

# Pointers For Parents

## Understanding How Boys Play

(NAPSA)—You may have seen it at home, in the classroom, on the playground and around the sports field: boys carrying on the way boys do. If someone gets roughed up, he may be told to “man up,” or if feelings get hurt, to “let it go.”

Although numerous studies show that strong relationships and the ability to connect are key to happiness, health and even career success, boys grow up with cultural messages telling them feelings and relationships make them weak. For generations, boys have been pumped with messages that encourage stepping away from their feelings. They’re urged to mask their emotions with bravery and toughness and it’s reinforced in the toys targeted to them. Trucks, action figures, building sets and the like don’t much contribute to developing emotional intelligence or teaching compassion and empathy.

In the girls’ toy aisle, the opposite is true. Almost all toys targeted to girls focus on creativity, friendship and nurturing.

Now, a psychotherapist and mother of a son, Laurel Wider, has come up with a way to change how boys connect during play. When her son returned home from preschool and declared that “boys aren’t supposed to cry,” she realized that even though she encouraged her son to express his feelings, it was quite evident that influences outside the home were sending the “man up” message. The same directive was also broadcast—loud and clear—in the toy aisle. Wider decided to use her experience and expertise to create a different play option for boys—one that would focus on building social and emotional skills.

“In efforts to bring friendship and empathy to boys’ play, I knew I had to find a way to cut through the stigma and that’s when it hit me: There’s no reason why a superhero or builder can’t also be a nurturer.”

In response, Wider created a line called Wonder Crew Buddies, designed for boys ages 3 to 5. The 15” buddies combine the adventure of an action figure with the emotional connection of a stuffed animal. The four pals, Will, Marco, James and Erik, can empower boys to develop emotionally through friendship, imagination and adventure. Each



**Toys that encourage boys to get in touch with their creative and nurturing side can help them grow up to be happier, healthier, more successful people, experts say.**

15-inch figure comes friendship- and adventure-ready, dressed in superhero gear, complete with matching mask and cape for kids. When children suit up along with their buddies, this not only adds to the crewlike vibe, but deepens the imaginative play experience.

Boys can partake in both adventurous and imaginative play, while having meaningful conversations and sharing feelings with their buddies. The diversity among the dolls is a huge plus, bolstering the confidence, self-worth and empowerment in all boys.

As Dr. Shawn Meghan Burn, Professor of Psychology at California Polytechnic State University, put it, “Children need toys that will prepare them for active roles in both the home and workplace, that promote a wide variety of skills, and that help them develop their own unique aptitudes and skills rather than only those that conform to traditional gender stereotypes.” In partnership with PlayMonster, the Buddies are available now where toys are sold.

“Wonder Crew Buddies are inspired by boys but truly meant for any child,” Wider added. The mission is to empower all kids to see themselves as caring, creative and strong people with the ability to go anywhere and be anything.

### Learn More

“Wonder Crew isn’t just a line of boy dolls, we’re sending boys that message that YES, of course you have feelings and YES, you can be an awesome caretaker or friend,” Wider added. Wonder Crew aims to move beyond the stereotypes and empower the whole child. Learn more at [wondercrew.com](http://wondercrew.com).