



New Mexico Boys and Girls Ranches CORRAL

Summer 2019

Comfort Zone vs. Growth Zone

By Heath Kull

Many families today struggle to find a balance between being connected to each other and the hectic demands of today's fast paced world. This is understandable as we are all busy and we all are seemingly attached to our smartphones and other devices on a fairly consistent basis. It is easy to be so connected to the information world that we, by default, become disconnected from those in the room with us; even when those in the room with us are our children.

Despite the inevitable arguments that will be offered, I believe that our devices allow us to be in our comfort zone whenever we pull them up to our faces. I can hear the cries of, "that's not my comfort zone! I need it for work!" already. The truth is though, that it is indeed our comfort zone. Our devices allow us information without interaction and, somewhat conversely, interaction without the messiness of actually talking to people on any terms other than our own.

"Didn't see your text"
"Service is spotty"
"Must have gotten stuck in my outbox"
"I prefer to text message"

All of these represent our ways of dictating the terms of interaction with others. I'm not sure that would work in real life and in face to face interactions.

"I'm just going to ignore you while you wait for an answer from me to your question."

"Sorry. My hearing went out for a minute."

"I don't feel like speaking to you anymore."

"Write down your thought and allow 5-7 business days for a response."

None of these are altogether plausible and all would be considered rude; or at least impolite if offered in person. (Obviously the second one takes on a far more sincere tone when uttered by one with hearing aides, but...)

Like I said, devices allow us the opportunity to stay in our comfort zone. The only problem with that, though, is that it keeps us out of our growth zone. Growth is never really comfortable and being comfortable never really leads to growth.

This concept is particularly true in families. Everyone can be in the imaginary world on their devices and quite comfortable while the relationships within the family cease to grow.

I encourage all families to find a time for growth and allow some time for comfort. "Device free dinners" or "Device free game nights" can allow relationships to grow between those spending time together and allow a retreat to respective comfort zones after the activity. (And the adults can't claim, "I need my phone for work!")

If families can learn to balance their comfort zones and their growth zones, the family stands to be more connected to each other and stronger as a result.

The Ranches Alumni

"Hiking the Grand Canyon and many other areas, camping, riding and caring for the horses, bucking hay, survival trips "down bottom," The ranch school, helping in the cafeteria, wood shop, cross country running, white water rafting, canoeing, mowing, our many road trips and adventures, the swimming pool, learning to weld, the camaraderie, the great influence from the staff, the safe and reassuring atmosphere, doing loads even taught me a lot...too many things to even list. I carry so much of what I learned from The Ranches in my everyday life even now. I am absolutely forever grateful of my time spent at The Ranches."

~Former Resident

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Heath Kull
President

10 Commandments of Parenting

By Heath Kull

Most of us are familiar with the 10 commandments and are at least aware that they form the basis for both Judeo-Christian ethics and our legal system. And technically, they represent the first download from the cloud to a tablet. While they may seem old-fashioned to the younger generations, they are 10 rules that, along with the golden rule, have raised and sustained many of us throughout our lives. I try to follow them and also treat others as I want to be treated. For reference:

- You shall have no other gods before me.
- You shall not make idols.
- You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet.

While I am neither as wise nor as succinct as the Lord Almighty, I also have a 10 commandments...for parenting.

1. I will make my children a priority and will work to never be "too busy" or "too tired" or "too anything else" to spend the time with my children that they need. As parents, we have to work to ensure that our actions and our priorities match.
2. I will not model behavior for my children that I then punish them for. It can be easy to allow ourselves to act in a way that we feel that we deserve to act due to our age and accomplishments, but to our children, we are role models and they are always watching and even copying us. For them, it is confusing to get punished for acting like their parents.
3. I will not express frustrations about my children to others as I will commit to expressing my frustrations directly to them. We don't appreciate it when people speak behind our back and damage our reputations to others. Why would our kids be any different?
4. I will set aside time in my schedule, no matter how busy I get, that is sacred and belongs to my children. It is easy to get busy, but kids need time with their parents that they don't have to fight for, ask for or behave badly to get. This can be dinners or Sunday afternoons or whenever you can carve out the time. It just needs to be sacred to you and for them.
5. I will teach my children to honor and respect me by honoring and respecting them. While demanding respect sounds like a good strategy, it usually doesn't work...unless you're willing to physically scare them. And is that really respect, or just fear?
6. I will not kill my kids, or hit them in anger, or say things just to hurt them, or be a bad example of a human being for them. This one can be a challenge but shouldn't be. If we treat our children the way that we want them to treat us, parenting gets a whole lot easier.
7. I will not invest more time and energy in other people's children than my own. Working at The Ranches can make this a challenge, but I am particularly committed to this one based on how I grew up. You can never teach your kids that you love them by prioritizing someone else's child.

