

Are You Raising a Mama's Boy or a Daddy's Girl?

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Whether you are a single parent or married, you could be raising your sons to be mama's boys and your daughters to be daddy's girls without realizing it. Because so many of us in the world today are mama's boys and daddy's girls ourselves, we cannot help but raise our children to be the same as us. Even though the term "mama's boy" carries unhappy connotations and the term "daddy's girl" carries neutral or happy connotations, there are positives and negatives to these classifications. Understanding the difference can assist you in bringing greater balance and happiness to your own adult life as well as to the lives of your children!

As we define it, a mama's boy is a man who has never left the sphere of influence of his mother. All kinds of masculine personality types can be mama's boys. It isn't a denigrating term here, not at all. For many generations, even as far back as World War II; our lives have been changing at such a high speed that growing numbers of families have not had the luxury of fathers inviting sons to enter their own masculine sphere of influence. In the western world today, men who go hunting do so for sport. There is no longer a necessity to take sons through the rite of passage of learning to hunt in order to provide the family with food. Some families still do, but they are not in the majority.

In today's world, sports do not stand much of chance of being a rite of passage between fathers and sons. When both parents need to have jobs or careers to make ends meet, children get whichever parent is available at games, if either is available.

Of course, fathers inviting sons into their masculine sphere of influence goes beyond rites of passage. You will read more about that in a moment.

These days, so much is asked of women in the world that it seems a kindness to allow a daughter to be daddy's girl, in as much as daddy's girls are some of the most effective and productive individuals around! Nevertheless, when a daughter accepts the invitation into her mother's feminine sphere of influence, she gains access to a feminine centeredness from which she can draw to find fulfillment from within as long as she lives.

Likewise, when a son accepts the invitation into his father's masculine sphere of influence, he gains access to masculine potency from which he can draw to find personal power from within as long as he lives.

When we, as adults, are second, third, and fourth generation mama's boys and daddy's girls ourselves, how do we help our sons enter the sphere of influence of their fathers and our daughters enter the sphere of influence of their mothers? Furthermore, when there are so many single parents out there today, how do single mothers assist their sons and single fathers their daughters?

To begin with, let's look at the consequences for mama's boys and daddy's girls in relationships. If you are a mama's boy or daddy's girl, these will be familiar to you.

Mama's boys, having never left the sphere of influence of their mothers, believe they get their power from outside themselves. They seek power from the women in their lives either by pushing against them or by pulling on them or a combination of both. Mama's boys can be either bullies or soft, compliant males or anything in between those two extremes.

As boys grow into men, mama's boys have complicated relationships with all the women in their lives because they do not know how to get their power from within themselves. The well of masculine potency that they could have gotten from their fathers and grandfathers is missing.

Daddy's girls, having never left the sphere of influence of their fathers to return to the sphere of influence of their mothers, believe they find fulfillment in life outside themselves. They believe that they find fulfillment through taking care of the men in their lives. Daddy's girls can be either bullying or submissive or anything in between those two extremes.

As girls grow into women, daddy's girls have complicated relationships with all the men in their lives because they do not know how to find fulfillment within themselves. The well of feminine centeredness that they could have gotten from their mothers and grandmothers is missing.

There are things parents can do to make a difference for their children when they realize they themselves are mama's boys and daddy's girls and that they are raising mama's boys and daddy's girls. First, we will list how parents can make a difference for their children when both parents are actively raising the children. Then, we will explore how single parents can make a difference for their children.

The time for a boy when he benefits from the invitation to the sphere of influence of his father and for a girl when she benefits from the invitation to the sphere of influence of her mother is between the ages of ten and fourteen. As we have discussed, if the invitation isn't given or received, the son remains in the sphere of influence of his mother and the daughter in the sphere of influence of her father. This invitation isn't something that happens once. It occurs repeatedly in both organic and intentional ways.

Ideally, for a young man to enter into the sphere of influence of his father:

- The father will be physically available.

- The father will be emotionally available.

- The father will be able to see the son as a man.

