

Middle Parent Forum.....14 March 2007

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What's Cool and What's Not.....adolescents, perceptions and masculinity and femininity

Masculinity

- *American Heritage College Dictionary* definition:
- 1-the quality or condition of being masculine 2- something traditionally considered to be characteristic of a male

- ✓ amongst boys the definition would include: good body, competitive, has money, doesn't take much seriously, able to discuss sports with authority, has a good physique/works out or appears to work out

- ✓ boiled down, this is what adolescent boys admire in other adolescent boys or what boys want to strive for:
 - being strong** **being/acting tough**
 - being funny** **having the right style**
 - having money** **having an interest in girls**
 - having athletic abilities**

Note the failure to mention characteristics such as:
intelligence, honesty, responsibility, hard-working

- ✓ these are adjectives/descriptors of the qualities adolescent boys most fear:
 - being called gay** **trying too hard/too much effort**
 - "acting" like a girl** **not being athletic**
 - taking things too seriously**

Femininity

- ✓ Dictionary definition: 1- the quality or condition of being female, 2- A characteristic or trait traditionally held to be female
- ✓ In the adolescent girl world, the definition might include: great body, guys are interested in you, in control, smart enough for people to do what you want them to, but not necessarily "book" smart

✚ What girls look for in other girls and admire in them in the adolescent stage of development:

having the right style

being pretty

being thin

having nice hair

being popular

being confident

having good grades AND being athletic- BUT NOT TO AN EXTEND THAT WOULD CHALLENGE EITHER BOYS OR PUSH THE GIRLS INTO THE "TOO SMART" CATEGORY

✚ these are adjectives/descriptors of the qualities adolescent girls most fear:

being called/thought of as gay

being fat

trying too hard

not having money

having loose morals

As with all subjects and topics, it is important to speak with your children often about issues they face in school. Always leave the door open for communication and try not to force it....sometimes the best conversations about sensitive topics can come about while watching a movie, reading a book, or watching a program on television. If we, as parents, want our children to grow up with different descriptors for "what's cool and what isn't," then it's up to us to change the perceptions of our children through

appropriate modeling and by given them the chance to examine their beliefs and values.

Resources:

- <http://www.rosalindwiseman.com/>
- *Queen Bees and Wannabes*
- *Queen Bee Moms and Kingpin Dads*