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## ABSTRACT

Based on the view that boys need real support in growing to manhood, especially in societies where traditional role patterns are changing, the Rock and Water program was developed in the Netherlands to focus on guiding boys ages 10 to 15 years in the growth to manhood. This paper describes the program, which is centered around the themes of safety and integrity. The program goals are: (1) to assist boys in their development to adulthood; (2) to focus on developing self confidence, self knowledge, self respect, boundary awareness, self awareness, and intuition; (3) to develop moral standards and values; and (4) to assist boys in dealing with power, strength, and powerlessness. The first 8 lessons of the program are suitable for 10- to 12-year-olds, with the remaining 6 lessons appropriate for boys 14-year-old and older. Physical exercises are linked with mental and social skills; the program's framework of exercises and thoughts about boys and manhood assists boys to become aware of purpose and motivation in their lives. Topics include intuition, body language, mental power, empathy, positive thinking and visualizing, bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, life goals, desires, and following an inner compass. Also included in the paper is information on workshops for training teachers to use the Rock and Water Program. An outline of the Rock and Water course completes the paper.  
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# The Rock and Water Course

**A NATIONAL INITIATIVE OF THE MEN AND BOYS PROGRAM, FAMILY ACTION CENTRE IN CONJUNCTION WITH FREERK YKEMA TEACHER AND TRAINER FROM THE NETHERLANDS**



Teaching Boys self control , self respect and self confidence.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE

SKILLS FOR PHYSICAL/SOCIAL TEACHING WITH BOYS

FREERK YKEMA

THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ROCK AND WATER PROGRAM

WHO CAN TEACH THE ROCK AND WATER PROGRAM?

SCHEDULE FOR 2001

THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE OUTLINED

HOMEPAGE

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## SEMINAR NOTES

*The Development of The Rock and Water Course*

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- Action and Reaction
- Growth to manhood
- The Goals of Rock and Water
- The line of development of Rock and Water in 5 Steps

Action and Reaction Growth to manhood The line of development of Rock and Water in 5 Steps

In the mid eighties in Holland, a program of self-defence for girls was developed. This program was a direct result of the women's emancipation movement. Changing role patterns and a growing sense of being entitled to the same rights as men, were at its roots.

The Self-defence For Girls Program taught girls and women to defend themselves against forms of sexual harassment and sexual abuse. Beside a number of effective physical techniques, they were also taught how to become stronger mentally. This program was and still is very successful in Holland. It has become a standard subject in the curriculum of many Dutch schools. Its success is partly found in the fact that its goals had - and still have - wide social support.

### ***Action and Reaction***

In the mid nineties a plan originated to compose a similar program for boys as well. Making the girls and women stronger and more defensible, appeared to be only part of the story. Boys, too, should be involved. They also had to learn how to cope with these changing role patterns. An essential part of this was that boys should be taught to have more feeling, understanding and respect for the boundaries and integrity of girls.

Not to make this course a mere sequel of the girls course, the following was the central starting point: boys are not only perpetrators of violence (especially sexual violence), but are also victims (not so much of sexual violence). This double role became the guiding motive for the boys course which was presented in September 1994 under the name "Action and Reaction". The objective of Action and Reaction was the prevention of sexual violence by boys.

Another important starting-point was the psycho-physical approach. Starting from the fact that boys are foremost physical in this world, the choice was made for a course in which physical skills are taught first of all, so that from there a transfer could be made to skills that are more mentally and socially oriented.

Finally, it was understood that aggression caused a lot of problems and annoyance, it is true, but that it would be wise to examine aggressive behaviour and the reasons behind it. Discontent, inner tensions, insecurities and the urge to move and explore were recognised as possible causes of aggressive behaviour.

From the start it was obvious that the double role was a good starting point, but at the same time it also caused much obscurity. Many teachers stressed the role of the perpetrator in their lessons too emphatically. Thinking about boys was narrowed down too easily to the idea that boys are troublesome, do not have a sense of boundaries, easily lose their self-control and have little respect for girls. In short: they needed to be changed.

The positive starting points of the program were overlooked too easily in practice. The reason for this was and is, that boys indeed attract attention with their behaviour. They express themselves - more than girls do - in an extrovert and physical way when they meet with conflicts or problems. Many teachers are caught by this exterior behaviour and are unable to see the intentions, qualities and problems that are sometimes hidden behind this behaviour.

Although the starting points of Action and Reaction were put into positive words, the program remained powerless and incapable of reaching many teachers.

