

Evolutionary Parenting™ by David Marshak

Copyright 2016: All rights reserved.

CHAPTER ONE

Five Insights

I have five insights to share with you. Each one alone is significant. Weaving these five insights together will give you an inspired understanding of your child's or children's becoming—and profound and specific guidance about how you can help them grow up into the fullness of their gifts and a life of meaning, satisfaction, accomplishment, contribution, and self-realization.

1

You already know the *first insight*. Every conception and birth of a human being is a wedding of flesh and soul.

Citing extensive and detailed research, Jenny Wade explains, “Two distinct sources of consciousness exist before birth and during the perinatal period”¹ (a number of weeks immediately before and after birth). One is tied to the fetus’ development of a physical brain, which shows measurable brain activity around the start of the third trimester of the pregnancy. This consciousness is infantile and primarily sensory. The other consciousness is mature and displays several characteristics of transcendence: “it is a distinct self but has little ego...it registers thoughts, feelings, and actions but is not comprised of, or very attached to, these...it operates in a receptive mode...it is fully mature and insightful.”²

Flesh and soul.

Wade notes that

...at some point during the pregnancy or perinatal period, the transcendent source becomes “stuck” to its body...For the majority of people, this joining coincides with the period when measurable brain wave activity commences. By the second day after birth, the two sources of awareness are bound together.³

The flesh of the newborn is new and very much a beginning of the physical body's unfoldment. The soul is complete at birth.

Each soul has its own purpose. As Michael Meade explains, “Each soul harbors a sense of divine meaning within and expects a call that awakens it to a life aligned with an inner sense of purpose.”⁴

Maria Montessori called this soul quality *horme*, "the vital force that is active within him (the child) and...guides his efforts toward their goal."⁵

Jean Houston calls this same quality the *entelechy*, the dynamic purpose that is coded within each person.

"Entelechy is all about the possibilities encoded in each of us. For example it is the entelechy of an acorn to be an oak tree...It is possible to call upon the entelechy principle within us in such a way that it becomes personal, friendly, and even helpful. This entelechy principle can be expressed symbolically as a god or a guide. We feel its presence as...inspiration or motivation..."⁶

James Hillman also employs the acorn image: in the acorn of the infant is the oak of that person's potential unfoldment. "Each person bears a uniqueness that asks to be lived and that is already present before it can be lived⁷...The soul of each of us...has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth."⁸

You know this deep down in your being, even if you have not put this knowing into so many words before. Your soul has apprehended the soul of your child.

Take a few moments now—close your eyes, be still within, and allow yourself to feel this soul-to-soul connection with your child.

2

The *second insight* follows from the first. Since the soul in its fullness is present from before birth, your child's soul is expressing its knowing through the vehicle of the physical body from the beginning of life. Yes, the soul is constrained by the infant's physical, emotional, and mental limitations—but the will of the infant is manifest from the first day of life outside the womb (and sometimes before). *And the will of the child at every age and stage is the expression of the soul's intent.* Rudolf Steiner calls the soul "the inner teacher." He urges that parents see the child's will not as their opponent but as a source of wisdom about what the child needs in any moment, with which they can ally their parental efforts.

To follow the guidance of the soul, the child needs freedom. As TsoIagiu M. A. RuizRazo, a Cherokee elder, explains, "Since connections with the inner spirit come alive only in a state of freedom, let her have as much freedom as possible during this time."⁹ But children, who are full in soul but immature in body, heart, and mind, also need protection and boundaries that are appropriate to their individual nature and level of unfoldment.

So, the *second insight* is that the primary work of soul-informed parenting is gaining the wisdom and emotional maturity to give your child as much freedom as possible to live out her inner teacher's guidance while providing your child with safety and individually-appropriate boundaries.

Fortunately this work is not about perfection. Parental errors in judgment are inevitable, as are emotional responses that are too strong or misdirected. *The key is that you continue to strive to give these qualities of freedom with appropriate boundaries to your child. If this is your goal, you will no doubt succeed in this sufficiently to provide your child with the gift of unfolding into her/his potentials.*

Close your eyes now and feel this pattern within your heart: freedom within appropriate limits, safe and supportive boundaries.

3

The **third insight** follows from the second. To work at giving your child freedom with safety, you will inevitably have to grow yourself—emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Even with all of the demands of parenting, family life, and economic well-being, the more that you choose to participate in activities that will help you to grow, the better you'll be able to give your child what his or her soul needs.

