



Life Actually By Kari Kampakis

15 things I'd want my son to know

As a mom of four girls, I often write about daughters. And on numerous occasions, I've had moms with sons ask for insights related to boys.

Obviously, I don't have firsthand experience, but I do have friends who do a great job cultivating boys into men. Besides taking mental notes from them, I've developed a hypothetical list of my own, things I'd want to instill in a son based on personal experiences and what I'm learning about today's teen culture through my work with adolescent girls.

The following are 15 things I'd want a son to know. This list is by no means complete, just a few qualities I consider important and that I hope my daughters look for in the boys they allow in their lives.

► **No. 1:** Your talents are a gift from God that you could lose tomorrow. Be grateful for every day that you have them and remember the point of using your gifts is to point people to God, not to show off.

► **No. 2:** "Boys will be boys" is a lazy and overly used excuse. Please don't buy into it. Set a bar high for yourself, and be the kind of leader this world needs: a person of integrity, character and self-control.

► **No. 3:** You are responsible for a girl's reputation the entire time you're with her. Part of becoming a man means growing a protective mindset toward girls and acting as their protector, not a predator. This is countercultural thinking. Many boys won't understand it, and you'll have friends who tease you for not being a player, but it's the right approach.

Proving you're a trustworthy and respectable guy ultimately makes you the one who girls trust and deeply respect. When a slumber party of 15 girls starts a conversation about how immature and rude all the boys at school are, you'll be the one singled out as always being nice to girls.

► **No. 4:** You aren't invincible. You will die one day. Doing reckless things, like diving off cliffs and blindly following the pack in the name of adventure, drastically increases your risk of dying young.

► **No. 5:** A strong work ethic begins with knowing that no job is beneath you. You aren't entitled to anything, and if you want to move up in your career, do even menial jobs well and with a good attitude, because eventually someone will notice and grant you a bigger opportunity. Whether you're mowing grass or running a business, stay humble and appreciate even the most boring work, because somebody has to do it.

► **No. 6:** Develop a healthy ambition. Let your motivation for success be driven by the likelihood that one day, you'll have a wife and children to provide for. Your willingness and commitment to protect and take care of others is a cornerstone of your manhood. So instead of seeing your future job as a fund for a lavish lifestyle, view it as a means to support your future family and community. Think selflessly instead of selfishly, because that creates a meaningful life.

► **No. 7:** Stay on guard against pride. It's the downfall of many men and boys.

► **No. 8:** Strength, confidence and courage are rooted in kindness, compassion and love. Keep a thick skin and a tender heart. Embracing virtues doesn't diminish your masculinity; rather, it enhances it.

► **No. 9:** Practice respect and respect boundaries. When a girl says "no," it means "no." When a parent says "stop," it means "stop." When a teacher says "enough," it means "enough." You're responsible for your actions and reactions, and for treating every human being with dignity, from the custodian of your school to the coach you deeply admire.

► **No. 10:** Learn how to fight, but only use that skill when necessary — like when someone is being attacked, mistreated or threatened.

► **No. 11:** The woman you marry will be the mother of your children. Choose wisely, because what can make a girl fun to date — like being the life of the party — often doesn't translate well into marriage and motherhood.

► **No. 12:** Be a gentleman, take the initiative, and always carry cash. When you see a mom carrying groceries into her home, help her out. When you're with a girl — a friend or a date — open doors and let her go first. Always pay for your date and don't mooch money from friends. Be a giver, not a taker.

► **No. 13:** All it takes is one convincing leader to make a bad idea sound good. Even among friends, it's imperative that you learn to step back, evaluate a situation and think for yourself. Prepare for those moments where you must stand alone or stand up for what's right.

If you aren't sure about something, don't do it.

► **No. 14:** Shake hands, give hugs, smile and look people in the eye. Be honest about who you are and passionate about the dreams in your heart so you can have real relationships and reach your God-given potential.

► **No. 15:** God created you specifically to serve your generation. He's grooming you to be an amazing leader and influencer. Listen to his voice in your life and pray for spiritual direction. Be the guy who steps up to the plate to do hard things and uses his power to empower those around him. Our world needs more men who create a sense of security. Our world needs more boys like you.

Above all, I'd want my son to know how deeply and unconditionally loved he is by his creator and his family. I'd then remind him to take the love he's been given and pass it on to others.

This would include, of course, loving on his mom, and making sure he remembered to call and check in on her once his life of independence begins.

Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis is a Mountain Brook mom of four girls, columnist and blogger for The Huffington Post. Her two books for teen and tween girls — "Liked: Whose Approval Are You Living For?" and "10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know" — are available on Amazon and everywhere books are sold. Join her Facebook community at "Kari Kampakis, Writer," visit her blog at karikampakis.com or contact her at kari@karikampakis.com.

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