



RAR 107 – Dr. Michael Gurian on the Minds of Girls

Sarah: Sarah Mackenzie here and you've got episode 107 of the Read-Aloud Revival podcast; so glad to have you tuning in today. Before we start with today's Show I want to make sure that you know today, August 14, 2018, is your last chance this year to become a member at Read-Aloud Revival Premium Membership. In Premium Membership we know that your relationships matter more than anything else. Your relationships with your kids—they matter more than anything else and that's why in Premium Membership you get a regular dose of connection to inspire your kids and ignite their imaginations, community to get refreshed and rejuvenated alongside other moms who are doing the same thing, and confidence to participate in mama book clubs and Master Classes designed to help you teach from rest and lead with confidence. Today is your last chance to join Read-Aloud Revival Premium Membership in 2018. We won't be opening doors again until 2019, so head to RARmembership.com to become a member today. If you're hearing this after August 14, I'm really sorry you missed it, but you can join us in the future. Go to RARmembership.com and put your name on the waiting list there to request an invitation so that you find out when we open doors again. We only open doors to new members a few times a year and you don't want to miss it. If you want to focus on what matters most to your family, if you want to teach from rest and make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books, I hope you join us in Read-Aloud Revival Premium Membership – that's RARmembership.com.

You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

2:08 Dr. Gurian is back!

Today's guest has joined us before and I'm thrilled to have him back today to chat with us again. Dr. Michael Gurian is the New York Times' best-selling author of 28 books, published in 22 languages, including *Boys and Girls Learn Differently*, *The Minds of Girls*, *The Wonder of Girls*, a whole host of others. We're going to link to them in the Show Notes at ReadAloudRevival.com/107, and today he's going to join us to talk about how girls learn. So, here's a quick note: if you missed the earlier episode with Dr. Gurian about how boys learn – that's episode 82 of the podcast. You can find it in your podcast app or just go to ReadAloudRevival.com/82 for episode 82, and that's one of our most popular episodes. In that episode we also talk about why fidgeting can be a really good sign so it ends up being a listener favorite because we all have at least one fidgeter while we're reading aloud. So, a marriage and family counselor, Dr. Gurian provides key notes and consulting throughout the world. You may have heard him speak at one of the Great Home School Conventions. I am so happy to welcome him back here to the Read-Aloud Revival, Dr. Gurian welcome back.

G: Well, thank you Sarah, this is a real pleasure.

S: I'm excited to talk about this because last time you were on we had such great feedback from listeners about how helpful your insight about boys was for them, and so today let's talk about girls. You ready to talk about girls?



G: I am. I have two daughters so I'm totally into it.

S: Two daughters. That's right, do you want to tell us about them a little bit, like how old they are now and anything else you want to share about them?

G: Yeah, they're 28 and 25 now, and one of them is in law school and the other is managing a climbing gym. So, one is in the business route and the other is in the law route.

3:55 Challenges girls face

S: Very cool. So, let's talk about some of the challenges that girls face in terms of learning. What are the challenges that come to mind for you right away when you think about girls and learning?

G: I take, of course, a science-based perspective and so, I'm always looking at where's the science on things, and I think there are three big categories we would talk about. Of course, there's more than this but the three big categories that I run into all the time are one, a girl can have a learning disability – so that's its own category and those are very specific, case by case, sensory processing, dyslexia, ADD, so that's that category. Then another category of learning difficulty or challenge is in the area of technology engineering. So we broadly call that STEM and then we say Math/Science, and then we hone it into what's later going to become technology engineering and I'm sure we'll talk about that – kind of, what we call the spatial fields. And then, the third area ends up being behavior – as they're in school and working through things and what we call girl drama—the stuff that's ancillary to learning but actually can impede learning and can create depression, anxiety [****inaudible****] in school.

S: I think, as a parent, that's the thing that comes to mind first for me when I think about challenges with my girls and learning and actually just growing up. So, I love that you've given that its own category because that's a huge piece of the puzzle obviously. I think I've heard you say before that the way that girls process information is actually different than the way boys process information, sort of a gray matter versus a white matter thing, can you talk to us about that?

