



#10160 WHAT'S UP WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL GUYS?

NEWIST/CESA 7, 2001
Grade Level: 6-8
60 mins.

DESCRIPTION

A group of middle school boys, ages 12-16, answer questions on a variety of topics. The boys expose their fears, dreams, struggles, opinions, insights, personal experiences, and thoughts about puberty, school, emotions, sex, family, and other issues. Shows the range of physical, emotional, and personal maturity experienced during this volatile age.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Health

- Standard: Understands the fundamental concepts of growth and development
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows the changes that occur during puberty (e.g., physical changes such as sexual maturation, changes in voice, acne; emotional and social changes such as a growing sensitivity to peer influence, family tensions, mood swings; cognitive and intellectual development) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1.)
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows strategies for coping with concerns and stress related to the changes that occur during adolescence (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2.)
- Standard: Knows how to maintain mental and emotional health
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows strategies to manage stress and feelings caused by disappointment, separation, or loss (e.g., talking over problems with others, understanding that feelings of isolation and depression will pass, examining the situation leading to the feelings) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2 and 3.)
 - ◆ Benchmark: Knows appropriate ways to build and maintain positive relationships with peers, parents, and other adults (e.g., interpersonal communication) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2 and 3.)
 - ◆ Benchmark: Understands the difference between safe and risky or harmful behaviors in relationships (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 3.)
- Standard: Understands aspects of substance use and abuse

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- ◆ Benchmark: Knows influences that promote alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (e.g., peer pressure, peer and adult modeling, advertising, overall availability, cost) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)

Subject Area: Physical Education

- Standard: Understands the benefits and costs associated with participation in physical activity
 - ◆ Benchmark: Chooses physical activities based on a variety of factors (e.g., personal interests and capabilities, perceived social and physical benefits, challenge and enjoyment) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 5.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To examine some of the physical and emotional changes boys experience at puberty.
2. To explore how middle school boys feel about expressing emotions.
3. To discuss friendships and relationships between middle school boys and girls, including sexual relationships.
4. To encourage discussion about drug, alcohol, and tobacco use in middle school boys.
5. To explore the interests of middle school boys.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two years ago, the Northeastern Wisconsin In-School Telecommunications group (NEWIST) sent out digital video cameras to 20 different groups of middle school girls so that the girls could record what they were thinking, doing, and feeling. They returned over 100 hours of footage, which was then edited and combined with one-on-one interviews, and became the Emmy award-winning video *Beyond the Butterfly: Middle School Girls Speak Out!*

NEWIST immediately thought this would be a good thing to do with boys too, so they identified groups of boys and sent them video cameras as well. But they soon discovered that boys don't talk to one another the way girls do. The footage from the boys was predominantly filled with nervous chatter, uncomfortable silences, abrupt answers to questions, and lots of belching and horsing around. They wondered, "What's up with middle school boys, anyway?"

In response to this glitch in their plans, NEWIST brought many of the boys in for one-on-one interviews in the studio and found intelligent, well-spoken young men who were more than willing to share their thoughts about what life is like for middle school guys. They candidly reveal their fears, hopes, dreams, struggles, successes, and shortcomings and through these revelations we truly find. . . *What's Up With Middle School Guys?*

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. body image | 5. express | 9. influence |
| 2. commit suicide | 6. fag | 10. mood swings |
| 3. criticize | 7. gay | 11. peer pressure |
| 4. depressed | 8. immature | 12. popular |

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- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 13. puberty | 16. sexism | 19. violence |
| 14. relationships | 17. sexual harassment | 20. virgin |
| 15. sensitive | 18. stereotype | 21. wuss |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Define *puberty*. Discuss some of the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty for boys.
2. Discuss the issue of sharing feelings. Compare girls' attitudes to boys' attitudes about sharing feelings and showing emotions.

