



Puberty in boys: An often-overlooked part of growing up

There is much on the Internet regarding puberty and its effects on girls. Not enough has been said about its effects on boys, however, even though it is just as hard becoming an adult male. For those raising boys, especially, this can be a truly daunting time as puberty catches them off guard and a parent is never fully prepared to see the changes that transform their innocent, often needy little boy into a sullen, outspoken teen.

When a boy starts going through puberty, he is bound to feel intimidated. This might cause them to retreat deeper into their shells — an action that feels deceptively exclusive to parents. Many feel shut out by their sons and countless others feel deeply hated. At this point, it is worth remembering that our boys are

not deliberately trying to hurt us. They are simply scared little men trying to come to terms with the wildly unrestrained hormonal changes happening to them.

Instead of taking things personally, it is infinitely prudent to give them the privacy they so desperately crave during this time. This would also mean accepting the longer bathroom and shower times, and locked bedrooms, without being verbal and understanding that some things should simply be ignored. Respecting their need to deal with certain things alone instead of hovering or nagging will help them trust you and open up to you faster.

It is often during these times that a parent finds themselves having to hold the trickiest conversations like erections — that can be triggered without a moment's notice

— or the dreaded conversation about the birds and bees. Before initiating these conversations, make sure your tween or teen is in one of his better moods, as they tend to vacillate between both extremes fairly quickly. Make sure these important conversations are not scheduled around fresh disagreements. It is easy to get provoked by their behaviours during this phase but picking your battles sensibly can be the best thing to do at this point. It has been proven that in places where tweens and teens do not have to make eye contact, they open up better. Car rides are good places to have uninterrupted, grown-up conversations.

While trying to hold on to some semblance of their childhood, it is important to recognise the changes that

make a man. Deal with the stink, the hunger pangs, and the weight gains sensitively, and try not to get teary-eyed when you hear a deeper voice instead of their usual, childish shrill.

Hormones may hit them hard but it often seems as if the sheer force of those changes hits the parents infinitely harder. Therefore, while allowing them their privacy, it is important to reassure yourself that your son still needs you, even if it is not in the ways you have been used to until now. It may not seem like it right then but they do come back, and in a way that is more special than ever.

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