Its objective "the prevention of sexual violence" appeared to be too specific in practice. Boys easily got the feeling that they should learn something because there was something wrong with them. Many teachers did not appreciate the limited objectives of the course. Although in itself the perpetrator-victim approach was meant to be a neutral approach to boys, many teachers had the feeling that this approach did not do justice to the majority of their boys.

Another factor was that not every teacher felt secure in dealing with subjects that were so emphatically concentrated on sexuality and sexual violence. The older teachers had grown up in a society full of traditional role patterns. Their younger colleagues had themselves experienced the problems of a changing society, but felt inadequately capable or called upon to dedicate their lessons to a subject which they had hardly outgrown themselves.

The wide support in society for the girls course, hardly appeared to exist for the boys course. The idea was generally accepted that boys will be boys and so they are troublesome. The worst mischief makers and the perpetrators of sexual violence should be severely handled, and the rest of the boys would grow over "it" as a matter of course.

That boys in their growth to adulthood, in a society which shows a lot of change in traditional role patterns and relationships between men and women, need real support, was and is hardly recognized.

### ***Growth to manhood***

Rock and Water has developed from the working knowledge of Action and Reaction. The starting points of Action and Reaction were maintained, that is to say the prevention of sexual violence through a perpetrator-victim approach. However, it was imbedded in a larger context which focussed on the guidance of adolescent boys in their growth to manhood and centred around the two main themes of Safety and Integrity. The original objective of Action and Reaction was placed in a setting that would enhance the realisation of its goals.

Balance was regained. Sexual violence and violence in itself should not be the sole focus to occupy boys, teachers, parents and guardians. Their main concern should be the boy on his way to manhood. It is about his qualities and the problems he may meet on his way. It is about the supportive roles of educators and guardians. It is also about the fact that we should determine the contents of adulthood or manhood. What is our ideal of a "real" man? A course with this wide, positive objective is appealing to a much larger group of teachers. It connects more easily and pleasantly. It incites in-depth discussions of standards and values, which is an urgent necessity in changing and multicultural societies.

A logical consequence of these new insights concerns the length of the course and the age at which it can be taught. Action and Reaction, with its limited focus on the prevention of sexual violence, aimed at boys of 14 and 15 years old. A full course existed of 6 to 8 lessons within a certain period. Rock and Water with its wider objective, intends to guide the boys over a much longer period. In its present form of fourteen basic lessons, Rock and Water is suitable for boys from the age of 10. The first eight lessons are suitable for 10, 11 and 12-year-olds. The last lessons are meant for boys of 14 years old and over. In this way it is possible to shape the guidance of boys over a period of 5 years.

In these 5 years, students and teachers together can build a frame of ideas and experiences in

which the education and guidance of boys can be given a really positive form. A further, logical step would be to extend the frame of ideas and exercises of Rock and Water to younger and older pupils.

## ***The Goals of Rock and Water***

### ***Rock and Water aims at the following goals:***

- The program aims to assist boys in their development to adulthood and to become real, fine, authentic men (self-realisation) who are conscious of their own power and responsibility within society and the involving tasks.
- Self-realisation is only possible with the right amount of self-confidence. From this real trust in oneself grows the trust to dare and listen to feeling, intuition and the inner voice that gives direction and guidance on one's path through life. That is why the accent in this course is put on the development of self-confidence, selfknowledge and self-respect, boundary awareness, self-awareness and intuition.
- Self-realisation goes together with the development of morality. The awareness that people are really connected and form an organic whole logically implies a growing respect for people with different lives and of another opinion. It is the basis for insight and tolerance and that is why it is the starting point of this course. That is also why discussions about standards and values form an important part of the group discussions.
- A specific goal of the course is teaching the boys to deal with power, strength and powerlessness. Boys can be perpetrators of violence, also of sexual violence, but they can also be victims. That is why on the one hand they are taught to defend themselves from various forms of violence, and on the other hand they are taught to grow more aware of boundaries and crossing them.

### ***The line of development of Rock and Water in 5 steps***

It is important to keep in mind that enhancing the defensibility of boys is merely part of a larger whole. This larger whole is summarised here in 5 steps. The thread running through it is the process of growing awareness of the boys on their path to manhood.

The point of application generally is the physical exercise that trains the aspect of defensibility, but from there the connection is always sought with mental and social skills. Boys must be made aware that these skills can and must also be trained: growing into adults is not something that just happens, but is rather a mental process of growth. Gaining awareness and insight in their own development are the central issues. Self-control and self-confidence are indispensable in this development.