#RaiseThemUp 

For the past several weeks, and for the next few months, The Ranches will be featured during the noon hour on Big I 107.9 for "The Parenting Minute." Hopefully, we can pass on a few helpful tips and a few lessons we learned to those listening to some country music in the Albuquerque area or get the IHeart App. Check it out, if you get the chance.

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(facebook.com/TheNewMexico-BoysandGirlsRanch)
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@HeathKull
#HeathKull



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8. I will always reward the efforts and accomplishments of my children. When our children were particularly young, my wife and I tended to "reward the slightest try." As our children got a little older, we continued to acknowledge the effort and started to then celebrate the successes and the accomplishments.

9. I will always be honest with my kids and teach them to be honest with me. Most people today tend to believe lies are OK if they're in a situation where they fear a negative reaction from others or if the lie won't really hurt anyone. I don't accept this and have always strived for honesty in all situations - especially when it's difficult. It's one of the original 10 after all.

10. I will not compete with or be jealous of my children's accomplishments. Sadly, it is all too common today to see adults reliving their younger years through their children and competing with their kids in unhealthy and unfair ways. Just don't.

These are my commandments and I don't expect everyone to follow them, but I do know that parenting gets a lot easier when you know what your rules are, what your priorities look like and what you are looking to accomplish. Just my two cents.

Sincerely,

Heath Kull - President
HeathKull@theranches.org

Toxicity and Shame

By Heath Kull

I didn't grow up in today's Information Age. In fact, I grew up in rural New Mexico at a group home for "at-risk" children. I grew up at The Ranches and I was just a staff kid who got in everyone's way a lot. I was, however, observing and paying attention... always. When I was young, only boys were considered "at-risk" and, as such, I grew up surrounded by boys during the 70s and 80s. While I admit that it was a simpler time, I make no claim that the issues that I faced are to be easily dismissed as simple. I faced the same basic issues that kids face today, I just faced those issues without the internet, without "safe spaces," without "gun free zones," without political correctness, without warning labels on everything and without the fierce and ill-informed mob of internet "experts," well-meaning Christians hell bent on righting society's wrongs and without social justice warriors cowardly labeling everything that they don't like as something to be seen as awful, shameful and toxic. There was no "violent speech" or "political correctness" or "toxic masculinity." We (society) made all of that stuff up as a part of an agenda that doesn't have the courage to do what all righteous agendas seem to do; honestly identify itself.

Growing up, men were expected to be providers and protectors. Men were also expected to be self-sufficient; especially emotionally. Men were expected to be good at a lot of things and exceptional at one or two things. Men were expected to be, or at least appear to be, unafraid. Men were expected to express their emotions with acts of service and courage for their loved ones; particularly women and especially their spouse. Contrary to popular opinion, I was not raised with the expectation of not talking about my feelings. I was just taught not to talk too much about love, fear and emotional pain. Thankfully, having 3 girls of my own changed that in me.

And that brings us to "toxic masculinity." This is another one of those made up terms with an origin that is less easily dismissed.

Abusers, pedophiles, criminals, "alpha male, dude bros," malcontents, anti-socials and narcissists are all at the root of "toxic masculinity," but are such a limited and easily avoided part of the population that the term "toxic masculinity" had to be expanded and applied to anyone who isn't, at best, gender neutral and, at worst, gender fluid. Anyone who leans towards traditional masculinity or who is Christian or who admits that they, as the country singer Eric Church puts it, "Don't like to fight, but ain't scared to bleed" is labeled as being a purveyor of "toxic masculinity" and a barrier to society's overall progress and success. I have a much different experience and thought process. The term "toxic masculinity" is just a thinly veiled assault on the anger that allows me to avoid weakness and really, anger of any kind. Even when women get mad, it is usually seen as a morally superior response to "toxic masculinity" or the loosely defined "Patriarchy" that seems to be the culmination of "toxic masculinity" and "white privilege." That type of anger is fine though as the only anger that must be stopped is anger attached to masculinity. If anyone that is bent towards masculinity is to get angry, that anger is toxic and needs to be shamed and shut down. What seems to be lost is that anger is a masculine response to shame, so the cycle is perpetual.

And what, pray tell, are these men and boys that display this so called "toxic masculinity" so mad about?

