



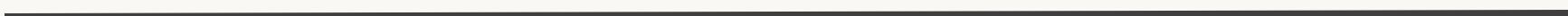
we need more men at the table

WHY OUR BOYS ARE STILL WAITING FOR
SUPPORT, AND HOW YOU CAN STEP IN

Dozens of boys are being referred for support
by their counselors, teachers, and families.

Too few men are volunteering.

Join us in closing the gap.



where have all the men gone?

Let me paint you a picture.

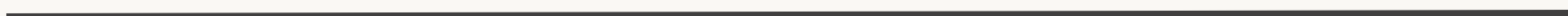
I email a school counselor to offer a female volunteer to mentor a female student (since all of our matches are same-gender). Within minutes, a reply comes back:

*“All of our girls are doing fine this year. They’re focused, they care about their grades, they sit quietly and follow directions. But our boys are struggling. **Do you have any male volunteers instead?**”*

(For what it’s worth, the girls are also not okay, they just perform better than boys and tend to get overlooked.) But right now, we’re deep into the school year, the stream of mentor applications has slowed to a trickle, and my inbox is overflowing with requests for male mentors.

And they’re nowhere to be found.

It has always been hard for programs like ours to recruit men. That part isn’t new. What is new is how wide the gap has grown. The need is rising, but the men simply aren’t signing up.



what's going on with the boys?

There have been countless studies done on the performance of boys in schools – but for now, let's focus on boys' relationships and their community. Young boys today have fewer everyday connections with men than any generation before!

- The number of kids in single-parent homes has more than doubled since 1970, mostly led by single mothers.
- Male teachers have dropped from 30% to 23%, with especially low numbers in early grades. We have elementary schools in our own county who don't have a single male adult on the staff!
- Studies routinely show that boys benefit from male teachers and counselors for motivation, identity, and future goals!
- In sports, only half of coaches are teachers now, weakening the link between academics and athletics.
- Youth sports participation is falling, isolating many low-income boys from positive male role models.
- Declines in unions, churches, and civic groups mean fewer intergenerational spaces for boys to meet caring men.



mentoring programs can help, but there just aren't enough men

When schools and communities ask mentoring programs (just like ours) for help, they find yet another barrier!

- Nationally, only 43% of volunteer mentors are men.
- **In our mentoring program, that number is only 35%.**
- This leads to long waitlists, filled mostly with boys.
- Many men hold back from mentoring due to societal and cultural stigma.
- Mentoring programs with more male mentors show higher effectiveness and retention.

The bottom line is that boys need more men in their everyday lives, and becoming a mentor is one of the most effective and simple ways to show up!



what men can teach boys

Cultural Relational Theory (CRT) argues that people grow through connection with their community, rather than through independence. But boys are often socialized to be stoic, self-reliant, and emotionally guarded.

- Boys benefit when the men in their lives model that vulnerability, empathy, and support are strengths, not weaknesses.
- Same-gender mentors help boys build connection in ways that feel culturally safe.
- Male mentors can challenge harmful norms by showing boys how to form mutual, respectful relationships.
- Strong mentor bonds boost boys' well-being, identity development, and academic engagement.



the difference only men can make

Male mentors offer unique benefits that boys often can't get elsewhere, especially when male role models are scarce. Here's what research shows male mentors can do:

- Increase school engagement and motivation.
- Encourage boys to become a part of their community.
- Build identity, belonging, and self-esteem through shared experiences.
- Improve behavior and academic outcomes (the greatest impact is seen in African-American boys)
- Model healthy relationship; teaching trust, respect, and integrity.
- Inspire hope and broaden horizons, especially regarding career paths and possibilities!

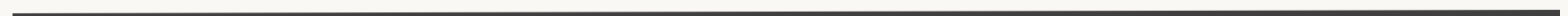


have you thought about being a mentor?

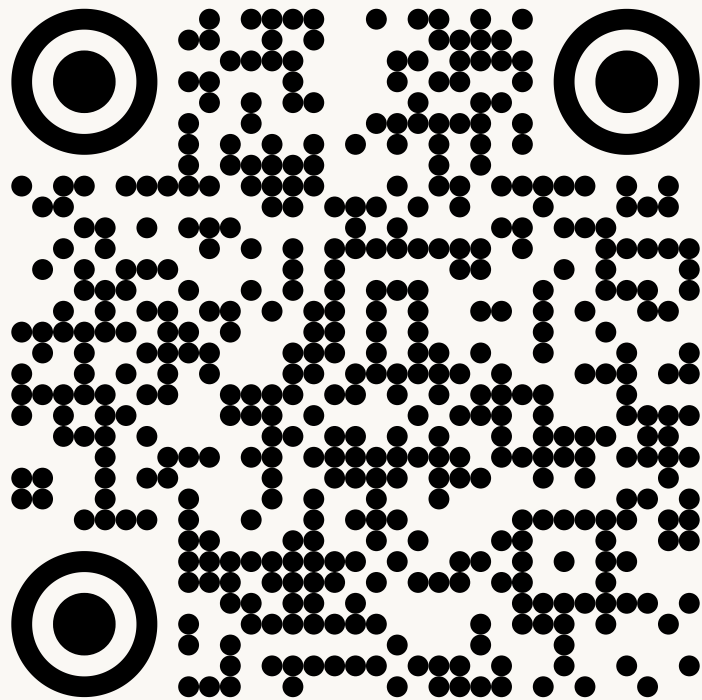
The Lunch Buddy Program, coordinated by the Council on Adolescents, is all about bringing mentorship directly to a student who could use a little extra support. Schools help us identify a student (usually a middle schooler) and we match them with a volunteer of the same gender. As a mentor, you'll go to the school once a week and have lunch with your student. The lunches are only short – about 25 minutes – so the most important thing is showing up week after week and slowly building a connection over time. It doesn't sound like a lot, but it makes all the difference to the students we serve.

The best way to make a real difference is by working with an organization that's already tackling the problem. We'll find the student, provide the framework, and give you all the support you need.

Your job is simple. Just show up, be present, and build a connection. For a kid, having an adult who takes the time to listen, care, check in, and share lunch with them can mean the world. I promise, it'll become important to you too.



want to be part of the solution?



Join the Lunch Buddy Program today!
Scan the QR Code to fill out a mentor application.
Contact me if you have any questions + want to learn more!

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