5:36 Processing differences (white matter versus gray matter)

G: I think it's foundational to a lot of what's happening and it's relatively unknown. I would say 99% of books don't know about it so let's spend a second on it. So, the male and the female brain, as listeners may know, are set up differently – they're formatted differently, biochemically different, structurally there are differences. And one of the primary differences is that the female brain tends to use more white matter activity and the male brain tends to use more gray matter activity. So, what does that mean? White matter and gray matter are – so, white matter spreads throughout the brain and it's in the myelin and it's sending signals throughout the brain constantly. Gray matter happens in splotches, so in little areas in the brain, and I'll give an example of one of the gray areas is, what's called the inferior parietal lobule, so it's this part of the brain that where a lot of high math is done and a lot of the spatial stuff (physics). It was a part of the brain that was huge in Einstein's brain when they autopsied his brain. So males tend to do their processing in these gray matter area splotches, and so they really concentrate their processing on a particular task. Females tend to do much more of their



processing through white matter activity so they'll process somewhat there in that lobe and then they'll be doing five other things at once; they'll be processing other stuff, too, in other parts of the brain. It's very clear that there's this white matter activity/gray matter activity difference and it impacts learning and it impacts learning not so much, it doesn't really impact learning very much in what we call language arts or English/History/Social Studies – those areas which are very **[**inaudible**]** oriented, the female brain is as we've talked before is more dominant in the verbally motive and word use because it does words on both sides of the brain whereas males only do words on the left ...

S: That's right.

G: ... so, it doesn't impact that as much in females and females are pretty dominant in that area, but in the higher levels of science and math and especially the stuff that involves moving objects around in space, and that's especially going to affect engineering and technology, even virtual space, that's where it really impacts. And so for homeschool teachers and parents, when you're looking at your little girls and little boys, it's very important if this is an area if you want them to do well later in math and science, I just say, "OK, think about it, focus on it, and have the girls play a lot with legos, have them be moving around, like at [age] 2, 3, 4 – move objects around, build things so that they develop a little more of those gray matter spatial areas that a lot of guys their brains are already set to develop them naturally.

S: So, basically you're saying you can set them up to succeed in that area later by just giving them more practice and letting the brain have more of a chance to develop that gray matter?

G: You set them up for better opportunity later. The brain is still the brain and if a particular girl or boy (not every boy is good at science) if they're brains aren't already templated to, for instance, have a lot of dense fibers or activity in that inferior parietal lobule, for instance, they're probably not going to. They're not going to be Einstein, male or female, they're just not going to be Einstein. But, the key to me is opportunity. If we do this early with girls we're going to give them more opportunity to be better at this and why shouldn't we? It's an equal world – girls should have the same opportunity that boys have and the only way I see to do it, sort of universally, is get all of us from birth to 15 to be doing more of the spatial play with girls more. It's great that girls are doing a lot of athletics now because that's spatial so that's going to help – get them involved in objects moving through space as much as possible and then see what happens.

9:29 3 things that affect girls' learning

S: OK, so you've mentioned three major categories. One of them was, sort of, the science/technology/math/engineering, one of them was the emotional, sort of what we think of as girl drama. What was the first category that you mentioned?

G: It's the depression/anxiety and the dyslexia – anything that we would look at as a mental health issue or a learning disorder.

S: OK, got it.

G: That's its own category because we are having more and more girls with depression/anxiety that's affecting their learning and then also they have learning disabilities. They could have autism. And, we're having an increase of these



brain-based ... these are all brain-based disorders, from autism to depression to anxiety, they all are brain-based. We talk about them as a culture (and it's fine to do so) as emotional disorders or we talk about them in the field of psychology and that's all correct but they do start in the brain and the brain is under some sort of stress that's partially genetic – everyone brings in genes for this stuff – and then there are triggers that are happening in the environment and triggering depression and anxiety and then the dyslexia, autism they come in with and that starts showing very young, and that's its own categories. And, we have millions of girls whose learning is being impeded or being challenged by these disorders and differences.

10:57 How girls communicate

S: So, let's talk a little bit about the way girls communicate and how that's unique, maybe, from how our boys communicate based on the way their brains are wired.