#### **Step 1 Self-defence**

Boys (young people) learn to defend themselves against various forms of violence that they may encounter. The training of physical skills play an important part in this, but also the exercises about body language form a part. The rock and water principles are generally taught at a physical level.

#### **Step 2**

## **Standing up for yourself**

Boys learn to stand up for themselves in various kinds of situations. The accent here is generally on the training of mental skills such as the rules of confrontation and the exercises with boundaries and intuition. These exercises are also the starting point for information and discussions about sexual abuse. Here the rock and water principles are generally examined and trained in mental and social areas.

### **Step 3**

#### **Awareness of personal possibilities, qualities and responsibilities**

Boys are made to get used to the idea that every human being possesses his own arsenal of possibilities and qualities that determine his uniqueness.

This fact is related to the fundamental right of being and becoming your own person. Self-respect, mutual respect and tolerance find their source of existence there. From this concept a line is drawn to sexuality: understanding that every human being goes through his own development in this area as well, and that tolerance and respect make this development possible. Homosexuality, homophobia, sexual violence and sexual abuse are discussed within this context.

Besides the right to be your own person, this uniqueness also implies a double responsibility:

- every human being is held accountable in the first place to himself, to his own core essence, to developing his own qualities.
- every human being is also held accountable to society: in realising his possibilities he makes the best possible contribution to society.

### **Step 4**

#### **The inner compass: directing personal development, forces within You**

Within every human being there are powers that have to be used and developed and must not be neglected. Boys are made to become aware that these personal possibilities and qualities in a person's life appear as an inner compass that - initially at a subconscious level - gives direction to their personal path of development. Not only society or the group determine someone's preferences and development, but rather this strong direction indicator from within. Following this compass leads to the realisation of that which - in its essence - is already present. So, on the one hand it is important to become aware of one's own qualities, and, on the other hand, an active and courageous attitude is needed to use and realise these powers.

This self-realisation gives a deep feeling of joy and purposefulness. At the same time, these are inner beacons that are so characteristic and that increasingly light up the inner compass in a person's consciousness. Positive thinking, positive visualisation, concentration exercises and learning to listen to their own feeling (intuition) are applied here. These skills come together in the Three Steps Plan (TSP). The TSP helps the pupil to ask himself three questions: What do I want? What positive thought or image (visualisation) may help me with it? What plan or strategy should I follow to reach my goal? (perseverance)

### **Step 5**

#### **The inner undercurrent: the awareness of connectedness and solidarity**

Following the inner compass gradually leads to a deeper awareness of identity. The feeling of identity undergoes a change. The awareness of having an individual compass that directs an

individual process of development, which initially seems to occur independently and separately of others, now changes to the deeper awareness of being a part, and forming a whole, with (all) other people (and everything that is).

This leads to a growing awareness that the individual path to self-realisation, in which rock and water merge, has been a universal path that leads to the deepest insight of solidarity and connectedness and thus accomplishes pure moral acting.

Boys do know this (spiritual) awareness of solidarity and connectedness, although generally unconsciously. However, it is not connected to their feeling of identity and does not direct their actions.

Here lies our chance to make them recognize this awareness as a basis for further growth.

Specific exercises as such have not been included in this course. The group discussion\* is a means to share experiences and ideas about this with the boys. The inner undercurrent seems to point at a development within the boys' consciousness that would appear to be a long way off. Focussing their attention to this process of inner growth gives it a greater chance to come to full development.

Freerk Ykema  
The Netherlands July 2000

## **SKILLS FOR PHYSICAL/SOCIAL TEACHING WITH BOYS**

*How do we teach social skills so that boys make changes on the inside?*

*By linking self-control, self reflection and self confidence*

*How do we develop a social skills course that boys like to do?*

*By using action methods in the classroom*

*How do we build a sense of purpose in boys?*

*By establishing connection with boys and helping them develop positive relationships with boys and girls*

## **A professional development program for teachers of Grades 5 - 12**

The Rock and Water program offers teachers a new way to interact with boys, physical/social teaching. Physical exercises are constantly linked with mental and social skills. In this way the program leads from simple self defense, boundary and communication exercises to a strong notion of self-confidence. The program offers a framework of exercises and thoughts about boys and manhood to assist boys to become aware of purpose and motivation in their life. Topics include: intuition, body language, mental power, empathic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualizing. Discussion topics include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following an inner compass.

## **CONNECTING FEELING, THINKING AND ACTING**

One of the challenges of boys' education is to connect feeling, thinking and acting.

