

Promoting your son's emotional intelligence
No more "Mr. Tough Guy"

There's a new generation of fathers out there, with an opportunity to put an end to the "tough guy" culture that still exists for men and boys. This opportunity demands that we show the courage and resolve necessary to break the cultural stereotypes that are still dominant today.

Here are five ways to help your son to be more emotionally intelligent:

1. **Show physical affection to your son.** Hug him, as well as other men that you care for. Show him that men can show love for each other. Research shows that boys who receive physical affection from their fathers are happier, healthier, smarter, etc. If you're squirming, you're a good candidate for this one!
2. **Have enough involvement in your son's life to know who else might be reinforcing the "old school" style.** This could include teachers, coaches, other family members, etc. If necessary, intervene, model your "new generation" style, and help set new guidelines.
3. **Reinforce your son's knowledge of emotions.** Help him identify what he's feeling. When you say, "You seem really sad right now," you help him to identify the feeling, and to "own it."
4. **Judge people less and empathize more.** Instead of saying, "What a jerk he is!" you can say, "He seems to be really angry right now." Being kind and loving yourself will create a clear path for your son.
5. **Keep examining how you raise your son.** Do you push him away emotionally, or shame him when he's showing signs of "weakness?" Continually monitor your responses to his behavior, and if possible, have a third party that watches your interactions as well.

The prevailing cultural ideas about manhood have done a great deal of harm to the development of strong, sensitive, and nurturing men. The responsibility of fathers today is to be aware of these cultural myths, and to show their sons a new path.

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Hawai'i Coalition for Dads

Promoting involved, nurturing, responsible fatherhood

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