

How to Raise Strong Resilient Males Part 1

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:06.7] ANNOUNCER: Next is Dr. Charlene Wrighton to discuss everything early education about your children or students in our new show, Ed. Talks with Dr. Char.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:21.4] CW: Hi, this is Dr. Char Wrighton and I have another topic for you and this is on how to raise strong boys. Now, the last two radio shows I did, how to raise strong girls because in the prior times, we talked about behavior, we've talked about how to help children become — grow and be strong and responsible, et cetera.

I have coffered the topic in many different ways, also academically, physically. There's a lot of aspects to raising strong children. But I really focused on the needs of girls, the last two radio shows and I want to really focus on boys. I actually have talked about boys and their needs many a time because when I talk about Zoo-phonics, I really do, I really do include how important it is, how Zoo-phonics teaches boys just because they're huge need for physicality and imagination and the creativity and all the acting out.

Anything that's [inaudible] in nature. Little boys need that, little girls as well but especially the wiggles. One thing I have not done is I'm not focused just on the issue of raising the strong boys. This really gets into some interesting areas, some that I'm not going to go into strongly. Others, I'm going to spend quite a bit of time on discussing little boys but I'm also going to discuss parental interaction and how critical it is in the growth, you know, the daily growth.

It isn't just projected to adulthood. By that I mean, when I do my research, I was you know, looking at topics because I do research a lot, I want to see what's being said out there by experts who have done longitude studies and also clinical studies and I'm going to share a little bit of that with you. But so often, it's raising strong boys to become men and I want some little boys [inaudible]. We're going to start there because if they're little boys and they're strong now, that means the likelihood of them being strong as adults. That's where we're going to start today.

I want to say that any time I put forward anything on radio show, it certainly is my opinion. My opinion is based on a lot of education and a lot of experience. But by no way I'm not a psychologist, I am me. Because I love education and I love helping children to be the best they can be, I have spent decades and decades, too many of them to even bring up here. Reading about it, studying about it, observing and some experiencing.

I've raised children myself and get to spend time with grandchildren and now we have Safari Learning Academy. I get to see everything first hand. Anyway, anything I put forth, certainly you can argue with, you can ask questions any time, call us, email us. I'd love to hear your thoughts. Okay, if children are mentally, emotionally, and seriously strong and by search landing, believing in something outside of themselves because it's really hard to conquer their will when it's just you out there. Able to handle the challenges of the world.

That again, I mean, the daily, the minute by minute as a two year old, a three year old, as a four year old, as a five year old, as a 16 year old, as 18 year old, that's a 21 year old, you get my drift. It starts young and we're in the process of helping them develop. This is really critical because your influence on them as parents and also preschool teachers and grandparents, you know, my projected audience is always parents, grandparents and preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers.

Is that our influence on them is critical. Now, when we're raising a boy, because we already done the girl thing. This week, it's going to be concentrated and focussed on males. When we're raising a boy, we raise them differently as mothers than we do as dads.

We're going to discuss that because it really is critical. What we want at every age and every age possible because children don't have a lot of what I'm going to mention to you. We want them to have self-control, we want them to be able to self-regulate their behavior and so this is a learning process and takes a lot of patience on your part.

We want them to develop strength and self-control is part of that because it takes a ton of self-control, a ton of strength to have self-control. I'm going to liken that to me in dining. I have great difficulty turning down a cookie when I know that I'm not so sad that in order to lose weight.

That's that self-control, that sometimes escapes me. It escapes two, three and four year old children, five year old children and so on as well. We want to make sure our children are ready to meet the daily demands, again at any age including the very young. The daily demands of a child hitting them, a child biting them, a child grabbing a toy from them, a child calling them a name.

I mean, this is something that continues to happen through high school unfortunately. We want our children to be able to handle it and if they can handle it when they're very young, they're going to be able to handle it when they're older. That is very critical to this discussion. We need to teach them how to listen to adults, to parents, to grandparents, to teachers.

