

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Mums raising boys

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

Many boys between the ages of 5 - 12 have an overriding need to be physically active. In these uncertain times, young boys can tend to be anxious, hence their need and to feel safe and loved within the family. Mothers can contribute greatly to helping their sons keep physically active and to feelings of safety and connectedness.

Here is a list of tips about how mothers can support their sons:

- **Maintain structure and routine**
Structure is very important for boys at this time, and even more so now that the regular school routine has been disrupted. Make sure your boys understand the rules and the consequences for breaking them. Ensure you follow through with what has been discussed. Look out for opportunities to praise them for things that they do well.
- **Plan activities and exercise that allow them to use their energy**
This might mean going out in the fresh air for a game of some sort every day. Allow their active imagination to run a little wild and let them come up with suggestions for activities they would like you all to do. Have fun!
- **Show you trust and believe in them**
This means allowing them to try out new things by themselves within the bounds of safety. For example encourage them to go outside by themselves and try out something they have been wanting to do such as climb a tree.
- **Help them identify their feelings**
Boys may find it difficult to identify feelings they may be experiencing in these challenging times. Help your child to name the feeling by saying something like, *"It looks like you are really upset. Tell me what is making you feel like this."* Then validate the feeling by saying, *"It's OK to feel upset"*. When they ask a question about the pandemic, listen carefully for what they know and what gaps there are. Provide answers to the extent that they are curious. Speak clearly and keep it short. Don't give more information than they can handle as this may cause undue anxiety.

- **Teach them how to process their emotions**

The present situation may cause boys to have feelings of anger, especially because they may not be able to engage in the activities they are used to. Many young boys may not know how to control their emotions and may lash out aggressively. Explain that it is OK to feel angry but it is unacceptable to hit someone. Discuss with them a good way to defuse their anger such as counting to 10 when they are feeling overwhelmed.

- **Give them time to spend with a father figure**

Boys love to be around men so make sure you create opportunities for them to be with Dad or step-Dad, if they are close by. It's important you stand back and let their relationship develop and grow close.

- **Be a good role model**

Show them what positive qualities look like. This means enacting your own values on a daily basis. In this time of the pandemic, young boys can learn much about kindness to others when they see us reaching out to those in need.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team will continue to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face once government guidelines allow. You might like to like us on Facebook to keep up to date with support information and details of services we can offer during this time.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on **Mums Raising Boys** once available, or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.