G: Communication, we always want to say that this can all work for everyone, male and female, but I think if people study it, as you know, in the minds of girls I ask people to become citizen scientists and to just check out everything that you see on Facebook or that you read from a scientist or that you hear someone like me say, check it all out. Test the kids around you. And, as you observe and as you are a citizen scientist, parents always or almost always notice there are communication differences. And one of the key differences involves verbally motive, the frequency of verbally motive communication. So, verbally motive means connecting words to feelings and girls do spend more of their day, even if they're shy and introverted girls, they spend more of their day connecting words to

feelings. So, there's two ends of this. One is they're feeling a lot more stuff that rises up enough to become verbalized and then the other end of it is they're doing words on both sides of the brain. So, girls have word centers throughout their brains so they have more activity between the feelings centers, motion centers, and the mid-brain, and then the word centers in the top of the brain, because they're doing it on both sides. So they, not only are feeling more stuff that they are remembering and storing and processing, but then they're connecting more of it to words. So then, they're verbalizing more; they're verbalizing more in social media, they're verbalizing more talking to people, connecting with people, so that even includes—this average—even includes boys who are very verbally motive and who are really talkative and we have a lot of boys (and I'm one of them) that talk a lot. We talk a lot. But if you study what we talk about we start to notice and citizen scientists will all start to notice this that boys, yeah they talk about their feelings—everyone can do that, but at a certain point you start noticing they're talking more about what they're doing, so the doing part, whereas females are still talking more about the emotions part. And so I would say that's the biggest communication difference is this emotion processing.

S: I can see that. I have three girls and three boys and I can see. As you're talking and I'm thinking about the things that my son, who's a very talkative boy, talks about versus my girls even the one who talks less and the one who talks just as much as I do (which is quite a bit), I can see the difference in how much of that is connected to emotions. So that's so interesting that that's the way that they're wired. That's so fascinating to me.



G: And it's a big deal. We have to, everyone—and this is dads and guys especially have to understand this—that once that female brain, once the white matter activity is on fire with this verbal and motor processing, that we've got to listen, because she will feel not validated and not valid as a self if we're not listening, if we keep interrupting or cutting her off. Girls really do need that listening. They don't need us to listen for a half hour but they need us to listen for a few minutes, whatever we kind of work out is our rhythm with each of our children because each child is unique, they need us to listen for that period of time and do some amount of time of reflecting back so that they feel validated and generally once they've started repeating themselves that's when we know, OK, they've processed and we can probably interrupt now. But in that first few minutes when they're really in that deep emotion state, trying to verbally process all that stuff going on inside, it's crucial, absolutely crucial that we listen and reflect back.

14:42 We need to listen

S: OK, so when our girls come to us and they're in that white matter space and we can tell because they're connecting their words with their emotion and they're talking to us about how they feel about something, we listen and we reflect back and don't interrupt – actually, as a woman I know that. When somebody interrupts us in the middle of my describing something, it feels so dismissive to me, it feels they're completely shutting me down, but you're saying that's actually because that's the way my brain is wired, and then when I go back and start repeating, which I know I do, that's sort of like, OK she's gotten through the most fundamental part of what she's talking about and now I can interact

with her more, but it's so important for our girls to feel heard.

G: Yeah. We don't want to be dismissing, and obviously, we don't want to dismiss boys.

S: Oh yeah, right.

G: No one wants to get dismissed. And with girls there's this particular, sort of, fire in their eyes I think we can see it where they're in what you beautifully called the fundamental, they're in all that stuff and they will feel dismissed if we don't listen and we reflect back, and that will over a period of a year or two of us doing that with that, that really hurts and that can affect their development—they just won't feel self-esteem, their self-esteem won't be as high, because they need us as the people attached with them to hear them and to reflect back so that they are validated and not dismissed, and so we give them this gift because we also know that in the larger world they are going to be dismissed and interrupted; they're going to be challenged. And you know that's OK. It's really great that girls are challenged, but in our safe home, in our relationships, I love to get people to make sure to at least, for that first 3-5 minutes be listening and reflecting back, and they generally will start repeating somewhere (you've got to individualize this) but somewhere in that 3-5 minute range they'll start repeating, and if they've been hurt and by the way, I want to put a parentheses, if they've been traumatized, OK, we're going to be listening for much longer periods.

S: OK.

