



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Boys: Routine Panic – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

Air Date: April 23, 2024

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: I've got a question for you. Are you the parent of a rebellious son and are you desperate to help reign his wild behavior in? Well today on Family Talk, we will continue tackling the tough work in raising boys, especially the rambunctious ones. As was the case last time, our basis for this teaching will be Dr. Dobson's popular "Bringing Up Boys" teaching series. To help introduce this important presentation, here is our host, psychologist and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson. Doctor, on today's broadcast, we are highlighting a critical concept from your popular book, *Bringing Up Boys*.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, the reason I wrote that book is because people began to notice that boys were in trouble academically, socially, psychologically, and in the family, and I felt compelled to address this dilemma and one of the overarching concerns that I focused on was something I called routine panic, where the pace of living and the exhaustion that families are feeling really don't provide a positive environment for raising our children, especially for our sons.
- Roger Marsh: Well, that is so true, doctor. So many parents are failing to make ample time for their kids and their families. The recording we're about to hear contains some of the fascinating research that you have uncovered on this issue, and I don't think many realize, doctor, it took you over three years to write this book. It really involved a lot of your past work in child development and also experiences in this present culture as well.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, to be honest, the reason I wrote *Bringing Up Boys* is because my academic training took me in the direction of what was new, the research that was just coming out, what was being said on university campuses and so on. But by the time I got around to writing *Bringing Up Girls*, all that had changed because so much additional research came out. So much more was known about child development. So I thought it was time to update that subject and I learned some new things along the way.

Roger Marsh: Well, let's tune in now and hear the principles that you've conveyed here on this second part of the "Bringing Up Boys" presentation here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's go back to what I was talking about before with regard to the relationship between a newborn and the mother. That bonding that takes place, that sealing of the relationship is also extremely important to the future mental health of that child. That 18 months that represents the first year and a half of life is extremely necessary for the mother and this son to bond together. What my great concern is at this time is that we're letting that period of time get away from us. There are 6 million children at this time that are toddlers or infants that are in daycare almost from birth, and there are 13 million kids that are in daycare in the preschool years.

I know some women have to put their kids in daycare. I know some of them have to get back to work. I know there are single mothers out there. They have no choice, and we have to be very compassionate to those folks and we have to do what we can to put an arm around them, but it is dangerous to do that. The research is now making that very clear. There is an instrument of the federal government called Child Health and Human Development that has been doing a longitudinal study for a number of years now on the consequences of early child care placement. And it is very, very interesting and somewhat discouraging. 1,100 kids in 10 premier child development clinics, they followed them at 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months and 36 months and then followed them longitudinally. What they've found is that those kids that are put in child care centers from very, very early and especially those that stay long hours there have a damaged relationship between the child and the mother.

And at five years of age in kindergarten, they are three times more likely to have behavioral problems, to be in conflict, discipline problems, to fight, to bully, and to not be cooperative and not be compliant. And it is related to the interference with that early bonding experience and that is only one of the findings that have come out of this situation. Now, a lot of mothers know that this is a problem. I've seen a lot of mothers cry who are at work and they know that once that baby has been born, they're going to have to be back at work in six weeks and they have to let those babies go. They're not going to be there when the first word is spoken or when the first step is taken, but they don't feel they have any choice.

70% of American women of those in that age group, in the preschool age group would rather stay home, but they're not able to do so for financial reasons, and our federal government looks at that great idea. "Why don't we give more money for child care? We'll make more child care centers." Well, that's not the point. What you need to do is let the women and the husbands and wives keep their own money so that more of them can do what they want to do, which is stay home and take care of their own children and boys especially are in need of stability at that time.

Now, let me address something that is related to this that really does concern me. If you were to come up to me and ask, what is the greatest source of difficulty? What is the most common cause of divorce? Why is the American family not making it and why are boys especially going through such a time of difficulty? There's one answer to it. It has to do with what I call routine panic. It is that lifestyle, that breathless lifestyle where we don't have time to talk together. We don't have time to walk together. We don't have time for our husbands and wives to be alone together, for their intimate hours and so on. They're too worn out. They're too exhausted. That is the typical American lifestyle and it has major implications for children, both boys and girls, but especially for boys.

I read the other day about a French naturalist by the name of Henri Fabre, Dr. Fabre, and he studied processional caterpillars. Processional caterpillars are those that follow the caterpillar in front of them. You could see a whole line of them there, and they are programmed to do that. He put them in a large flower pot and put them inside the inner edge and they began following one another round and round and round, and they continued for at least two days and into the third. It's obvious that they needed food and it's obvious that they were fatigued, and yet they continued to follow one another. Finally, he put some pine needles in the center of that pot, which is the food that they typically eat, but none of them would go over and eat it, and they followed one another around that flower pot until they all died of exhaustion and malnutrition.

