

## **Puberty Boy by Geoff Price**

“Puberty Boy” is a beautifully produced text. The colours are glowing, the paper feels good and the binding is strong. It is illustrated with a mixture of beautiful photographs and well defined cartoon like characters, and the printed text is laid out such that it can be taken in small 'bites'. The structure includes real stories of puberty experiences from men and boys, each one prefaced with a tiny symbolic head which indicates whether it is the story of a man or a boy.

The text is written by a professional counsellor who specialises in counselling men and boys, with the link to the author's website given as one of several internet links at the end of the book. Geoff Price's philosophy, explained on his website, underpins the tone and approach of the book. Price believes that the special relationship between men and boys is crucial to emotional wellbeing and development, and that boys can only truly become men if this relationship is fully worked through.

As a book on the physical, emotional, and social changes which occur at puberty, “Puberty Boy” is successful in providing information in an accessible format. Price provides a glossary and an index, with enough points for young boys to find quick answers to their important questions. The real stories provide an easy point of contact, allowing for dipping into or browsing through.

For those for whom sexuality and morality are intertwined, in a 'you must not' kind of way, Price may not be your cup of tea. He does not forbid or condemn sexual activity such as masturbation, rather he points out gently that some activities are best undertaken in private, that bullying and cruelty are not right in the quest towards true manhood, and that maturity is as much about growth in attitude and responsibility as it is about a maturing body. He does provide advice about 'right' ways of thinking and behaving on such topics as virginity and self-control. In focussing on the transition from boy to man, Price recommends a kind of transition ceremony such as a group father-son camping experience which focusses on emotions and connections and celebrates masculinity. He also talks about mentors.

I did not check out all of the websites listed at the end of the book, but the allenandunwin site given on page 118 was not yet activated at the time of reviewing. I did test the index with some of the more controversial topics; there were no references to paedophilia; homosexuality was given 3 pages with a light touch, providing advice about 'gayness' through a Q&A format and in a factual, not moralising, way; the clitoris was given an entry in the glossary, and one line and a point in an illustration in the chapter on girls, 'Girls are changing too'.

The book is more likely to be of interest to boys approaching puberty rather than those who have passed through it; or to parents, carers, teachers, and grandparents of boys. I asked an 11 year old boy what he thought, and his response was "Yeah, mmm it's O.K.", with that particular rising inflection which means, yes, really quite good. Its size means it's not a book to be carried around, and anyway when was it 'cool' to be seen reading about puberty? But it is probably a book that could be looked through more than once by the 10-13 year olds, and giggled over with a mate or two.

**Helen Wilde, SA**

As the title suggests, this book is about what happens to boys emotionally and physically as they reach puberty. I am the mother of a 12 year old boy and thought this book was brilliant. The use of photos, diagrams and cartoons and the variety of colour makes it an attractive book to pick up

and read. The content is set out in readable chunks with headings for each paragraph. Interviews with men and boys make the whole process of puberty seem more real and less mysterious.

This book has been well researched and covers everything from acne to wet dreams and also talks frankly about issues such as bullying and anger. I particularly appreciated the way the author handled the issue of having sex as opposed making love with someone you love and are committed to. Without being judgmental he cautions young men to think about the decisions they are making.

This book is a must read for 10-13 year old boys and their parents. It may avoid having to have embarrassing 'talks' and open the way for some frank discussion.

**Nova Gibson, Summerland Primary School, New Zealand**

"Puberty Boy" is presented in the same attractive format as its counterpart, "Puberty Girl" (published 2004). It is written by Geoff Price, counsellor and men's health advocate, in simple and accessible language, with scientific terms explained and phonetically spelled, and not-so-scientific words and phrases included for comparison!

The physical changes of puberty are dealt with in a down-to-earth manner, with clear diagrams and explanations, and hints on hygiene, personal safety and how to stay healthy. Individual differences in physique and the timing of onset of puberty are noted and discussed. The author includes his own recollections of growing up, as well as comments from 'puberty boys' and 'puberty men': this device works well to reinforce the message that the feelings of confusion and embarrassment experienced by many boys are not unusual, and will eventually be overcome.

The intellectual and emotional changes involved in the transition from boyhood to manhood are also addressed effectively by Price, with particular reference to the development of emotional intelligence, dealing with feelings of sadness and anger, and taking responsibility for one's actions and responses. Here again, the 'real life' quotations neatly illustrate some common emotional challenges and how boys and men have dealt successfully with them.

"Puberty Boy" includes a Glossary of relevant terms, along with a list of useful sources (mainly websites) for further information. There is also a very short chapter on girls and puberty: I would have liked a bit more detail here, though I note that "Puberty Girl" also does not include a chapter on the changes boys go through at this time. I think both boys and girls are curious about the changes taking place in each other, and would appreciate the opportunity to learn more from the book aimed at their own gender.

On the whole, though, I found "Puberty Boy" a very well-presented, thorough and reassuring explanation of a very complex topic. It will make a most valuable, and well-used, addition to the Secondary School library. On a personal level, as the mother of two grown-up sons, I wish it had been published ten years ago!

**Margaret Mikulin, St Joseph's College, Echuca, VIC**