G: If they've been traumatized, abused or something like that, that's going to be a long period, but sort of the normal interactions, 3-5 minutes, somewhere in there they'll start repeating then we can ... we're interrelating, we



can say, “OK, I got that, now, what should we do about that?” but in that 3-5 minutes and for trauma and longer periods of time I would love everyone to understand that this is about a white matter processing and verbally motor processing that that female brain does that it’s great to be conscious of.

17:29 Social media

S: Yeah, that’s really helpful. I can actually see my day-to-day shifting based on just on that information, just knowing the importance of that listening and reflecting back for the first while as they’re doing that white matter processing. Can we talk about social media, because as a mother of two teenage girls, I have two high school girls and oh boy! the social media and my, gosh, the poll on the siren’s song of what’s happening on their phones is such a constant concern for me as their parent. I’d be curious to hear what insights you have for parents as far as their girls and social media?

G: This is really a big deal. Social media can be what we call a neurotoxin, which is toxic to the brain, and so let me come at it from a couple of angles. One angle is the way that dopamine and the reward system works in the brain, this is a big part of it. So, a girl gets a smart phone (and again, some of this is going to apply to boys, of course – males tend to do more on the video game sides and females more on the social media interaction side, so it’s a good thing to talk about with girls).

S: I love that you mention that, actually, because I don’t ever have to tell my son (well, my son’s younger) but I can see that the same amount of time or pull a video game has on my son is the

same intensity of a pull that my daughter feels for Instagram, for example.

G: Exactly. And that is a brain difference. I definitely would argue there’s a brain difference there that grounds that; there’s, of course, nurture elements, there’s culture elements, there’s all that that’s operative; but in terms of that which you’re seeing there I think most of us as citizen scientists would see that. We’d have some exceptions, we always say when we do this brain-based work there’s a one in five exception rate so we’re going to see exceptions, but I think most people would see this. And the reason they’d see it that that smart phone (and this is one of the reasons why I’m begging people not to give smart phones to kids until they’re 13-14. And Bill Gates and Melinda Gates didn’t give their kids smart phones until 14, so they’re pretty smart people, so I think 13-14 and the reason is that the dopamine system is the reward system in the brain, and if it gets attached to a smart phone, let’s say, or to social media, if it gets attached to that it needs that stimulant for the reward system to work and for the dopamine to flood through the brain, so let me give an example to just tell people. Let’s say we have a girl who’s really into horses. So, she never saw a smart phone, but she’s into horses. So a lot of her life is around taking care of horses, riding horses, competing maybe and her dopamine system (her reward system) a lot of what she gets reward from is, of course, her family life and all those great things but a lot of it comes from taking care of horses and this is a very natural act and it’s a slower process for the brain to release dopamine and the reward system. She has to actually do something like win a contest for the brain to go, “Oh man, you really did great” and that builds pathways in the brain. That’s a natural



system for reward chemistry. Now, let's say she's 11 and she's wired into her smart phone and it's all about the social media, what's happening is she's getting instant gratification and not doing anything. So there's a double-edge sword here. Number one is instant gratification, I have just texted my friend, Anna. Anna needs to text me back right away. If Anna doesn't text me back right away that causes some anxiety in me. If Anna does text me back right away, I get that dopamine hit, I get the instant gratification. And we don't want either of those. We don't want her to be developing this constant anxiety because someone did or did not text her back, which is going to flood the brain with chemistry we don't really want at 11, and then we don't want her to be getting instant gratification—she's just going to expect instant gratification the rest of her life. Her brain's going to get re-wired toward instant gratification ...

S: Wow.

G: .. and anxiety. What we prefer at that age of 11 is that she's involved in doing things (and I used the example of horses, it could be anything for anybody), doing things that have a slower pace, a more realistic pace of development, and that set her up to be a more mature adult—an adult who doesn't expect instant gratification, an adult who follows through on things, and an adult who isn't constantly anxious. So this is the direct formula we need to be thinking about when we attach girls to social media so young. It is affecting their brain development and generally, to the negative. So, I'm not anti-social media, I'm not anti-smart phones or anything, but what I'm trying to warn people about is the developmental. The minds of girls I do divide it up, as you know, into stages and saying, OK, if you have a 3 year old, here's the stage of their brain development so you don't

really want any social media or screen time then, if you can avoid it. But 11, I gave the example of 11 because a lot of people have already given their girls smart phones by then and I would be begging them to rethink that because once they get the smart phone they're going to spend 2-3 hours a day on the smart phone. So that means 2-3 hours a day of their brain development is going to be potentially negatively affected.

