classroom problems
  – Lack of positive male role models
  – Tend-&-befriend approach
Emotional Disconnect

• Fight or Flight
  – Body is prepared to react
  – Lack of control may mean overreact
  – No examples on how to modify behavior

• Tend and Befriend
  – Focus is on not frightening student
  – Reasoning rather than rules

• Disconnect
  – Boys do not think that adult is serious or has the strength to demand good behavior
What is discipline?

• Discipline – teach a child appropriate behavior
  – Induction
  – Power assertion
  – Removal of attention

• Punishment – stop behavior
  – Presentation of aversive stimuli
  – Removal of positive stimuli

• Abuse – power is used to control another
  – Physical
  – Sexual
  – Emotional
  – Neglect
Types of Discipline

• Induction
  – Does not work with boys – they think it is not fair
  – Works with girls especially with reference to adults

• Power Assertion
  – Physical
    • Hegemonic Masculinity
    • Concern that boys learn this as appropriate response
  – Reference to rules and consequences
    • Consistency is key
    • Only works if student values the consequence

• Removal of attention
  – Similar to negative punishment
Why doesn’t punishment work?

• Punishment doesn’t actually work unless it is immediately following the incident and the child sees it as catastrophic
  – Punishment must fit the crime
  – Must mean something to the child

• Much of what is used as punishment is actually reinforcing to boys
  – Suspension

• Public punishment becomes a badge of courage
  – Conduct disorder as coping mechanism
Self-Esteem

• Does punishment lower self-esteem?
• What matters most to little children is that they perceive they matter - even if attention is negative
• Failure will lower self-esteem
  Especially if child feels out of control
• Success will not raise self-esteem
  Unless the success is plainly the result of personal effort –
    We need to struggle to survive
• Participation trophies lower self-esteem
Parental Involvement

• Child with low self-control has greater emotional and behavioral problems for both girls and boys
• Parents who were restrictive and psychologically controlling led to more behavioral problems
• Parents who were strict and alert to child’s activities led to fewer behavioral problems
• As child reaches adolescence, collaboration with parent and teachers as guide
Strategies to teach self-control

• Do not praise or discipline with global terms – use specific references
  – Without specific references, failure results in boys getting angry and girls getting anxious

• Decision Education
  – Helpful frame, Clear values, Creative alternatives, Useful information, Sound reasoning, and Commitment to follow through

• Peer Mediation/mentors/prefects

• Conflict Resolution – manage problem & move ahead
  – Focus on behaviors & issues, not emotional responses
Everyone on the Same Page

- Rules apply to everyone including students and staff
  - If boys can’t drink, neither can staff where boys can see
  - Honor applies to all
- Students are involved with the maintenance of discipline
- Staff trained not to put students on the spot
  - Boys are impulsive, teach them to think before they speak
- Having a sense of humor helps
5 Positive Rules

• Treat others with respect
• Be trustworthy
• Be a gracious winner and a resilient loser
• Be a responsible member of the community
• Rights and Responsibilities
Sources