- The mother will honor and respect the father and masculinity in general.

- The mother will release the son to the father.

Ideally, for a young woman to enter the sphere of influence of her mother:

The mother will be physically available.
The mother will be emotionally available.
The mother will be able to see the daughter as a woman.
The father will honor and respect the mother and femininity in general.
The father will release the daughter to the mother.

The breakdown for parents most frequently occurs in the aspect of seeing their children as men and women and in the aspect of honoring the masculine and feminine.

Adult mama's boys have much difficulty honoring femininity in general even as adult daddy's girls have much difficulty honoring masculinity in general. If you suspect you are raising mama's boys and daddy's girls then it is highly likely you are that yourself. Therefore, since honoring the masculine or feminine will be a stretch for you, simply become intentional about developing the practice of honoring the masculine and feminine.

In addition, adult mama's boys and adult daddy's girls have a tendency to project their issues with their parents onto their children. This is why it is difficult to see your children as men and women, even when their entry into adulthood is obvious. Again, setting the intention and following through with action that helps you see them as your children and as the young men and women they are growing into is important.

For single parents, you will stretch yourselves even further. For whatever reason your spouse is no longer in the picture and to whatever degree he or she does or doesn't participate in parenting; your children need the freedom to have an invitation to enter that parent's sphere of influence. The ways you can help are the very things that will stretch you and cause you to grow in ways perhaps unfathomable until now!

If you are a single mother of sons, you can create a special place in the house to honor your sons' father. Hang his picture there. Have some masculine articles that reflect his interests, heritage, and/or ancestors. If you do not have a photograph of the man, perhaps he could be represented through a picture of a bird or animal. The picture would serve as a totem. A wolf, a bear, or an eagle comes to mind as honorable, masculine symbols. You can create a physical space as well as a space within yourself where you allow your sons' father to exist. After all, he will always exist in them.

If you are a single father of daughters, you can do the same kind of thing. Whatever it takes to create a space in your home and inside yourself where their mother is honored and respected creates the opportunity for your daughters to enter the feminine sphere of influence.

If your "ex" isn't a worthy parent, then this task becomes an even bigger stretch. There is a saying that what you resist, persists. If you have been in the habit of demonizing your "ex," then one or more of your children will surely follow his or her example. You attract that reality every time you make your "ex" the bad one. It will take even more

creativity, imagination, and intention to create the space to honor him or her as well as the corresponding masculine or feminine sphere of influence.

Ultimately, we each have two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and so forth. As much as possible, create your children having access to both parents' spheres of influence as organically, naturally, and imaginatively as possible. Children choose to be either mama's boys or daddy's girls from love. They take on these roles because, even as infants, they sense a void in the family that they try to fill. It is an honorable thing they are attempting to achieve.

Your efforts to create the space for them to potentially choose to be father's sons and mother's daughters means you are offering as much balance and wholeness as possible. In the end, the choice is theirs.

As you work through this, you will find out for yourself that you now have more choices in how you relate to others. If you are a daddy's girl, you may realize one day that you are no longer trying to take care of the men in your life to fill the void. You are making more time for yourself and exploring your mother's sphere of influence even if you are in your twenties or thirties or any age. If you are a mama's boy, you may find you turn within to find your power and no longer invite women to either boss you around or acquiesce to you. You too explore your father's sphere of influence. Suddenly, there is a completely new way to relate to everyone!

What you experience as a surge of newness in relationships can be something your children grow up with as normal, whether they choose to be mama's boys or father's sons, daddy's girls or mother's daughters.

You love them. This article gives you the ability to offer them options they may not have had previously. Having options lends itself to balance and wholeness.

Authors' bios: Joseph and Sarah Elizabeth Malinak are the authors of the definitive book on mama's boys and daddy's girls, "Getting Back to Love," <http://www.GettingBacktoLove.com> (FREE DVD when you order). It specifically addresses how parents can assist their children in having greater balance and wholeness, even as it primarily helps couples create greater balance and wholeness in their marriages and partnerships.