In some ways, that is typical I think of the American family. We're following one another faster and faster and faster. If you take this book that I've written, *Bringing Up Boys*, and all of the problems that I discussed in here, most of them are linked to that lifestyle. Most of them come out of the fact that we are too tired. We're not there when they get home at night. 59% of kids come home to an empty house. Girls cope with that a whole lot better than boys. Boys by their very nature do not do well when they are not properly supervised and yet, this is the way it is.

A book by the name of *Bowling Alone*. It's a tremendous book. It's written by Dr. Robert Putnam, who is a professor at Harvard University, and his thesis is that Americans no longer have the community that they used to have. I remember when I was a kid, we would hear a knock at the front door at the screen, if you will, and somebody would say, "Anybody home?" And my mom would come running and she'd say, "Come on in." And they would come in. These weren't people we had an appointment with. They were friends that had come over and they'd come over and they'd sit in the living room and mom would go put some coffee in the coffee pot and bring it and serve it. She usually had some apple pie and some banana cream pie or something to serve to them and we would sit and talk and there was a sense of community. There was a sense of oneness.

And that doesn't happen now. You got to make an appointment. You got to get on somebody's calendar. You got to put it three weeks in advance and then change it four times because we just... You don't drop in on anybody now. We

don't have time to see each other. You would just probably be frustrated. You had planned to get seven things done on your to-do list today, and here they are at the door. And in the absence of that, community has broken down. Well, Dr. Putnam has said that this has become a serious problem in American life. We are less involved in JCs, in Kiwanis, in Elks, in PTA, in the Republican Party, in the Democratic Party. They don't do anything together anymore. And as a result, community has broken down.

The theme of a book, the title of the book is *Bowling Alone* because he said, and he interviewed 500,000 people to come up with these findings. He said, "We don't even bowl together anymore." Just as many people are bowling now as were 10 or 20 or 30 years ago, but we don't bowl in leagues because we are not in association with each other. We're isolated, we're exhausted, we're alone. And now what's happening in the church? More and more people are watching the electronic church. They're not even coming together to commune together, even though Paul said, "To forsake not the assembling together." And that is what has happened. Well, this relates very much to boys and how they function, because you get a chaotic lifestyle where there's no time and everybody's going in opposite directions. Boys don't do well under those circumstances.

There's another study that was done called a National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This is another very, very important long-term study that's been done to see what the effects are of this kind of lifestyle. What they looked at were violence, juvenile delinquency of all sorts, suicide, conflict in school, academic difficulties. Here are these problems that you see with young people that are on the increase. And then they tried to relate that to the characteristics of family life that they were observing in 11,000 families that they studied. Do you know what came out of that? This just fascinates me. Do you know how to prevent a lot of these problems? Do you know what was number one in the outcome as to how to prevent adolescent difficulties? It was simply to be together as husband and wife, husband or wife with your kids four times a day. In the morning, after school, at dinnertime and at bedtime. Just be in the vicinity. Those four times per day and the incidence of adolescent rebellion dropped dramatically just from that difference.

There was another study also done by a man at Harvard University, Dr. Blake Bowden, who came up with similar results. This one surprised me even more. That of all the things related to adolescent difficulties, those families that ate together five times per week, now you actually have 21 meals a week. The families that ate together five times a week had a much lower incidence of rebellion and difficulty. Isn't that interesting? And it didn't have to be a candlelight dinner. It could be McDonald's, it could be pizza, it could be at a local restaurant. It didn't have to be a formal thing at all. Simply being together for a meal five times a week made all the difference. But we don't do that. We eat in our cars, we eat at work.

This kid's eating over here and this one's eating over there and dad comes home two hours later than them, and we don't eat together. We don't do anything

together. We don't even watch television together. The kids have television in their own rooms or they're into the internet or they're doing something on their own. There is not that sense of community. When that occurs, for boys especially, be aware. Now, I'm going to say something to you that I have not been willing to say in the 30 years that I've been writing for families. I've known it, I've believed it, I've never had the courage to say it. And courage to speak my mind has never been a problem for me, but this is one that I have not been willing to say, but I'm going to say it now and you're going to disagree with me and so is the rest of the world and everybody's going to hate me, but it's okay. It's okay.

I believe that the primary problem with the deterioration of the family and the problems that boys are going through is directly related to the two-career family where you have both members of the family racing and running and huffing and puffing. They're exhausted. All of their energy is going in that direction, and there is nothing left over and there's nobody home, and that is dynamite. That's sets up all kind of problems for kids. Am I telling women especially that they should not be in a career? No. I mean, everybody's got to make that decision. I wouldn't even presume to try to say what other people ought to do, and it would be silly for me as a man to make a statement like that about other families. I don't know their circumstances. I don't know their finances. I don't know their opportunities. I don't know their temperaments. So I can't say that. I can only tell you where you have that, where you've got two very active, usually successful careers going that are somewhat uncompromising with each other and with the family, the children suffer for it.

