

# MENTORING BOYS with Barry MacDonald

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As you know, Teresa Harris and I run Go Girl!, an empowerment workshop for girls. We've received overwhelming support from parents, counsellors and educators, but almost always, the inevitable question is asked: WHAT ABOUT BOYS?

As a result, I am always on the look out for good resources for boys, parents of boys and professionals who work with boys. I've yet to find a Go Boy! program, but I'd like to share some information about the educational and counseling work of Barry MacDonald, an expert on boys.

MacDonald, a clinical counselor and international presenter and consultant, is Langley's program coordinator for at-risk students. He spoke recently in the Lower Mainland, and has a private counseling practice in the Surrey Area.

MacDonald's website, [www.mentoringboys.com](http://www.mentoringboys.com), not only gives a detailed description of the services he offers, but provides lists of helpful resources for parents and others who have boys in their

life in the form of website links and articles. He also discusses the challenges that boys face when it comes to expressing themselves in a healthy way and coping with their struggles. For example, he notes that boys, and most men, assume that crying implies weakness. As a result, they experience pent up emotions and at risk of exploding in the form of violent behavior or other forms of acting out. He stresses that boys need strong male mentors to teach them that being male does not mean just being an athlete. Boys need more help than we think.

MacDonald also offers some tips for parents as to how they can help their boy. These include:

1. Make sure he knows you appreciate his gifts, strengths and talents.
2. Be physically active and involved in doing something while discussing sensitive issues with your boy. Movement helps the brain to process emotions.
3. Be careful with your eye contact and follow the boys' lead.
4. Talk less—be careful not to re-explain yourself too much. Be brief and to the point and wait.
5. If your boy expresses tears, follow his lead—notice whether he wants a hug or whether he'd prefer distance.
6. By encouraging your boy to have the confidence to share his problems and express his world, you will help to relieve the pressure that drive so many young men to the point of depression and despair.

So, again, the website is [www.mentoringboys.com](http://www.mentoringboys.com).