

# Dear Mother, don't look away, talk to your boys

This year the focus of Independent Media's annual [#dontlookaway](#) campaign during the 16 days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children is [#talk2yourboys](#). The goal is to focus on the male youth, educate and teach boys to become better men and in so doing, break the cycle of gender-based violence. Today we are talking to mothers.

Dear Mother

- If your son wants to talk to you about (sometimes uncomfortable) topics such as puberty, relationships with his friends or his interest in girls, do you ask him to speak to his dad or a father figure?
- If you see your son treating your daughter or a female family member with disrespect or aggression, do you turn a blind eye? If you notice that your son displays traits of a bully, do you ignore it?
- If you hear your son talking about girls in a rude, disrespectful or distasteful manner, do you let it ride?
- If you notice your son watching something on TV or a music video in which a female is being abused or portrayed as a sex symbol, do you allow him to continue watching?
- If your son is socialising with friends who you feel are a bad influence on his behaviour towards girls, do you stand back and avoid addressing the issue?
- Do you allow your son to disobey rules his sister(s) or female family members are expected to keep or to get out of doing his share of chores and family responsibilities?
- If you notice your son having difficulty with managing his emotions, particularly anger or frustration, do you leave him to figure things out on his own?
- Do you allow your son unrestricted access to the internet without imposing any limits, controls or boundaries?
- When your son cries, do you tell him that crying is only for girls? Or when he is afraid, do you tell him that boys don't show fear?

Mothers and their sons share a unique and special bond, and every mother's goal is to raise her son into a respectable and well mannered young man. With the prevalence of gender-based violence in our society - aggression and abuse that is perpetrated by men and boys - the question is: are mothers actually doing enough? Are we teaching our sons how to behave respectfully towards girls and women? Are we nurturing them into confident, kind and compassionate boys who will become good boyfriends, husbands and fathers one day? Or do we condone bad behaviour without realising it?

If any mother ticked any of the boxes above, perhaps there are a few things you can do differently going forward.

It is never too late to [#talk2yourboys](#) and take the mother's pledge below:

*My dearest son, I pledge to do everything possible to raise you in the best manner I can, because I love you.*

*I promise to teach you that every girl and woman, including myself, deserves to be treated with respect, kindness, tolerance and love.*

*That she deserves to be supported, heard and acknowledged, even if she holds views or values that are different to yours.*

*I am proud to be your mother and I pledge to show you how to have the courage to do the right thing and never be silent about violence.*

*I pledge to teach you to never objectify or de-value women and girls, and to speak up when you see others doing so.*

*Every day I will make a special effort to teach you about the power of self-control.*

*Although I am your mother, I also sometimes make mistakes. I am human.*

*I pledge to show you that it's perfectly fine to make mistakes and how to learn from them.*

*Your reaction when others make mistakes will speak volumes about how I have raised you to be a forgiving and loving individual.*

*I pledge to teach you that "No" means "No" and "Stop" means "Stop".*

*I want you to understand that women are equal to men.*

*Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.*

*All my love, Mum*

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<https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/dear-mother-dont-look-away-talk-to-your-boys-38044228>