



# 5 Critical Needs of Boys

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# Introduction

Boys are getting a tough break. Here are a few headlines you may have seen:

**Seventh Grader Suspended for “Liking” Photo of Airsoft Gun on Instagram (The Daily Wire, May 8, 2017)**

**California Elementary School Bans Kids From Playing “Tag” (Washington Times, May 14, 2017)**

**Common Core is Taking Away Kids’ Recess—And That Makes No Sense (Forbes, January 15, 2015)**

**What One Boy’s Story Tells Us About Video Game Addiction (Huffington Post, February 19, 2017)**

Recess is going or gone. “Tug of war” is now called “Tug of Peace.” Red Rover, Dodge Ball, and Tag are disappearing because we are told these games can “... undercut emotional development and create an environment of resentment.”<sup>1</sup>

Can you imagine how confusing being a boy is today? Boys are paying a price for the simple circumstance of being boys.

The Department of Education tells us that they are:

- 3 times more likely to be enrolled in Special Education.
- 4 times more likely to be diagnosed ADHD.
- Outnumbered 2-to-1 in top-senior rankings.

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Murphy, physical education teacher at Tobin Elementary School in Sandy Coleman, “Dodgeball Sparks Debate in Schools,” *Dayton Daily News*, April 3, 2001.



Because we are removing the reality of outdoor competitive rough-and-tumble boy-friendly play, we are driving boys inside to a virtual reality that parks them in front of a video game while starving them of real-world competition, fresh air, and normal peer interaction.

Being a male is not some sort of social disease that needs to be eradicated. In fact, the need for boy-specific activities and mentoring that provides challenge and reward has never been greater! Properly channeled and intentionally challenged, the drive and daring of healthy boys is exactly what's responsible for much of what is right with society when these boys become determined, focused, and winning men.

Who will stand up for them? Who will reinforce the values and activities it takes to develop strong Christian citizens, husbands, and fathers? More and more adults who understand this challenge are committing to providing boys with essentials to succeed in this contrary culture. Entire organizations are being founded and growing exponentially because they are accepting the challenge to reverse this dangerous trend.

Trail Life USA is one of those organizations. Here's what we find is working in lifting boys back to their potential:

# #1



# COMPASS

## **Boys need a compass.**

In the confusion of cultural relativism, mixed roles, and gender fluidity, boys need a solid point of perspective from which to begin. Messages have never been more mixed than they are today.

If boys don't know where they are and where they are headed, they will either choose their own course or opt out of moving at all. They are attracted to the gaming environment because the rules are clear.

For Trail Life USA, its biblical foundation secures a "true north" that doesn't shift with every new idea or construct.

**Give a boy a clear direction.**



# #2

# MAP

## **Boys need a map.**

A map is evidence that someone has gone before you to spy out the land, experience the trail, and note difficult sections. Although there is a great deal of value in permitting new discovery, there is confidence instilled in boys when they get a sense of what is ahead from someone who has been there.

Puberty, peer pressure, and typical insecurities are all challenges that can paralyze a boy if the future is unclear.

Trail Life USA provides the opportunity for background-checked, child safety and youth protection-trained, and passionate adult volunteers to lead boys.

This is an especially powerful influence in the lives of boys that don't have an engaged father in the home. Single moms embrace this opportunity for their sons, and see them grow in maturity and confidence before their eyes.

**Give a boy a safe male mentor.**



# #3

# GUIDE

## **Boys need a guide.**

As valuable as a mentor is, boys also need someone on the trail ... a peer to walk alongside through the challenges. They need to hone leadership skills that will set them on a lifelong course to make good decisions, absent negative peer pressure.

Unfortunately, for many boys, the closest they get to being led by peers is through a gang. They are attracted to that environment because there is a bond and loyalty that is absent in other areas of their lives. They test themselves against one another, learn how to negotiate, compete, and lead – all skills that could benefit them if the objectives were admirable. Still, they hunger for this type of challenge.

Trail Life USA's Troop and Patrol structure gives boys the opportunity to grow with boys who share their values, providing them with accountability under the watchful eye of their leaders. The unique Patrol setting allows them to experience leading other boys of their same age or younger. The robust awards and challenge of the outdoors lets them develop strengths and abilities that distinguishes them from their peers in a healthy way as they grow in self-esteem.

**Give a boy the opportunity to lead and be led by peers in a supportive environment.**

# #4

## FLASHLIGHT

### **Boys need a flashlight.**

For a boy looking for truth and a glimpse at who he can be, these are dark times. A shifting sense of one's place in the future is a dark one; it robs boys of incentive and the ability to develop mature skills such as delayed gratification and a sense of cause-and-effect.

Boys take great comfort in firm, fair, and consistent guidelines, and anticipated reward. They may test the guidelines, but they want to know their expectations will hold.

Trail Life USA's clear objectives and emphasis on the unchanging Word of God as a light for their path gives them the daily counsel necessary for navigating an unsure future.

**Give a boy a solid sense of boundaries  
and a glimpse at who he can be.**



# #5



## MOUNTAIN

### **Boys need a mountain.**

If we fail this generation, it won't be because we over-challenged them. It will be because we under-challenged them.

Boys love an outdoor challenge in structured environments. "Tell me who's with me, who's in charge, and what our mission is," they say. If the answer is unclear, they will create this structure in a way that looks like rebellion, resistance, or apathy. Or, they'll find a virtual world where they can find conquest and excel.

Trail Life USA provides a robust awards program and outdoor adventure that feeds the desire to be challenged and to accomplish something significant; not just a "participation trophy" or empty progression toward the next "game level."

**Give a boy a real-world challenge.**

# Conclusion

## Boys are getting a tough break.

As more and more responsible adults value the healthy maturation of boys, society is sure to be impacted as generations are touched by these deep and essential principles.

Help a boy or get behind an organization that does.

Yes, it's that important.



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