

**PARENTING**

**YOUR WAY**

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# **PARENTING**

## **YOUR WAY**

**From Tough Love to Enough Love**

**Kaeli Van Regan**

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(typesetting instruction: indent) Real people inspired all the cases reported in this book, but some of the names and identifying details have been changed to protect the identity and confidentiality of each person and their family. Any stories shared regarding the author, or her family, have not been changed and are recounted from the best recollection possible.

I dedicate this book to Steph, Mathéo, Padmé, and Darrah.  
Your unconditional love gives me the strength to follow  
my heart.



# TESTIMONIALS

*In this book, Kaeli Van Regan invites us to take a close look at what we've been taught, accept only what fits, and use our inherent wisdom to fill in the missing pieces. She urges us to open our hearts as well as our minds, and recognize that, while we may not have the answers, our options are unlimited.*

**Dr. Gerry Fewster**

**Author of *Don't Let Your Kids be Normal***

*Parenting is one of the most exceptional journeys of all. In her informative and heartfelt book Kaeli Van Regan brings the reader a wealth of information gained from her own journey, and that of the many parents and parenting experts that she interviewed. Woven through these different stories and perspectives common themes begin to emerge. At the heart of this book is a message for every parent – if you lead with love you cannot go wrong! It is through love that we will lead our children to compassion, growth and the emergence of their true and authentic self. This book builds awareness while reminding parents that they need to take care of themselves in order to take care of their children. This refreshing and inspiring book will provide the reader with the information and inspiration to truly enjoy their journey while continuing to launch their children on their own life journey.*

**Alyson Jones, MA, RCC, Parent, Child and Family Therapist, Parent Educator, Alyson Jones & Associates**

**Author of *M.O.R.E A New Philosophy of Exceptional Living***



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# FOREWORD

In the fifty years I've spent working with 'troubled' children and their families I've read and reviewed more books on parenting than I care to remember - I've even published a couple myself. Many were written by psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers dispensing remedies for popular problems. Others offered broad prescriptions designed to prevent such problems from occurring.

If such texts, from well-meaning experts, helped Bill and Mary Grimshaw to deal with their promiscuous daughter or recalcitrant son, so be it. But these quick-fixes and divergent theories have done little to assist us in addressing the most pressing parenting challenge of all - how to prepare our children to live in a fearful world of increasing fragmentation and unpredictability. To some extent, this has always been the case but now, thanks to our burgeoning global communication networks, the evidence of our disarray is inescapable. From terrorism to climate change, we can no longer look the other way, while hiding behind the illusions and rituals of our daily lives.

As children, few of us were raised to cope with this intimidating level of awareness. We were taught to live by the rules and make our way in an orderly world that would reward our efforts and respond to our aspirations. As adults, we have witnessed the steady degradation of this security blanket, from the waning of traditional family values to the crumbling of the structures that sustained them. As parents, we know that what we learned from our parents no longer works and the prescriptions dispensed by the experts are more likely to contribute to the problems than resolve them. So we are left wondering what we can do to avoid passing our confusion on to those who will inherit our

dubious legacy. The one thing we do know is that we can't pass on what we ourselves don't have.

In this book, Kaeli Van Regan invites us to take a close look at what we've been taught, accept only what fits, and use our inherent wisdom to fill in the missing pieces. She urges us to open our hearts as well as our minds, and recognize that, while we may not have the answers, our options are unlimited. When we become open and curious, rather than fearful and defended, we open the same doors for our children. We pave the way for them to explore their own inner resources, to ask questions without being bound by our answers and to be seen and heard for who they really are - unique, purposeful and valued human beings who have what it takes to create their own lives in their own way. Then, perhaps, we can finally erase the draconian belief that kids are the problem. From this perspective, they are the potential solution. Then, as self-responsible adults we can work with our children in creating a more conscious, caring, compassionate and connected world.

Of course there will be those who chose to dismiss this message as just another variation of "permissive parenting" - a misguided notion that if we back-off and let kids do whatever they want, all will be well. Nothing could be further from the 'truth'. What the author suggests calls for is a conscious, caring and disciplined response to the developmental needs of children. It's not about backing-off it's about getting close. Nor is it about unbridled indulgence, it's about creating a protective space in which children can become self responsible by learning what works and what doesn't. It's no longer about training them to fit into the world, it's about giving them opportunities to find the resources and the courage to change it.

This might seem very different from what most of us were taught to believe about the parent-child relationship and, of

course it is. We have no models to emulate, no leaders to follow and no experts to spell it out. Kaeli Van Regan makes no claim to being an expert, but don't let that deflect you. With wisdom, insight and refreshing humility, she reminds us that, deep down, we already have the necessary knowledge and resources to reconnect with ourselves, each other and our children. A mother doesn't have to be taught how to connect with her newborn baby anymore than a father needs to be taught how to relate to the insecurities of his adolescent son. What we really need is to believe what we know and step confidently into the breach. We cannot hope to empower our children unless we are willing to empower ourselves.

But this immensely readable book is not simply a list of empty exhortations. Drawing from her own personal experience and the comments of thoughtful parents, Kaeli provides us with a framework for "conscious parenting", blending the key principles of awareness, curiosity, presence within a crucible of unconditional love. Rather than tell us what to do, she triggers and stimulates our awareness with real life examples and activities. The traditional design in which children are expected to perform to the agendas of their parents is replaced by one in which unique human beings learn from one another while carving out their own separate pathways along the developmental highway.

