



A Discussion Guide for

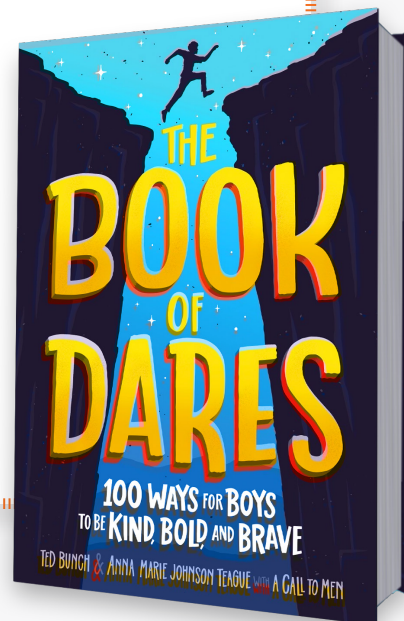
THE
BOOK
OF
DARES

100 WAYS FOR BOYS
TO BE KIND, BOLD, AND BRAVE

TED BUNCH & ANNA MARIE JOHNSON TEAGUE WITH A CALL TO MEN

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS



Dear Family and Friends,

Thank you for supporting the boys in your life as they dare to feel confident about who they truly are and learn how to treat people around them with kindness and respect. Being a boy—being male—is a wonderful thing. We want to make every boy's lived experience the very best it can be. *The Book of Dares* is meant to be fun and challenging and to help boys (and the adults in their lives) think and talk about different experiences that boys go through on their way to manhood. We believe that all kids will benefit from the dares in this book, but we have specifically and intentionally designed them to relate to the experience of boys and how they are often taught to view women and girls as inferior to men and boys.

The Book of Dares will, we hope, help boys see the ways they are taught to be men, and how some of those teachings can keep boys from becoming their whole, authentic selves. The dares promote healthy manhood and authenticity, help develop leadership skills, and encourage gender equity—all of which can help create a world where all men and boys are loving and respectful and all women and girls are valued and safe.

We are parents and anti-violence educators. We noticed a huge gap in the market for content for boys that encourages their authenticity, helps them develop empathy, educates on healthy relationships, promotes emotional literacy, and supports social-emotional learning. *The Book of Dares* is written to help fill that gap while being fun and accessible for boys and parents.

The dares are based on A Call to Men's more than twenty years of experience working with and training men and boys, including the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, the National Hockey League, the United States military, the US Department of Justice, the United Nations, corporations, educational institutions, and other organizations across the United States and abroad.

Finally, *The Book of Dares* was written with mad love for boys and men, with a profound respect for humanity, and with deep gratitude for the honor of supporting the evolution of manhood.

Ted Bunch & Anna Marie Johnson Teague

A CALL TO MEN

HOW BOYS ARE TAUGHT TO BE MEN

We live in a culture where the Man Box dominates. It polices boys, demanding that they obey its rules and punishing them if they fall short. Boys are consistently pushed beyond their feelings to aggression, and that aggression is reflected back to them in video games, music, movies, and pornography. These teachings are reinforced in things we say all the time: that “big boys don’t cry,” that a boy should “man up,” that he is “acting like a girl,” and that he needs to “be a man.” Those messages tell boys it’s not okay—not safe, even—to show emotion or be afraid. This socialization leaves boys vulnerable to depression, anxiety, suicide, high-risk behaviors like vaping, alcohol or drug use, and putting themselves in physical danger, and violence toward themselves and others.



The Man Box teaches that boys shouldn’t need to ask for help, that they should have everything under control or be able to figure everything out on their own. This can create a damaging cycle of harm. It can make boys feel insecure, ashamed, and lonely. Here’s how it can play out:

Michael is having trouble with science class but doesn’t ask for help because he doesn’t want to look dumb (the Man Box says he should know it all!). Because he didn’t ask for help, he fails an important test. Because he fails a test, he starts to doubt himself and thinks he’s not smart. Because he’s doubting himself, he quits trying in school. Michael has a bad semester and gets kicked off the basketball team because he didn’t make his grades. Because he no longer has practice, he starts hanging out after school with kids who are making poor choices. Eventually, Michael starts making poor choices and gets in trouble with the police. He’s suspended from school. His future is in real jeopardy. We call this the cycle of consequences, and for many boys, it’s very real.



INSIDE THE MAN BOX

Boys and male-identified children are taught to believe:

- Women and girls are objects, the property of men, and have less value than men
- Boys and men should not cry or openly express emotion
- Boys and men should not show fear or weakness
- Boys and men should not "act like a girl"
- Boys and men should be decisive and not ask for, offer, or accept help
- Aggression equals dominance

The Man Box also teaches boys to view women, girls, and those who are LGBTQ, trans, and non-binary as having less value than men. Boys start getting these “less than” messages in their early, formative years. On the ball field, a coach might say to a boy, “Son, you’ve got to throw harder than that, you throw like a _____.” Most men and boys around the world fill in that blank with girl (that’s our collective socialization!). So what does that boy walk away thinking about girls? That they’re weak and inferior—and that you certainly don’t want to be like one.

The coach isn’t trying to teach the kid about girls. He just wants the boy to throw harder. But the lesson that coach passes along creates the fertile soil where sexism can take root. Similarly, boys who are physically weak or who present more “feminine” qualities or behaviors are demeaned with gender-based insults. Boys who push the norms of gender expression with colored hair, painted nails, and other personal style choices consistently have their manhood questioned. All those who fall outside the Man Box are at risk of isolation, bullying, and violence.

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not safe even—to show emotion or be afraid.