Listen and to mind what from stakeholders who have their best interest at heart, they need to listen and they need to mind parents, teachers, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

We need to teach them to do the right thing and it's doing the right thing, takes inner strength because again, it's just like that cookie analogy when one is dieting, a lot of times, you literally have to say no and in order to say no to your own behavior, you have to have that inner strength and some children just have it automatically and whatever consider getting into trouble and then others are just self-regulation just escapes them all the time.

If we're talking about the full spectrum of male behavior in early stages. Children need to learn how to problem solve. Little boys are naturally problem solvers, they love to get involved with the building and the tearing down of things, they're great at both but they also need to solve problems. If they're building something, say for instance, they're using blocks or train tracks, et cetera, to build a road or a train track and something isn't working, the sense of frustration builds.

We need to teach them how just to keep trying and figure it out and so problem solving is really critical. But also how to deal with the frustration one feels. I know what I feel like when I'm trying to do something on a computer or something technological one is absolutely beyond my imagination and my ability to read manuals, to solve those kind of things.

I feel of frustration that I feel, similar to what any child feels when whatever they're working on doesn't work to their ability. We need to teach them how to bounce back from mistake making or from failure.

This is also critical because these are all things that they'll learn from us and how we treat them and how we interact with them really teaches them if failure is okay, we need to teach children that failure is okay. But we need to also teach them to get up and start all over again.

We need them to be able to cope with hardships, nothing in life is easy quite honestly, you might have a lot of easy days, easy months, even easy years. But somewhere along the line, a pet is going to die, an accident might happen, an injury might happen, a grandparent might die, a friend might die. Life is not easy.

We need to teach our children to be ready for that and to have that ability, that coping mechanism as again, parents are so critical to this stage because they watch how you cope, that's how they cope and how you teach them how to cope is how they're going to cope.

We have a lot of talk right now about toxic masculinity and when I bring it up, I have a tendency to chuckle more about it than anything. I am sure there is, I mean, we all, I don't care what generation you are from, it wasn't named toxic masculinity but we certainly saw it and that's the bully, the people who bully and who are unkind, we know that that's true.

But, as a mom and a grandma and a teacher, I'm concerned that little boys are going to get mixed messages on masculinity and I'm hoping and praying that parents for the most part are going to continue doing what they're doing till they raise strong children. Not dissuade by fear of toxic masculinity and go too far in that direction because that is a concern.

It is definitely a hot political topic, it certainly not my specific focus here at all. We don't want our little boys to deny their emotions, so their feelings, they do feel, they do have emotions but we're going to look at gender and here's where the research comes in. We're going to look at gender and we're going to see how –

Over the last 50 years, gender has been an uncomfortable thing to discuss because we saw that and this is realistic that females, I mean, back to my generation and maybe before my generation, absolutely for sure and a generation before that, women had certain roles, male had certain roles and we certainly have changed that over the last 50 years.

I think that's been a good thing because women and men can choose different career paths, they can certainly choose to be more comfortable with their other interests, et cetera without having to worry about stereotypes, not every person has to be John Wayne is pretty much the point I'm making.

However, we've also been very nervous about discussing genders as we were raising little girls' awareness of their own ability to be anything they wanted, we started pointing them towards the math and the science, because we knew that was an area of that either was not afforded to them, encouraged or allowed.

Now we have more women in medical world for the first time in history than males. More women in the universities than males. That is a huge concern that I have because that men I told you in another radio show that men will be happy to compete and fail against another man.

But to compete against a female and fail, very difficult. So it's just easier, not competing and not trying. That's why we see less men, fewer men in universities et cetera. It's just something that I feel like we need to, as a society, look at and find balance. I mean it's critical to find balance.

What I'm looking for is whatever it takes to raise a male, maybe to be just like my dad or just like my husband, just like that balanced, wonderful, caring, strong, but maybe a strong human being, whether you're a male or a female. We have men who when they're raising their boys, they raise them to be very tough and that's how they were raised. How – to brush, you know, if you're injured, brush it off, toughen up.