S: Where they're getting that instant gratification and the anxiety, because – what's the word I'm looking for? –the possibility for anxiety, because, I know even as a grown woman using social media, we all do it right? We put something on Instagram and you back to see how many likes you have. And you think about how tremendous of an impact that can have on a younger woman, a girl, a teenager. I can see this as just being sort of a recipe for disaster. That this is the way they interact with the world. But what you just said a few minutes ago really makes so much sense to me—the example of the horses or the girl with the smart phones. If we're handing our young girls phones and social media they're getting constant practice with instant gratification and you said something else...

G: And they can become more anxious.

S: More anxious! Yes! Right. Waiting for that friend to text back. Waiting for somebody to leave a comment on whatever they posted. Waiting for that instant ...

23:15 'Pruning period'

G: Exactly. They come to the point where they're measuring themselves, how do I look? Do I look like that person over there? All of this stuff is, it's potentially, if they're getting into that too young for brain development, it's potentially detrimental.



You know, by the time they're 15 or 16, OK, they're relatively well-developed brains by then and it's not likely we're going to keep them from having a smart phone at 15, 16. But you know the pruning period ... a huge deal here is the pruning period in the brain. The girls brains are doing this massive amount of pruning. So, pruning is a use it or lose it in the brain and the cells that are being used, kind of, are kept and the cells that are not being used are thrown out by the brain. It happens to every human being and it has to happen because the brain has a lot of cells and it just can't keep them all, so it's really a big part of adolescence in the brain and it follows right along with puberty, where the brain has gone through this big transition between child brain and adult brain, during adolescence. Well, that time between 9 and 14, huge, huge pruning period and we want that brain to be pruning based on real life because really life it will have to live at 30.

S: Yeah.

G: We don't want to be pruning based on two or three hours on a smart phone which most of which is not real life.

S: That's good. That's so helpful. So 9-14 is when most of that pruning happens?

G: Yeah, it's happening all through our lives but that's a huge pruning period, 9-14/10-15, and it's especially acute in that 10-13 age group. It's acute and we have to protect our kids during that time especially.

S: So, when you're talking to parents about interacting with their girls, is there anything else that just comes right to mind? Like, [this] is what I'm hearing all the time that parents are concerned about or that you wish you could tell more parents or girls about the minds of girls.

And, of course, we'll be putting links to Dr. Gurian's books in the show notes, but his newest one is *The Minds of Girls* and if you have daughters and you're intrigued by Dr. Gurian said today you want to get your hands on that book because he breaks things down, developmentally, and across the board so you get to see, you'll get a lot of insight to how you can best interact with and help your daughter develop in a really healthy way by getting your hands on that book. But what else, Dr. Gurian, have I not asked you about that you just sort of comes to mind? Anything?

25:12 'Girl drama'

G: Well, let's see. The girl drama thing ...

S: Oh yeah.

G: ... is one that we all have a lot of ... as you know I have two daughters and they're grown, and Gail and I lived with that for the 10 years of their lives, and it continues – the female brain, it's so active emotionally and empathically, you know, empathically. Let me talk about this one particular part of the brain that is part of what's going on. This insular is this part of the mid-brain that fills up with mirror neurons and in girls, those mirror neurons they don't only get more mirror neurons like when they see someone in pain or they see someone else or they see someone roll their eyes at them, their brains just light up with all this processing about that, and they get mirror neurons, and boys, like people will say, "Why isn't there more --- boys have drama, sure there's boy drama, of course – but why is that the boys are not spending as many days responding to someone rolling their eyes at them, and one of the reasons is they just don't fill up with as many mirror neurons, they don't use as much white



