



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Boys: Routine Panic – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and this week we are remembering the life and legacy of Dr. James Dobson, who went home to be with the Lord on August 21st, 2025. This Friday, we will commemorate the one-year anniversary of Dr. Dobson's home going with a special State of the Ministry address featuring our president and chairman of the board, Dr. Bart Brock, and yours truly. We'll talk about what the future holds, what the past 12 months have involved here at the JDPI, and why Dr. Dobson was adamant that this ministry not only outlive him, but that the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute become the only organization, the only ministry around, designed to carry on his legacy based on the work that he's produced over the past 50 years.

Now, on today's edition of Family Talk, we're continuing our look at one of the toughest jobs any parent will ever take on, and that is raising boys, especially the rambunctious ones. Maybe you're the parent of a strong-willed son, wondering how to rein in his wild behavior without breaking his spirit. If that's your story, today's program is for you. We're going to revisit from the archives a presentation Dr. Dobson gave in support of his best-selling book, *Bringing Up Boys*. You know, he spent decades studying what boys need to grow into godly men. And in this presentation, he's going to zero in on one of the biggest threats to healthy families today, something he calls routine panic. It's that breathless, exhausting pace of modern life that leaves little room for the connection our children need most. So here now to share the heart behind his book is our host, psychologist, and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson.

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. 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, boys do thrive on stability and connection, and yet the frantic pace of modern life so often robs families of both. So let's listen now as Dr. James Dobson unpacks the research behind Bringing Up Boys and shows us why slowing down may be the most important thing we can do for our sons. Here now is part two of his presentation on Dr. James Dobson's 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 the 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, 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. 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. 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 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 is 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?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Speaker 5: 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: The greatest gift we can give our sons simply might be our time. And you've been listening to a classic presentation from Dr. James Dobson and his "Bringing Up Boys" teaching series on today's edition of Family Talk. And if you'd like to hear this two-part program again or share it with a parent who needs the encouragement, visit jdfi.org. Now, if today's program spoke to your heart, I've got great news for you. We've just revamped our free "Bringing Up Boys" email series. It's a newly updated 10-day journey built on the wisdom from Dr. Dobson's best-selling book, *Bringing Up Boys*. It's packed with practical guidance to help you raise your sons into the godly men God created them to be. And it's easy to sign up, and it's really quick, too, when you go to drjamesdobson.org or jdfi.org and search for that title, Bringing Up Boys. Again, you'll find it at drjamesdobson.org and jdfi.org as well.

You know, raising boys has never been easy. And in today's culture, the challenges facing parents are greater than ever. That's why the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is committed to carrying Dr. Dobson's timeless, biblical wisdom to the next generation of moms and dads. Each day this week here on Family Talk, you're hearing special programming commemorating the homegoing, if you will, of Dr. James Dobson, who received his eternal reward on Thursday, August 21st, 2025. Now, the teaching that we are continuing to present here on Family Talk and all throughout the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is by design. Dr. Dobson ordained this ministry to carry on his legacy work, and it was his desire that this ministry would outlive him. That's why this week, as we commemorate the first anniversary of his passing, we're also giving you an opportunity to make a contribution to help this ministry continue on into the future. When you call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825 right now, ask them how you can receive a copy of our Best of Broadcast CD collection, the final one that we've prepared right after Dr. Dobson passed away last year. It features a multitude of different programs, guests like Joni Eareckson Tada, Victor Marx, and more. But it also features the very first ever edition of the Family Talk broadcast back in May of 2010 as well as the final recording Dr. Dobson ever recorded in the studio back in the spring of 2025. We'll be happy to send you a copy of our Best of Broadcast Legacy Edition when you make a contribution of any amount in support of the ministry here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So call a member of our

constituent care team at 877-732-6825. Give a gift online through our secure website, jdfi.org, or write to us at our ministry mailing address, which is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, or just use those initials, JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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