

## Grade 8 Mothers Lunch – Thursday 9th February 2017

In 2003 in the maternity theatres around Cape Town there were the shouts of joy! ‘It’s a boy!’

But what is a boy? Let me remind you – between the innocence of Babyhood and the dignity of Manhood we find a delightful creature call a **BOY!**

Boys come in assorted colours, sizes and weights, but **ALL** Boys have the same creed: **TO ENJOY EVERY SECOND OF EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY!**

Boys, of any age, are found everywhere – on top of, underneath, inside of, climbing on, swinging from, running around or jumping to. Mothers love them, little girls hate them, older brothers and sisters tolerate them, adults ignore them and Heaven protects them!

A boy is truth, with dirt on his face.....

Beauty, with a cut on its finger.....

Wisdom, with bubble gum in its hair, and.....

The hope of the future with a frog in its pocket.

When you are busy, a boy is an inconsiderate, bothersome, intruding jangle of noise.

When you want him to make a good impression, his brain turns to jelly, or else he becomes a savage, sadistic **jungle creature** bent on destroying the world and himself with it.

He likes ice creams, knives, Christmas, comic books, water (in its natural habitat), large animals, Dad, trains, Saturday mornings and fire engines.

He is not a magical creature – you can lock him out of your workshop, but you can’t lock him out of your heart.

You can get him out of your study, but you can’t get him out of your mind.

You might as well give up – he is your captor, your jailer, your boss and your master –

A freckle-faced, pint-sized cat-chasing bundle of noise.

But when you come home at night with only the shattered pieces of your hopes and dreams, he can mend them like new with the two magic words: “**HOWZIT, FOLKS!**”

So here we are 13 years later with your young son about to start the tricky journey from boyhood to manhood. The next few years are going to be difficult and testing. Megan de Beyer in her programme “strong mothers & sons” identifies 3 developmental tasks which boys have to achieve in reaching maturity:

### 1. **Achieve Autonomy**

In order to be a psychologically well-adjusted adult, your son needs to enter adulthood with an understanding that he has control over his life and his destiny. He will need to have the confidence and necessary skills to make his own decisions. He requires an

understanding that his actions will have consequences that he will have to live with. In order to become an adult your son needs to take control of his life and assume greater autonomy. Many of the arguments that occur between you and your son are nothing more than an attempt on his part to achieve autonomy and control over his own life. You should welcome these as signs that your son is maturing and endeavour to help him develop the skills he needs to make his own decisions.

2. **Establish an Identity**

Your son needs to enter adulthood with a clear idea of who he is. He needs to be aware of his strengths; values; goals; and beliefs. He needs to perceive himself as being a unique and valuable member of his community. He needs to feel that others accept him and respect him for who he is. In order to achieve this, your son will challenge the things you say, the values you hold and your opinions. This process of questioning will undoubtedly lead, at times, to a rejection of your values (and prejudices?) Remember that your son's questioning what you believe is not a rejection of you; it is part of a process of searching for his identity.

3. **Liberate himself from the family**

In the processes of becoming an adult, your son needs to liberate himself from his family. He needs to reach a point where he feels that he is part of the family but at the same time separate from it. This is a very difficult thing to do. Some boys manage to tear their families apart in the process of freeing themselves while others never escape and start adulthood enmeshed in their family unit. Much of your son's challenging adolescent behaviour stems from an attempt to perceive himself as his own man who, while still having a role to play in his family, is distinct from his family.

You need to help your son, in your way, to negotiate these developmental tasks and successfully accomplish them. His maturity and psychological well-being depend on it.

A few years ago 15 year old boys at Bishops were asked the following questions:

***What do you wish your parents would stop doing?***

- Worrying so much
- Taking out their bad moods on me and blaming me when they have a bad day.
- Expecting me to be competitive
- Invading my space eg. Coming into my room all the time
- Not respecting my privacy
- Fighting with each other
- Always telling me that I am disorganised
- Holding me back
- Holding grudges, bringing up the past and holding things against me
- Judging my friends
- Being late for things that are important to me
- Treating my room as if it is a passageway

***What would you like your parents to do?***

- Listen to me
- Ask for my opinion
- Give me more of a role in making decisions about things that affect me
- Stop worrying
- Accept me for who and what I am; not expect me to be someone else
- Be more understanding
- Understand that I need my independence
- Allow me to just do nothing when I get the chance (which is not often)
- Remember the names of my friends
- Spend more time with me and appreciate having me around
- Get to know me better
- Communicate with each other more

***What issues do you wish you could talk to your parents about?***

- What I am going to do after school
- My plans for the future
- My social life
- What happens when I go out
- General stuff about me and my friends
- My life and the things that happen to me
- Sex
- Relationships
- Their jobs

I like to think of going through adolescence as walking over a bridge; let me call it the 'bridge of adolescence'. It is important that he crosses his bridge on his own two feet, with you as parents and us as teachers there to encourage, support, sometimes to point him in the right direction. You need to be waiting at the end as he emerges as a man, hopefully a good man, who will become a good boyfriend, brother, husband and father.

It will be worth the effort, in the meantime we all need we need to have love, patience and understanding.