Don't cry like a baby, you sound like a little girl and so the comfort becomes demeaning. That tamps down a male's wanting to show emotion or feel emotional or even understand emotion. That is something that certainly I am going to discuss today because there is a balance, that is not imbalance.

Then, the other side of the balance system, females who we don't want rushing in to solve every problem that the child has, that the male has. Never allowed to express himself in his way or to be able to solve the problems in his way. Moms have a tendency at times to be very overprotective and you know, more feeling and you want to take that pain away from the child.

You know what? You just can't always. We can comfort and help them move on from it. There are biological studies, a longitudinal studies where they have looked at the brain really carefully in children and they see that there are absolutely differences between their brains.

That is something that we have to accept and also to take comfort in because I think it really helps us to understand children better. When we have the belief that girls and boys are just alike and there's no difference, then we lose out on the appreciation of the genders, but we also start reacting with them and not understanding them and not appreciating them.

The scientists are saying that boy's brains just have, because of the production, just have more testosterone than girls. That creates this fast moving, tough, conquering, human being that I do believe was put into them, whether you're talking about the spiritual side of life or you're talking about the evolutionary side of life, that was built in to the male, to be the gatherer, the hunter, the provider, like I said the protector, the family protector, that was built in so that they survive.

We had our roles clearly. That hasn't really changed chemically or biologically or organically. Little boys produce more testosterone and it causes more aggression. It causes them to be faster moving, it causes them to be less sensitive. Whether they hurt themselves or whether they hurt another person's feelings, it causes them to be less sensitive and also slower and also a little out of touch with their emotions. These are realities that we parents and teachers have to deal with and also appreciate because there's good in all things.

Even this when, again, I always think of the preschool, the teacher, parent's side of them. They're stepping on our last nerve and we're frustrated and exhausted, we still need to say cute little boys and have that calm and appreciation because that's just the nature of the adorable little beasts.

Because they are indeed wonderful and I just have a heart for them so much. We want to understand, I find this, I chuckle over this. In the frontal lobe of your brain, your forehead, right behind your forehead, that is where you're amygdala and your executive function live. That is your domain and that executive function stops us from doing dumb things.

Whether it's very young in life, all the way through adulthood. Now, in all our whole lives it is that executive function that says don't speed on a rainy day, it's dangerous. There's so many things that we know will hurt us. That is an objective function that says not a good idea. Well males don't fully develop this until they are 25 and where I chuckle a bit and only because of the irony that's five years after being able to drink. They're actually able to drink legally before their executive function is fully developed.

It is nine years after they have been given a driver's license. So think about that one and we know that young girls certainly have their executive function is developed far earlier. Their sense of right and wrong and not necessarily right and wrong because I think that is built in by family and school and society but the ability to control and achieve that right and wrong is definitely different than females and so I think it is really important that little girls can look at facial expressions and body language.

And read them much faster than little boys. I think little boys are moving too fast. They also hear differently and perceive what's been said differently than little boys do. There is an entire book that I read, just all the entire thing was on and it was a big one with little words. Big words little print that was on discussion on how men and women hear and perceive the language differently and it should be and probably is used in marriage counseling because I think it would be really important to know.

Little boys have a tendency to be bulls in china shops when it comes to life. They just plow through because they are all arms and legs and their arms and legs move all the time. So it is very difficult to you got to slow down and concentrate if you want to hear it received and understand. So you know things that I always like you to think about are scenarios, real scenarios that you face every day and that is when you sit down with your little boy and you say to him, "Was it okay to hit your little brother?"

And they shrug, not a lot of eye contact happens and they go, "I don't know," because at that moment they don't know because first of all, they can't really get their thoughts into focus onto what they want to say and they also don't remember things. I mean incidents disappear from their memory banks really fast and they also don't even know how to use sometimes the words to express it.

Now, I would have to say that I have literally for 45 years and it's longer — because my son is over — he is at the 50 year old mark getting there close and so therefore I have all of that experience where dealing with little boys when they make the wrong choice, sitting down there and they don't always say,

“Oh yes mom, dad I was completely wrong. I hit my brother and I shouldn’t have.” They don’t always have that ability to say that especially quickly and so memories surpass behavior as acute as little girls and so we then have to gently.

