


# Rock & water program

developed by Freerk Ykema

This program offers teachers and social workers a new way to interact with boys through physical / social teaching (though the program can also be taught to girls) Physical exercises are constantly linked with mental and social skills. The program leads from simple self defence, boundary and communication exercises to a strong notion of self confidence. The program offers a framework of exercise and ideas about boys and manhood tot assist become aware of purpose and motivation in there life. Topics include: intuition, body language, mental strength, empathic feeling, positive feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising. Sexual harassment, homophobia, life goals, desires and following an inner compass.



 Energy-motion, Richard Normann is training boys

## **Four leading threads are interrelated in the program:**

### **1. Grounding, centring and focusing**

Learning how to stand firm and relaxed. How to concentrate your breath in your belly and focus attention (first external, later transformed to an internal goal)

### **2. The golden triangle of body-awareness – emotional awareness – self awareness**

Emotions are expressed in the body by way of muscular tension. Therefore, increasing body awareness can lead to more insight and experience of one's own patterns of reaction which in turn can offer a chance to deepen and further develop emotional awareness and self awareness.

### **3. Communication**

The development of physical forms of communication as a basis for the development of other, more verbally orientated, forms of communication.

### **4. The Rock & Water concept**

The tough, immovable rock attitude versus the mobile, communicative water attitude. This concept can be developed and applied at various levels: The physical, the mental and the social level. At a physical level it means that an attack can be parried by firmly strained muscles (rock) but also – and often even more effectively - by moving along with the energy of the attacker (water). At a social level – for instance in a conversation – it is also possible to choose between a rock or a water attitude and the same choice applies to the way in which one maintains relationships with others. Finally, at a spiritual level, the apparent opposites between rock and water disappear. Insight and experience come about when a realisation occurs that both ways are needed to reach self fulfilment and that people, in their deepest essence, are connected to each other and travel along a path together.

# The Rock and Water Mansion

## **Step 1: Safety and self-defence**

Discovery of energy / guiding energy / mastering or controlling energy. Grounding, centring and focusing

## **Step 2: Standing up for yourself**

The accent is generally on the training of mental skills such as the rules of confrontation and the exercises with boundaries and intuition.

There the rock and water principles are generally examined and trained in mental and social areas.

## **Step 3: Personal possibilities, qualities & responsibilities**

Boys and girls are made to get used to the idea that every human being possesses his own arsenal of possibilities and qualities. Tolerance and respect make this development possible

## **Step 4: The inner compass : personal development**

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 life appear as an inner compass that - initially at a subconscious level – gives direction to there personal path of development.

## **Step 5: The inner undercurrent : connectedness & solidarity**

Following the inner compass gradually leads to a deeper awareness of identity. The awareness of having an individual compass that directs an individual process of development now changes to the deeper awareness of being a part, and forming a whole, with (all) other people (and everything that is).

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## 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, self-knowledge 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.

## **A Gender - specific approach**

Rock & Water was developed as a gender-specific program, especially meant for boys. Experience has taught us that girls can profit from and enjoy the program as much as boys do. However, boys and girls clearly differ at a number of levels. They undergo a different socialisation and therefore, they have to go on a different path of development and are confronted with different tasks of development. That is why the Rock and Water program works best in gender-specific groups.

Why do so many boys (and, less so, girls) take their lives by suicide or hazardous behaviour? Why are boys' school efforts falling? What's the reason for the violent behaviour? Why do more and more boys experience a sense of loss of direction and meaninglessness? (With the consequence of looking for the ultimate kick through hazardous behaviour, violence, vandalism, drugs and ecstasy.)

When we speak about the differences between men and women, we are often inclined to tackle one subject and then come up with examples proving that there is no difference between men and women. Comparisons based on a single aspect always fail, because when we take the entire package of characteristics into consideration, we generally do see a masculine or feminine pattern, unless of course when obvious variations such as trans-sexuality are considered. The difference is there, right from the beginning, with all the consequences for their behaviour. Baby boys look at objects longer, baby girls look at people's faces. This difference can be noted before upbringing and education have had the opportunity to be of any influence. There is an innate difference between boys and girls and the socialization process often follows it through. Education, however, should help the boys develop their strong qualities, such as their focus on action, their leadership mentality and assertiveness, and it should teach them to deal with their weaker side, such as a less developed empathic capacity and showing hazardous behavior (Delfos 2000). Just like we try to stimulate girls in leadership, acting and assertiveness, appreciate them for their empathic capacity and point them to the risk of overdoing this at the cost of themselves.