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Consider pausing between each topic to discuss the previous issues that were raised. Also, this gives the opportunity to discuss the statistics at the beginning of each new section.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the changes associated with puberty.
 - a. When do most boys start developing the signs of puberty?
 - b. What is the most difficult part of puberty for you?
 - c. Do the expectations of others have of you change as you go through puberty?
 - d. Do your expectations of yourself change as you go through puberty?
 - e. Do you feel ready to "be a man"? What does it mean to "be a man" in our society?
2. How are boys different than girls when it comes to school and learning?
3. In the video, many of the guys stated that they felt girls were favored over them by teachers. Discuss whether you agree or disagree with this perception.
4. Discuss emotions.
 - a. Do you think males hold in their emotions more than females?
 - b. Why do males have trouble identifying emotions?
 - c. Which emotions are you more at ease expressing, and why?
 - d. Why is it so "bad" for boys to cry?
5. Discuss feelings and opinions about popularity.
6. Discuss depression and suicide in young males. Why do you think the rate of suicide is so much higher for boys than girls?
7. Discuss the "Man Talk Time" concept. Do you think this is a good idea and would it work for your group of friends?
8. Discuss drug, alcohol, and tobacco use.



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- a. How prevalent is drug, alcohol, and tobacco use among your peers?
- b. What are the effects of drugs and alcohol on the lives of those who use?
- c. What are some of the reasons why underage kids use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco?
- d. Why do you think boys who drink alcohol almost always drink to excess?
9. Discuss friendship.
 - a. Many boys in the program stated that their best friends were girls. Is this the case with you?
 - b. Discuss the difference between guy and girl friends.
 - c. Describe how you select friends.
 - d. Define what a true friend is to you.
10. Discuss issues related to sexual activity.
 - a. What is a good age to become sexually active, and why do you think this is a good age?
 - b. Is there a macho image associated with sexually active guys? What is the image of sexually active girls?
 - c. If the images are different, why do you think this is?
 - d. What does it mean to have "safe sex"? Why is protection so important?
11. Discuss personal interests. Do you think boys and girls usually have different interests? Explain your answer.
12. How important is your family to you and why? What lessons, values, and benefits do you receive from your family?
13. Discuss your biggest problems at school, in your family, and with your friends.
14. What are your goals for the future?
15. What words of advice can you offer to other middle school boys?

Applications and Activities

1. Make a chart of the changes that occur in boys and girls at puberty.
2. Using words and pictures from magazines, create a personal collage celebrating unique qualities and personal interests. Display the collages.
3. Discuss media influences. Watch 30 minutes of television with a critical eye. Observe how obese people are portrayed. What stereotypes are promoted? Share findings.
4. Review the description of "Man Talk Time." Try this idea in small groups.
5. Choose one or two comments from the video. Write a letter explaining how those comment(s) impacted you. Describe why you agree or disagree with the comments.
6. Survey other middle school boys on topics expressed in the video. Share the results.
7. Investigate some possible career choices.
8. Make a video to share local middle school boys' attitudes, beliefs, concerns, and issues.
9. Visit the Web site for the video (<http://www.uwgb.edu/newist/boys.htm>). Read research related to each of the topics covered and other comments by middle school boys.

SUMMARY

There are no experts speaking in *What's Up With Middle School Guys?* No adults whatsoever—only BOYS! This hour-long documentary features over fifty of them, all speaking for themselves and about themselves—and about how they are learning to address life for the first time as young adults rather than as children. They talk about their feelings, their ideas, their concerns, their hopes, their issues, their self-concepts, their relationships and their thoughts on the world they are just growing into.

CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [Boy to Man #3013](#)
- [The Mirror in my Mind: Body Image & Self-Esteem #9911](#)
- [My Body's Changing—Puberty and Sexuality #8826](#)
- [Straight Talk about Mental Health: Image and Identity #10041](#)

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **WHAT'S UP WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS?**

<http://www.uwgb.edu/newist/guys/index.htm>

Read extensive factual information and additional comments related to the video and the topics in the video from the producer's Web site. Find links to many related sites and a list of recommended books to read.

- **NORTHERN COUNTY PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATES**

<http://www.ncpamd.com>

Find information on a wide range of topics, including depression, attention deficit disorder, family issues, and a special section of teens and kids.

- **TEEN GROWTH**

<http://www.teengrowth.com>

This Web site is for teens to get health information. Board certified physicians give you the scoop on puberty, family, friends, drugs, sex, and emotions.