

Excerpt from *Nurturing Essence*

Why?

If your first child were born today, you have about three years to prepare yourself for the experience of *Why?* Three-year-olds are an insatiable embodiment of curiosity, whose endless demand and mantra is: Why? They are relentless in their pursuit of the infinite answers to this simple question.

There's no time to waste! You need to start preparing right now. But wait, hold on! Before you get to *Why?*, there are the *Terrible Twos*. And you can never do enough to prepare yourself for them!

These stages in childhood development are just two of the tsunamis heading your way as parents. And, like tsunamis, no amount of preparation will prepare you for the actual *lived experience*. But, just like preparing for a tsunami, an early warning system can save lives. For soon-to-be parents, our hope is that this book will help to accomplish that, at least metaphorically.

Today's body of wisdom on childhood development can help prepare and forewarn you for one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences possible for human beings—parenting.

Becoming a parent is relatively easy for most human beings. Parenting, on the other hand, is a more challenging endeavor. Parenting is full-throttle life. Even when you're taking a break, there is no off switch. Your mothering, or fathering, brain and instincts are in a state of constant vigilance. General knowledge and an overview of childhood development are like preparing for a tsunami, earthquake, or power grid failure by having an emergency survival kit handy. It's not optimal to wait for an emergency and get a kit.

Believe it or not, human beings are not born as adults. We undergo a developmental process that involves not only physical growth but also brain and mind development, along with the expansion of our neural network and associated processes, ultimately leading to the development of a *sense of self*.

When we're born, we have no sense of self. We have not yet developed the capacities needed for a sense of self. And yet, many parents interact with their newborns and young children as if the child is a self with adult resources, such as fully functional and discriminated multi-modal perception and self-reflective cognition.

It is this insight and wisdom into the developmental process of the sense of self where the treasure lies for prospective parents. However, while amazing and valuable, knowledge of the developmental process can be even more revelatory and supportive when combined with an understanding of *essence*. Essence is what we are at our core. Essence exists before the developmental process, during the developmental process, and is that which *gets lost* to consciousness because of the developmental process.

We enter the developmental process as essence and exit it as an ego/personality with little conscious awareness of our essential nature. We are lost to ourselves while we spend our lives seeking what was lost—our authentic self, our essence.

Very little, if anything, is done in the first 6 to 7 years of life to help the child recognize and maintain awareness of their essential nature because few parents have an experiential understanding of essence and its relationship to psychological development.

*From the problem, you can't see the solution.
But from the solution, the problem is apparent.*

This is what this book is about.

Introduction

Parenting as Presence, Not Perfection

Becoming a parent can feel like being handed the lead role in a play for which you've never seen the script. One moment, you're anticipating a child's arrival; the next, you're in the thick of something raw, beautiful, disorienting, and all-consuming. There are books, of course, and advice from every direction. But nothing prepares you for the real, lived experience of parenting: a daily invitation to show up, again and again, often without knowing how.

This book is not a manual. It's not a list of parenting strategies or best practices. *Nurturing Essence* is something different. It's a way of seeing your child, yourself, and the sacred unfolding that happens between you. It's about understanding development not just through milestones and behavior, but through the deeper movements of the soul.

In the early years of life, your child is building a sense of self. But they're also bringing something in with them, something essential, unconditioned, already whole. Most parenting approaches focus on shaping behavior or guiding development. This book asks a different question: *How do we support our child's growth without losing touch with what was never missing to begin with?*

We draw here from the great developmental theorists—Piaget, Erikson, Bowlby, Mahler, Vygotsky, and others—each offering insight into how the child's mind, emotions, and relationships take shape. However, we also include the often-overlooked dimension of essence—the quiet presence, joy, strength, and will that reside in each child before their personality develops.

When you understand both the development and essence of your child, you begin to see them not just as someone to shape or guide but as a being to meet. A mystery to welcome. A soul finding its way into this world, through your love, your attunement, and your willingness to be changed in the process.

Parenting is not about getting it right. It's about becoming more real. As your child grows, so do you—not by mastering techniques but by learning to be present in the unknown.

This book is for those who sense that there's more to parenting than surviving the early years. It's for those who want to understand not just what's happening on the outside, but what's unfolding on the inside of your child, and of you. May it serve as a mirror, a compass, and a companion on this sacred path.