S11E9 - Hey, This Is For You: Boys - Age 10-13

A quick note before we start. This episode is made for young people, specifically for boys and males aged around 10 to 13. It talks about bodies, puberty, and growing up. All of it is normal, all of it is honest, and none of it is anything to be embarrassed about.

If you're a parent listening first, brilliant. Have a listen, then share it with your son and listen together if that works for you. Either is completely fine.

If you are a young person listening on your own, perfect. This one is for you.

Let's go.

Hey, welcome. So, somebody, some trusted adult in your sphere, pointed you towards this podcast episode. Maybe it was a parent. Maybe you found it yourself. Maybe someone just left it on your phone and said, "Give this a listen."

However you got here, good, because this episode is actually for you. Not for the grown-ups, not dressed up in boring adult language, just for you.

We're gonna talk about some stuff that's happening, or is about to happen, to your body, and I'm gonna be straight with you because that's what you deserve. No weird diagrams, no cringe, just honest information that is useful.

Are you ready? Let's go.

So, first things first. What I want to say, and I mean this, is whatever is happening to your body right now, it's not weird.

It's just normal. It's not weird the way that you look, not weird the things you're thinking about, not weird the questions you haven't yet told anyone.

Here's the thing about being 10, 11, 12, 13. Your body is doing loads of stuff that nobody asked it to do. It's doing it on its own timetable as well. Not yours, not your mates', not anybody else's, just its own.

Some of your friends might already be going through some of this stuff. Some of them might not have started yet. Some of you listening might be right in the middle of all of this, and all of that is normal.

There's no right age for any of this to begin. There is just your body doing its thing in its own time.

And what's happening, all of it, has a name. It's called puberty, and it's basically your body upgrading itself from a kid's body to an adult's body. But, like all good things, it takes a few years.

It's not always comfortable, and it makes a lot more sense when somebody actually explains what's going on. So that's what I'm here to do.

I'm Ashley. I am a psychotherapist at The Resilient Kid, and I wanna talk about what puberty actually does in plain language. No weird diagrams required.

It all starts with something called testosterone, a hormone that your body starts producing more of during puberty.

Think of hormones as messages your body sends itself. Testosterone is basically your body sending a message saying, "Time to change."

Your body responds quite enthusiastically, sometimes at extremely inconvenient moments.

But here's what you can expect, not in this order, because everyone's different.

First thing you might notice is your body getting bigger. Your height increases, often in spurts as well. That means your trousers stop fitting overnight. Your muscles start to develop, and your shoulders broaden. This takes time. It does not happen overnight.

Hair appears under your arms, around your penis and testicles. It's called pubic hair, and eventually on your face. It's fine, and then it tends to get thicker and coarser over time.

Your penis and testicles grow. This is normal. It happens gradually, not all at once, and there's a really wide range of what normal looks like. So whatever you've got going on is most certainly fine.

Your voice changes. Now, this one can be a little bit unpredictable. Your voice starts to get lower, but it doesn't always go smoothly. It might crack or wobble at random moments, which can feel embarrassing. However, it's just your voice finding its new frequency.

Every single adult male goes through this. Every single one.

Your skin changes. Now, that's because your body is producing more oil during puberty, which can mean spots. Not everybody gets them badly, but most people get some. Washing your face regularly helps. So does not touching your face or picking the spots, which is far easier said than done.

Now... oh, one more. You sweat more. This is real, and deodorant becomes your best friend from about now. Not optional. Make it your friend.

There are two things I want to talk to you about specifically because they are the things nobody warned you about, and not being warned makes them more confusing, more embarrassing than they need to be.

Okay. The first one is erections.

Your penis gets erections. It becomes hard more frequently during puberty. You probably already knew that. It's not new. That's not news.

But what you might not know is they can happen randomly. Not because you're thinking about anything in particular, not because you want it to, just because it happens, and often at the least convenient possible moment.

This is completely normal. It happens because your body's flooded with new hormones and is still figuring out what to do.

Think of it like a car alarm that sometimes goes off when nobody's even touched the car. Your body is testing the systems. It's not doing it to embarrass you. It is just doing what bodies do.

It gets more predictable when you're older, but for now, it happens, it passes. You're not the only one.

Now, the other thing that I want to talk to you about is wet dreams, and this one catches a lot of boys completely off guard because nobody mentions it. So I'm gonna tell you about them now.

At some point during puberty, usually somewhere between 11 and 15, you might wake up and find that you've ejaculated in the night.

This is a nocturnal emission, or a wet dream. It might happen during a dream. It might happen without any dream you can remember at all.

It's completely normal, and it's your body's way of managing the semen that it's now producing. It doesn't mean anything other than your body's doing exactly what it's supposed to.

It requires nothing more than ordinary hygiene to sort it out. Wash. Change. That's it.