## **Nature and nurture**

Of course, research has been done for years to find out what exactly cause these differences in behaviour. Research is even carried out to find the particular gene or gene combination that might determine intelligent behaviour or could predict violent behaviour. Related discussions move from one extreme – behaviour is determined by nature (genetic data – to the other - behaviour is determined by the environment people grow up in – by nurture (the sociological perspective). It goes without saying that both nature and nurture are important behavioural determinants. Both should be taken into consideration. Boys and girls differ, that is beyond dispute. We must learn to take into account the existing, fundamental difference that are innate and gender specific. A third important aspect, beside genetics and environment, is the development of the central nervous system which also shows important differences between boys and girls, If we want to give optimal chances of development to boys and girls, we must do so in ways that move with the biological stream instead of going against it (Martine F. Delfos).

## The level of testosterone

Testosterone is the most important male sexual hormone. It is responsible for the secondary sexual characteristics and promotes the manufacture of proteins in the muscular tissues among other things. However, testosterone is also an 'action stimulator'. When the level of testosterone in the body increases, the urge to move increases as well. And a larger claim is made of the capacity of self-control. One of the most apparent differences between boys and girls is the amount of testosterone in their bodies.

Some additional information about the influence of testosterone: the average level of testosterone in the blood plasma of a boy (man) is nine times higher than that of a girl (woman). At birth the level of testosterone is high. After a couple of months it decreases to a level that is approximately one-fifth of the level at birth. At the age of about four, there is again a rise in the level of testosterone. Until now, it is not clear what the cause for this increase can be. The level of testosterone can also be influenced by circumstances. Every person has a so-called basic level of testosterone and this level can be increased by social stimuli. Stress and conflict increase the production of testosterone. A restless situation in upbringing and/or education will also create a rise in the level of testosterone, which in turn makes it more difficult to study calmly and attentively (Martine F. Delfors 2000)

However, differences in the level of testosterone should not be a reason in itself for problematic behaviour and aggression. Extra energy does not necessarily have to lead to more aggression. The point is how we teach boys to cope with his amount of extra energy in a positive, meaningful way. That is a task that should really be taken seriously in education and upbringing (nature), but it is precisely this task that is often neglected. So boys are blessed or burdened with testosterone, and are, therefore, generally more energetic than girls. They have more need to move, are more restless and get bored more easily with activities that ask for little physical energy. It is their task of development to cope with this growing energy bomb in their future lives. They do not learn this by sitting still, but rather by moving. By teaching them to pace their strength, by teaching them to wait for the right moment for appropriate action and by teaching them to control and focus their energy. When we force boys to sit still (too long), we suppress their impulse to move. An energy bobbin your body is an irrational thing. If we do not teach boys to handle it, but – on the contrary – try to suppress it, this bomb will explode (always at the wrong moment) and..... boys will do irrational things.

## Neurological differences

Recent research has pointed out that the *corpus callosum* (the connecting bridge between the left and right hemispheres) shows differences between men and women. The corpus callosum of women is relatively larger than that of men. This difference applies especially to the rear part, the *splenium*. It is a fact that the larger corpus callosum of women allows them to coordinate all kinds of information. (hearing, seeing, feeling) faster and more effectively than men (Martine F. Delfos 2000). In other words, the connections between the two hemispheres and between the brain centres in them are slower to develop in boys. It is especially the slower development of the left hemisphere, which is also caused by the higher level of testosterone. At the same time it stimulates the development of the right hemisphere. Unfortunately, the centres of reading, writing and speaking are located in the left hemisphere. The development of the left hemisphere originates from the connections made out of the right hemisphere.

