



We can learn from elephants whose young males need the influence of adult males

Boys are different than girls! On average, boys are more physically active, more aggressive and less compliant. They are less likely to express themselves verbally, and are more distractible. The aggression needs to be channeled into sports and other supervised outlets. They need to have clear rules and boundaries, and they have a deep attraction to the heroic, and they want to know that their lives have meaning.

The National Fatherhood Initiative recounts the true story of a group of younger male elephants who were transferred to a wildlife game preserve in Africa, away from the bull elephants. The juvenile elephants began marauding in bands, attacking and killing other animals. It was only after a group of adult males were brought to the preserve that the delinquent behavior stopped. The older males began to discipline the younger ones, who quickly fell into line. The lesson: boys need the presence of positive adult males who give them the opportunity to express their maleness and desire for meaning in ways that don't involve hero worship of hip hop stars or Adolph Hitler.

Many mentees have adults in their lives who are themselves morally challenged, involved in substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, domestic violence and other negative or criminal activities. Mentors may be the only role models who can not only demonstrate, but discuss and encourage positive and ethical values.

