



The Good Son: Shaping the Moral Development of Our Boys and Young Men

By Michael Gurian

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Selected by **Publishers Weekly** as one of the Best Books of 1999, *The Good Son* is the definitive guide to the moral and emotional development of our boys and young men. Within its pages, Michael Gurian widely credited as the founder of today's "boys movement" takes readers through a complete parenting program, showing how to instill virtues in boys at each stage of life.

For parents and teachers who fear that our child-rearing systems have lost much of their ethical underpinnings and that our boys are becoming emotionally closed-off, **The Good Son** serves as a welcome guidepost. It is one of today's premier books on parenting and male development.

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The Good Son: Shaping the Moral Development of Our Boys and Young Men By Michael Gurian Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #251863 in Books
- Brand: Tarcher
- Published on: 2000-08-07
- Released on: 2000-08-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.10" w x 6.00" l, .96 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 416 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Gurian (*A Fine Young Man*), one of today's premier writers on the subject of male development, moves beyond the realm of sociological and psychological analysis (offered in Eli Newberger's fine *The Men They Will Become*, see p. 71) to provide a timely and practical parenting guide. Focusing specifically on the subject of moral development—a matter of hot debate in the wake of such tragedies as the Columbine High School shooting—Gurian writes from his own experience as a family therapist. Citing an "increase in ethical numbness, moral distraction, and spiritual emptiness among boys and young men," he examines the roots of potential problems—such as the abandonment of our children's moral development to "potentially toxic" visual media—and then lays out a well-organized blueprint for ushering boys into adulthood. Gurian discusses such topics as biological and neurological development as well as building spiritual life and dealing with media influence (for example, he notes that a boy of nine or 10 should not "see images he cannot or should not experience with his own body and soul at this time in his life"). Gurian concludes with a list of age-appropriate books and movies that "stimulate moral growth in boys." Parents and caregivers will welcome the direction and reassurance of this outstanding book in their efforts to guide boys "toward loving, wise, and responsible manhood—the compassionate life."

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From Library Journal

Here are two solid books with practical advice on how to raise well-adjusted, ethical young boys. *The Good Son* is the culminating third volume of Gurian's best-selling series (*The Wonder of Boys*, *A Fine Young Man*) about raising young males to become responsible men. Like many recent scholars, such as Gad Cudner (*Small Criminal Among Us*), Gurian offers ethical explanations of youth violence: his "good son parenting plan" revolves around morality and discipline. Astutely synthesizing Jean Piaget's cognitive and Lawrence Kohlberg's moral stages of development, he gives detailed guidelines for instilling "good virtues" during each of three stages of moral development: obedience (birth to six), convention (seven to 12), and moral intuition (13 to 18). On the other hand—and in contrast to Donald Black (*Bad Boys, Mad Men: Confronting Antisocial Personality Disorder*, LJ 3/1/99), who emphasizes genetic attribution—Newberger (pediatrics, Harvard Medical Sch.) thinks that the best explanation for boys' misbehavior is the interplay of biological drives and "character" development. He claims that boys are born with malleable "innate temperaments" that can be transformed into positive "male characteristics" such as self-control, courage, honesty, and sportsmanship. In short, boys can become leaders without resorting to violence. Both Gurian and Newberger use anecdotes to show that raising good sons need not be difficult, and their books are timely, insightful additions to the current debate on youth violence and school shootings. Recommended for public and academic libraries. A Chogollah Maroufi, California State Univ., Los Angeles

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From Kirkus Reviews

A practical guide for parents in raising sons to become compassionate and responsible men. In calling for a "moral and ethical revival in the raising of boys," therapist Gurian, the author of two prior books about raising boys, speaks to the concern of many that our culture is failing to develop character in its young males. After examining the gender differences in male brains, hormones, and social acculturation that place them at greater risk than females, he argues that boys need more structure, discipline, guidance, and training than is commonly provided. He then spells out the details in a "Good Son Parenting Plan." The plan addresses the values of decency, fairness, empathy, self-sacrifice, respect, loyalty, service, responsibility, honesty, and

honor. Each chapter tackles a stage of life: the age of obedience, comprising infancy, the toddler years, ages five and six; the age of convention: ages seven and eight, preadolescence, and prepuberty; and the age of moral intuition: puberty, the middle teens, and preadulthood. Instructive stories from a variety of sources open and close each chapter, fables and myths from India, Hawaii, and East Africa, as well as personal experiences of parents and teachers. In each chapter the author traces the intellectual, emotional, and moral development occurring in that stage, and considers issues most likely to arise. He includes practical advice on dozens of issues from bedtime, television, and bullying to peer pressures, sex, drugs, and alcohol. Two features especially helpful to parents are "The Range of Normal" and "Rules to Live By," in which Gurian sums up what is to be expected in a boy's life at each stage. Appendices provide not only reading lists for parents but a selection of age-appropriate books and movies for stimulating moral growth in boys. A well-planned program whose nonsectarian, nonpreachy approach makes it an appropriate guide for all parents concerned about the moral development of their sons. -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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