

Cultural Realities...

# ...enter the forbidden zone...

A few years ago, I was called to discuss an incident at a secondary school where a Grade 9 boy had been caught in the male washroom with a Grade 8 girl who was providing oral sex while two other boys watched and waited their turn.

You will likely not be surprised with the BC 2003 **McCreary Centre Survey** results: 7% of 13 year-olds, 21% of 15 year-olds, and 43% of 17 year-olds had

s e x u a l  
intercourse in  
the past year. It  
also discovered  
that 24% of  
sexually active



youth use no protection or birth control methods.

As some adolescents try to negotiate their sexuality while maintaining their virginity they may turn to practices such as rainbow parties, and wearing sex bracelets to advertise how far they will go. Without parent and teacher input, teens are left with the ever-powerful presence of media or peer groups to guide their sexuality.

Boys are flooded with distorted messages that seek to sexualize them at increasingly earlier ages. The attitudes of today's easily accessed and brutal pornography, which makes the groundbreaking 1972 X-rated film *Deep Throat* look tame, seep insidiously into the language, fashion, and actions of our boys.

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**Boy Smarts - Mentoring Boy for Success at School**  
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Mixed messages also exist about drug, alcohol, and use of other substances. Nearly 50% of parents do not regularly talk to their children about substance misuse. Perhaps this is because many of these parents were themselves smoking the much milder pot of 20 or 30 years ago, or they were so removed from the drug scene as adolescents that they cannot relate today.

Parents may lack confidence in their message and their methods to explore drug issues with their boys. To make matters worse, even th-

ose parents who are telling their boys to avoid drugs are being drowned out by a society that supports its use. Just consider the winks and nods that world-class basketball stars receive who are renowned for smoking marijuana (commonly called weed among youth). Research tells us, however, that while it is no guarantee, frank and non-judgmental talk with boys about avoiding drugs will reduce the likelihood of their using drugs to self medicate.

Although boys need plenty of private space and want to independently solve life's dilemmas, they need plenty of adult input and guidance. Don't shun the topics of sex, drugs, and other risky behaviours at home or school. Even though boy culture tends to prefer superficial bantering to serious discussion of the forbidden zone, boys need caring adults to invite them into this territory with frankness—not preachiness. • • • • •