We start with physical exercises because most boys feel more comfortable with the physical approach. So, for example, we teach them how to stand stronger, how to be more flexible, how to deal with physical intimidation. But, since we know that it is difficult for them to integrate these skills into everyday life, we connect them with other situations and exercises which have less physical orientation and are more verbal exercises. That is why we call the program a physical/social approach.

The same approach works with mental power. At first we start with physical exercises. Learning how to control our body and mind in order to be most effective. For this we use three questions: What do you want?; Which positive thought helps you to be successful (mental anchor)?; Which physical anchor will support you in your action (for example grounding, breath control, be rock/hard/uncompromising or water/flexible/communicative)?

### **FREERK YKEMA**

*Freerk Ykema is a Physical Education and Remedial Teacher at Schagen in the north of The Netherlands. His school has approximately 2500 pupils, spread over different locations. In 1995, he trialed the draft Self Defence and the Prevention of Violence for Boys course with five classes of boys at his high school. Since then he has developed the Rock and Water Course to address boys' motivation and self confidence in primary and secondary schools. He continues to teach the boys in his school but also trains teachers to deliver the course.*

### **THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

A major task for the boys and their teachers is to learn to value and to control the enormous energy which is so typical for boys in the eldest groups of primary school. These boys have a very strong focus on physical action and achievement, so that is the starting-point of each lesson. The program teaches them to use their power in a more effective way and shows them how to deal with different kinds of conflicts.(rock-and-water attitude)

Boys learn to stand stronger in many ways. In the playground and the classroom they learn to identify their limitations and possibilities, learn to communicate more effectively, learn to feel, set and defend their own boundaries and to respect others' boundaries too.

Some basic self-defence skills are taught. The emphasis is on simple, harmless wrestling forms such as the tai-chi exercise of "pushing-hands". Physical contact exercises are linked with other forms of communication in order to improve communication abilities. This physical approach encourages discipline and perseverance in the boys and teaches boys how to deal with conflicts without losing self control.

### **THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Boys learn to stand stronger in many ways. As an important part of communication they learn to sense, set and defend own boundaries, particularly in situations of group pressure. They also learn to respect other boundaries, particularly those of girls.

Boys learn how to use their imagination in enlarging their mental power in reaching a physical goal, but they also learn to use positive thoughts in order to reach their goals

in everyday-life.

Some basic self defence skills are taught in order to teach boys how to control and develop their power. This physical approach demands discipline and perseverance and teaches boys how to deal with conflicts without losing self control.

The Rock and Water Program at Secondary level addresses: standing strong, rock-and water attitude, mental power, awareness of boundaries, empathic feeling, intuition-training, prevention of sexual violence, group pressure, homophobia, body language and group-dynamics, success-strategies and expressing respect to others.

The program is very active with lots of physical exercises alternated with group-discussions. Each lesson is supported with questions and simple assignments in order to make a successful integration with everyday-life.

## **HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ROCK AND WATER PROGRAM**

In March and April of 2001, Freerk Ykema will be returning to Australia to present the Rock and Water Approach to schools and organisations throughout Australia. If you are interested in Freerk attending your school or organisation to present a workshop, please contact The Men and Boys Program for more information. Email Address: [men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au)

### **1. PARTICIPATE IN A ONE DAY WORKSHOP**

This workshop provides a survey of the entire program (with teaching materials) which enables you to make a start with parts of the program at your school.

The emphasis in the one day seminar is on the contents of Lesson 1,2,3,4,: Standing Strong, the Rock and Water attitude in physical, mental and social context; Dealing with pressure from others.

What you get: Demonstrations and practice at using the exercises from the Rock and Water Course. A complete set of teaching notes (primary or secondary version) with lesson plans for the course. Confidence in using physical exercises to engage boys in self reflection. Background notes for teachers on the processes used in the course.

### **2. PARTICIPATE IN THE TWO DAY WORKSHOP.**

This workshop extends the range of exercises and topics. All lessons from 1 to 8 are practiced. These can be taught in coeducational or boys-only settings (ways to maximise the benefit to girls from these courses are suggested).

Topics covered include: breathing to extend physical power and to keep in self control; the body language of The Tunnel and of The Beach; feeling, setting and respecting your own and other persons boundaries; and, using intuition to warn of danger, of someone else's boundaries and to tell you what to do.

What you get: Demonstrations and practice at using the exercises from the Rock and Water Course. A complete set of teaching notes (primary or secondary version) with lesson plans for the course. Confidence in using physical exercises to engage boys in self reflection. Background notes for teachers on the processes used in the course.

