



BOYS
WITHOUT
BORDERS

Dear Boy Child...

A compilation of letters to the boy



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PREFACE

This book is a collection of letters from Boys Without Borders to boys, men and society in general. It is a collation of excerpts from our Content Guidelines – a material created to help guide our volunteers when conversing with boys and men, and reaching out to society. This book presents short, useful and impactful messages that would be helpful in different ways to whoever picks it up. To our boys and men, this is for you.

ON PEER PRESSURE

➤ Dear Boy,

Dealing with peer pressure can be challenging, but always stop and ask yourself;

“What are my values?”

“Why are they my values?”

Reflect on your answers...Then act.

➤ Dear Boy,

When it comes to pressure around alcohol and other drug use, never overestimate just how many of your peers actually indulge. So in the end, it's more of self-pressure than peer pressure, watch it!

➤ Dear Boy,

When people or situations that make you feel pressured are not avoidable, try the “delay tactic”, like... "Let me think about that", “Can I get back to you?”, or "Check back with me in an hour”. Give yourself time to think about your decision.

ON DEALING WITH SOCIETAL STANDARDS

➤ Dear Boy,

Social pressure is the direct influence of other people on your thoughts, desires, and actions. It's the feeling that you should live your life according to other people's narratives, following a path that's considered "acceptable" by modern society.

➤ Did you know?

Social pressure isn't an external force exerted by society in an attempt to keep you confined to a path you ultimately don't want. Rather, it's the internal pressure you put on yourself based on your subconscious need to fit in with those around you.

➤ Dear Boy,

Never be afraid to break free from the kind of social pressure that does not encourage you to follow your own unique interests.

➤ Dear Boy,

If you're unable to define what drives you, it's easy to follow the narrative that other people say results in "success."

➤ Dear Boy,

If you know what your why is, it becomes much easier to say “no” when social pressure rears its ugly head.

➤ Dear Boy,

The social norms theory is a theory that says that a person’s behavior is often influenced by incorrect perceptions of how other people expect him/her to act.

➤ Dear Boy,

The crux of the social norms theory tells us that we often overvalue the expectations of our peers in negative situations and undervalue them in positive situations.

ON RELATIONSHIPS

➤ Dear Boy,

Human beings are social organisms, and it is impossible to get the best out of life if they don't have good relationships.

➤ Dear Boy,

Never trivialize the importance of family and how it can really be that support system you need.

➤ Dear Boy,

About 80 per cent of a person's actions and significant decisions in life are influenced either directly or indirectly by his/her friends. So, choose your friends wisely.

➤ Dear Boy,

Never get too dependent on someone to the point that it starts to affect your productivity.

➤ Did you know?

Trust fosters love in relationship. Try it!

ON GENDER ISSUES

➤ Did you know?

Attitudinal upbringing deals with how the attitudes and beliefs of the parents and the society affect a child, how they contribute to what a child eventually becomes.

➤ Dear Boy,

One of the male stereotype role is to hold back his emotions always, but understand that you are human, and talking and crying are human traits. You are fully allowed to exhibit them and express yourself.

➤ Did you know?

UNICEF describes gender equality as a case where women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protection. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men be the same, but that they are treated exactly alike.

➤ Did you know?

Even though our genital configurations might be different, this should not hinder us from acquiring basic skills or attributes predominantly expressed by one gender over the other.

ON EMOTIONAL AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

➤ Did you know?

Emotions are a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence your thought and behavior.

➤ Did you know?

Emotion management is your awareness and handling of both positive and negative emotions.

➤ Dear Boy,

Once you can define your emotions, they become more familiar to you, and this helps you successfully handle them.

➤ Dear Boy,

You are not superman. You are a human being from planet earth, not Krypton. So, take breaks every once in a while. Your body will need to recover what it has burned through work.

➤ Dear Boy,

Emotion and stress management is a critical skill that every person should learn in the course of living. It helps improve personal and social well-being, and is also crucial to building persons who can make this world better.

ON MENTAL HEALTH

➤ Did you know?

Poor mental health does not mean you have mental illness. It simply means that a you are not equipped with the appropriate skills to interact effectively with your immediate environment. Some of these skills needed are assertiveness skills, coping skills, adaptation skills, cognitive skills, and observational skills.

➤ Did you know?

In everyday life, the boy-child is made to feel that he must be on top of every situation, which he cannot always do. But because he feels that he must live up to expectations, he makes all attempts to assert his role.

➤ Did you know?

