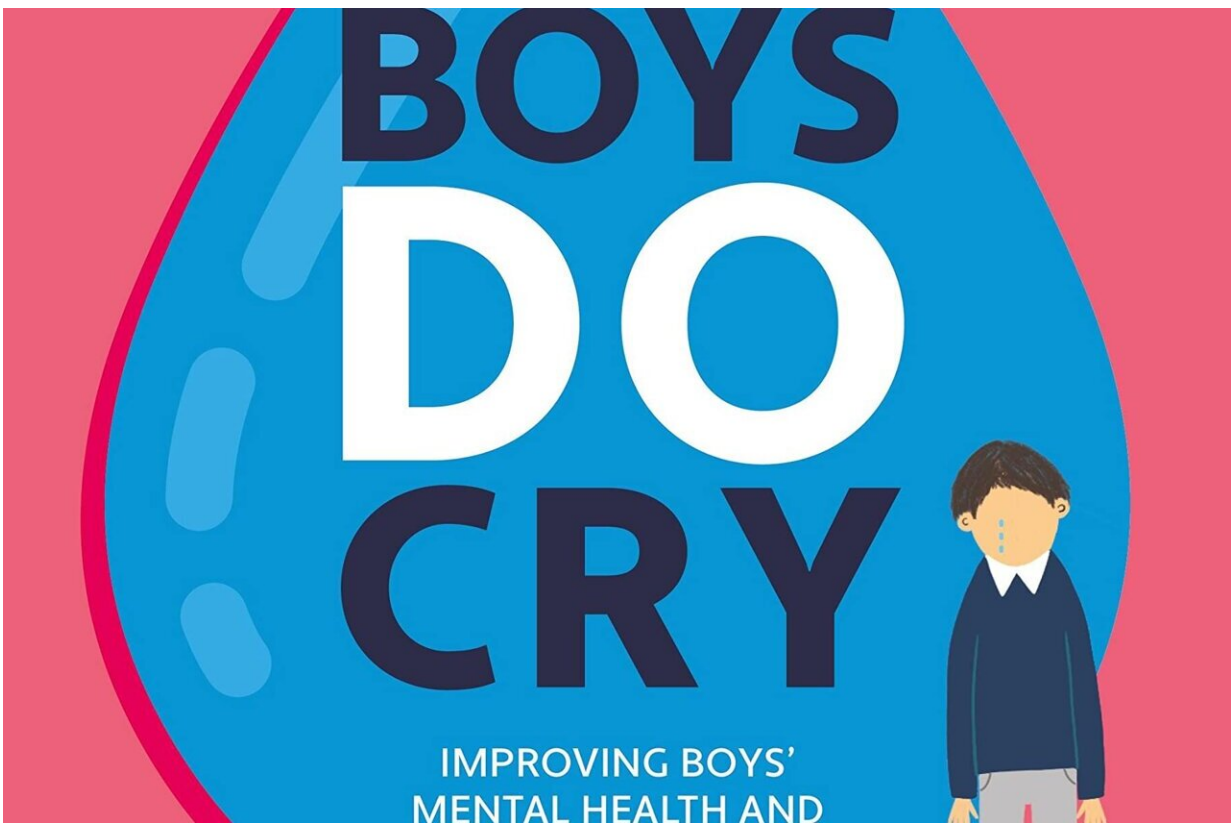


Boys need 'lessons in bromance' to tackle mental health crisis in schools, says new book

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Credit: Routledge

Teenage boys are twice as likely as girls to die by suicide, and, when boys become men, they are three times more likely than women to die by suicide.

After years on the frontline of teaching and observing, first-hand, a decline in teenage mental health, a teacher has warned that we need to deal better with male anger, friendships, and attitudes towards sex in order to combat the male [suicide](#) crisis.

Official statistics for England, Scotland, and Wales show that in 2020, 264 people aged 10–19 died by suicide—72% of these were boys. In England, suicide is the single biggest killer of men under the age of 45. They are three times more likely than women to die by suicide.

While statistics surrounding male suicide paint a bleak picture of the future of boys in our schools, teacher Matt Pinkett thinks all is not lost.

What can be done?

Pinkett has gathered evidence from teachers and [school staff](#), well-being experts and therapists to create a powerful guide to helping boys, in "[Boys Do Cry](#)," released today.

The practical and engaging guide, backed up by the latest research from the fields of psychology and education, suggests that teachers must stop stigmatizing anger and instead help angry boys understand the neurological and physiological reasons for their feelings.

Pinkett says, "Anger isn't an inherently bad thing and telling boys it is just leads to shame and hiding away. Instead, how about we teach them that anger is a feeling as natural as joy or sadness, and give them ways to manage it and the words to talk about it?"

He also suggests that teachers need to make loving, male relationships the norm, and to assume that every social interaction that takes place in a classroom is being watched and internalized.

He advises male teachers to compliment male colleagues openly, to talk lovingly about other people, and praise and salute male emotional vulnerability wherever and whenever possible.

"I am not suggesting that we should ever try to be therapists—that would never work," Pinkett explains, "but the fact is that we are in front of these children for massive chunks of their life. If we can speak positively about male emotions and demonstrate ways of dealing with problematic feelings, that would be a powerful thing."

Talking isn't enough

In "Boys Do Cry," Pinkett advocates the benefits of the 'bromance,' suggesting that teachers and schools harness this relatively recent phenomenon of male-to-male relationships. He argues that in teaching boys about bromances, teachers can equip young men with the skills to actively listen and display compassion and affection towards each other.

He suggests teachers can help facilitate [emotional connection](#) between boys and help build friendships that are supportive.

He explains: "The problem isn't encouraging young men to talk—it's teaching their peers to listen. Research suggests boys don't listen as well as girls. There is so much conversation about encouraging boys and men to speak up, but are we teaching them how to support each other through listening effectively?"

Demonstrated through research and [case studies](#), Pinkett argues that boys crave emotional intimacy and the freedom to express themselves without being mocked, but that toxic ideas about masculinity are preventing these fruitful peer relationships.

"We need to teach boys to be kind, and that it is OK to be vulnerable and

emotionally articulate," he says.

Benefit to society

With his research-backed tools and tips, Pinkett hopes the book will give teachers confidence to engage with really difficult topics—to the benefit of all.

"This isn't just a problem for [teenage boys](#). If we can teach these boys to get rid of those harmful and outdated expectations of what it means to be a man, all of society will be better off," Pinkett says. "It is only through education of young people that the scourge of male-on-female sexual abuse, assault, and harassment can be eradicated."

"Boys Do Cry" examines key research on factors impacting boys' mental health, including topics such as [body image](#), pornography and [self-harm](#), and provides teachers with practical strategies to start enacting positive change.

With his extensive research, he has created advice on intervening when a child may be in danger, to tips on how to set up group working so friendships can be made while learning.

"This isn't about turning teachers into therapists," Pinkett adds, "It's just about being brave enough to intervene and give boys a chance to learn another way of being."

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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