



## THE BOY WOUND

*Jerome Teelucksingh*



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### ABSTRACT

*The boy wound reflects experiences of abuse, hurt, neglect and hate resulting in a painful state of incompleteness. If a boy is neglected or abused, his crucial transition into manhood will be even more difficult. A boy who is physically abused might later see physical abuse as a medium to demand respect or as an acceptable form of punishment. A boy must be taught how to turn his anger, depression and pain into success. If we do not embrace and nurture our boys, then the wrong persons will be their role models. It might be then too late to heal the boy wound. And, if the boy wound is allowed to fester then the society will become very sick.*

**Keywords:** boys, males, masculinity, men, World Day of the Boy Child

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Some of us might be familiar with the terms *mother wound*, *father wound* and *narcissistic wound* (Gaba, Lavender). What about the *boy wound*? The boy wound is one of the most painful male experiences: the boy wound reflects conditions of abuse, hurt, neglect and hate resulting in a painful state of incompleteness. This incompleteness is the wound. There are many of us who have been wounded, and some refuse to be healed, whilst others are not aware of the wound. Some of us have small wounds; others display large wounds; a few carry multiple wounds.

Some have mocked the annual observances of World Day of the Boy Child on 16 May; they tend to be people who do not appreciate the significance of protecting and ensuring proper nurturing of the world's boys. Some in Kenya, Africa have acknowledged the fact that a focus on girls and women has contributed to a neglect of the boy child (Pike). Often, seminars and discussions have tended to focus on the adult male and inadvertently to overlook the boy. Some of the problems faced by men are due to earlier situations which were ignored. For instance, a boy who is constantly bullied has a higher chance of maturing into a man who might become introverted or suicidal. It is obvious we need to protect the boy child from the harmful influences of society or else we will reap the whirlwind. If a boy child is neglected or fed a diet of hate and violence, there is an increased possibility that he will develop into a teenager who is misguided and confused. And the next crucial transition into manhood will be even more difficult. A boy who is physically abused will later see physical abuse as a medium to demand respect or as an acceptable form of punishment.

During the past decade, there have been ugly revelations of boys being abused in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, Mexico, Australia and Europe ("Regensburg Domspatzen choir"; Kennedy; "Mexican Catholic group"). In 2020, another can of worms was opened as the world learnt of boys being abused in the Boy Scouts of America. These boys were robbed of their innocence and stripped of their dignity. The perpetrators of such depraved acts against innocent boys will never realize that they have created a generation of incomplete and unfinished men. No amounts of financial compensation to the victims can restore the damage done to these persons. These traumatized boys and humiliated men will face an uphill struggle: some will question organized religion; some will rebuild their broken spirituality; others will try to untangle their snarled sexuality. A scientific study in 2019 revealed that children who are abused will more likely commit suicide (Ioannis Angelakis, Emma Louise Gillespie, Maria

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Panagioti). The scandals of the Roman Catholic Church and Boy Scouts are only the tip of the iceberg: what about the many stories of boys being wounded that are not been exposed by the media?

Even the traditional place of safety, the home, has been a breeding ground for abuse and violence. There is an urgent need to focus on the home and school as the public seek solutions to save the boy child. In the 21st century, the boy child lives in a turbulent social environment that makes him vulnerable to a multitude of negative forces.

Educational institutions have become venues for learning and abuse. It could be bullying, peer pressure and other forms of verbal, emotional or physical abuse. The minds of our boys are damaged as they are constantly embarrassed, humiliated and condemned. They graduate with certificates, diplomas and...damaged psyches.

Those boys and men who are victims of violence and abuse are emotionally challenged. Furthermore, boys who are abused will become depressed and attempt to forget the ugly memories by turning to medications and addictive drugs. Additionally, the abused are also psychologically challenged as they grapple with low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts. These are disabilities endured by boys that we have learnt to accept, but we are not dealing with their origins which are preventable. The boy or man who seeks to rectify his life will need a regimen of medication, therapy and counselling.

Many global and regional organizations that claim to be protectors of children cannot provide basic statistics that are needed in the battle to save our boys. Which institution can provide accurate statistics for the boys who are recruited into criminal gangs or unwilling participants of human trafficking? There are many boys who are forced to serve as soldiers in areas such as Afghanistan (Tallon). These innocent child soldiers are denied basic human rights and have lost their lives in senseless wars.