When all is said and done, the object is not to strive toward specific outcomes but to consider parenting as a shared opportunity for mutual growth. Stay with the process and the outcomes will unfold as they should. So why not enjoy the journey and change the world along the way? Sounds good to me.

Gerry Fewster



# INTRODUCTION

This book pulls together themes and knowledge gathered from a lifetime's worth of my own work plus twenty-seven interviews with parents, parenting coaches, and experts. I have been learning ways to support and care for children since I was a girl; I have used this knowledge as a parent of three to guide my children into teenagehood. I want to share what I know from working as a Child and Youth Worker, a children's dance teacher, a Life Coach, and a leadership facilitator. I bring together all my knowledge and experience with the expertise, insights, and highlights from a supportive community of conscious parents to provide a strong foundation and support for parents.

This book is an exploration of many topics and can be read in any order. You can move through it chronologically or dip into any area that interests you. It is meant to fit into your schedule and grow with you.

I wrote this book because I really want my three children to be brimming with love, joy, and peace. I want them to be overflowing with a sense of fullness knowing that they are enough. I want them to know that they can turn to themselves to find love, support, and happiness. I want everything for them.

This book is so important to me because I have found that everything is already within and I continue to uncover my own wonders. While growing up I did not trust myself. I often felt worried that I wasn't doing things correctly and felt that I wasn't quite right. I was worried about who I was going to be rather than enjoying who I was. This really affected how I made my way in the world. I was often uncertain and lacked confidence. I held back from sharing my gifts and talents and from being myself.

I am glad for the growth I have experienced and for still

having a chance to bring more freedom and happiness into my life. I would like my children to enjoy who they are throughout their whole lives. I don't want them to put their happiness on hold for something that may or may not come later. I would like them to experience joy even through the challenges. Today.

I think that parents can help bring all this to their children by deepening their relationship with themselves. This outlook is the foundation of everything put forth in this book. Once you value yourself you gain the ability to pass this on. When you understand the role you play in passing it on, you will not need a parenting book: your inner guidance will lead you.

You may find yourself reading this book for many reasons. If you are trying to parent while raising your children in mind, body, and spirit, you will find the insights and tools helpful. One reason for reading this book is to learn ideas for new ways of relating to your children that are really valuable to your children today. The world is a changing place and as this evolution takes place it is reasonable to think that the way you raise your children will be more relevant as it changes too.

You may be coming to this book for support. Sometimes you may not parent in the way you want to. This is true for everyone. This book has gathered thoughts from many parents who know that they don't always parent the way they would like but enjoy the process of striving to improve. As a parent leading change in this world, I find there are examples of different ways to parent consciously but they are not necessarily easy to come across. This can lead to uncertainty. Be assured that as you step into the role of the conscious parent you are freeing yourself from fear and giving permission to other parents to do the same.

As I completed one interview and the next, I began to feel a very real connection with other parents. As I spoke with one

parent who was thinking about allowing their children to be themselves, it led me to another resource or another parent and so on. I began to get a sense that the process could go on forever. This is the truth behind *Parenting Your Way*. Each parent I spoke with was committed to themselves and to making a difference in the lives of their children through a conscious way of living and parenting. The beauty was that the parents were letting go of having all the answers and of being judgmental of other parents. They were ready to share in an experience. The experience that is being shared is one of expansion and a way to grow if your desire is to parent with love.

You may be hoping to receive some ideas about how to develop practices for parenting. I have included some personal stories to show how the concepts play out in life. Through the awareness activities you will also find practical tips and tools to help in the development of your own skills and you will be led toward trusting your own insights. The exploration of a range of ideas in this book will give you strength to follow your own knowing and allow your own thoughts to come together.

Another reason you may come to this book is your hope that when children learn messages of love and safety in their early years they will be able to experience more happiness and fulfillment throughout their lives. There are many messages about self-understanding that could have helped me move through life with a greater personal awareness had I learned them earlier on. These are messages that can help your children right now.

Maybe you are turning to this book to find an expert opinion and if so you have also come to the right place, because you are an expert in your own selfhood and in finding the answers that are true for you. The quality of ideas that are being imparted by other parents will hopefully support you so that you can have faith in your own expertise.

If you have ever had a gut feeling, already been exploring alternatives, or ever felt the need to justify the way you choose to parent, I suggest that you already know that it is important to move from the tough love of the past to the enough love of the present. It is time to open up the conversation so that your parenting can reflect your intuition.

You may or may not agree with some of the concepts explored in this book and that is great. I hope that what you come across gives you a chance to question and reflect. My greatest desire is that you find something among these words that will bring more love into your relationship with your child and allow your child to lead his life through love. Instead of turning to other experts you are being asked to listen to what your children want and need. As you engage with the information in this book the ideals presented can grow in popularity, allowing methods that you don't get to see as often in society to become more visible.

Awareness and reflection can teach you lessons about parenting from both sides of the coin. Looking introspectively can give you many insights. It can also help you to parent with a peaceful feeling. Learn from yourself and the advice you give yourself. Trust it and follow it. Parenting, like life, is a work in progress and will unfold.

“We take responsibility for the space between us by crossing the bridge to the world of the other and bringing our full presence to the other side.... It is in being with each other that our essence becomes revealed,” Hedy Schleifer (TED Talks).