Again, without demeaning, without putting words in their heads, we have to adjust if they are giving you that “I don’t know,” and they are shrugging their shoulders or they are just completely new looking down, we just have to say, “Okay, let’s strike from a different tact.” And then we have to mention a few things, “Well your brother got hit. How do you think had happened? What do you think hit him?” And start trying to bring memory back a little bit because it is just something that they are not great at.

So much to understand that because it is an adult to understand that way, little boys deal with every day things. Definitely not the way adults do. That is another thing. I do remind dads especially to remember what it was like to be a little boy. I have seen dads become frustrated over and rightly so, be frustrated with something that their child has done and forgetting that they probably did the same thing and more when they were little.

And so as we become adults we forget all the mistakes and the dumb things that we did and the impulsive things that we did constantly, girls too, that we did that we have forgotten and so having that understanding of them is critical because it makes a calmer environment where we as adults are less frustrated and I think that’s really, really important. Little boys have a way of because they are fast moving very aggressive behavior, they have a way and a talent for pounding things and breaking things.

They love to build up, they love to tear down where they’re it doesn’t what it is. The other day I walked up and the boys were sitting around the table and girls were sitting and waiting for they’re going to go out to the playground and so in the meantime, the teacher was giving some of them potty breaks and some of the boys and girls were entertaining themselves at the table. Girls were drawing, everyone had a choice to do what they wanted to do right there at the table.

So the boys had the blocks and the dinosaurs. Girls, we had some drawing. The boys were taking the blocks and creaming out the dinosaur that the other child was holding in his hand, which meant the potential for the child’s hand to be hit by a block was 100% on that one. So I walked up and I said, “You

know, first of all your friend's hand is right there and he might get hurt. Number two, we do not hurt our dinosaurs. They will break and then we will not have nice toys to play with."

"Blocks are meant for building. They are not meant for pounding." So they just looked at me and went. They didn't even say anything, they just left it and they went. I mean I just believed in their heart they went okay and that was it. So you know that was it until my back was turning and the pounding started again but it's just what they do. They have this strong behavior where they need to conquer and so while they're pounding the plastic dinosaur with blue block and say, "Take that dinosaur."

And it is that feeling of strength that comes out in this little T-Rex pounder. In our society and in the past we – and I love John Wayne. I love John Wayne movies but it was that era of men being strong and silent. Don't feel, if you feel don't show your emotions. So over the years, over 50 years, you know the '70s was just a great time for and I don't think great as immoral, it was just a large time. It was a few said time for men to start getting in touch with their feelings.

We had so many different psychological books and classes you can take, etcetera, etcetera. I remember one of my favorite albums that I showed my special ed kids because I loved it, I had Rosey Grier, the Rams NFL huge football player saying "It's okay to cry," he was singing that and it was a wonderful song and I love the song because I too felt that children need to especially little boys but children in general need to be able to cry and show their feelings and so that was really reinforcing to the era that said it is okay to cry and show your feelings.

However then in any and like a pendulum swings in education and psychology and politics obviously. So you go from one extreme to the other and similarly we need to find a balance. We want to make sure that we analyze the child's tears with love in our hearts, understanding in our hearts but it is okay for boys to cry but is it okay for them to tantrum or is it okay for them to cry for longer than a few minutes. So same with the girls. I think that this is the part that has to be looked at.

What is the purpose of the crying? What is it for? Are tears manipulative? Are tears really there to express what the child is feeling? If a child needs to cry, they need to be hugged and they need to be able to let it all out. I remember that when I lost my dad and he had passed on and I was 12, I couldn't

cry for months. I could not cry. I didn't shed a tear. I just went into quiet mode. My family thought I was fine. I don't remember them ever asking me questions about it.

They were all grieving and they are all very involved in their own grief even though we are a very compassionate family and it wasn't until I came home sick to a babysitter's house. She was a dear friend of the family and she just held me and I burst into tears and I cried for a very long time. I let myself so I am not saying put a time limit at that at all. I am just saying just carefully analyze why is the child crying. The last couple of weeks I said that sometimes when my girls would cry I was analyzing it.

