

HOMESCHOOLING



# *Raising Boys*

*10 Simple  
Tips*

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## *One - DREAM BIG!*



We're the parents of 5 sons, ages 20, 18, 16, 6, and 5, and BOY have we learned a few things along the way. Still learning.

Every day, we want to help our sons learn to **DREAM BIG**. Whatever it is they believe God wants them to do, we want them to know that they can dream big, pursue His plans, and reroute whenever they know that God is redirecting and writing their story.

We wasted a lot of years planning how our older sons would "turn out". In our controlling, fear-based, short-sided vision, we saw a version of

them that wasn't a big dream and it certainly wasn't God's idea. **God's ideas were much, much cooler than ours.**

God wants us to dream big dreams for His glory. Getting to be the cheerleaders who say, "Go for it!" to our sons is one of the most exciting facets of raising boys.

**DREAM BIG**, my sons! There's no limit to what you can do to the glory of God!

## *Two - DON'T FREAK OUT!*



**Don't freak out.** Boys are boys! Many of them have an insatiable need to push themselves, test their limits, and scare the snot out of mom all at the same time. It's a flexing-their-muscles thing!

There's a watchful eye on their overall safety, but then there's hovering and fussing. Are you a hoverer? And how can you tell the difference between a watchful eye and a hovering fear?

As their mom, I've often had to ask myself, "What's the worst that could happen?" And yes, the worst that could happen might be death. But then, if I'm so concerned about the possibility of death, I wouldn't put them in a car, with or without a seatbelt.

Or a bathtub. Or feed them shellfish because they *might* be allergic and go into anaphylactic shock. Or allow them to plug the vacuum into the outlet because it might electrocute them. Or let them cook anything on the stove.

See? There's a general view of safety and common sense (I wouldn't hand a two-year-old a hunting knife), and then there's allowing them the freedom to climb the highest tree in your neighborhood, touch the slimiest bug in your yard, and longboard down the steepest hill they can find.

**Scabs? Broken bones?** Those are medals of honor.

### *Three - LET THEM FAIL*



**Let them fail.** This one is very, very difficult for me, the mom.

I'm the woman with the 8 kids and the homeschool and the blog and the book. I'm kind of a "doer". Kind of.

When I see something that needs to be accomplished, my brain goes into ninja-administration mode, and I know exactly how to get from point A to point B (even if it's a curvy line).

But boys, especially older boys, need us to back off. They need to try things their own way and they need to be proven wrong by experience, not by our words. They need that exhilarating feeling that comes when you take a chance, dig in with both feet, and succeed.

**Unless they ask for advice or help, let them get from point A to point B on their own.** And if they never get to point B, tell them how amazing they are for trying. Resist every urge to shake your head and say, "I told you so." The world is already saying that to them, every day.

## ***Four - LEARN TO BITE YOUR TONGUE***

**When boys are young, you can say as much as you want.** Get it all out, though, because it won't be long before your words will likely go right over them, entirely. That old "in-one-ear-and-out-the-other" thing.

But that's not really what we mean. Yes, expect that they won't hear you tell them to empty the dishwasher for the 3,764th time, all the while remembering every baseball statistic from the 2011 American League season.

What I really mean, though, is to learn to bite your tongue when they are just on the brink of manhood and you know you're wiser and more experienced and *right*. Just hold all of that wisdom in and pray, unless you're asked for your opinion.

My experience has been this: they actually do ask for our opinion — sometimes via text, sometimes over the laundry — and when they do, it is a warm and mutually respectful conversation. When they don't, we try to bite our tongues and pray. Unless we might ever see something aggressively harmful or illegal in the works, we resolve to smile and keep our opinions to ourselves.

"A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife {father, mother} are alike." Proverbs 27:15

## *Five - HELP THEM FIND HEROES*

**We're sure we don't need to tell you that our boys are desperately in need of heroes.**

Real heroes.

Not the overly pumped-up, self-absorbed, flash-in-the-pan sports and movie stars of our age, but real, flesh-and-blood, die-to-self men who can inspire them to live a life of integrity and faith, no matter what they end up doing with their lives.



That's our son Jack on the left (his real name is John). In the middle is my (Kendra) older brother John, and on the right is my precious late grandfather, also named John.

**My Grandpa John was a hero.** Born in 1911 and raised on a pig farm in New Jersey with 11 siblings, he married my grandmother and together they had 3 children. John saw a better life for his family in California and so he moved to Los Angeles after World War II and successfully provided for them as a tree surgeon. His famous clients included Ava Gabor and Dean Martin. Oh, the interesting tales he told!

Every day, six days a week, my Grandpa John would get up and climb trees on behalf of his wife and children. When he was in his 70's, he chased two guys who stole some equipment out of the back of his truck and tackled them, holding them until the police came. They didn't scare him!

And tenderly, when I was a child, Grandpa would take me by the hand, plop me into the back seat of his car (no seatbelts required back then) and drive me a mile or so to Griffith Park to ride the ponies. (Is that not the cutest? In the middle of Los Angeles, to boot!)

Grandpa John was a man's man. He cut slices of apples for me with a scary-big knife. Into his 70's and probably even his 80's (gumption!), he climbed the trees in my childhood backyard to trim them every year, then carefully stacked all of the branches to form a fort for me to play in. I looked forward to those forts with wondrous anticipation.

He nursed my difficult grandmother as she was dying, patiently weathering the end of *years* of her anger and bitterness, and when she died, he missed her. He was gentle and kind and long-suffering.

He was a hero.