This is not an option or a luxury. As you likely already know, parenting is its own spiritual path. Either you choose to embrace its challenges with consciousness and intention and see it as an organic curriculum for working with your own limitations and healing your own wounding—or you will be stuck re-enacting your own wounds in your children's lives.

All of us as parents have said, "I would never say that to my child the way my mother/father said it to me." And we have all heard the voices of our parents rushing out from between our own lips. When we act in this manner, the key is not to chastise or punish ourselves—but to acknowledge the pattern, explore its roots, and seek to release or transform it.

Perfection in parenting is not attainable. But when we consciously choose to experience parenting as a spiritual path and seek to learn and grow ourselves on that path, we do. It's the intent and the effort that matter. One excellent guide for this journey is the book *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn (Hyperion, 1997).

Close your eyes, bring stillness within, and allow yourself to see or feel your own path of parenting now.

4

The *fourth insight* is that there is information available to you now about the trajectory through which human beings unfold and grow in childhood and youth. Yes, each child is unique in the most literal sense of that word. In concert with that uniqueness, the vast majority of children and youth unfold and grow through similar patterns of unfoldment, through similar trajectories of growth. But each individual grows in his or her own way, at his or her own rate.

Some of these patterns of human unfoldment and development have been charted by psychologists during the past century. A more holistic description of human unfoldment was articulated by three spiritual teachers—Rudolf Steiner, Aurobindo Ghose, and Inayat Khan—during the second decade of the 20th century. This holistic description includes body, heart, mind, and soul—and the complex relationships among these systems of the human being. You can learn more about this “common vision” of human unfoldment in Chapter Two.

5

The *fifth insight* is that *the very best parenting that you can provide for your children will also make a significant contribution to the evolution of human consciousness.*

Many people now understand that we human beings need to evolve or we may well perish from our own genius run amuck. For an increasing number of people, this perception is the new *myth* of our increasingly globalized world. *Evolution is not something happening out there, somewhere. We are an integral part of it. Our capacity for growth in consciousness is the leading edge of the evolutionary process on the planet right now.*

Myth is a funny word. In common usage it has come to mean a story that is fundamentally untrue, as in “that’s just a myth, it’s not real.” But the deeper meaning of the word, as noted in Wikipedia, is “a sacred narrative in the sense that it contributes to systems of thought and values, and that people attach religious or spiritual significance to it.” So a myth is a story that human beings use to explain and give meaning to their lives.

For example, the myth of the “modern era,” beginning with the birth of modern science in 17th century Europe, is that the problems of human life can be solved through the development of science and technology. What we’ve seen in recent decades is the slow dissolution of this myth for many people in so-called developed societies. We have come to see that while science and technology continue to be the fruits of human genius that have provided us with enormous benefits, both materially and philosophically, science and technology cannot solve many key human problems, particularly problems that deal with values and ethics. In addition, new technologies always come with costs as well as benefits, particularly if we lack the foresight to see the whole system of a new technology’s implementation.

The myth of science is still powerful in our times. But a new myth that is only beginning to emerge from its scientific womb is the myth of evolution. Charles Darwin

and Alfred Russel Wallace both published writings that introduced biological evolution to modern societies in 1859. Early in the 20th century Rudolf Steiner, Aurobindo Ghose, and Inayat Khan placed the biological evolution of life within a larger context, explaining that biological evolution was one stream in a larger reality of spiritual evolution. Aurobindo in particular focused on the evolution of human beings as a key element in this process.

A few decades later Teilhard de Chardin and Jean Gebser also wrote about the evolution of human consciousness, in Gebser's terms, from archaic consciousness, to magical, to mythical, to mental, to integral. While Gebser came to his knowing mostly intuitively, in mid 20th century Clare Graves used the tools of social science to develop what has become known as the Spiral Dynamics model of the evolution of human consciousness. Graves' model was articulated and popularized by Don Beck and Chris Cowan and then Ken Wilber and Steve McIntosh in more recent years. It was based on data collected from a wide range of individuals from all over the world and added detail to Gebser's model with a somewhat different listing of stages: archaic, tribal/magical, warrior, traditional, modernist, post-modern, integral.¹⁰

We all move up and down the spiral of consciousness as we go through our daily lives, but each person has a central position, an anchor stance, a consciousness core at any given moment in her/his life. Since you are reading this book, it's most likely that your core consciousness is either post-modern or integral.

