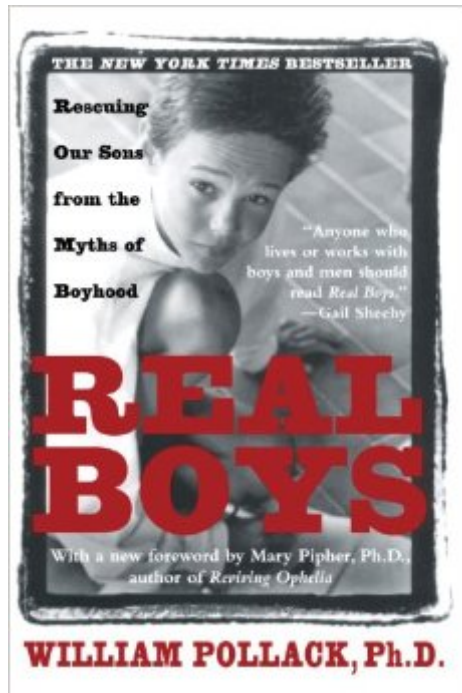


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# Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons From The Myths Of Boyhood



## Synopsis

Based on William Pollack's groundbreaking research at Harvard Medical School over two decades, *Real Boys* explores this generation's "silent crisis": why many boys are sad, lonely, and confused although they may appear tough, cheerful, and confident. Pollack challenges conventional expectations about manhood and masculinity that encourage parents to treat boys as little men, raising them through a toughening process that drives their true emotions underground. Only when we understand what boys are really like, says Pollack, can we help them develop more self-confidence and the emotional savvy they need to deal with issues such as depression, love and sexuality, drugs and alcohol, divorce, and violence. Just as *Reviving Ophelia* opened our eyes to the challenges faced by adolescent girls, *Real Boys* helps us hear and respond to the needs of growing boys.

• Judith Jordan, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School  
Featuring a new preface by the author on how parents can make a difference.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There have been a number of complaints about this book ranging from thoughtful to narrow-minded and ridiculous. Among the top three criticisms are: (1) it is based on vague "research" by the author (2) it is repetitive, and (my favorite) (3) it suggests that parents raise boys as effeminate or as "girls". First of all, many of the people who reviewed this book complained that it was written in a clinical jargon, that at times, made it unavailable to the casual reader. In the same breath, these readers demand that scientific citations be presented every time Pollack begins a sentence with "My

research shows". In essence, they are demanding scientific text devoid of scientific terminology. It's in the back, look it up. Furthermore, Pollack is a Ph.d in Psychology, and as such, probably does his research empirically. It is unlikely that he would publish phony results for all of his scientific peers to see and criticize if such results had no grounding in reality or even a kernel of truth to them. I also feel that Pollack's seemingly repetitive writing style was a necessary ingredient in this book. He is not merely cudgeling us with case study after case study to make us cry, or to fill 400 pages. Rather, he is emphasizing the fact that the problems discussed in the text are problems for a great many boys and not just a few isolated incidences. A few depressed individuals is not news; an epidemic is. He is suggesting an epidemic. Some individuals also stated that this book is based on common sense, such as don't call your son a "sissy" etc. If it is common sense, why is it still a problem?

Having been blessed with all sons (ages 8 to 32), I've been able to see some of the external conflicts and internal workings as my babies grew into young men. This book supports what I've always suspected - boys are just as needy of nurturing (from both parents) as girls - perhaps more so, since to be emotionally needy and male in America is too often interpreted as a weakness. During the 70's, I sometimes found it difficult to listen to the angry cries of my feminist sisters (and yes, I think women's minds are of equal value to men's) who too often seem to be accusing men of just being born 'bad,' rather than being formed and influenced by the actions and reactions of people, culture, environment. We women expect our men (sons, husbands, friends and lovers) to be strong, yet sensitive. Their peers often expect them to be 'a man' - strong, not 'a wuss.' Trapped in a double-bind, most men respond to the heavy peer pressure, and turn off most of their emotions. When a son hits adolescence, with the body and voice of a grown man, we often think that means he is a man, and should act like one. Without defining clearly what that is (for there are often contradictions), just when they need us most, we set them free in a world that is confusing, demanding, and frightening. (And if you find your self thinking there's nothing wrong with that, since that's what being a man means, I beg you to read this book!) Little boys are expected to move away from their mother by five or six (to not do so means they'll have 'problems' later in life). When a young boy smacks a friend, we might just throw up our hands and say "boys will be boys." Worse, when an elementary school boy kisses a girl he likes, he may be accused of sexual harrassment.

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