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# Masterminds And Wingmen: Helping Our Boys Cope With Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, And The New Rules Of Boy World



## Synopsis

Books for a Better Life Award Winner Here is 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 yet 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 or 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.

From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Rosalind Wiseman, who so insightfully explained the world of girls in *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, has done it again. This book is a powerful exploration of the inner life of boys, which is far more complex than many parents and educators may realize. Wiseman reveals the unwritten rules boys must both abide by and try to overcome, and she helps parents understand boys' reactions, as well as their own. This is an essential guide not just for parents but anyone who wants to better understand their own childhood and its impact." --Anderson Cooper "This book is a gem." Rosalind Wiseman offers readers deep, nuanced, up-to-the-minute insight into today's boy. She explains how and why boys, in so many areas, make it easy for parents and educators to miss out on their suffering and their strength. Most important, she shows how to reach out and lift boys up without getting on their nerves." --Wendy Mogel, PhD, author of the New York Times bestseller *The Blessing of*

a Skinned Knee

“Rosalind Wiseman, the well-known girl expert, has a real feel for the inner life of boys, and for the way they interact with their parents. Her new book, *Masterminds and Wingmen*, contains some of the best advice for communicating with boys that I’ve ever read: wise, clear and tough. The brilliant chapter on why boys lies to their parents is alone worth the price of the book.”

—Michael Thompson, coauthor of the New York Times bestseller *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*

“Trying to communicate with boys — teenage boys especially — can sometimes feel like cracking the world’s most complicated secret code. What makes *Masterminds and Wingmen* so remarkable is how thoroughly it decrypts boy-world language. It allows us to really connect with boys. If you want to understand what’s in your son’s head, read this book!”

—Michael Gurian, New York Times bestselling author of *The Wonder of Boys*

“Rosalind Wiseman is perhaps America’s foremost guide through the complex social hierarchies and cruel logics that govern adolescents’ lives. And *Masterminds and Wingmen* maps the foreign territory of boys’ social and interior emotional lives as deftly and compassionately as Wiseman’s earlier book on girls. With clear analysis and down-to-earth practical advice, this book will guide many many conversations between parents and their sons.”

—Michael Kimmel, author of *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*

“Rosalind Wiseman brings a distinctive perspective and voice to whatever issue she takes up. She did it in *Queen Bees and Wannabes*. Now she’s done it again, revealing the inner workings of ‘Boy World.’ I found the book insightful and useful, as both a father to sons and as a professional working with violent youth who must deal with the most serious life issues facing other people’s sons.”

—James Garbarino, PhD, author of *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*

“Don’t even try parenting, teaching or coaching a boy without reading Wiseman’s book — a field manual that you’ll absolutely need if you wish to enter the strange and wondrous world of guys.”

—Richard Whitmire, author of *Why Boys Fail: Saving Our Sons from an Educational System That’s Leaving Them Behind*

“The world bombards boys with confusing and destructive messages — the net result is the creation of characters instead of young men with character. *Masterminds and Wingmen* will help parents, teachers, and coaches understand young boys and make a difference in their lives. An intriguing read.”

—Dr. Kevin Leman, author of *Have a New Kid by Friday*

From the Hardcover edition.

Clearly this author has done her research, and she brings clarity of thought to her presentation.

There is a lot of excellent perspective both in the subjects chosen and the suggestions given. I am a father and I could feel that she was writing more to a mother, yet that is not problematic for me, the material is strong in itself. A lot of the strength is in the specificity, looking at a particular behavior or situation, and searching out the motivations and how responses by the parent will be seen by the boy. There are many paragraph-long quotations given by boys in response to specific situational questions. They are good for the most part yet some seem to me to be too literate and conceptual to come directly from boys of that age. Without polishing them up. The one glaring absence for me was the failure to feed the boy what he needs to develop in the best way. As an example, empathy for others may be developed or neglected in childhood. And a failure there is of immense importance. To the contrary, the author seems very attuned to viewing the child as a separate being who has needs and merits guidance. But always from the outside. The parent-child interactions are transactional in nature, not developmental.

As one who has worked in Middle and High Schools or over 40 years, I thought I knew lots about boys. How wrong I was. This exceptionally well-researched and written book takes you inside what really motivates boys and how their social structure dictates what they do and how they respond to both peers and adults. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who has felt frustration in their relationships with boys or simply asked "Why?" As a male, I also enjoyed the insights into why I was such a teenage toad, and how I somehow managed to arrive at adulthood in one reasonable piece. You will have lots of chuckles along the way, some "ah ha" moments, and a better road map as to how to successfully survive the boys in your life.

I can't say enough about this book. If you have a loved one (child, grandchild, nephew) who is a teen/preteen boy, you absolutely **MUST** read this. If you are a youth pastor or teacher or scout leader of a teen boy, you absolutely **MUST** read this. I heard about it from a friend, who heard about it through her son's school (in Colorado). The school is doing a series of book club/ discussion groups on this book for parents of boys about to enter middle school. I would love to start a similar parent's discussion group at my son's school! If you think preteen and teen "girls are hard" and that "boys are easy", it is only because we don't know what is going on inside a boy, but their teen years are **JUST AS** tumultuous as girls. The author points out that she isn't writing this so that you can confront your boy and make him talk about everything in the book; rather, her intent is that you gain an understanding and awareness of your son's world to better support him. Just read it!!! You won't be sorry.

Best book ever. Should be required reading for every parent. I plan to read and reread as often as I have time. Probably also a good idea to read the girl version just to better understand young girls even if you don't have one. I may require that book for my boys.

very well written and easy to follow. As a mom of a young boy, this book opened my eyes to his daily challenges. No longer will I think just because he isn't saying anything, means he isn't feeling anything. The author gives very good options for conversations with parent and son. Honestly I will read it again in a few months time to recap anything I may have missed or need to freshen up on communication skills.

I think it is a book that every parent with a son or any person who works with boys in any capacity should read. I have worked with young people most of my life and through various means have learned how much boys are taught not to express what they are really feeling, and how as a culture we have promoted that. In addition drugs, alcohol, and video addiction and other factors contribute to their ability to deaden themselves. Once they learn to open up and be able to be vulnerable to others their whole life can change. Many parents are at a loss on how to do this, and many young people have fathers who never learned either. They want to talk ; they need to talk, and often don't know how. As a parent or any adult in their lives, we can teach them how to do that. There is so much peer pressure as well as pressure from parents to perform, expectations the media sets, and pressure to fit the mold. This book offeres help and insight into the issues our boys face.

I've read Rosalind Wiseman's books for girls and recommend them often to friends. I don't have a Son but thought this book would be great to read as a parent of a Girl to gain insights into Boy World as my daughter is now in Middle School. I think it's very helpful to have an idea of what the teen years are like for boys too in order to provide my daughter with better advice as she starts forming relationships with boys as she gets older. I have downloaded The Guide and plan to read this soon and as my daughter gets older, I may have her read it or parts of it because the Boys' perspective on certain topics may help her handle certain situations better. I would have loved to read a book like The Guide as a teenager to have a better idea of what was going on with the boys around me.

This is a must read for all parents of tweens and teens

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