This is where things get complicated. As a man, anger is still the easiest and most socially acceptable emotion to draw upon for dealing with life's less than awesome moments. Anger slices through, and allows the holder to ignore, almost all other emotions. When I am angry, I can ignore fear and sadness, grief and loss, shame and guilt and pain and insecurity. For many men, myself included, anger at times allows me to maintain my definition of myself while hiding many significant emotions that I, and those around me, see as weakness in me. Anger isn't great, but it keeps

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Ethics of Hard-Work

Work ethic is extremely important when we enter the workforce as adults. That work ethic, believe it or not, starts when we are a whole lot younger. Helping out around the house, cleaning our rooms and learning to do our laundry. This is why chores are such a big part of The Ranches' program. We teach kids to do all of the chores by rotating each week. They learn a skill that will serve them well when they eventually get their own place, and we get to take care of all of the things that need to get done around a cottage.

While some kids aren't used to it and many are not good at their chores when they first get here, we patiently teach them to handle their chores. As they grow and mature, those chores become the foundation of their work ethic. And we can all benefit from young people with great work ethic.



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Staying Healthy

Healthy kids become healthy adults. While we have a lot of physical activity at The Ranches, it isn't always exercise. While it isn't easy to get the kids exercising, a generous donor volunteers to come out to The Ranch and teach Zumba. It's not too complicated, but it gets them moving and their little hearts pumping.





THEIR JOURNEY





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weakness at bay...even if the weakness is only a learned perception and a reflection of different men in a different time. To label that anger as a display of "toxic masculinity" only serves to give me the distinct impression that my accusers and judges haven't walked in my shoes or suffered the pain of looking in the mirror and the faces of those that they love only to see the disappointment of seeing a perceived "weak man." I, like most men from yesteryear, will gladly take the label of "angry" over the accusation of "weak". Unfortunately, I would also take "angry" over "toxically masculine"...whatever the heck that means.

Despite the reliance on anger to shield men from the effects of other emotions and the perceptions of weakness, anger is a human emotion and one that has its own very dark and cruel baggage. Many a sin against humanity and against human beings has been committed out of anger. This is important as anger in its best form is a layer of protection while it is, in its worst form, hurtful and even toxic. But every emotion can be taken too far until it becomes an awful and toxic version of itself. Love can even be morphed and manipulated until it is no longer love and becomes toxic and eventually turns into Munchausen Syndrome By proxy. What starts as a parent's love and desire to be needed and heroic in their child's life can become insanely toxic.

So, let's look at anger. As a Christian, I tend to reference the Bible when searching for guidance.

From GotQuestions.org (Your questions. Biblical Answers)

Question: "Was Jesus ever angry?"

Answer: When Jesus cleared the temple of the moneychangers and animal-sellers, He showed great emotion and anger (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; John 2:13-22). Jesus' emotion was described as "zeal" for God's house (John 2:17). His anger was pure and completely justified because at its root was concern for God's holiness and worship. Because these were at stake, Jesus took quick and decisive action.

Another time Jesus showed anger was in the synagogue of Capernaum. When the Pharisees refused to answer Jesus' questions, "He looked around at them in anger, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts" (Mark 3:5).

As the Bible describes it, Jesus was angry, and his anger stemmed from "zeal for God's house" - the temple - or when He was ignored in His Father's house - also the temple.

We have, for most of my life, described to kids that their body is also a temple. And, while I hate to be the bearer of bad news, many children and young adults today have endured unspeakable violations of their temple and many of these violations occurred while those charged with protection were conveniently ignoring them. While you may be rightfully thinking in the extremes of abuse and sexual perpetration, kids also see insults, criticism and negative feedback as violations of their temple. As many kids see it, "My temple should be sacred, right? You wouldn't let someone spray graffiti in your church so why should I tolerate shame, insults

about me or my body or what I believe or what I feel or think? My temple is sacred, right?"

In addition, many of the kids that I work with have simply been ignored. Their temple was abandoned by the builders somewhere along the way. Construction was halted and left to others to complete.

Now that we are looking at the same picture of how anger became so prolific and so pervasive in our culture, we can begin to question why there is an agenda with a desire to eliminate anger. I can't speculate on other's motives and I am not a part of that particular agenda. I can, however, offer my observations on how anger is handled in today's world around young people; especially boys and men.

