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Opening extract from

Being a Boy

Written by

James Dawson

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FOR MUM



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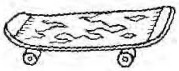
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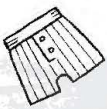


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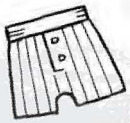
BEING A BOY IS HARD

It's harder to be a girl because they have to push enormous babies out of a very small hole and also because we live in a pretty sexist world run almost exclusively by rich men.

Putting that to one side, it's still really hard to be a boy. In some ways it's harder than being a girl because, unlike boys, girls are encouraged to share and talk about their problems, for the most part.

In fact to the male outsider, when girls go through puberty, they are apparently inducted into what seems to be a secret sorority – the mysterious 'clubhouse' of womanhood that men cannot enter, because we do not have periods. That's fine – by the way, if your bits are bleeding, you must see a doctor NOW – but the sad fact is, that there isn't a similar 'club' for boys where we can talk about our worries and about our bodies. For girls, it's okay to share these things in glossy magazines and chat about them in online forums or at sleepovers. But, as it is generally assumed that boys are tough and don't have emotions you may feel that you are rather left to fend for yourself.

You are about to enter, or already are within, a super-weird time in your life. EVERYTHING is about to change both inside as your body tumbles through puberty, and out, as your relationships take on a sexyfun new







twist. While many girls are able to guide each other through this minefield, boys are often programmed from an early age to be STRONG and TOUGH and HARD, so we don't really talk about these changes.

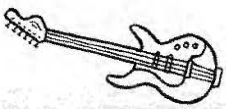
Sadly, it is pretty much what society expects of boys. Sitting down and having a long conversation about what's happening to your cock is likely to be interpreted in one of two ways:

1. YOU ARE GAY.
2. YOU ARE MENTALLY ILL.

You might be neither, one or both of these things, but the fact is that WHOEVER you are, your body is going through an awful lot of changes and this can be really scary. It's fine to admit this – it won't stop you being STRONG, TOUGH and HARD. In fact, speaking up, reading this book and being honest make you pretty effing brave.

Let's say you're with your chums and some loudmouth is bragging about something sexual and in your head, you're like 'what?'. But you can't say 'what do you mean?' without looking like a MASSIVE, MASSIVE VIRGIN. If you don't feel comfortable talking to any of the adults in your life, you might never find out and could end up really worrying about sex stuff. Sure, the Internet has loads of information, but it's hard to find in-amongst all the naked ladies that pop up when all you wanted to find out was if masturbation will kill you.

That said, it's possible you have a great man in your life like a dad, uncle or big brother who can guide you through the weird stuff that's





going on, but these are difficult conversations to have. It doesn't even need to be a guy. Mums, sisters, aunts and other women are pretty good at puberty chat too but no one really likes talking about pubes, anal sex, spunk, porn and the location of the clitoris – least of all your dad when he mainly just wants to wash the dishes and have a relaxing poo in peace.

With this in mind, I have set out to answer every question you might have about your body, sex and relationships. For a long time I was a teacher and I specialised in PSHCE (personal, social, health and citizenship ed) so I taught an awful lot of sex education. This experience means I no longer have ANY SHAME so am more than happy to discuss bums, willies and lady-gardens. I am also someone who was a boy and is now a man. I more or less survived this transition.

This book will hopefully act as an ice-breaker that will allow you and the adults in your life to have a frank and honest chat about sex. If you're not in a 'let's all liberally share muesli' kind of family that's also fine and, with any luck, this book will answer all those questions you were scared to ask plus a few you didn't even know you had. Hopefully, you'll think it's funny sometimes, too. Let's face it, there is nothing funnier than a penis, so we may as well laugh about it.



BOYS AND GIRLS

If you've come to this book thinking it's a manifesto of BOYS ARE BETTER THAN GIRLS, then you are sadly mistaken. There's none of that here. In fact, I pretty much think that girls and boys are EQUAL and THE SAME in nearly every way, other than a few bits of body.

Seriously – how are we different? Are women shorter than guys? No, not always. Are they smarter? No, not always. Are they stronger, braver, tidier, funnier? Are you getting the picture?

But we DO live in a rather sexist society. This sexism is pretty much baked into our world, so it's going to take YOU and your generation an awful lot of hard work to clear out the rot. Because people in suits want to SELL YOU THINGS they try to do it based on the most basic of criteria – your gender.

So from before you are even born, everything comes in pink and blue. Advertising screamed to you and your parents: 'THIS IS WHAT BOYS WANT! THIS IS WHAT BOYS LIKE!'. Before you know it, you have some things for boys: toy guns; skulls; snakes; football; murder; pirates and BLUE. While girls and their folks get bombarded with: kittens; petals; snowflakes; horses; cupcakes; ballet and PINK.



If by some quirk you happen to be one of the MILLIONS of boys who don't like the items listed then society could make you feel like a freak and you may well have to pretend you like certain things to fit in.

It's about to get complicated now. Are you sitting comfortably? We can never know if it actually *feels* different to be 'male' or 'female', but I know this – we are only 'male' because a doctor said so when we were born. You might be sitting there, reading this, thinking that you don't feel very 'male' even though you have boy bits. This is super-common, by the way.

The Gender Question

Some boys want to be girls. Some girls want to be boys. Some boys and girls do something about this and CHOOSE their gender identity, sometimes permanently with hormone treatment or surgery, sometimes temporarily. You might hear this being called 'transgender', 'trans' or 'genderqueer'.

I think this is a very brave thing to do because most of society wants you to be MALE or FEMALE and would like you to stay that way, thank you very much.

In the eyes of most people, you get only TWO options. This is why gender is so poo, because even bloody POPCORN comes in sweet, salty and butter! There is still such a terrible lack of understanding by most people of what it means to be male or female.

We're all HUMAN. What if we were just one big gang of equal humans? I think that would be much nicer. We all want the same things – happiness, warmth, love, laughter, sex, chips and ice-cream. The biological stuff is different for obvious reasons – but as you'll see later a lot of the relationship advice is identical for both boys and girls. If you are treating your female friends differently to your male friends, I'd politely suggest there is something wrong there.

Being a boy doesn't make you superior or even that different to girls. Got that? Brilliant.

Of course, your way of being a boy will be different to the guy sitting next to you. His way will be different to the person next to him. There are infinite ways of being a boy and they are ALL okay.

