

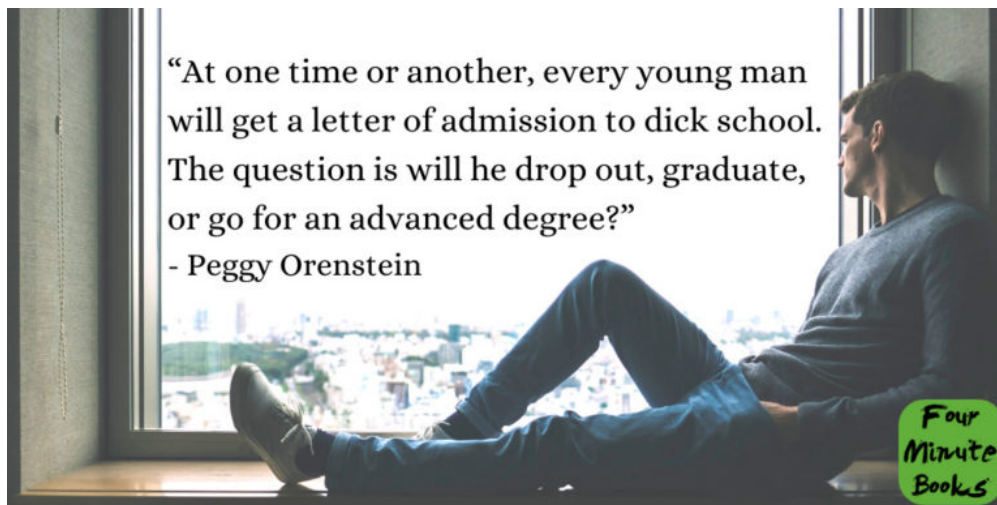
# Boys & Sex Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Boys & Sex* shares the best insights that Peggy Orenstein had after two years of asking young men about their sex lives, including why stereotypes make life harder for them, how hookup culture is destroying relationships, and what we as a society can do to help these boys have better, healthier views about and experiences with sex.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Getting a teenage boy to open up about pretty much anything is a challenge. And when it comes to talking about something as taboo as sex, it seems almost impossible. Nonetheless, journalist Peggy Orenstein was able to get hundreds of boys to open up about their sex lives.

In her book, *Boys and Sex: Young Men on Hookups, Love, Porn, Consent, and Navigating the New Masculinity*, Orenstein shares what we can learn from these candid discussions. The topics ranged from hookup culture and consent to gender expression and toxic masculinity.

Her unfiltered view will help you understand the challenges of being a teen boy in today's world. By understanding what they have to navigate, we can know how to better help them thrive sexually and emotionally.

These are 3 of the best lessons the book teaches:

1. Society's stereotypical image of the tough, emotionless male is wrong and harms boy's mental health.
2. Hookup culture makes it difficult for young people to connect deeply with others and leads boys to misunderstand consent and often fail to obtain it.

3. We must do better at talking openly with our boys about sexual matters of all kinds if we want to alleviate the struggles they have with it.

Let's dive right in and get learning!

## **Lesson 1: Boys' mental health is suffering because of the incorrect stereotypical image of tough, emotionless males that society holds up.**

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When Orenstein asked boys what they looked for in the ideal woman, she expected stereotypes like big boobs and blonde hair. Many of them actually listed positive descriptors like "ambitious" and "intelligent." That surprises Orenstein.

But when she asked them about what an ideal man would look like, they listed old stereotypes like someone who was strong or emotionally reserved. This shows just how prevalent these old stereotypes of what a man needs to be are.

Orenstein says the problem is that these stereotypes are negatively affecting the mental health of young men. Emodiversity, or the ability to feel and express a myriad of emotions, is essential to mental health. When young men feel like they have to suppress their emotions, it severely limits their emodiversity.

Statistics show us how this negatively affects young men's health. But yet there is pressure from a young age to hold emotions in. Studies have consistently shown that parents use more empathy and emotional vocabulary when speaking to their daughters than their sons.

This only continues into school years, where young men feel their peers will see them as weak if they show emotion. This "strong man" image needs to stop if we want to help young men be mentally and emotionally healthy.

## **Lesson 2: Young men have a hard time understanding consent and connecting deeply with others because of hookup culture.**

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It seems the youth of today have decidedly "swiped right" on hookup culture and mostly rejected emotional commitment. Fueled by this culture are Dating apps and booze-filled one-night stands. And it is having big consequences.

In these types of hookups, emotional intimacy isn't the point. The goal is to be sexually active without vulnerability or attachment. Boys who didn't keep things casual and expressed feelings to a partner or thought about their own performance often reported being ostracized by their peers for this.

The stereotypes that college males should be both sexually active and confident, combined with the stereotype that they should be emotionless contributes to the insistence on keeping sex and intimacy separate. Worryingly, this “transactional” sex encourages young men to see and treat women as sexual objects.

This is evident in statistics such as the Online College Social Life Survey, where only 51 percent of college-aged girls reported climaxing in their most recent hookup while 81 percent of boys did. What’s more, many of these young men admitted being distant from their partner to maintain a masculine image.

Young men also report feeling the pressure to perform, leading them to drink alcohol, which only leads to problems with consent. When surveyed, young men don’t seem to be on the same page as women on what consent is. In a survey of 1000 college-aged boys, only 13 percent had actually had a conversation about intent in their last hookup. Many young men even try to say consent can be given in nonverbal cues.

### **Lesson 3: If we want to alleviate the struggles that boys have and cause when it comes to sexual matters, we need to be more open with them about sex.**

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Orenstein did find some positives about boys and sex in today’s world. For one, they understand consent more than men of the past. They are also much more progressive when it comes to feminism and LGBTQI+ rights. But as we know, they also struggle with outdated ideas of masculinity and are exposed to more graphic pornography than any other generation.

What can we do to help them grow into good men? Parents and educators need to be more open in talking about sex. First, they need to be taught their or more ways to be sexually intimate than penetrative sex.

What’s more, there is so much more to it than just physicality. Sex talk should also include discussions about gender, sexual orientation, consent, and respect. They should be encouraged to physically and emotionally fulfill their partner’s needs as well as their own.

As a parent, you shouldn’t just have “the talk”. You should regularly have honest and open discussions about sexuality with your child. Sure, it’s going to be awkward, but teaching our young men to be emotionally available and vulnerable starts with us.

### **Boys & Sex Review**

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I really wish every parent who has boys could read this book. There are also a lot of young men who could do well to read it also. Comparing it to Orenstein’s other book *Girls & Sex*, it seems this one focuses more on the problems boys cause. At first, this frustrated me but now

I realize that these issues come from an incorrect view of masculinity. That stems from society, and not always the boys themselves. With the help of books like this, however, I think we can beat these problems for good!

## **Who would I recommend the Boys & Sex summary to?**

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The 17-year-old boy who wonders why it's so hard to figure out sexuality, the 38-year-old high school teacher that wants to understand her male students better, and every parent who has boys.