Links to the

### **3. PARTICIPATE IN THE THREE DAY WORKSHOP.**

In addition to the seminar topics covered in the first two days, the topics which need to be taught in boy -only groups are presented. (It is advisable that girls learn self defence to defend themselves while the boys are engaged in this section) Boys don't learn the same self defence material as the girls. The boys learn simple basic self defence skills with the emphasis on the linked social skills. Topics of sexual violence and the positive relationship skills are covered in this section.

What you get: Demonstrations and practice at using the exercises from the Rock and Water Course addressing sexual violence. A complete set of teaching notes (primary or secondary version) with lesson plans for the course. Confidence in using physical exercises to engage boys in self reflection. Background notes for teachers on the processes used in the course.

***PARTICIPANTS COMPLETING THE ONE , TWO AND THREE DAY WORKSHOPS WILL RECEIVE PARTIAL CREDIT IN THE POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN BOYS' EDUCATION***  
[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE POSTGRADUATE COURSE](#)

#### **WHO CAN TEACH THE ROCK AND WATER PROGRAM?**

You don't have to be an athlete, a kick boxer or a male to teach boys well. Any teacher who has an interest in boys' education can use the ideas and materials from this program. By trying the exercises out in pairs and groups, participants feel the physical reactions and can make their own mental links to the issues of strength and confidence for boys. Female teachers find the workshop energising and useful. The simple exercises developed in this program are powerful tools for the classroom. The boys learn to be confident of their own strength and learn to deal differently with girls and other boys.

#### **FOR TEACHERS CONCERNED ABOUT MAKING BOYS EVEN STRONGER**

Some teachers are understandably nervous at the idea of making boys stronger. They are afraid that this will cause more trouble, strengthen the 'be tough, be cool' culture and make life more difficult for girls. They don't trust the boys to develop well.

But trusting that boys can be strong and respectful is the basis of this course. Trust is also essential to forming good relationships with boys. It is not the same as blanket approval. A boy knows and feels when someone doesn't trust him, when someone only sees his misbehavior and can't see his qualities. This can be the turning-point: you can't feel connection with a person who doesn't trust you and without connection it is very difficult to accept and integrate knowledge.

We will need trust to understand our boys and help them find their way in society and help them to develop themselves. The Rock and Water program tries to do this. As a teacher I do trust boys. I want them to grow in their self confidence and I want

all of us be proud of our boys and their qualities.

## **THE ROCK AND WATER COURSE OUTLINED**

Lesson 1: Standing strong physically and mentally

Lesson 2: Introduction of the Rock- and Water attitude (in physical confrontation and verbal confrontation)

Lesson 3: Rock and Water in the schoolyard

Lesson 4: Rock and Water in relationships (what kind of friend am I? Too rocky, too watery?)

Lesson 5: Breathstrength to extend physical power and to keep in selfcontrol

Lesson 6: Body language (tunnel attitude and beach attitude).

Lesson 7: Boundaries (to feel, set and respect own and other persons boundaries)

Lesson 8: Intuition (warns you of danger, warns you when you cross someone's boundaries, tells you what to do)

Lesson 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 and the special Threatening Group lesson are suitable for upper primary (10, 11 years) and secondary school students. They can be taught in mixed boy-girl groups or classes. These lessons are great for girls as well!

Lessons 9,10,11,12 and 13 are about self realization and so more suitable for older students. they address lack of direction, homosexuality, the calling of qualities.

Lessons 9 to 13 are best directed at boys only. For the girls in the Netherlands we have a similar program but there is one big difference: the girls learn special/dirty effective tricks to defend themselves. Boys don't learn this. Boys only learn simple basic self defence skills with the emphasis on ethics.

Lesson 9: Mental strength: tree-attitude and hara-attitude

Lesson 10: Mental strength: concentration, visualization, conviction

Lesson 11: Dynamics/tension between group pressure, independence, connection (meaning the positive inner felt relation between people)

Lesson 12: Three Step Plan (TSP): positive thinking and positive visualization

Lesson 13: Sexuality: sexual harassment and homosexuality

Special lesson : How to deal with a threatening group. This special lesson was developed as a reaction to the wave of violence which swept Holland during the last few years. Groups of boys attacked other boys without reason, causing death in several cases. This lesson was developed in co-operation with the Police. Boys are taught the best attitude when they are confronted with a group like this.

The Rock and Water Program is sponsored by The Men and Boys Program of The Family Action Centre of the University of Newcastle

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