Anger, and the conflict that comes along with it, is almost universally seen as bad and negative and unnecessary and barbaric by cultural elites and enlightened souls. Christians started this by claiming that anger and conflict were unchristian and sins. Eventually, teachers, coaches and those involved with young people glommed on to the concept that anger and conflict were both bad and to be avoided. You see, when I was young, there was a binary choice that every boy had to make; violence or words. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!" Much to my surprise, we have now invented the made up and completely fictitious term, "violent speech". The truth is, that "violent speech" is just a way to control when, how and where someone expresses themselves. It is control masquerading as morality. "Your temple is to remain quiet, young man!"

So, what's a boy to do?

Well, if Dr. Sigmund Freud is to be believed, "Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways."

What we are seeing today is the uglier ways that unexpressed emotions in males come forth. We have sent the message to boys that they are unimportant, toxic, unnecessary and to be ashamed of. Furthermore. When a boy dares to stand up and express frustration or dares to venture into anger, he is almost immediately told that, in order to get his needs met, he will need to calm down, sit down and offer some uncharismatic and dishonest impression of an apology to someone who has taken offense, not to his feelings towards them but, because he dared to even be angry. In my experience, this leads only to two roads; rage or addiction. Both options tend to be rather toxic, but altogether avoidable if capable, non-fragile people who are comfortable with masculinity will support the expression of unexpressed emotions that were, indeed, buried alive.

As if the agenda to quash anger weren't enough, we have now had a rightful push to promote girls into the hierarchy of everything while somewhat unjustly demoting boys to either being "woke" and in complete support of feminism...or purveyors of toxic masculinity.



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Boys literally have no choice as to their gender before they are born. God, or for those less faithful, some predetermined spin of the genetic wheel determines their fate until they are old enough to have that fate determined by women claiming equality without any requirement that the equality be measured. Don't agree with every female? You're a villainous supporter of the patriarchy. Speak out against the narrative that women are superior, and the victims of systemic sexism and you're quickly labeled as embracing "toxic masculinity." So, you have to sit quietly and accept it when a female says, "I'll kick your ass!" There's nothing that you can do as it is a classic "no win" situation. You can either fight her and risk being an abuser, fight her and suffer the jeers of "you got your ass kicked by a girl!" or sit silently and smile along while being boxed into a situation that you neither asked for nor have any solutions for. This dynamic produces significant anger that must be dealt with – either by the boy or by society when the boy's emotions are buried alive and left to come back in uglier ways when he becomes a man.

And, this is where the real "toxic masculinity" starts to take root. This is not men being evil, but it is equally, if not more, toxic. Boys simply fight the norms or learn to hate themselves. If they fight the norms and choose just plain old masculinity, they are usually relegated to being alone and limited in their social and dating opportunities. They even get the label of being toxic and masculine for just refusing to embrace femininity. Imagine a child expressing, in public, the following: "Men are expected to be providers and protectors. Men are expected to be self sufficient; especially emotionally. Men are expected to be good at a lot of things and exceptional at a couple of things. Men are expected to be, or at least appear to be, unafraid. Men are expected to express their emotions with acts of service and courage for their loved ones; especially their spouse. Men do not have the expectation of not talking about their feelings, but all will expect you not to talk too much about love, fear and emotional pain. Try not to let life beat that out of you." You can probably imagine the reaction that would await them at the conclusion of this expression. The demanded silence that goes with going against

the grain produces significant anger that must be dealt with – either by the boy or by society when the boy becomes a man.

On the flip side, if boys internalize the hatred for masculinity, they learn to hate themselves and all men. As a side effect, they are usually relegated to seeking feminine acceptance and approval exclusively. "I hate me because, due to a lot of things that I cannot control, I can't actually be me."

I can think of no greater violation of the sanctity of my temple than to have to choose between isolation and self-loathing. This dynamic produces significant anger that must be dealt with – either by the boy or by society when the boy becomes a man.

So, I propose that we abandon the label of "toxic masculinity" for all those who aren't headed down the path of narcissist, abuser, criminal, pedophile, murderer or rapist. Labeling masculinity as toxic not only creates shame in boys but also absolves femininity of toxicity. As a father of three girls, I can tell you that masculinity does not have the market for toxicity cornered. There's plenty to go around.



I propose that we start teaching kids, both boys and girls, to handle their emotions, respond instead of react, and learn to deal with conflict in respectful and in solution-oriented ways. I propose, we stop teaching toxicity and start teaching honesty, healing and hope.

Maybe, within a few generations, we can start to eliminate toxicity by refusing to allow ourselves to be lazy in assigning it to a gender instead of honestly assigning it to the human condition.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the businesses, organizations and churches that made monetary or in-kind gifts during the period May 01, 2019 - June 30, 2019. We deeply appreciate your commitment to children and families!

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