
by Rosalind Wiseman
A landmark book that reveals the way boys think and that shows parents, educators and coaches how to reach out and help boys overcome their most common and difficult challenges -- by the bestselling author who changed our conception of adolescent girls.

Do you constantly struggle to pull information from your son, student, or athlete, only to encounter mumbling or evasive assurances such as “It’s nothing” or “I’m good?” Do you sense that the boy you care about is being bullied, but that he’ll do anything to avoid your “help?” Have you repeatedly reminded him that schoolwork and chores come before video games only to spy him reaching for the controller as soon as you leave the room? Have you watched with frustration as your boy flounders with girls?

Welcome to Boy World. It’s a place where asking for help or showing emotional pain often feels impossible. Where sports and video games can mean everything, but working hard in school frequently earns ridicule from “the guys” even as they ask to copy assignments. Where “masterminds” dominate and friends ruthlessly insult each other but can never object when someone steps over the line. Where hiding problems from adults is the ironclad rule because their involvement only makes situations worse. Boy world is governed by social hierarchies and a powerful set of unwritten rules that have huge implications for your boy’s relationships, his interactions with you, and the man he’ll become. If you want what’s best for him, you need to know what these rules are and how to work with them effectively.

What you’ll find in Masterminds and Wingmen is critically important for every parent – or anyone who cares about
boys – to know. Collaborating with a large team of middle- and high-school-age editors, Rosalind Wiseman has created an unprecedented guide to the life your boy is actually experiencing – his on-the-ground reality. Not only does Wiseman challenge you to examine your assumptions, she offers innovative coping strategies aimed at helping your boy develop a positive, authentic, and strong sense of self.

Amazon.com Review

Q&A with Rosalind Wiseman

Q. Why turn your attention to boys? Haven’t they always been in an advantageous position? What has changed?

A. While in some ways it seems indisputable that boys have an advantage over girls, it depends on how you define “advantage.” Yes, some boys have social status and power that enables them to silence others—boys and girls alike. Some boys can use their advantage to hurt others and not be held accountable. But I don’t think of it as advantage per se because it’s impossible to have meaningful connections and relationships with other people when you feel entitled to use those people. And in regards to many boys in middle and high school who’ve barely started puberty, if you asked them who has more advantage, them or the ninth-grade girl who looks like she’s eighteen, they’d laugh at you. To them it seems as if girls have all the power.

Q. I know you wrote this book with boy editors from every walk of life—were you surprised by what the guys revealed to you?

A. Yes! I knew that boys had complex emotional lives, but there was a lot I didn’t know. For example, it’s funny, but boys hate it when their parents pick them up from school or practice and ask a million questions. Other things I learned are more serious. I didn’t realize how often adults dismiss boys’ feelings, or that boys regularly have experiences where people assume they’re either hormone-crazed jerks or lazy slackers—or both. I also didn’t realize how complicated lying is in “Boy World.” Boys lie for many different reasons and our (adult) responses when we catch boys doing it need to reflect an understanding of the reason they lied in the first place. If we don’t understand it, we can’t impart whatever values we want to teach boys.

It also surprised me that so many boys and young men volunteered to help me with this project. Within six months I had more than 150 boys, aged eight to twenty-four, signed on as editors. They came from all over the country and every walk of life: private East Coast boarding schools, New Orleans’s 7th and 9th ward public schools, working-class communities in the Midwest, Southern California suburbs, and every other type of educational environment
imaginable. These boys assisted me throughout the writing process to make sure the book was accurate and relevant and captured the lives they really lead.

Q. How do you think this book will help parents to assist boys in navigating the middle and high school years?

A. I am hoping it will make parents realize that behind a boy’s silence or glib assurance that “I’m fine” is a person with deep emotional needs—one who wants meaningful relationships with adults whom he can believe in. Parents can support the emotional lives of their sons without making them soft or unable to handle life’s challenges and hardships. Giving boys the skills to be socially competent when they’re in conflict or upset with someone is the way for them to be truly secure. The boys want and need this support. I hope this book will help move the conversation forward.

Q. What can teachers, coaches, and school administrators get from this book?

A. First and foremost, they’ll gain an appreciation of how critical they are in helping boys to believe what honorable, courageous men they truly can be. Boys often see how hypocritical adults can be, and that disillusionment can make a boy not follow his passions. It can make him disengage from the things and people he values most. Every day, educators have the opportunity to be role models of what it looks like to be just, fair, and honorable. They also have the opportunity to be bullies, abusers of power, and cowards. I want educators to read Masterminds and really hear what the boys are saying about the two kinds of men that exist in their lives, and having heard it, to strive to do their best for the boys in their charge.

Product Description

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