And people say, "How are we going to do that? How in the world are we going to be with our kids morning, after school, dinner and bedtime? How are we going to make it on one salary? How are we going to do what you're asking us to do?" I don't know. I don't have the answer for that. I just know that if you want to know to harmonize the family and how to raise more healthy boys and girls, then you've got to deal with these issues one way or another because it isn't working the way it is, it isn't working. The families are absolutely falling apart. Everywhere you look, they are falling apart. Why? Because we don't have anything left for each other. And as a result, the problems that I've talked about in this book, having to do with suicide and academic problems and all those other things are related to that. My only point is that if that matters to us, we will figure out a way to deal with it.

Roger Marsh: A challenging message for parents to better care for and engage their kids. I'm Roger Marsh and you are listening to a presentation from Dr. Dobson's "Bringing Up Boys" teaching series here on Family Talk. Now, we've reserved our last few moments to hear some of Dr. Dobson's Q&A session with the studio audience who were in attendance that day. Let's listen now to a few of their perceptive questions.

Speaker 3: Where does the trust factor come into play raising a boy or is there a trust factor?

Dr. James Dobson: Not much. You could make a very big mistake by assuming that everything is okay when you're not looking. I think you have to stay in touch. Carol Burnett's daughter got into drugs, and I just remember her going on television saying she trusted her daughter and she's regretted it ever since. She should have been watching. She should have been listening. There are so many dangers out there. There are so many influences. There are so many social settings where your kids will be wounded and hurt and enticed into evil things. You've got to stay in touch. The notion that you just kind of close your eyes and hope is a recipe for disaster. That doesn't mean you read the diary, but it might. If you think your child is taking drugs, you better read the diary. That's just my opinion. You guys disagree with me, don't you? Over here.

Speaker 4: You mentioned that that period after 18 months and around five is crucial for the son to be pulling away from mom.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Speaker 4: What if at that time the father's going through his own crisis and he's working a lot and he's not home a lot, and his participation in the family kind of resolves when the son's older? This is my case.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Speaker 4: And dad wants to be a great dad wants to teach his son. Can you get back what you...

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, the sad thing is that that situation you described is the typical family scene today because in early marriage and early childhood, dads are busier than they'll ever be. They're trying to get started. They've started a business, they're trying to make it in their work, and they're just overwhelmed with these responsibilities. So this is the typical scenario and the question that you ask could be asked by women everywhere.

There is no real simple answer to it because it is a need that is either going to be met or not met. This is why I'm talking about this today. This is not simply a matter of a passing need at home. This is the foundational relationship that is going to make differences for years to come. Now, some kids by their temperament, make it anyway. Most of them do, but many of them don't. And where that occurs, you've got to find a male role model somewhere. And if dad is gone and just simply can't meet that need, you better find an uncle or a little later on, a coach or somebody who can teach that boy what it means to be a man.

Speaker 4: My son's almost 13. Can you play catch up is I guess my question.

Dr. James Dobson: I think it's never too late to build a relationship like that, and a teenage boy and his father can still bond together, and a lot depends on the temperament. I

don't want to make it look like it's forever lost, but it will be forever different. So there is much that you can still do. Yes?

Speaker 5: I guess it's my belief that when you're raising a son, it's a little bit different than a daughter from the standpoint that when your son starts getting into manhood, he has to have these experiences where he is letting the air under his tire.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Speaker 5: How do you provide a healthy way for him to do that where he doesn't get hurt, recognizing that in part they have to do it? I wish they didn't. It seems like in part, they indeed have to experience it.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a wonderful question because boys do need to do that. They do need to let it out. They do need to experiment. They do need to rebel a little bit, and you do have to allow that. I think you need to select the battles that you're willing to fight.

Roger Marsh: Well, what an important discussion about raising boys to become God-led men here on Family Talk. If you missed any part of this two-day presentation, remember you can listen to what you missed simply by visiting our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or you can pick up the JDFI Family Talk app on your smartphone and listen there.

Now, if today's classic presentation was an encouragement to you, you'll want to sign up for the free 10-day email series based on Dr. Dobson's best-selling book called "Bringing Up Boys." It's designed to equip you to wisely lead your sons to become godly men. It's easy to sign up. Simply click the link at the bottom of the broadcast page when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Again, that's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're there, remember, you can also reserve your copy of Dr. Dobson's classic book called *Bringing Up Boys*. We'll send you a copy as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the JDFI today. Just click the link at the bottom of the broadcast page and make your reservation request today.

By the way, have you heard about our brand new resource here at the JDFI? It only takes a minute to listen to. It's the Dr. Dobson Minute. We've been remastering Dr. Dobson's biblically-based transforming truths into 60-second audio messages. Each Dr. Dobson Minute will provide young families with helpful tools that will strengthen marriages and equip moms and dads to become even better parents. You can listen to a Dr. Dobson Minute today when you go to drdobsonminute.org. That's drdobsonminute.org.

I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. Do you need help dealing with the everyday tasks of raising a family? I'm James Dobson here, and if you do, I hope you'll tune into our next edition of Family Talk. Our main purpose in this ministry is to put tools into your hands that will strengthen your marriage and help you raise your kids. Hope to see you right here next time for another edition of Family Talk.