

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Children's Role in Helping Us Grow

A SINGLE MOM OF TWO BOYS told me about a situation that surprised her because she suddenly felt inexplicably sad. It occurred when she drove her son to pick up a new teammate for a game. She had never seen such a palatial Lafayette home. Although she had seen many nice homes, she was aware for the first time that being around affluence made her feel “less than,” a response her parents might have had to wealthy people.

As her son trotted up to the door, she tried to get a deeper sense of her reactions and realized that she also felt bad that she couldn't provide her sons with a luxurious house like this, a home where they could each have a spacious room. At her small rental home, her sons shared a room. The process reminded her what she really values in life—her strong connections with her boys. She said, “I also thought about other boys on the team who live in bad neighborhoods in Oakland and remembered, as I have so many times, the importance of gratitude.”

From my perspective, the most important part of this situation is this mother's ability to tune in to her deeper feelings and values. Without that self-awareness, she might discourage her son from having his new teammate over to their more modest home, or unconsciously do something that would make her son feel inferior.

The importance of parents reflecting on subconscious emotions so that they don't pass them on to their children is the subject of an immensely popular new book, *The Conscious Parent: Transforming Ourselves, Empowering Our Children*, by Dr. Shefali Tsabary. With an introduction by the Dalai Lama and acclaim from leaders in the field of mindfulness like Eckhart Tolle and Marianne Williamson, the book has received international attention.

Dr. Tsabary's premise is that children provide mirrors to parents' subconscious feelings, allowing them to grow and transform. One of the subjects the author focuses on is the tendency in our culture to equate money with success, showering children with material possessions instead of building their sense of self.

Money and its relevance to power and status are not always comfortable subjects for parents to think about in relation to their children's lives and to their own, especially in our county, where children from highly affluent families go to school with families who are struggling or barely getting by financially. Having been a single parent myself, I appreciated the brave mom in the story above for being willing to share her reflection process.

When we take time to examine our feelings, we free ourselves from the patterns that have been passed down to us for generations. Dr. Tsabary's book awakens us to the fact that we are living in a new, more conscious age, when we can recognize our children's role in awakening our desire to grow.

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