Someone with a traditional core consciousness would reject the insights in this book as heretical to her or his religious beliefs. Someone with a modernist core consciousness would be likely to view this book's claims as fantasy or delusion.

Steve McIntosh in the book *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution* characterizes post-modern consciousness with the following qualities and values: egalitarian, compassionate and inclusive, worldcentric morality, personal growth of the whole person, ecological, celebration of the feminine, and renewed spiritual freedom and creativity.¹¹ Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson use the term "cultural creatives"¹² to identify post-modern consciousness, drawing on a large scale social science investigation to discover that about 25% of adults in the United States and Canada and a somewhat higher percentage in western Europe (Great Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland) hold "cultural creative values." Ray and Anderson define these as follows: ecological sustainability, beyond environmentalism; globalism; feminism, women's issues, relationships, family; altruism, self-actualization, alternative health care, spirituality, and spiritual psychology, and well-developed social conscience and social optimism.

The next step up the evolutionary spiral is integral consciousness. McIntosh characterizes integral consciousness with the following qualities and values: compassion for and appreciation of all previous stages in the evolution of human consciousness, a sense of personal responsibility for the problems of the world, appreciation of the sometimes paradoxical qualities of truth, aspiration for the harmonization of science and religion, and seeing spirituality in evolution.⁹

Integral consciousness supports many of the same values as does post-modern consciousness. But one key difference is that while people whose core is post-modern consciousness often polarize off people whose core is traditional or modernist, viewing them as ignorant or foolish or corrupt, integral consciousness provides the awareness that

every stage in the spiral of human evolution is necessary to our unfoldment—and that every stage offers both positive and negative qualities.

Consider “fundamentalist religion.” Many people from a post-modern consciousness core react with hostility to fundamentalist religion and see its believers as people who are choosing not to use their reason. Yet in the evolution of human consciousness, traditional consciousness—what we now call fundamentalist religion—was an enormous evolutionary step upward in its origins. For the first time rulers with power over the ruled were constrained by laws; for the first time people began to have rights that were protected with power.

Post-modernists or cultural creatives also often polarize off modernist consciousness. They see everyday in their lives how materialism, an unconstrained search for new technological powers, and ecological irresponsibility seem to be as central to modernist consciousness as its immense capacity for invention. So they blame science and technology for these failings. Yet science and technology also have given us enormous values and powerful tools on which most cultural creatives rely in their daily lives: comfort, safety, longevity, food and shelter, transportation, communications technologies, entertainment, and so on.

The gift of integral consciousness is the capacity it offers to perceive and act in new ways in the world. McIntosh again:

Integral consciousness is a way of seeing things -- a perspective that arises from a new understanding of how evolution really works. Not just biological evolution, but the evolution of human awareness and human history. Integral consciousness comes about as people use the insights of integral philosophy to recognize how values and worldviews have arisen in sequential stages throughout history, and how these stages of development are alive today within the mind of each person.¹³

When you read the previous paragraphs about spiral dynamics, do you experience a negative or hostile emotional response? It’s not unusual for people whose core consciousness is post-modern to experience a resentment of hierarchy. We’ve often experienced hierarchy as hurtful or oppressive, because in our times hierarchies often manifest in those ways both from traditional and modern consciousness sources: for example, traditional religions, modernist schools, and “democratic” governments that fail to embody their ideals. One liberating quality of post-modern consciousness is its rejection of oppressive hierarchies and its insistence on both equality and equity.

But some hierarchies are not oppressive. They are just the way that the universe works. Biological evolution has a hierarchical quality in that each succeeding form is more complex than its predecessor. Multi-celled organisms are more complex than single-celled ones. Animals are more complex than plants. Homo sapiens is more complex than chickens.

This same progression of increasing complexity describes the evolution of human consciousness. It’s not that people who have a more evolved core of consciousness are more valuable. Rather it is that they have more complexity of perception and conception, a greater capacity for understanding the many complex systems within which we live, and a larger range of choices about how they can act in their lives.

Perhaps the most creative gift of integral consciousness is that it gives people the

capacity to perceive the whole system of any particular phenomenon or situation and to act from that perception in ways that focus on healing and improving, not on blaming or finding fault. This enlargement of capacity leads to a deepening of self knowledge and an enhancement of wisdom.

We have come to a time of crisis in the evolution of humanity. This is global warming/climate change. It is an enormously dangerous phenomenon, because it may disrupt and damage the life support systems of many or most of the life forms on the planet.