The reason I'm telling you is because finding out it's happened without any warning is alarming, and it doesn't need to be.

Now you know. If it happens, you're fine. Your body's fine. It's just puberty doing its thing.

Now, something that most adults skip, and I don't think that's fair, so I'm not gonna skip it.

During puberty, you might find yourself touching your own body, exploring, figuring out what it feels like. This is called masturbation, or self-stimulation, and I want to tell you something really clearly.

It's normal, it's private, it does not harm you, it's nothing to feel ashamed of.

The vast majority of boys do this at some point during puberty. It's a normal part of figuring out your body.

The only things worth knowing are these: it's something you do privately, not publicly; it has nothing to do with anybody else; and it's about your body and your own experience. That's it. No big deal.

So just make sure that when you do it privately, you are cleaning yourself up afterwards. Keep yourself hygienic. But that's it. Really no big deal.

So, moving on, I want to talk to you about something else, and that's your feelings, because puberty's not just physical. Emotions go through it, too.

You might find that your feelings are bigger than they used to be, that you get angry faster, sad more suddenly, frustrated in a way that often seems out of proportion to what's actually happened.

And sometimes you might be in the middle of something, and you can know that this is bigger than you intended, and you don't know how to get out of it. But just know that it'll pass.

You might feel things that you don't have words for, and you also might feel things that you don't want to. All of this is completely normal.

During puberty, your brain is literally rebuilding itself. It's a massive renovation project, and like all renovation projects, it's messy, inconvenient, and takes way longer than anyone planned.

A bit of your brain handles impulse control and emotional regulation, deciding how you respond to things. It is the last bit to be finished.

Now, if you've seen *The Simpsons*, the cartoon with the little yellow people, and you've seen the dad, Homer, he often will go, when he's made a mistake or he's done something wrong, "D'oh," and hits his forehead. Behind there is exactly where your emotional regulation is constructed. It is the last part of the brain to be finished.

It is not gonna be fully done until you're in your late 20s, which sounds like forever away from where you are right now. But what this means practically is that your feelings might feel too big sometimes, and that's just biology.

When that happens, and it will, the most useful thing you can do is find somewhere to put it. Exercise, going to the gym, running, going out for a walk, music, listening to music, making music, drawing, painting, gaming, talking to someone you trust. Anything that gives your feelings somewhere to go, rather than just sitting inside your head and waiting and watching these feelings get bigger and bigger.

And talk to someone. I know that might feel like the least appealing option on that list, but I promise you it is one of the most useful.

Find a person, a parent, a friend, a teacher, an older cousin maybe, who you can be honest about what's happening. That person is worth their weight in gold. Maybe a coach.

If you do sports or chess, anything like that, speak to your coach.

So, a few things worth knowing.

And I wanna make sure that you know them before we finish.

Your body is yours. Nobody has the right to touch it in a way that you don't want. Not a peer, not a friend, not an adult, not anyone.

If something ever happens that doesn't feel right, that feels uncomfortable, tell somebody you trust. You'll not be in trouble.

You will be believed.

What you see online is not what real bodies look like. If you've come across pornography, and a lot of boys your age have, usually without even looking for it, or somebody shared something with you, I want you to know that's not real life.

It does not show what bodies actually look like. It does not show what sex is or how people actually treat each other. It's made for entertainment, not education. It's not a reliable guide to anything.

We'll talk more about this in a later episode, but for now, just know real life, real relationships look very different, and that's okay.

Now, you're allowed to have questions, all about this, about things I might not have covered, about things you're thinking about and you're not sure are normal.

They almost certainly probably are, and you're allowed to ask someone, the adults in your life.

If they've shared this episode with you, then maybe they're trying to be the people you can ask. Let them try, even if it's just over text.

And you can say to them, "I don't wanna talk about this in person," if you don't want to. "I just need you to answer these questions for me honestly."

And put that out there for them, and they will support you.

Okay, so that's most of it. I know some of that might have felt like a lot. Some of it might have felt uncomfortable. Some of it you might have already known, and some of it might have been new.

All of it is true, and all of it is stuff you deserve to know.

And here's what I want to leave you with.

What is happening to you is normal. All of it. The body stuff, the feeling stuff, the confusing stuff, the embarrassing stuff. Normal.

Every adult man on the planet went through exactly this, even the ones who seem like they've always had it together.

You're not going through this alone, even if you feel like you are. And if you've got questions, ask them. Don't try and figure this out in the dark.

You've absolutely got this.

Thanks for listening to this one. There are more episodes in this season, including ones coming up that talk about consent, relationships, and one for older teens that goes into more detail.

Both have age guidance at the start so you know what's in them.

And if you're a parent who has just listened to this, thank you for being here. Your young person is lucky to have you.

Until next time, take care of yourselves.