



A Discussion on Helping Boys Become Men

Stephen Mansfield Interview

Stephen is the author of 17 books, three of which are New York Times bestsellers. His most recent book is "Mansfield's Book of Manly Men: An Utterly Invigorating Guide to Being Your Most Masculine Self." Stephen also works with the Mansfield Group, which does leadership consulting as far as communication and content.

You've tended to write books about your passion. Talk about some of the books you've written and why you wrote them.

My interest is how leadership is fashioned, what shapes it and what makes it work. One of the things I've explored is faith. I believe a man or a woman's faith is the most important thing about them and shapes their leadership. You can't understand a person's decisions in office if you don't understand their faith.

Talk about the role of faith in leadership.

Faith is going to frame their worldview. When a person's faith is sincere and fiery, that's what will keep them on an ethical track. It frames ethical and moral decisions and their opinion of fair play. People of different faiths respond differently. Your religious base is the lens through which you view the world.

Explain your passion for developing healthy leadership qualities in the next generation.

If the generation that's in the lead does not actively attend to the younger generation, that generation will be ignored. In our time, it's particularly important that the older ones pour into the younger ones because there's so much going against them. I believe some of our greatest leaders will come out of the millennial generation. They're going to need mentors. If I didn't have mentors that looked at me and said, "You're an idiot, but you're my idiot," I would never be where I'm at today. Just like I was as a kid, boys today have crazy energy that can be put to good use.

I hear what you're saying. The energy is in us. Let's channel it to something good.

There's a very wise African proverb that I love: "If we do not initiate the boys, the boys will burn the village down." We've got to get them on a path to manhood. Otherwise, their craziness and destructivity will run the village down. Men are really responsible for this. We have to show them what it is like to be a man. Of course, boys do stupid things, but we need men there to discipline them.



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In our nation, we've not known what to do with this energy, so we've overmedicated it because it makes it easier on us.

If that energy that drives you crazy in a boy is channeled the right way, it will develop a magnificent, energetic, engaged man. Both of my kids channeled their energy and now they know how to manage this wildness. It's just a matter of teaching them.

If you had just one word of advice, what would you add?

I certainly can understand discouragement and despair. Teachers and coaches and their words shaped my life. I didn't realize it at the time, but their words have lived in me forever. I just know that I remember the things they said to me and about me. Just remember that you're pouring into students who will solidify over time.