matter activity, but girls, they see it all. They read the facial cues, they see the girl rolling their eyes, and so my daughter, Devita, let's say responds to that, and is processing for hours and hours why did Anna roll her eyes at me? And then if social media's involved then she gets on there and makes some negative comment about Anna, or Anna makes a comment about her, and the whole thing can go nuts. OK, so the normal part of that is – so there's a normal part of girl drama that we should actually love and respect – which is, as girls get involved in these emotional dramas what they are doing is they're developing boundaries, and so a lot of it's normal and has existed since the beginning of time, it's normal, they respond to this stuff and then they react, and other people react, and they have to react, and they're learning about relationships, and especially about what are the appropriate boundaries like, OK, how do I maturely respond to someone who rolls their eyes at me? Is it mature for me to totally overact or can I have some good boundaries here and go, well, OK, she rolled her eyes, she was in a bad mood, it doesn't really have to do with me, I go on. That's what they're experientially learning over that period of 5-10 years as they're involved in a lot of this drama, and one of the reasons girls need to learn that is that they do tend to merge, because the insular, the mirror neurons, the empathy, all of this, they tend to merge themselves. And women talk about this a lot as adults where they're merging themselves with other people and they lose themselves. Say, I'm working so hard to take care of everyone else I don't have a self.

S: Yeah!

G: Well, it's a real phenomena. And during those years, especially, of 10-20 we actually want our girls to be having drama, not dangerous drama,

but to be having this normal girl drama so that they can build a self, a resilient self, and that's the subtitle of *The Minds of Girls: A new path for raising healthy resilient and successful women...*

S: Yes.

G: ... and that resilience is a big deal. They need that, and they develop a lot of it by going through all these mini-crises in girl drama. So that's the positive. And, as you know, I have a whole chapter on that explaining to folks how that works and how they can help manage that. The negative, of course, of girl drama is when it becomes cyber-bullying or becomes bullying, or dangerous, and that we're not saying is normal, and that's kind of a form of violence and we don't like that and we're always battling against that and I give people strategies for that, but I think what people find especially interesting or helpful is this idea that girl drama is normal and can be healthy.

S: Yeah, I like that. That's really helpful for me as a parent, we don't want to protect our children from it completely, our daughters from it completely, because they need to go through it to develop that resilience, to develop the skills and the ways to create those boundaries, right, so that they're not prone to losing themselves in it as they get older. Would you say then that that is, as parents, that's one of our most important parts of us listening and reflecting back to our daughters is sort of helping them process through that emotional drama. Am I ... ?

29:47 Processing through emotional drama

G: No, I think that's absolutely true. A lot of their lives, for a few years somewhere in there, it's going to hit every girl at a different time, but



somewhere in that 10-20 age group, I think every girl goes through a period where she feels like a zero self and she's constantly involved in feelings that become drama or that are internal drama, and you know, that's a time when she's really vulnerable, and when it's so great for us to listen to her, reflect back, help her process. And this is also a thing that's fundamental about male/female difference, and it's something where we can enlist the help of both males and females here, and I'm going to use mom and dad here, even though in some situations dad might not be around or mom might not be around, but let me just use that as the scenario. Males and females approach girl drama differently, in general, and we want that. We want someone, and I'm going to say it's the mom, again it could be the dad – this is not a stereotype – but often, it's the mom who will be listening and reflecting and saying, “Oh yeah, that's so hard, and she hurt your feelings” and that's really, really great and it's also great to have someone else, and in this scenario it might be the dad (but it could be the mom) who says, “Yeah, that happened, and that hurts, and now, OK, so how do you want to change? What do you want to do now? Call Anna? Do you want to call Anna and talk to her? Or do you want to just stew in the fact that Anna rolled her eyes at you?” and I'm saying this very starkly, obviously, people are probably going to say this sweeter, but it's good – what I'm trying to get at is – it's actually good to have (this is called bi-strategic parenting where you have different approaches to your daughter, and obviously to your son), different approaches that give them different assets that bring out of them different assets, and one set of assets is the listening/reflecting and really not critiquing or problem solving much, the other set of assets is how do we problem solve? How do you remain a separate self? Why are you

so engaged in this? Why do you care? We actually need to give both messages to our daughters and our timing is important. The person who's saying, “OK, buck up, that's just an eye roll” that person can't say that in the first minute of processing.

S: Got it, because they still have to do that processing first.

