

23 February 2021

# A fine young man

by Michael Grose

“He’s a fine young man, your son.” Imagine how you’d feel if you received this compliment. I suspect you’d feel fantastic as acknowledgement that you’ve raised a fine man is probably the ultimate compliment for any parent of boys.

What traits should a male possess to make this assessment ring true?

My involvement in education and parenting over four decades has brought me close with many males at every stage of development. It appears that some males grow old but never grow up or reach that type of maturity that benefits others and allows them to prosper. Fortunately, many boys do become men who are mature, stable and reliable and it’s this model as a society that we need to set our sights on.

There are a number of traits that mature men have in common that are worth noting as we move our boys toward mature manhood. The following traits are the mark of a mature man, but by no means is it a complete list.

## Gentleness

The twentieth century saw manhood associated with strength, toughness and hardiness. Two world wars saw the rise of the myth that a male couldn’t cut the mustard unless he was strong, tough and hardy. Hollywood and the celebrity culture it birthed helped perpetuate this image starting way back with Marlin Brando in the ‘50s and Clint Eastwood in the ‘70s. Gentleness has been seen as a weakness for too long, which is the antithesis of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century notion that a man should always strive to be a ‘gentleman’.

Gentleness comes from confidence and mental assuredness. A gentle man is in control of his emotions and feels comfortable with the full gamut of sadness, anger, love and hope. A gentleman acts kindly and is guided by a mindset of caring, empathy and contribution.

## Generosity

A measure of majority is seen by how much a person can give of themselves to others. A generous man will help others, support and guide others without the wish for compensation.

Maturity also is shown when a person gives of themselves fully in a relationship, whether in friendship or an intimate relationship. Sadly, too many men hold back their thoughts and true feelings and look inward rather than outward with both their friends and life partners. Maturity only happens when a man realises that life is not about him, but about something greater.

## Discipline

A mark of a mature man is shown through his ability to put up with short-term pain or discomfort for long-term gain. Whether it's an athlete sweating it out on the track, a student giving up a night out with mates to study for an exam or a father forgoing a weekend away so he can be at his child's birthday, the ability to forgo short-term pleasure takes discipline and self-control.

Discipline, conscientiousness and self-control are required to develop the habits and patterns of behaviour that contribute to a man's long-term healthy development. Boys often struggle to see past the immediate moment, whereas a mature man can look ahead and stick a plan, even though the journey may be long and difficult.

## In closing

The world wants men to grow up, see maturity as worthwhile and take the necessary steps to achieve it. As you point your son toward manhood, make gentleness, generosity and discipline the guideposts to aim for. These traits won't limit his freedoms, but expand his possibilities as he develops into a fine young man.