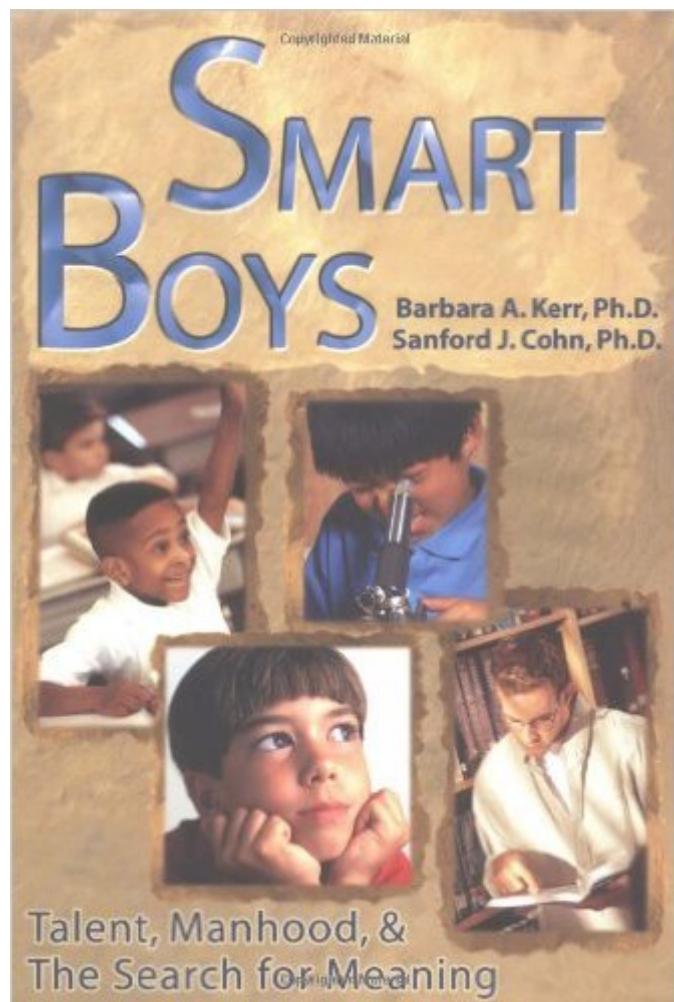


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# Smart Boys: Talent, Manhood, And The Search For Meaning



## **Synopsis**

Boys will be boys--but gifted boys may need help. Depression, underachievement, sensitivity, and relationship struggles are just some of the issues that many smart boys face on a daily basis. This book presents suggestions to help gifted young men embrace optimism, motivation, and achievement, and it offers thought-provoking insights and tips for engaging in successful interactions. There are also interviews with gifted adult men who have experienced and overcome crises or failures.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Smart Boys: Talent, Manhood, & The Search for Meaning, by Barbara Kerr (author of Smart Girls) and Sanford Cohn, is a must-have book for parents of boys who are precocious, creative, intense, sensitive and otherwise gifted learners. With all the other books about boys currently on the market, how is this one different? Smart Boys addresses social and emotional issues that are either unique to or more extreme for gifted boys, such as their high levels of sensitivity (which often go against the culture's Boy Code), their tendency to enjoy traditionally "girl" activities as well as boy activities, their sometimes intense intellectual interests that cause them to be branded "nerds," and their need for role models and mentors who provide an alternative vision of what it means to be a man in today's society. Smart Boys also provides valuable background information on the research of gifted boys and an age-by-age guide both to academic needs and to emotional and spiritual development. The authors call for a new vision of compassionate masculinity that includes courage, creativity and

commitment. The message that rings most loud and clear from the pages of this book is that we need to allow gifted boys to be themselves, even when, and perhaps especially when, being themselves is different from what society expects boys to be. I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves, works with, or has been a gifted boy.

As a Gifted Education student and professional, I have developed strong interests in the gifts, needs and problems unique to gifted males. It's an area that's not terribly well-researched, partly owing to a more PC focus on gifted females (and I don't mean to argue that gifted females are unworthy of research and funding!) As gifted young males grow up and enter high school and college, their representation in academically-oriented classes and universities declines drastically compared to gifted females (and this generally serves for all males and females of college age). It's difficult to pinpoint or put the blame on any one or two specific causes, but it is important to recognize first that boys and girls learn and process information differently, and second, that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with recognizing these differences and attempting to address them at the classroom and familial levels. This book gives quite detailed accounts of many of the issues specific to gifted males, and it also breaks them down chronologically to address the growing gifted male at different stages of life, including gifted men (yeah!) It serves its purposes well as a quality reference book, and its reviews of the myriad popular books about boys, although too short, are helpful and basically sound. One caveat: the writers (I assume both of them, since the reader has no way to identify which writer authored which section or article) write from a very PC perspective, which occasionally leads them to accept or reject certain hypotheses or ideas outright. Many of these actually deserve more careful consideration, positive or negative. There is also a strong and somewhat preachy emphasis on the problems of homosexual boys, and it runs as an undercurrent throughout the text. While the unique difficulties of these boys merits attention and tact from teachers and parents, it almost seems to be put on a pedestal in this book. Perhaps the authors have dealt extensively with homosexual boys who have faced many issues, but they are not explicit about this, so these emphases too often come across as agenda driven and prescriptive dictates. All in all, quite well-written and broad, albeit a bit preachy in places. I would recommend this book for parents, teachers and gifted ed professionals who deal with gifted boys on a regular basis.

This informative book begins with descriptions of gifted boys and explores the relationship of how being gifted may have affected their masculinity. From young boys to the adult gifted male, the authors tell about the milestones and the danger zones for bright boys. Halfway through this

excellent book, the authors outline the special challenges for gifted boys like underachievement, being called nerds, and even being a minority gifted male. The authors conclude the book with suggestions on guiding the gifted boys in our lives. They not only deal with the academic challenges that smart boys face, but include their social, emotional and spiritual development, too. The references at the conclusion of each chapter share valuable resources for those interested in further reading on gifted males. The book is well-grounded in research and is enjoyable reading for both parents and educators of the gifted. The authors encourage us to guide these smart boys in our lives as they go for their dreams!

This book provides everyone who reads it an understanding of the challenges gifted males experience as children and as adults. The stories make readers aware of how we are not all the same and that our individual nature needs to be nourished. If this happens these boys can grow into confident men, if not, their gifts are sadly compromised. Each chapter deals with the specific problems boys have in being as smart as they are and how our culture--be it family or social--needs to become more aware of nurturing the individual aspects of each child's personality so they can develop into the totality of who they are meant to be. The book is very readable and flows through the personal and collective stories that all males--gifted in a variety of ways and from various backgrounds--experience as they struggle to become themselves. We can all learn more about how to treat the unusual and valuable aspects of those gifted boys and men we deal with daily from reading this book.

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