It seems as if our world is addicted to violence against boys. Creating wounds, inflicting pain and creating hurt among young males has become the new normal. This twisted way of life has become entrenched in our societies. We have become desensitized, and we have grown accustomed to wounded boys. Some of us tolerate abuse, tolerate these wounds; this is a frightening situation that reflects the dysfunctional level of society. However, violence is no

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longer restricted to the battlefield; it has become a common-and-everyday scenario.

Some boys appear fortunate as they are surrounded by wealth and security but lack caring and considerate parents, friends, or both. Some boys might have attained a sound education and desirable occupation but display personality disorders or lack morals and ethics. This defect in character is another boy wound that is often untreated. We know of ungrateful boys who do not appreciate the work and sacrifices of their parents, guardians and teachers. These are the boys who are also wounded. We need to create an environment of trust to nurture this respect and understanding. In our society many of our boys are goaded to be winners. There is nothing wrong to excel academically, break records and win awards but they become *wounded winners*. However, we have to remind our boys that not everyone can be a winner. Somebody will be second, third...and last. If we keep on pressuring our boys, they will be more susceptible to nervous breakdowns and feelings of insecurity and inferiority. Of course, we cannot encourage a culture of mediocrity or let boys believe that becoming the best is not important.

For too long the world has avoided or moved very slowly in dealing with the trauma, neglect and abuse endured by our boys. Of course, the media would not want to highlight these issues because they seem bland and boring. The reality is that a sensational story would obviously capture more attention and sell more copies of newspapers and magazines. Observers of the World Day of the Boy Child salute those boys who are struggling to survive and those who are helping the healing of the wounds. Too often those teenagers and young men who have beaten the odds and become role models and successful men are not appreciated. We must never be ashamed of our wounded boys and have them hiding in the shadows of life. They must be given proper spiritual, physical and psychological care and be aware of their diversity and different talents.

In 2017, a mother from the United States contended, “While girls are encouraged to be not just ballerinas, but astronauts and coders, boys—who already know they can walk on the moon and dominate Silicon Valley—don’t receive explicit encouragement to fully access their emotions” (Salie). Furthermore, she became aware of the specific colours, messages and images on the clothes in the boys’ department in a baby store and realized, “The boy taught to be tough is emotionally doomed.” Such assessments of the wounded boyhood are needed in understanding the challenges of the young male. We need to identify the wounded boys and

rescue them from the waves of hopelessness and pessimism that continue to knock them down. Boys born to parents who are drug addicts and alcoholics will not fully develop their potential and talents in such a negative environment. Boys reared by parents bearing either a father wound, a mother wound, or both will most likely mature into a wounded adult. Thus, a wounded cycle continues into the next generation. A wounded teacher or wounded role model will often unknowingly inflict wounds on other innocent souls.

These questions arise: should the government or agencies immediately intervene and separate children from their biological parents who are wounded? Or should the government seek help for the parents and later reunite the child or children with the parents? Society should not judge these wounded boys as failures. These wounded children might have a slow or rough start in life, but they do not have to develop into failures or a burden to society. These children must be motivated and taught how to turn their anger, depression and pain into success.

The recipe to create mature, diligent, trustworthy boys in our world is a difficult one. There is considerable inequality; our boys are not all on the same playing field. We need to ensure that our boys can envision a society where they are treated equally. Differences in culture, literacy, religion and geographical location have all posed problems for moving boys to a higher level in society. However, there are similar ingredients in that elusive recipe which will help boys. These include ensuring our boys live peaceful and stable surroundings, promotion of a safe environment to encourage creativity and developing channels of communication to share problems and discuss ideas. Additionally, boys need to be guided on future careers, choices of companions and friends; governments need to create programs to rescue boys who are incarcerated.

It is difficult to disagree that many of our boys are misunderstood, and the adolescent journey is a nightmare. We need to work with our boys to let them fulfill their dreams and goals. We cannot believe that hugging and displaying affection will make our boys soft or effeminate. If we do not embrace and nurture our boys, then the wrong persons will be their role models. It might be too late to heal the boy wounds. If the boy wound is allowed to fester, then the society will become very sick.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



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