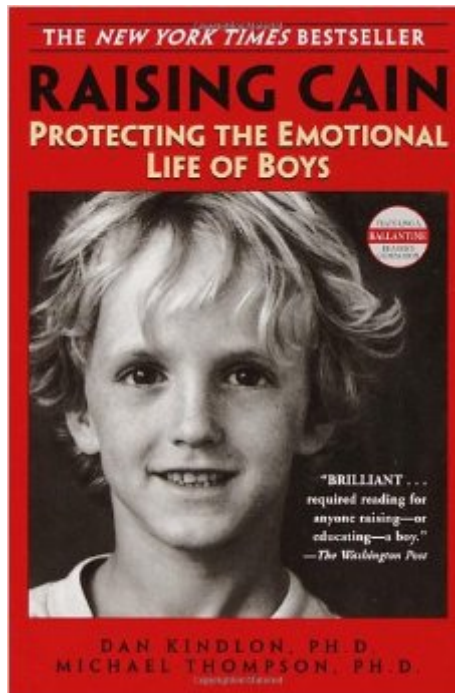


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Raising Cain: Protecting The Emotional Life Of Boys



Synopsis

In *Raising Cain*, Dan Kindlon, Ph.D., and Michael Thompson, Ph.D., two of the country's leading child psychologists, share what they have learned in more than thirty-five years of combined experience working with boys and their families. They reveal a nation of boys who are hurting--sad, afraid, angry, and silent. Kindlon and Thompson set out to answer this basic, crucial question: What do boys need that they're not getting? They illuminate the forces that threaten our boys, teaching them to believe that "cool" equals macho strength and stoicism. Cutting through outdated theories of "mother blame," "boy biology," and "testosterone," the authors shed light on the destructive emotional training our boys receive--the emotional miseducation of boys. Kindlon and Thompson make a compelling case that emotional literacy is the most valuable gift we can offer our sons, urging parents to recognize the price boys pay when we hold them to an impossible standard of manhood. They identify the social and emotional challenges that boys encounter in school and show how parents can help boys cultivate emotional awareness and empathy--giving them the vital connections and support they need to navigate the social pressures of youth.

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Customer Reviews

While I think men and the parents of daughters would also benefit from reading this book, I want to emphasize that as a woman and the parent of sons this book has become an invaluable resource for me. The authors made many important points about the male experience that were new to me, or vague, and also gave practical ideas and examples for achieving goals or avoiding conceptual traps. Kindlon and Thompson begin with the story of Cain, which is immediately disorienting. In a

good way. I've always been puzzled about why God was so mad at Cain. I believe the fruit Cain offered was beautiful, so why was it of lesser value? I never thought God was fair to Cain, though admittedly Cain did react badly. So immediately you're in the state of mind to question perceptions about males as well as male perception (and reaction). I didn't find any intellectual oneupsmanship over which gender's got it worse. Instead I saw: Boys are different, and here's what some of the differences are and why that's so, and how you can deal with that. I feel much better prepared for the many talks I hope I'll have with my children over the years. Important talks that I want to be transformative rather than reactionary or alienating. This isn't just a book for the parents of adolescent boys, either. The authors make the point many times that giving boys an emotional education is imperative -- teaching them to recognize various emotions as physical cues and with emotional consequences. More importantly, the authors then cite cases from their clinical backgrounds and make down-to-earth suggestions about what to do to catch these problems and help our children.

A few months ago, I read *Reviving Ophelia* on the recommendation of my wife (a psychologist) and a friend (a social worker). I was frankly stunned at the insight I gained in reading it. I immediately ordered a copy of my own, and in the process discovered *Raising Cain*. And just like *Reviving Ophelia*, I read it completely through. As a man, with strong memories of my adolescence, the book resonates with me. The stories it presents of the adolescent indoctrination into male culture (the "Big Impossible" as it's referred to throughout the book) ring true in a personal way. I "knew" many of the boys that they're referring to and who tell their stories. These were my associates, my classmates, my friends. And the more I read, the more I recalled of that period. Kindlon and Thompson present their story in the same basic structure as Pipher in *Reviving Ophelia*; as a series of topics that can greatly influence a young man, using vignettes of particular children and their stories to develop understanding and insight. And again, these are powerful vehicles for communication; presenting stories of strength and power in the face of unbelievable adversity. Just as powerful, is the understanding it brings as to how and why a child who's been continually disenfranchised can lash out against others (I find I'm in particular agreement with the authors after having been on the minority end of discussions about school killings such as Columbine). The most important contribution of this book; however, is to those who don't (and can't) understand what male culture can do to shape a child. I'm continually at the receiving end (and mostly the participating end) of jokes about the inability of a man to express a real emotion or feeling.

I am a father of two boys and I came across this book by searching on for books that could help me improve my parenting skills. I love my boys and I consider my parenting as a full time job. I read other readers comments and I did some research before I purchased a couple of books, Raising Cain being one of them. My main motivation in buying these books is derived from the frustration that I experience when I know I fail to understand my son on some issues and also from my worry that I do not understand what is going on in a life of a young man in today's world. Raising Cain opened my eyes in many aspects. It is written well and it makes no assumptions about the level of knowledge of the reader. It talks about the relationship between the boy and the father and between the boy and the mother, then it talks about general attitude of society on boys with short comparisons with the girls world. The book continues in discussing boys' psychology explaining how their inner world is built, what factors influence it most and consequences of their influence. It talks about drinking, drugs, sex and violence. There are some very good positive points that I took with me and there are some points that are missing from the book despite the fact that they are quite important. I can summarise the book by saying that it does a very good job explaining the need of talking to our sons and helping them to see their feelings as a way of diffusing tension, but it fails (in my view) in providing the tools that parents can use in implementing this concept. The book showed clearly that the lack of fathers' positive involvement in sons education causes a lot of damage in the long term.

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