THE SOLUTION: HEALTHY MANHOOD

Healthy manhood is the solution. It's the antidote for some of the most destructive problems we face in our society—bullying, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, mass shootings, male suicide, gender-based discrimination, and homophobia. The threat of all these problems decreases as we increase healthy manhood.

Healthy manhood is also linked to improved physical health and emotional well-being for men. When boys are told not to cry or feel, there are lasting negative effects on their health and relationships. The Man Box teaches boys to stuff their feelings inside or only act them out in a physical or aggressive manner. Aggression is a very good thing if boys are playing a sport or competing in a race. But aggression toward friends, family, and even themselves can be harmful. We must help boys develop the skills to identify their feelings and the language to express them. Boys' emotional literacy is directly linked to their potential for happiness and success.

HEALTHY MANHOOD

IS THE PATH OUT OF THE MANBOX

12 TO PRACTICING

KEYS HEALTHY MANHOOD

1	2	3	4	5	6
Embracing and expressing a full range of emotion	Validating the feelings of other boys and men	Being willing to cry	Being vulnerable — allowing oneself and others to ask for, offer, and accept help	Valuing the lives of girls and women	Treating all people equally and promoting the betterment of humanity
7	8	9	10	11	12
Never using control or violence	Never using gender-based attributes to bully or discriminate	Never using language that denigrates women and girls	Having an interest in women and girls outside of sexual conquest	Modeling healthy manhood for other men and boys	Using your influence and platforms to promote its practice

HOW DO BOYS FEEL ABOUT DARES?

We spoke with thousands of boys around the world about the idea of dares. Unanimously, boys agree that dares are terrifying. It's impossible to know the outcome of a dare—and scary to imagine a bad one. With every dare, there's potential for embarrassment, shame, and being laughed at—in other words: judgment. There's pressure, not only to go through with the dare, but to accept the challenge in the first place.

Both are ways of showing you're tough or proving your manhood. And yet boys told us that they still find dares appealing, that they're fascinated with dare culture and the respect earned by completing dares. Not to mention that it feels a little bit like living on the edge. We wanted a concept that boys would be attracted to—that would be familiar and fun—and could be done individually or in groups.

GUIDEPOSTS FOR THE BOOK OF DARES

Each of the dares in the book is designed to promote healthy manhood, authenticity, and gender equity in boys.

Healthy Manhood

Or healthy masculinity is a way of living that allows men and boys to be their authentic selves. The principles of healthy manhood are:

- ✓ Embracing and expressing a full range of emotion
- ✓ Not giving in to the pressure to always be fearless and in control
- ✓ Valuing and treating women, girls, and all people equally
- ✓ Never using language that puts people down
- ✓ Being interested in women and girls even if you don't romantically like them
- ✓ Modeling healthy, respectful behavior for others

Authenticity

Is the ability to be one's whole, genuine, and real self

Gender Equity

Is the idea that all people should have the same rights, resources, opportunities, protections, and respect, no matter their gender

A dare that promotes Healthy Manhood:

Dare to name three emotions you felt today.

You'd be surprised how many boys (and grown men!) cannot do this. We have found that when young people talk about something important, the adults in their lives are quick to offer opinions and solutions. One of the best ways to respond is by asking, "How did that make you feel?" Prompting boys to articulate their feelings builds emotional literacy and helps them process what is going on in their lives. It sets them up to be better communicators in their personal and professional lives.

A dare that promotes Authenticity:

Dare to encourage someone's uniqueness.

So often at this age, differences are considered weaknesses. What we should be doing is celebrating them! This dare is designed to help boys identify things they might call out or pick on someone for and praise them instead. This not only helps build trust and deepen friendships, but it helps boys embrace their own differences and ultimately love themselves.

A dare that encourages Gender Equity:

Dare to chip in for equal pay.

This dare is great because it presents a scenario where a brother and sister are asked to do the dishes for a week. They do the same work, and both do a great job. But at the end of the week, the girl is paid \$30 and the boy is only paid \$27. Young people have a radar for what's "fair" and they immediately identify the bias and speak out. It's a simple, effective way to talk about a complicated issue that persists in our society.

5 TIPS FOR USING THE BOOK OF DARES

1. Encourage Questions.

The Book of Dares is meant to start conversations. Discussing the dares, how they made readers feel, how it worked in real life, any challenges, any successes, will help deepen the reader's experience and understanding.

If you don't have an answer in the moment, that's okay. It's good to admit we don't always have all the answers and are willing to seek them out.

2. Link the dares to its guidepost.

As you are discussing the dare, ask the reader which of the guideposts they think it relates to? They might feel strongly that it links to one or might have rationale for more than one. This exercise promotes critical thinking.

3. Use your own stories.

The best way to get young readers to share is to model authenticity and vulnerability. You will find that the dares are very relatable and you will have likely experienced much of what is discussed in the book. It's about our shared socialization, after all!

4. Become a trusted friend and resource.

It's inevitable that the dares will prompt some conversations that could be challenging. A reader could disclose that they are being bullied at school, or that they are worried about a friend or relative. Remember to stay calm in the moment. Listen without trying to immediately solve the problem. Ask how the reader is feeling about it. And ask how you can help. If you suspect a child is in danger, talk to an appropriate authority.

5. Ask your readers to make up their own dares and share them with us.

You can submit them at www.acalltomen.org/book-of-dares/

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Whether you are a parent reading with your child or a coach using the book in your athletic program, *The Book of Dares* is meant to start conversations. With each dare, you have the opportunity to expand on the concept, the experience, and the follow up. Try incorporating these questions into your conversations with readers.



What did you think about this dare?



Did you want to try it? Why or why not?



Did you try it? Why or why not?



How did it go?



What would you have done differently?



How did it make you feel?



What did you learn about yourself?



What did you learn about others?



Did it give you an idea of something else you can do?

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