But it is also a perfectly framed evolutionary crisis in that it is global and universal in its potential impact—and only fools will seek to use their wealth and power personally to avoid its calamities (as some of the wealthy and powerful surely will). We know that evolution is often provoked by crisis, that crisis can be a catalyst to the development of next steps in evolutionary unfoldment. We may not have chosen consciously to create the crisis of global warming, but it is indisputably here and, most likely, of our own making. If we hope to mitigate its impacts and respond to these in creative and life-affirming ways, we will need as many people on the planet as possible acting from a core of integral consciousness.

We need to evolve as a species to survive and thrive. Because we are aware of the evolutionary process now, we can choose to participate consciously, with clear intent.

There are two paths open to us for evolutionary participation. One is our own psychological and spiritual growth work, what we do as adults to become more integral, to become more whole. Judith Blackstone explains, “Personal evolution is a growing communion with this fundamental, unified ground of life. It is literally an expansion of our personal consciousness in space.”¹⁴

Personal evolution is a process of moving towards increased integration of one’s parts. Blackstone continues,

A person is integrated when there is optimal interaction between all the vibratory levels of her or his organism. This means that, without adjustment, one is aware of one’s entire being all at once. The lack of fragmentation between the various parts of ourselves is what is known as wholeness.¹⁵

Anyone who is aware of humanity’s need to evolve surely must bring her or his will and talents to this personal work. But the means through which adults can evolve from post-modern to integral consciousness—and beyond—is not the focus of this book.

This book is about the second path, which may be even more important than the first. This is the path of parenting.

Blackstone again: “Basically we are each the vessel and the vehicle of the essential motion of evolution.”¹⁶ Each human being literally embodies the evolutionary potential of the species. *So every parent who knows this knows that her or his parenting can make a contribution to the evolution of humanity.*

This book describes how a number of parents have begun this work in recent years. You’ll hear directly from these parents about their lives, their challenges and struggles and their accomplishments and satisfactions, their hardships and their joys. You’ll also hear from a number of their young adult children who have been nurtured by the inspiration of evolutionary parenting.

Evolutionary parenting opens the door so children and teens, guided by their inner teachers and nurtured by their parents, can unfold toward their fullness of potential. The young adults you'll meet in this book all have accessed post-modern consciousness in their teens, and several have already moved on into integral consciousness.

*Close your eyes now, still your body, and bring this phrase—**evolutionary parenting**—into your awareness. Let yourself sit with these words for a bit and see what comes up into your awareness.*

Notes

1. Jenny Wade (1996). *Changes of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Page 58.
2. Ibid. Page 54.
3. Ibid. Page 53.
4. Michael Meade (2008). *The World behind the World: Living at the Ends of Time*. Seattle: Greenfire Press. Pages 6-7.
5. Maria Montessori (1995). *The Absorbent Mind*. New York: Henry Holt and Co. Page 83.
6. Jean Houston (1992). *The Hero and the Goddess: The Odyssey As Mystery And Initiation*. New York: Ballantine Books. Page 62.
7. James Hillman (1996). *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*. New York: Random House. Page 6.
8. Ibid. Page 8.
9. Tsolagiu M. A. RuizRazo (2004). *Tomorrow's Children: A Cherokee Elder's Guide To Parenting*. New Tazewell, TN: World Edition USA. Page 75.
10. These are the terms employed by Steve McIntosh in *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2007). Don Beck and Christopher Cowan use the following terms for the same progression of stages of consciousness in *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership, and Change : Exploring the New Science of Memetics* (Boston: Blackwell Publishers, 1996):

Archaic-instinctive—survivalistic/automatic/reflexological
Animistic-tribalistic magical-animistic
Egocentric-exploitive power gods/dominionist
Absolutistic-obedience mythic order—purposeful/authoritarian
Multiplistic-achieivist scientific/strategic
Relativistic-personalistic—communitarian/egalitarian
Systemic-integrative

11. Steve McIntosh (2007). *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2007. Page 56.
12. Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson (2000). *The Cultural Creatives. How 50 Million People Are Changing the World*. New York: Harmony Books.
13. Op cit. McIntosh. Page 84.
14. Judith Blackstone (1991). *The Subtle Self: Personal Growth and Spiritual Practice*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books. Page 59.
15. Ibid. Pages 56-57.
16. Ibid. Page 39.