There are different acts of violence in our society. They include domestic abuse, rape, and bullying. Exposing the boy-child to these acts will have life-long effects on the boy's psychological development.

➤ Did you know?

Lack of adequate attention and care will make the boy-child prone to isolating himself from others. He'll think he is all alone in the world and that he can never receive any care.

➤ Did you know?

The boy-child deserves to be loved and cared for. If he doesn't get the attention and care he should get, He seeks attention, he'll take care-free decisions under the influence of his peers.

ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

➤ Dear boy,

Personal development is a lifelong process. It is a way for you to rate your skills and qualities, consider your aims in life, and set goals in order to realize and maximize your potential.

➤ Dear boy,

Having self-esteem is important to your personal development.

➤ Dear boy,

The internet is filled with pressure from all sides that a guy needs to be wealthy before he is given societal respect. But that's not true. When you have good self-esteem, others will respect you for what you're worth.

➤ Dear boy,

You are the major player on the journey of your personal development. You are the one to take the wheel. Any other person or external factors are just to guide you.

➤ Dear boy,

You must know that you don't have to have everything figured out.

➤ Dear boy,

The pressure out there is heavier than before, and most times, people feel left out. Whenever you feel that way, remember that personal and career development is a journey not a destination. It is all about the little steps we take.

➤ Dear boy,

The only person you are destined to become is the person you choose to be.

ON DRUG ABUSE AND ADDICTION

➤ Dear boy,

Drug addiction is a chronic brain disease that causes a person to take drugs repeatedly, despite the harm the drugs cause. Repeated drug use is what leads to addiction.

➤ Did you know?

If drug use continues for a long period, other pleasurable activities become less pleasurable. The person then has to take the drug to feel “normal.”

➤ Dear boy,

The initial decision to take drugs is usually voluntary. Still, with continued use, a person’s ability to control their drug intake becomes gradually reduces. This is what leads to addiction.

➤ Dear boy,

To stop your addiction, set goals for yourself. It might not be possible to stop your addiction at once. However, you can set up a process. Start with reducing the number of times you use the drug, or any other addictive behavior until you can fully do without it.

ON SEXUAL EDUCATION

➤ Dear Boy,

Consent is something that must happen before any sexual activity, every time it is desired. You or your sexual partner are responsible for giving consent. Under the influences of sleep, intoxication, unconsciousness and drugs, it cannot be given.

➤ Dear Boy,

Sexual abuse in simpler terms, is any form of sexual violence, including rape, child molestation, incest and similar forms of non-consensual sexual contact. By knowing this, you equip yourself to fight it in whatever form it is seen.

➤ Dear Boy,

Sexual abuse is in other forms, too. It does not always fit the popular understanding of it. For instance, parents who have sex in front of their children or make sexually inappropriate comments to them have committed sexual abuse.

➤ Dear Boy,

Society says that a boy cannot be hurt by sex, but in fact, this is untrue. This ruling is actually harmful, too. Because men now fear being ridiculed, they do not seek help. Substance abuse or drug use therefore becomes a way to avoid the emotional pain.

➤ Did you know?

A child doesn't need to be touched to be sexually abused. Voyeuristic actions such as watching a child undress, or shower, can count as abuse. Adults who expose their genitalia to children are equally committing abuse.

➤ Brother man,

Sexual harassment na wahala wey person no suppose find. To avoid it, do not harass a person on the basis of their sex; make unwanted sexual contact or advances; pressure to go on a date or fulfill sexual favours; or even, make offensive comments or jokes about a particular sex.

➤ Dear Boy,

Suffering abuse can cripple your will to go on, but you have to fight to not let it. In seeking help, open up to trusted people on what happened to you. You cannot let yourself be frightened by society. To right that grievous wrong, contacting the appropriate authorities is advisable, too.

➤ Brother man,

Konji na bastard, we sabi. But you fit decide say you no like the problem wey e dey cause. As a boy, abstinence is the best option for you to prevent getting an STD.

However, if you must:

- Calm down to wear condom first
- Get frequent tests

- Be vaccinated
- Limit sexual partners (lool, chill☺)

➤ Did you know?

Although sexual content in the media can affect any age group, adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Do you know why? Adolescents may be exposed to sexual content in the media during a developmental period when gender roles, sexual attitudes, and sexual behaviors are being shaped. This group may be particularly at risk because the cognitive skills that allow them to critically analyze messages from the media and to make decisions are not fully developed.

➤ Dear Boy,

The media depicts sexual behavior and its positive consequences while most times neglecting the negative consequences of such actions.