And I would ask questions like, "Am I being manipulative with these tears?" Because children learn very early in life to be manipulative with tears because they learn it from babyhood. I cry, I get a breast or I get a bottle. I get picked up, I get a diaper change and so they learn over the years. They have become very, very good. If I cry in the store, mom wants me to be quiet I get my toy and from that point on tears or tantrums can be used for selfish purposes.

That is not the point, it is to express emotions. The point is to relieve stress. Crying is important and I think it definitely has its purpose, however we have to be careful and so also, I feel like we need to analyze with our children the appropriate amount of emotion or tears. Is anyone dying? Is anyone sick? Has the house burned down? You know if it's just I didn't get my toy or I don't want to go to bed or I don't want to brush my teeth or I don't want to eat that vegetable then the crying may not be as appropriate especially any length of it or especially if tantruming is involved.

Is crying for oneself all the time or is it for someone else? We want to build in the emotions where if a person if they are going to cry is because they have a feeling of compassion for somebody else that they are literally feeling something. It's not all about me and because we have more money than we have ever had in a long time, we have a tendency to blast our children out of our socks with things and they get to the point where they are asking for things.

You walk in the door, "Did you buy me a present?" I know grandparents get hit with that a lot. If you go on a trip, "Did you bring me back a present?" And so there's always that you are in a Walmart, "I want, I want, I want." And then it becomes all about me and we are literally from very young, we need to be

moving a child away from that and become other oriented. They will not survive socially in a world if the thought is always on them.

And so becoming me oriented moving to other oriented needs to start very early in life. There are many ways to do that and I will give you a list coming up shortly and then it will also be carried over in next week's radio show. We want to grow strong resilient males to have the courage and the confidence to reach their full potential, to be able to fight depression, suicidal possibilities, loneliness and bullying and also not to be boys. We have more suicide than we have ever had in our existence as a modern society and it is frightening.

The loneliness that people feel, the awkwardness that people feel, the isolation that people feel, it is so painful that people even though they may be loved, children, teenagers, young adults don't have whatever it takes to get through it even though around the corner the doors might be opened and the light might shine and its one of life's tragedies that break our hearts but we again, you grow a child to be strong. You teach a boy to be strong in his own right.

Remember, I did girls the last two weeks so I am now focusing on males, to be so strong in their own right that they can withstand negative comments from their children that maybe they can laugh and tease about it and they can actually dissolve it before it gets anymore, where they build up their inner self that says I can handle this, I can get through this especially when they know they had you there in their corner and that you are there to help support them.

Not to do it for them but to be in their corner. We need to be fully aware of as I said earlier the effects of mom and the effects of dad, they are different. I've said earlier in another radio show that the more time a dad spends with the child, male or female, the higher the child's IQ is. We also know that our children are spend 75 to 85% of the time with their mom and think about this, for a female because it could be a pre-school teacher or a kindergarten teacher.

Because they are primarily in their early education and so we are literally raising our boys to spend more time with females who don't necessarily understand how males think and our males need or how males move, how males need to move, how males need to make noise and to conquer and wiggle and all of

that. So therefore, we need to be first of all dads need to be really involved but we also have to remember that males learn from their parents.

They learn certain things that their moms learned, certain things with their dads and we really need to understand and analyze the effects this has. I have my list. I have 18 things on my list that I am going to share with you next week in a part two, raising sons to be strong and remember if you want to call in, you can call us at Zoo-phonics. You can email me at char@zoo-phonics.com. We love to hear your thoughts and opinions and concerns and questions. Bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

[0:30:33.9] ANNOUNCER: That was Ed. Talks with Dr. Char. You've been listening on KAAD-LP Radio, live on 103.5 FM, or streaming online at kaad-lp.org. If you would like to have Dr. Char answer any of your questions, please e-mail your question to dr_char@zoophonics.com. Thanks for listening and stay tuned for what's next on KAAD-LP Radio.

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