



## How to Bring Your Son to His Initiation into Manhood

### Societal Reverence for Rite of Passages

In days long gone, families raised their sons happily knowing their communities would formally participate in the responsibilities of imparting the communal values and behaviors to all of the young men. Additionally, a formal rite of passage initiation provided young men the opportunity to freely express themselves and discover who they are, without fear of being made wrong in this “container of confidentiality.”

All parents, grandparents, and their relatives celebrated the initiation, knowing that the village was going to help them raise their sons. The son honored his family by giving his best to this ordeal and became a respected member of the clan.

### Why It's So Difficult To Get Young Men to Their Initiation

These days, parents must compete for their son's attention with the constant pressures of consumer commercialization (constant selling), digital domination (screen time) and healthcare industrialization (over-medication). Trying to get them to be away from their devices, friends and the comforts of home is a great challenge. Thankfully, some young men actually look forward to going to an initiation, but most become agitated at the thought of having their sense of control being taken away from them.

An equally strong challenge is for parents to relax their emotional attachment to their sons. While they may not admit it, parents often acquiesce to their son's resistance to go to their initiation as a way of being nice – as if their sons were boys who are afraid of the dark. Another reason that parents don't insist their sons go to the initiation is to avoid a confrontation of conflict. Many requests to their challenging sons are often met with resistance, so parents drop the issue, looking to save energy.

### What to Say and Do

#### 1) Be Confident & Clear

Your sons are more likely to attend the Young Men's Ultimate Weekend only when they sense you are conveying complete confidence in the importance of this event *and* that there's not going to be any negotiation. If your son was sick and needed medical help but didn't want to go to the doctor, it's highly unlikely you wouldn't follow through with your intention to help him.

*A California Non-Profit Corporation - Tax ID# 68-0455131*

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You will need to be clear that, no matter how harsh the reaction is from your son, you're not asking or begging him to go. If, after going through our website, you need more information about YMUW, contact us at [info@ymuw.org](mailto:info@ymuw.org) or call (800) 719- 8302.

## 2) Keep it Simple

The conversation should go something like this; "Son, I've heard about an event that's really special. If I had something like this when I was your age, I never would have made as many mistakes in my life and I would have been happier and more independent a lot sooner, with a lot less stress. It's lots of fun and I trust you'll have a great time. The event is over a weekend on (date) and I'm excited for you! Thank you for listening."

That's it. That's all you really have to say to start the process. Gently walk away and go onto your next activity, like nothing happened.

If your son wants to speak to you, I suggest you make it a meaningful conversation about how it takes a community to raise young adults. You can say there'll be mentors present to help him become more independent. He'll also learn how to be more successful leading his life in a way that's right for him. This is how both you and your son will know the relationship is becoming geared more towards his ability to care for himself.

Use this as an opportunity to create a stronger bond in your family.

## 3) What Not to Say

If your son is not happy with your intention to send him to his initiation, he'll have no problem telling you! No matter what he says or does after you tell him, do not make this a conversational competition. Unless he is willing to carry on a civil dialogue with you, do not say or even think any unspoken message that says. "You're going because I said so". He'll feel this unspoken command, become more upset and use it as an excuse to carry on with anger.

It's best not to ask him if he wants to go. For this event, I don't recommend treating him like a boy, where you might say, "Do you want to go to the store with me?" Your son needs to *feel* something is changing in your dynamic with him. Ideally, the rite of passage is just as much about you starting to treat your son like a mature young man, as it is about him needing to become resilient to withstand and thrive, the rigors of adulthood.

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#### 4) Reminding Your Son About the Initiation

You don't have to mention anything to your son until a week before the event. When you speak to him, make it a simple reminder to be at the designated place at the designated time to get to the event. If he wants to talk to you about it, don't make it a problem. Listen, without interruption, to his objections and then simply, respectfully, repeat what you said the first time – confidentially and calmly.

Let him speak. If he asks you detailed questions that you don't know the answers to, tell him the truth by saying, "I don't know". The more they can trick you into making up things about this Weekend, the more they'll likely use it against you as a reason not to go. For each question they have that you do have an answer, respond with one - three sentences only.

Communications with young men are often most effective when loving, simple and direct.

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