

25 Rules For Raising Feminist Boys

 scarymommy.com/raising-feminist-boys/

03/02/2015



Christine Organ

- [Share](#)

“If you want something in life, you need to put yourself in a position to provide those things for *yourself*,” my dad said to me about 20 years ago. “Don’t count on anyone to provide them for you.”

We had been standing next to each other finishing up the dinner dishes — he dried while I put them away — and he was likely responding to some whiny teenage request for a purse or new shoes or a pair of Guess jeans. Whether intentionally or not, with those words, my dad gave me my first lesson in feminism: Be independent, take control of your life, and be the master of your own fate. And just as importantly, he was reaffirming his confidence in me as a capable, competent and self-reliant person, just as worthy of respect and opportunities as anyone else.

As parents, we are constantly teaching our children *something* — whether it is what to do or not do, what is important and what is not, how we feel about ourselves and what we think about the world around us. And because these little lessons have a way of leaking out, in dribs and drabs and whether we realize it or not, it is important, I think, to constantly remind ourselves of our own ideals, values and intentions so that these are the lessons that come through.

Despite the fact that on the outside our family looks like something straight from a 1950s sitcom (my husband works and I stay at home with our young children), I am without qualification a feminist for the simple reason that I believe in equality. And though I have two sons (no daughters), it is no less essential that my children learn what feminism is and, perhaps even more importantly, how feminism and gender equality play out in the world around them.

Women aren't the only ones impacted by gender inequality — we *all* are — and it is up to my husband and me to do everything we can to combat the never-ending siege of stereotypes, biases, and inequality that society throws at children from even a very young age. It is up to us to ensure that the lessons of feminism and gender equality (and all kinds of equality, for that matter) are so deeply rooted in our family's core that they leak out slowly and constantly — during play dates and in sports and, yes, in the kitchen while we put away the dinner dishes.

There is no shortage of lists on feminist lessons for our daughters, but, while many things on these kinds of lists are universally applicable, as a mom to boys, I wanted to find something that related more specifically to the issues that I am facing (or expect to face) with my sons. Coming up short, I did what any independent woman would do — I came up with my own list for raising feminist boys...

1. Feminism does not mean feminine. It means equality.
2. Being a boy doesn't mean you can't be a feminist. Neither does liking sports and burgers and action movies. Just like wearing jewelry and makeup, taking my husband's last name and getting manicures don't make me any less of a feminist.
3. It's OK to cry. But as with all expressions of emotion, take care to do so in a responsible and respectful way.
4. Be friends with girls.
5. Girls can like trucks, superheroes and Stars Wars, just like boys can like princesses, tea parties and My Little Pony.
6. The phrases "like a man" and "like a girl" hold no real meaning. Ignore them.
7. Be strong AND sensitive; the two are not incompatible.
8. Your penis does not give you special privileges. It is simply part of your anatomy. It makes you human, with all of the pleasures and obligations that the human experience offers.
9. Hold doors open for women. And men, for that matter. Not because of any sexist traditions, but simply **because holding the door is kind and polite**. It is just good manners. For the same reason, push in your chair and put the toilet seat down.
10. A girl might look pretty, attractive, cute and sexy, but true BEAUTY comes from within.
11. Pay for dinner and buy her flowers. Not because that will make her more likely to want sex or fall in love; do it just because it is the nice thing to do. (And if I had daughters, I would also tell them to offer to pay for dinner and to buy him flowers because, again, it is a nice thing to do.)
12. Have sex when you are both ready. Not because your friends are having sex. And not because your hormones are going all haywire inside of you. But because you are physically and emotionally ready to handle sex and its aftermath.
13. "No" means no. Silence also means no. And even "maybe" means no. **Only "yes" means yes.**
14. Surround yourself with people who invite you to be your best self. Be wary of people who want to change you.
15. Equal work deserves equal pay; equal pay requires equal work. It's just that simple.
16. Your gender does not define you. Neither does your job or car or bank account. Be kind and brave, be a good friend and a hard worker and treat everyone with respect — those are the qualities that will define you.

17. If you get married one day, your spouse may or may not take your last name. Neither choice has anything to do with how much she (or he) loves you.
18. There are more ways to provide for your family than financially.
19. If you should one day have a family, make your child care decisions based on one thing only: What is best for the family. Consider the financial, professional, emotional, psychological and other factors involved, all of which might change over time. Maybe you share financial obligations associated with raising a family and you both work outside of the home, then share in the household and child care obligations as well. And if you decide that one parent will stay home with the children, don't be afraid to step up to the plate. Being a stay-at-home parent is hard but good work, regardless of its lack of a paycheck.
20. Even though most commercials and just about every sitcom on television will send messages to the contrary, men are capable of making the bed, doing the laundry, changing diapers and tending to other household chores and child-rearing tasks.
21. Don't be afraid to apologize. It is not a sign of weakness, but a brave act of courage and strength.
22. Never take for granted the privileges you have — whether financial, educational, racial, cultural or otherwise — and continue to fight for the rights of those who do not enjoy the same privileges.
23. Be sensitive, empathetic and compassionate.
24. There may be differences between the sexes — just like there are differences between all people. This is a good. Do your best not to over-generalize. And don't be afraid of the differences; celebrate them.
25. Remember these lessons, not necessarily because any person or group of people needs protection or special treatment, but simply because they are essential for fairness, equality and respect. They can, I hope, change the world — one small step at a time.

Related post: [10 Things Moms of Boys Must Do](#)