Do your boys have heroes like my Grandpa John to look up to? Men like that leave legacies of strength in their wake, and it is worth every prayer and moment searching for them as an example for your boys. ***Real heroes.***

## *Six - TEACH THEM TO SHOW UP*

**Do you know what our kids want the most from the adults in their lives?** They want them to *show up*.

Girls want mothers and sisters and aunts and friends who faithfully love them through the hardest moments. Boys want fathers and brothers and uncles and friends who show up. Faithfully.



**So teach them to show up, too.** Teach them that when you make a commitment to something, whether it's a baseball team or a Sunday School class, you show up, come hail or high water.

No need to be the best or the brightest, no need to wow them with your skills or plan every Pinterest project you've pinned. Just show up.

*Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. -Proverbs 3:3*

## *Seven - REMEMBER THEIR FRAMES*

**God, in His infinite wisdom, made these boys BOYS.** He also made them attracted to girls, a lot. At least, once they start noticing that girls smell good and look pretty, too. Reminds us of that last scene in *The Jungle Book* when Mowgli spots the little village girl and is mesmerized to the point of carrying her water jug back to the village for her.



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We're big believers in *preparing our boys for the road*, rather than running ahead of them attempting to prepare the road for our boys. And the road they need to be prepared for is fraught with temptations, isn't it?

**Equip, teach, inform, live, and have the conversations.** The tough ones. The ones that make you uncomfortable and maybe even a little sad because the end of their innocence is in sight. Prepare them for the road.

And remember their frames. They are finite, human, weak, sinners, just like I am and you are. So continue to have those conversations, asking them questions that address the "elephants" in the room and the deepest recesses of their hearts. Help them to understand their own frames, their own failures, their own need for the perfection of Christ.

Pray for them, mama. They need the Holy Spirit more than ever. And then shower abundant grace and mercy all over them because in it all, you are remembering their frames.

## *Eight - POTENTIAL*

**9-year-old boys are, shall we say, *odd* creatures.** Weird. Slightly off-kilter. And oft-annoying, no?

We're well beyond goofy 9-year-old boy stuff with our older three, but we're just around the corner from it with our bottom two. Already there are shades of it: today our 6-year-old was squawking like a duck in the back of the van and every time a sister would tell him to stop he would pause, smile and then squawk louder. Boys!



But wise parents see potential. They help a young boy curb his lack of self-control by controlling him when they have to. "Put your hand on your mouth until you can gain control over your squawking". And they try to smile a concealed smile after they read their 15-year-old the riot act for throwing the creepy doll on the skylight because they recognize the playful heart and creativity behind the shenanigans.

Can you imagine our reaction when we glanced up and found that creepy doll staring down at us from up there?

**See the potential.** It's there lurking in every goofy 3-year-old and weird 9-year-old and dreaming 13-year-old. It's the creativity and the vitality and the zest for life that reality so quickly strips from men who carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. See the potential and then be their biggest fan!

## *Nine - TIME MANAGEMENT*

It might be just our boys, but we think it's a rare boy who understands how to manage his time well. Too many distractions, too much to do. How does one stop and learn the fine art of time management?

**As with so many things, our children learn from our example.** When I, the mom, say aloud, "Hey guys! We need to be at the orthodontist's office at 10, so we'll have to be in the car and pulling out of the driveway by 9:30", I am teaching them time management without even trying.

The lack of skilled time management tends to show sometime during high school, when boys are juggling academics, perhaps a sports team, a musical instrument, a part-time job, and a social life. These years are a great time to pass along some hands-on help and teach them what you know about having your hands in lots of pies, as it were.



I recently took my three oldest sons (20, 18, and 16) on a date with the intent to help them map their next few months. Using Amy Lynn Andrews' very helpful e-book *Tell Your Time*, we wrote down their goals and responsibilities, the things they had to do and the things they want to do. I think they were somewhat surprised by the lists they'd created, and in the end, I hope they had a better grasp on how to rearrange their lives to make better use of the 24 hours they have in a day.

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1*

## ***Ten - SHOW THEM THE GOSPEL***

Every single day, remind your boys whose they are.

When we understand that the gospel is not just good news to the unbeliever, but a place where we dwell, our lives change from the inside out.

How many times did the Israelites forget Whose they were? And how many times did that go well for them? How many times do we look to something - *anything* - other than God to find our purpose, our identity, our significance, our value, or worth?

We do that daily.

But Jesus gives us all of those things, and in abundance. Through His life, death, and resurrection, we have the good news that none of those things need to be achieved by us, and in fact, cannot be. It's through His gracious and marvelous divinity that we are who we are.

**You know that.** But do your boys?



When a hard-played basketball tournament leads to dream-crushing disappointment, do they know that their worth is in Jesus? When friends reject them because they aren't cool enough, do they know that their significance is found at the cross and not in the slang they use or the jeans they wear?

Send them into the world knowing firmly that their identity is not in their job, the way they practice their faith, whether or not they choose to homeschool their kids, how much knowledge they've obtained, the kind of car they can afford, or the wife and kids they're attached to. It's in Jesus.

And really, **the most important work we can do for our boys is to point them to Jesus.**

About Fletch and Kendra, podcasters at [HomeschoolingIRL](http://HomeschoolingIRL):



Fletch has been featured on The Homeschool Heartbeat broadcast, has won the coveted Best Homeschool Dad Blog award for [theMangoTimes](http://theMangoTimes), but he moonlights as a dentist and keeps his patients/captive audience laughing as he drills. He also celebrates International Talk Like a Pirate Day. Who wouldn't want to have a dentist dressed like a pirate?



Kendra is a popular conference speaker and writer, appearing in such publications as *The Old Schoolhouse Magazine*, *Washington Family Magazine*, Sally Clarkson's *I Take Joy*, and [crosswalk.com](http://crosswalk.com). She moonlights as a wrangler of the 6 kids who are still under 18 in their home. Yes, she gave birth to all 8. Classic over-achiever.