

Seminars Put Boys in Focus

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Boys need short, quick instructions, freedom to fidget, and a sense they have at least some control in awkward discussions. Insights, along with tips for helping boys succeed in life's relationships, are on the agenda for a day-long workshop Friday at Elgin Park Secondary.

Barry MacDonald, a counsellor, educator and program coordinator for students at educational risk, will lead the workshop. MacDonald has parented two boys, and believes young males generally are active, kinesthetic, adventure-oriented and aggressive. They typically think, respond, and process information differently than girls, and so need different teaching and parenting styles.

While parents and teachers can be frustrated by boys who just can't sit still and listen, MacDonald said fidgeting actually helps stimulate boys' brains, and process information. Keeping things brief also helps boys respond, especially if the issue at hand is emotional.

MacDonald advises against demanding eye contact with boys during such discussions – it's confrontational and creates anxiety. Instead, go for a walk, make a positive connection, and then bring matters up in pieces, with lots of time in-between to process what's been said. "It's important with boys to allow them to be in the driver's seat, so they feel they have some say in what's being discussed," MacDonald said.