G: They still have to do the processing, absolutely, but that person could say at a 3-5 minutes depending on the situation whereas the other person, and it may be the mom or the dad, may not really want to be that parent and may just be the listener and the processor, and that's great, bi-strategic is great.

S: So good. That is so helpful.

33:03 Trusting ourselves in parenting

G: Oh good, we need a lot of approaches. I think pop culture kind of tells us well, there's one way to respond to a girl, and you can tell I would say, no, I think we multi-strategic approaches.

S: Yeah. Pop culture does, and also like parenting books, depending on where you go for your “expert” advice, a lot of times we think there's just one way to handle something, so I like how you say there's lots of different ways and they all have their benefits, they all have their strengths in helping our children develop, and they all have a role to play there.

G: I think we should trust ourselves. I mean, if someone is putting a child in danger, if he or she is abusing, that's going to go in a separate category. But mostly, I think we parents with all our various different styles with which we parent, we need to trust that they're all part of a puzzle



and not be too hard on ourselves. If we're not really a great listener, OK, that's alright, as long as someone else is a really great listener in our household, I think that's going to work. So, we need to trust ourselves and I think this is an important message for people especially to try to make sure that dads are involved because our culture is really hard on males; it wants males to be one way and wants fathers to be one way and usually that one way it wants them to be is not who they are. And we guys can learn a lot from social movements about being more emotional (I certainly have) but at the same time we don't want dads to be far away, and we don't want to push them out...

S: Yeah.

G: ... and so part of what I think we have to do now, in the new millennium, is actually convince all of us that the way dads do things also have merit naturally, just the way they are they have merit. They're not perfect but they have merit.

S: Yeah. And they play an important part in the development of our sons and daughters.

G: Absolutely. We all, moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, we're all playing a crucial role.

34:26 Books he read with his girls

S: So, of course, this is the Read-Aloud Revival and we love to give book recommendations. I know we're out of time but before I let you go I'm wondering if you could recall any books, in particular, that you enjoyed reading with your girls or talking with your girls about, or that your own daughters enjoyed reading as they were growing up?

G: Well, yes, I mean I have to go back in my memory but I certainly remember Good Night Moon, and I remember Corduroy, all of those classics, we were into all of the classics. Then I remember as they got older To Kill a Mockingbird with the female lead, I thought that was really great, and just tried to find books that had female leads. But, I do want to say that we, even if the books had male leads, we would always say, "What did we learn from that?" It doesn't only have to be female...

S: It's probably easier now than ever to find books that have strong female leads, I think.

G: Oh, it is now, absolutely. Of course, my kids are older. I mean, there's so many I wouldn't even know about that you would know about, but I guess, overall what I would say is we look for two things at once: we did want female leads but we also look for quality, and if the messaging in the book even if it had a male lead and the messaging was good I would read the book with my daughter and just have my daughter put herself in that place...

S: I think you do that naturally, too. You know what I mean? I'm trying to think... if I'm reading Peter Pan (well, that's probably not the best example)...

G: Like, Winnie the Pooh ...

S: Yeah, exactly. You already as the reader, kind of, associate most strongly with the character regardless of whether they're similar to you or different. I think that's one of the things that makes reading so powerful is because we get to chance to really relate to the character in the story who may live very differently (or very similarly) to us and every time we get to do that and we walk a mile in someone else's shoes that gives us a chance to, sort of, experience life



through a new pair of eyes. And so, even as a female reading stories with male leads, or for my son reading Little House on the Prairie he's still going to relate with Laura because she's the main character and that's how stories work, right?

G: Exactly. And you hit it. Winnie the Pooh, Little House on the Prairie we read with our kids, and Winnie the Pooh was a huge favorite and I bet our girls read that I don't know how many times. And The Narnia Chronicles. Christopher Robin, obviously was male, etc., but the neat thing about the way the human brain works is that in those first years, like birth to 10, it's not really differentiating sexually. So if it's a male lead or a female lead the brain's identifying with that character and isn't really saying, "Oh wait, that's a male lead and I'm female" it's not doing that ...

S: Yeah, right.

