

Teaching Indian Boys

Interactive Training Modules

10 Conversations to have with your son in the car

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Teaching Indian Boys Self-paced training for teachers

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I've had the most rewarding experience writing the book *10 Conversations You Must Have With Your Son*.

Below are seven of the conversations. My reason for not sharing all 10 is that I would be interested in finding out your views on what the other three conversations should be. I say this because your views are just as valid as mine.

Many boys have little idea of their extraordinary ability. As a result, their unique talents remain undiscovered and their life is blighted by their potential never being realised.

DR TIM HAWKES

My choices have been heavily influenced by being a father of a son, and headmaster of a boys' school of 1600 students for the last 17 years. This also explains why I have limited the topic of my book to teenage sons.

1. Telling our sons they are loved

The world is not always an encouraging place. Our planet has animals that are red in tooth and claw, who are predatory and can cause a boy to feel unloved. Tragically, there exist some parents who do not love their sons. Some will say that they do, but there is no congruency between word and deed. Fortunately, most parents do love their sons, and demonstrate this love faithfully even when that love is seriously tested by bovine behaviour. A son needs at least one adult who adores him, preferably two. A son needs to know that he is a priority in someone's life. A son needs to be loved and he also needs to know he is loved.

2. Helping boys find out who they are

Many boys have little idea of their extraordinary ability. As a result, their unique talents remain undiscovered and their life is blighted by their potential never being realised. The teen years are years boys search for an identity that is their own, an identity that is independent of family, and possibly, even of friends. Too many boys are accidental in the formation of their faith, conviction and politics. Others are worse; they haven't formed ideas about anything and seem content to drift through life unlabelled (which is often interpreted as a good thing) and uninformed (often seen as a bad thing). It is also important for a boy to know his history and 'story'.

3. A boy needs guidance in morality

What are the reference points for a boy's behaviour? What will be the navigational markers he will use to navigate the world's seas? There are many competing and even conflicting philosophies that beckon alluringly to him. What ones should he be guided by? There are many choices, including the secular philosophies associated with humanism, existentialism, utilitarianism, consequentialism and a lot of other 'isms'; there are also divine directives to consider. There can be a temptation for parents to leave many of these choices to their offspring. This might be admirable if it were not for the fact that the son is then given no information to make his choice on this and other matters, and the results can be tragic.

4. We need to encourage our sons to accept responsibility

Many like to watch. Watching is safe. You bear no responsibility, you accept no accountability. Today's teenagers have been described as 'screenagers'. They look, comment and criticise from the comfort of their couch. The child then grows into an adult who finds it difficult to do much more than spectate. Our sons need to be taught to take ownership of their behaviours. They need to learn how to be leaders and how to be servants. They need to be encouraged to take ownership of their lives.

5. Our sons also need to learn how to live in the community

Although some boys remain active and involved with society, there are a number that are lazy blobs. Entertained by a range of expensive electronic equipment, many sons are limiting their social interaction to a number of 'e-relationships'. These relationships are often short-term, disposable and shallow. The exercise of social skills strengthens a community. If neglected, a boy can become self-centred and become a liability to society.

6. Sex and intimacy

The western world generally does a poor job in preparing its sons to be intimate. There are always exceptions, but in general, boys are required to navigate their way through the sexual swamp with minimal direction. The signposts that are given to him can be vague and contradictory. Parents say this and the school says that, but the porn site says something completely different. Where adult direction falters, peer direction takes over. The 'leader of the sack' can, in a boastful voice, suggest the way forward to the forbidden fruit in a manner that is

not always helpful. The proper people to educate sons about sex are parents. Some parents are wonderful at giving their children guidelines on sex, while others are not so wonderful.

7. The ability to manage financial matters

The level of ignorance in young people about financial matters can be frightening. This is revealed by the number of young people who get into financial trouble through an inability to budget, a failure to understand the traps associated with credit cards and an incapacity to retire debt. Too many are persistently living beyond their means, over-relying on parental assistance and making unwise choices when selecting hire-purchase options, mobile phone plans and leasing arrangements.

If you were limited to three more topics of conversation to have with your teenage son, what would they be?

Of course, there are literally thousands of options, and all of them have to be adjusted so they are relevant and age appropriate. Nonetheless, it would be great to hear what three you would add to the list above.

Finally, I would love to know how you would alter the list of 10 essential conversations if they were with your teenage daughter. I need all the help I can get, given that I have 1601 sons but only two daughters!

Dr Tim Hawkes is the headmaster of The King's School in Sydney and the author of 10 Conversations You Must Have With Your Son.

Two Page Plan – 10 conversations to have with boys

What tips have you learned in this session that would help you communicate with boys?

1.

2.

3.

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6.

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