The right hemisphere of boys and men is, on average, stronger developed than is the case with girls and women. The right hemisphere harbours the ability for spatial and abstract thinking and for creativity.

The left hemisphere is for analysis and logic. In 97 % of all right-handed men and women, the linguistic centres are located in the left hemisphere. In left-handed people this percentage is 76 % (Kuipers/Weggelaar 1984). The left hemisphere is, on average, a stronger developed in woman than in men. The areas in the brain that are responsible for the linguistic functions (islands of Bora) being able to read written language and understand spoken language, and the Wernicke speech centre) are located in the left hemisphere and are on average, larger in women than in men. Being able to verbalize thoughts and feelings is therefore located in the left hemisphere, and on average, better develops in women than in men (Martine F. Delfos 2000)

## Arrears in development

Research shows that boys – as compared to girls – have arrears in verbal, cognitive and related psycho-motorial skills. Except for the difference in the level of testosterone and the relatively slow physical growth with large motorial capacity, boys also show arrears in their development that directly influence their school efforts and indirectly influence their behavior, their way of communication and their development of identity. At the age of six boys – as compared to girls – show arrears in verbal, cognitive and related psycho-motorial skills. This is a matter of skills developing later: so a difference in maturing or in their words a slower development, which – given the necessary time and practice – will largely be made up later. These arrears should therefore not have to give any trouble when education takes them into account and is more developmentally oriented. Unfortunately, the greatest majority of schools, whenever they are, ignore these differences and in doing so create many problems themselves. At the age of six, the arrears of boys can be 12 months or more as compared to girls the same age (Kuiper/Weggelaar 1984)

These express themselves in three areas:

1. Writing: many boys of six do not yet have the fine motorial skills in their fingers and opposable thumb that are needed to learn a relaxed writing muscular movement. As a consequence: they have a cramped sitting and writing posture with a bad pen grip and sloppy handwriting. We will see that this tendency to fixation of acquired motorial patterns also applies to behavioural patterns.
2. Reading: a certain maturing is also needed for learning how to read (which is of course related to writing). Both hemispheres and within them the various brain centres, have to be able to cooperate properly. This may cause them to grow a hatred of reading and even of going to school, because it creates a negative self-image. They need more, and more varied, practice.
3. Verbalizing thoughts and feelings (verbal communication). This also depends on maturity/ripeness. Finding words in your memory to express yourself is also based on a good, mutual connection between the hemispheres and brain centres. Especially the left hemisphere plays an important part in this. A lesser-developed left hemisphere makes it difficult to find the right words (word-finding problems). This makes you feel unable and locked into yourself, and so you try to express yourself in a more physical way: pushing, romping, making faces, and screaming. And as this is stimulated by the high level of testosterone. The development of communicative skills in boys is largely based on physical communication. If we take this away from boys, we are cutting off the path to developing the forms of communication at the same time.

This results in the following tasks of development for boys:

- Learning to control and focus their energy
- The development of all basic physical / motorial abilities
- The development of communication and emphatic feeling through physical communication
- Learning to verbalize thoughts and feelings
- Becoming aware of the inner compass and inner undercurrent

(The rock and water perspective, theory book, Freerk Ykema, Gadaku Institute, 2002, ISBN 0 9581593 0 0)



### **Freerk Ykema**

The rock and water program is developed by freerk Ykema. He Has been a physical Education and Remedial Teacher and counsellor at Schagen in the North of the Netherlands in a comprehensive school. In 1995 he trailed the Rock and Water course at his school to address boys motivation and self-confidence. He now trains teachers in countries throughout the world to deliver the Rock and Water course. In 2000 the course won a national award in the Netherlands for targeting boys education.



### **Richard Normann**

Born in 1970 in Varssenveld / Netherlands, works as a course trainer and is director of Energy-motion, trainingcenter. Richard completed a conflict and de-escalation training in 1996. And is Advance Rock en water trainer educated by Freerk Ykema. In addition he attended different courses for massage therapy and bodywork and similar techniques in the Netherlands and Nepal. Richard offered numerous group works and trainings in different settings (e.g. in primary schools) in the Netherlands and abroad. However, he is specialized in teaching social skills to boys.



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