

# BOYS IN TIGHTS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I couldn't help noticing the big debate that is going on at the moment about the young boy being photographed with his toenails painted pink. I am not sure whether it was an advertisement or a story, but it sure seems as though it is raising a lot of viewer response.

Back in the day when we were growing up there was a very clear line that separated boys from girls. It didn't matter whether it was in clothing or in toys, girls were pink and frilly and played with dollies and boys were tough. Boys played in the mud, played with guns, hammers and toy trucks. Boys were called sissies if they cried and when girls cried their mommies came running. Everything children played with emulated where they were headed – into a rough and tough workman's world or into a mothering role.

As time has gone by our style of toys has changed dramatically. Whereas boys wouldn't be seen dead playing with dolls in the past, we now have boy figures created from loved cartoon characters. It started with Ken and then moved on to action figures like Batman, Superman and Spiderman, and more recently the little skinny legged 'Woody' from Toy Story.

The hard-core line between frilly and pink and tough and blue has greatly diminished. In my mind I think that is great. Not all boys are tough and macho by nature and not all girls are gentle and sweet. Justin was about two years old and loved purses and little fairy dresses. His father was quite concerned about this, but decided not to make a big deal of it. As time went by Justin, quietly encouraged by his dad, became interested in Meccano sets and Buzz Lightyear. His little brother loves to watch the TV show "Strawberry Shortcake". While shopping with his mom a few weeks ago, he decided that he wanted the little doll 'Lemon' from the same show. He made a wood-block house for her and took her to Kindergarten. When he got home he said to his mom, "Lemon is a girly doll, isn't she!" He put 'Lemon' away and that was that.

There is never any fuss made about little girls wearing boyish clothes or playing cowboys and Indians yet there is a very negative attitude towards boys showing the least bit of femininity. Young women always appreciate men who show sensitivity. Guys don't learn to be softhearted by constantly displaying a macho attitude and throwing their weight around. That is very unappealing to girls.

Remember the movie, "Billy Elliott?" That poor lad was so terrified of his father's response to him wanting to be a dancer that he hid the fact that he was going to dance classes for a long time. Eventually his father, a coalminer and

very gruff man, came to terms with the fact that his son was living his passion and with great difficulty accepted his chosen path in life.

It is vitally important to allow our children to develop their own characters and find their own identity. In no way am I supporting gender transfer, but by demonstrating extreme opposition to boys showing any feminine tendencies or sensitivity it can cause the child much stress and confusion. Instead, it is way more productive to gently guide them towards activities that are more male oriented without necessarily being tough and gruff.

Children face all kinds of pressures as they grow up. As parents, we need to choose how we will deal with issues. The fact that two and three year olds may like dressing up in clothes of the opposite sex is hardly a big deal. They love to dress up. Hey, even adults like Robin Hood, Batman, Spiderman and Superman all wore tights and they were manly men! Lighten up and let the kids enjoy painting themselves and dressing up as they like. Life is short! What is a tutu between friends?

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.