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## Boys and Role Models

By Ian Lillico

There is no doubt that boys need male role models throughout their lives. Many fathers are role models for their sons even though they may never know it. Boys often *take on* their father's mannerisms, beliefs and thoughts in later life – but often not until into their mid twenties.

Boys who don't have a Dad or who have a distant father will often take on hyper-masculine characteristics as they tend to copy and emulate the *macho* male figures they see on the screen. Many boys who join gangs are crying out for more wholesome male role models and appropriate adult male company and this is tragic in our modern society. Behind many of those tough - looking kids is a gentle, vulnerable boy who doesn't know what males are supposed to be, so wears a mask of coolness and toughness to hide his vulnerability and not get teased or bullied.

Single Mums, however, and female teachers can be non-competitive role models for boys and their impact on the lives of boys has been underestimated. Women teachers assist boys' development of emotional intelligence, can affirm them better than males and help them develop into fine young men. Even though we need a dramatic increase in the number of male teachers for boys and girls, we need to realise that female teachers and Mums do a fantastic job in assisting young men grow into adulthood. We must also not give our women teachers the impression that replacing them with males will *cure the ills* of boys in our Australian society – it won't.

Boys from single-parent Mums are loving and open and grow into well - adjusted young men, generally, as they don't have to compete with a father and therefore grow up faster. They develop their hunter-gatherer-protector characteristics and this helps them develop into adulthood. Some of the difficulties these boys face arises when another male appears on the scene and the boy has to revert to being a child again as males are subtly competitive and hierarchical and place themselves in a *pecking order* with other males in their lives.

Single Mums are very conscious of their son's need for male figures in their life and often manage to find such mentors for their sons. Please assist single Mums to provide role models for their sons by volunteering to include their sons in your family activities, sleep-overs etc as you are assisting in *rearing* our Australian boys and really enriching our Australian society as a result.