



5 THINGS WE'RE LEARNING ABOUT BOYS AND CONNECTION

"I'm fine" is rarely a full sentence

They have realised emotional language costs them socially. They're not refusing to talk, they're managing risk. The boys who open up need to trust who they are sharing with.

Connection happens side by side

Boys tend to bond through shared activity, not direct conversation. Walking side by side, the kick of a footy, packing up or doing jobs, these are important moments. Sit-down talks often shut things down. Side-by-side activity opens them up.

Friends become the mirror

A boy's sense of who he is starts shifting from "what my family thinks of me" to "what my mates think of me." This isn't a loss of values, it's a developmental milestone. Schools that name this transition for parents see less panic and more curiosity.

One adult changes everything

Decades of research on boys' resilience keep landing on the same finding: a single trusted non-parent adult (a teacher, coach, uncle, mentor) is one of the strongest protective factors we know of.

Not words. Behaviour!

A boy who's struggling rarely says, "I'm struggling." He withdraws, gets louder, picks fights, loses interest, or disappears into a screen. The behaviour is the communication. The question worth asking is "what's he trying to tell us?"

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