

Inside the world of boys

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Inside the World of Boys Timmy is eight years old and was participating in this first-ever track competition. Just before he would have finished third in the race, Timmy fell flat on his face in front of the audience. Small for his age, Timmy did not know what to do except to get up and feel absolutely embarrassed. His mother immediately rushed down the bleachers to console his son. " Not here, Mom, " he said. Later, his mother can hear him whisper to himself while trying to restrain his tears, " big boys don't cry. " Twelve years later, Timmy does not regret telling his mother that he did not need her console. However, he no longer hides his emotion. Instead, he expresses them freely to friends, family and college advisor. I am Timmy. Often time, boys avoid expressing feelings because of boys are shame-phobic. Because shame is such an undesirable experience, most boys (and men) will do anything to avoid the possibility of experience it (Pollack 33). Society often underestimates all the emotional needs of boys. Many of the boys today live behind a mask of masculine bravado that hides the genuine self to conform to our society's expectations (Pollack 5). Boys are taught at a very young age to be more independent or their peers will call the sissies and make fun of them (Pollack 21). We restrict how much affection boys show one another and that boys are less in need of friends, close personal bonds, or connections. One can say being a guy is hard because society expects guys not talk about their feelings and that guys are supposed to deal with everything themselves. Statistic has shown that when girl infants expressed painful states, mothers responded only twenty-two percent of the time, but when their sons showed negative feelings, the ignored them altogether (Pollack 41). Boys are encouraged not to talk about problems, especially

problems that expose their feelings of worry, doubt, or sadness, for fear of seen as weak, vulnerable, or needy-traits of femininity (Pollack 185). Our society taboos boys' affection as a whole. In an example given by Dr. Pollack, two third-graders, Charlie and Tommy, became fast friends and discovered that they were going to be in the same class together in the following school year. On the first day of school, Charlie excitedly flung himself across the room and gave Charlie a heartfelt hug. Their homeroom teacher turned around and saw it as "struggling and fighting." She sent both to the principal's office. The principal told them that such sexualized behavior was inappropriate and gave a letter to each student to bring home (Pollack 183-184). This assumption that boy's friendship was sexually inappropriate is hardly unusual. This misguided perception, a form of homophobia, might push some boys to turn to drugs and alcohol, substance temporarily mute the shame they feel about their genuine longings for friendship, love, and affection. The definition of masculinity often time is the scorning of femininity. The "Boy Code," an outdated and constricting assumptions, models, and rules about boys that our society has used since the nineteenth century (Pollack 6), is still being taught in sandboxes, playgrounds, classrooms by peers, coaches, and just about everybody else. The "Boy Code" can be summarized in four injunctions: "sturdy oak", "Give 'em hell" "the 'big wheel'", and "no sissy stuff." "Sturdy oak" teaches them to be stoic, stable, and independent (Pollack 23). "Give 'em hell" is about the stance based on a false self, or extreme daring, bravado, and attraction to violence (Pollack 24). "The 'big wheel'" teaches them the to achieve status, dominance, and power, the "big wheel" refers to the way in which boys and

men are taught to avoid shame at all costs (Pollack 24). " No sissy stuff" teaches them boys and men is the literally gender straitjacket that prohibits boys from expressing feelings (Pollack 24). This " Boy Code" puts boys and men into a gender straitjacket that constrains not only them but everyone else, reducing us all as human beings, and eventually making us strangers to ourselves and to one another, or not as strongly connected to one another as we long to be (Pollack 6). I agree with a lot of the things pointed out in these articles and I feel that Dr. William Pollack was on point in his studies. He gave excellent examples to show aspects one might have as an adolescent male such as: avoiding shame, and just being " masculine. " In " Stories of Shame: The Haunting Trauma of Separation, " he broke down the boy code into four injunctions that I found was true. I realized the rules of the " Boy Code" were in fact taught everywhere by just about everyone growing up: " toughen up", " be cool", " don't be a baby" were words I heard the most. As a young boy, I was taught that staying close to my mother is something shameful. I knew should not run to my mother immediately if something is wrong, but that is all I could do as my father worked long hours. I related the " Anger: The OK Male Emotion" section the most, anger was a constant issue growing up as I thought it was the only feeling I was allow to show. I constantly broke things around the house, pulled the heads of my sister's Barbies off. I thought that proved my masculinity. My father would always encourage me to take karate classes when I have no desire to learn karate because he wanted to " harden his boy" so I would not grow up being a sissy. After having to read this article, I was surprised by how I fell victim to this cycle. I feel like generations after generations, fathers would tell their sons

the same thing and it is not something that is going to be stopped anytime soon because being a guy is about survival of the fittest. In " Behind The Mask of Masculinity, " the section " How To Get Behind The Mask" was something I was most interested in. I was so interested that I almost wanted to phone my mother and tell her what she should have done when I was growing up. I was reading how parents can learn a new way to talk to boys in a less intimidated language, and I thought to myself that if I came home with a black eye, I would rather my mother ask me " what is going on-can you tell me" and not " what the heck happened to you" because that means I would be talking to her and not explaining it to her. In another section, Dr. Pollack talks about boys devoting energy to keep up their emotional guard and disguising their deepest feelings that they often have little or no energy for their schoolwork. I feel like that is still true for me in college. I admit that I put more time and effort worrying about what others think of me than my actual schoolwork knowing that my schoolwork is more important.

Sometimes I shut down and reflect on life and refuse to do any schoolwork until I can sort out my emotions — on my own, when my roommate is not there; and if anyone that sees me asks me if I am okay, I often lie and say yes. Growing up was different, it might have been about things like I was not invited to play during recess or I had lost the spelling bee or I was picked last during gym class. In college, it is more about what I am going to do with my life, relationships, family issues, financial issues etc. In " The World of Boys and Their Friendships, " the topic of boys helping out boys stood out the most. I have a male friend that I have known for a long time and we would talk on the phone for hours talking about life, relationships, and other people

in general. We go out to movies, dinner, and just have a lot of fun because we have a lot in common and he did not live far from me. My other neighborhood friends did not understand why I was always with him. I tell them that he is someone I can openly talk to and trust and vice versa. I was told immediately, "dudes are not supposed to do that, that is some girl thing." I did not agree with my friend's statement but I made no further effort to tell him how I felt because he would not have understood. After reading the article, I feel that the notions of boys helping out boys and showing affections should not be seen as something taboo but rather an act of bravery, real masculinity. Works Cited: Pollack, William Ph. D. "Inside the World of Boys: Behind the Mask of Masculinity." Electronic Reserves. State University of New York at New Paltz. 21 October 2006. Pollack, William Ph. D. "Stories of Shame and The Haunting Trauma of Separation: How We Can Connect With Boys and Change the Boy Code." Electronic Reserves. State University of New York at New Paltz. 6 October 2006. Pollack, William Ph. D. "The World of Boys and Their Friendships." Electronic Reserves. State University of New York at New Paltz. 6 October 2006.