G: ... until later. So, parents of girls who say rightly that there aren't enough to offer, there haven't been enough little girls in the leads, the good news is that until puberty time that girl is still getting all of the messaging that we want her to get from Christopher Robin, it's still happening and it's not really a detriment to her.

S: That makes so much sense. Well, listeners, make sure you get your hands on Dr. Gurian's new book, The Minds of Girls, we'll put a link to it in the Show Notes, that's ReadAloudRevival.com/107, and we'll have links to Dr. Gurian's other wonderful books there as well, in addition to his previous conversation he had with me here at the ReadAloudRevival.com, all about boys, which is episode 82. Dr. Gurian, thank you so much for coming back on the show. If our listeners want to connect with you where's the best place for them to do that?

G: Oh yeah, thank you. Oh, and thanks for having me. So, GurianInstitute.com has all of our programming and then my own website is MichaelGurian.com, and so those would be two good websites to look at, and of course, all of my stuff is through your link or through Amazon or through anywhere.

38:22 Let the kids speak

Now, it's time for Let the Kids Speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read-aloud to them.

Child1: My name is Hudson. I'm 5 years old. And I like The Three Billy Goats Gruff because I like when the billy goat pushes off the troll, and I live in Texas, America.

Child2: Hi, my name is Jude, and I live in Texas, America. And I'm 3 years old, and my favorite book is The Three Billy Goats Gruff. Billy goat pushes the troll off the bridge. [Mom: Jude, how old are you? Are you 3?] I said that mom. [Mom: are you 3?] Yes. [Mom: are you 3?] Yes. [Mom: are you sure?] I'm sure! [Sibling: you're 4, Jude.] And I'm 4 years old.

Child3: Hi, my name is Hudson. I am 5 years old. I live in Texas, America. My favorite book is The Three Bears. The part I like about it is when she sneaks into the mommy bear's chair.

Child4: My name is Joselyn and I'm 6 years old. I live in Wisconsin and my favorite book is Little House in the Big Woods. I like it because there's sisters like me and my sister. And I like it when Pa makes maple syrup and they do the dance.

Child5: My name is Taryn and I love Fly High Guy and I love it because we get to learn about space in it and I love about it because we really get to



learn about space. And I am 4. And I live in Texas.

Child6: [Mom: what's your name?] Alice. [Mom: Alice. And how old are you, Alice?] 3. [Mom: 3. and where do you live?] **[**inaudible**]** [Mom: good. So, what's one of your favorite books to read out loud?] My Sarah and Duck Christmas one. [Mom: your Sarah and Duck Christmas one? What do you like about it?] They get trees and get the lights and put them on. [Mom: when they get trees and get the lights and put them on?] Yes. [Mom: oh, so fun. Thank you, Alice.]

Child7: Hello, my name is Isaiah. I am 10 years old. I am from Edmund, Oklahoma. My favorite book is Lunch Money by Andrew Clements because it involves friendship and the use of money and how to spend it. And, it also shows you how to sell products. And it also shows you how to make comic books.

Child8: Hello, my name is Asa and I'm 7 years old. My favorite book is The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street. And I like it because the kids band together to save their home. [Mom: so, where do you live?] In Tampa, Florida.

Child9: My name is Naomi and I'm 6 years old and I live in Sanford, Florida. My favorite book is Fancy Nancy and I like it because there's lots of fancy things in it.

Child10: My name is **[**inaudible**]** and I live in **[**inaudible**]**, Wisconsin, and my favorite book is Working Hard with a Mighty Dump Truck. And my favorite part in the book is when he's hauling roads and fire trucks come up and I'm 5 years old.

Sarah: Thank you so much, kids. I always love to hear the books that you're enjoying, so thank you for calling those in. Thanks to Dr. Gurian for

another fantastic episode. If you want the Cheat Sheet, Show Notes, links to anything we talked about it, or a complete transcript of today's Show, go to ReadAloudRevival.com/107. And don't forget that today, August 14, 2018 is the last day to join Read-Aloud Revival Premium Membership for this year. We have a fantastic fall line-up including people like the author of The Mysterious Benedict Society, Trenton Lee Stewart. The one and only Kate DiCamillo, some excellent young writers workshops, a whole bunch of good stuff happening. You can get all the details at RARmembership.com and until next time, go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.