➤ Dear Boy,

Consent is clear and understood by everyone involved. “Yes” means “yes”, "no" means "no" and silence is never equal to consent. Consent is required for every sexual act, from kissing to sex and can be withdrawn at any point.

➤ Did you know?

In Nigeria, the legal age of consent is 18 years old. In general, this means an adult having sex with someone younger than 18 years old is considered sexual assault and someone younger than 18 can't give consent.

➤ Dear Boy,

Making consent an expectation in your relationship (dating, hook ups, or other relationships) will also set the tone for a respectful and healthy relationship.

➤ Did you know?

If you have had sexual contact without consent, this is a form of sexual assault and rape. It does not have to be violent or leave a physical mark. It can happen to anyone regardless of age, intellectual ability, physical ability, and it is never your fault. If you have experienced sexual assault or rape, you are not alone and you should report the case to the appropriate authorities.

ON PERSONAL HYGIENE

➤ Dear Boy,

Maintaining a high level of personal hygiene will your increase self-esteem and confidence while minimizing developing infections.

➤ Dear Boy,

Practicing good personal hygiene can help you:

- stay healthy
- feel good about yourself.
- maintain and enjoy a healthy body image
- Develop a healthy personality

ON CHARACTER BUILDING

➤ Dear Boy,

Character building is very crucial in your developmental stage. It is in fact the first thing the outside world sees. You should feel a sense of wellbeing, self-worth and confidence, and show no iota of ill-discipline.

➤ Dear Boy,

Insecurity is a phase when you may often lack confidence regarding many aspects of life. Often accompanied by anxiety, it causes negative thoughts about one's ability to attain success or fit in with others.

➤ Did you know?

Deep-seated feelings of anxiety and insecurity may result in personality disorders like narcissism, schizophrenia, borderline personality, depression, anxiety, eating disorders and so on.

➤ Dear Boy,

Dealing with Insecurity?

- Give yourself time to heal and adapt to the new normal
- Engage with life, following your interests and curiosity.
- Reach out to friends and family for distraction and comfort.
- Persevere and keep moving towards your goals.

- Be willing to try a different strategy if necessary
- Set yourself limited, realistic goals as you work towards improving.

➤ Dear Boy,

Self-worth is how you value yourself. It's not based on what others think of you or the things you have or haven't accomplished. Simply put, self-worth comes from within and is more about valuing your inherent worth as a person.

➤ Dear Boy,

Searching for self-worth by constantly comparing your self-worth to others' means you are simply fighting a losing battle as there is always someone more "successful" than you are.

➤ Dear Boy,

Although real accomplishments are important to acknowledge as you build your sense of self your self-worth should also be taken in to account as the unique qualities that make you, you.

➤ Dear Boy,

Only you can determine your self-worth, and the feeling of self-worth comes from within

➤ Dear Boy,

Comparing yourself to others not only endangers your confidence or self-esteem, it also put you on the edge of losing your self-worth

➤ Dear Boy,

Things that do not determine your self worth are your financial status, age, social media following, other people, appearance etc. If you want to change the way you look, do it for you. But know that these things shouldn't define how worthy you are.

➤ Dear Boy,

How do you build your self-worth?

-Through adding meaning to your life, by taking part in activities that you feel are important. For example, helping others and volunteering.

-Think about the activities and interests that feel meaningful to you personally and pursue those activities to build a more positive feeling of self-worth.

-Acting on principles, in ways that you respect. "Make a concerted effort to maintain personal integrity in your life by insisting that your actions correspond to your words", suggests Dr. Robert Firestone. When our actions do not match our words, we are more vulnerable to attacks from our critical inner voice and less likely to respect ourselves.

➤ Did you know?

Self Confidence is the feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeeds at something. It is derived from the Latin word 'fidere' which means "to trust"; therefore, having self-confidence is having trust in one's self. One's self confidence increases from experiences of having satisfactorily completed particular activities.

➤ Did you know?

Self-confidence is not the same as self-esteem. Self-esteem is an evaluation of your own worth, whereas self-confidence is more specifically trust in your ability to achieve some goal.

➤ Dear Boy,

Building Self Confidence?

- Take Pride in Your Achievement
- Use Positive Visualization
- Improve Your Self Talk
- Appreciate Yourself
- Change Your Body Language- employ a confident posture and body language
- Love Yourself First
- Live in the Present

➤ Dear Boy,

Discovering how to be confident in yourself isn't an overnight process, it takes time. By shifting how you present yourself physically and what you focus on mentally, you can create confidence that will help propel you toward your goals.