



HOW I PARENT

How I Parent

by **Bob Collier**

Publisher of the Parental Intelligence Newsletter
www.parental-intelligence.com

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With Thanks

To Mary, my life partner of more than thirty years and my parenting partner for more than twenty.

To Bronnie and Pat, our two wonderful children, who are a joy and an inspiration.

Thank you for everything you have added to my life.

May the three of you be blessed in all that you do.

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Introduction

Welcome to *How I Parent*.

As the Publisher of the *Parental Intelligence Newsletter*, it has been my great pleasure to pass on to my readers, since August 2002, a cornucopia of excellent ideas about parenting, and about related subjects such as education and personal development.

It has been a privilege and a joy for me to learn so much myself from some of the 'brightest minds in the business' and to be able to share what I've learned with others.

This book, however, represents something I want to share with you that is very much my own.

I was motivated to write this book as an 'extra' to my newsletter in order to demonstrate that any ordinary person with a desire to bring out the best in their children and in themselves and who is willing to 'risk the unusual' can produce truly remarkable results.

I am such a person. I'm an 'ordinary bloke'. But, for most of my experience of parenthood I've had the good fortune to be able to do some very out of the ordinary things with 'my life as a dad'.

In this short book, you will discover some unusual and little known ideas about children (and ourselves) that I discovered myself more than twenty years ago, just before I became a parent with the birth of my first child, my daughter Bronwyn.

These ideas literally *changed my perception of reality!*

They were first tested and proven in the five years I was my now grown up daughter's full-time at-home parent from when she was a seven month old baby until she started school. The results they produced were astonishing – and more than that, they were achieved *with less effort than most parents make to get results they don't like!*

The ideas you'll be reading about in this book totally transformed my expectation of what having a child would be like. They've been the basis of my entire parenting philosophy from that wonderful beginning with my baby daughter and throughout a quarter of a century consistently generated *one positive experience after another* in my relationships with both of my now two wonderful children.

My wife, Mary - the mother of my children - is, I have to say, just as much an untypical parent as I am, in her own way. And, between us, we've created a particular family lifestyle over the years, for ourselves and our children, that has worked for us very well indeed.

We've never placed any limits on anything our children have wanted to do. Our children have never had a timeout or experienced a loss of "privileges" (whatever *that* means), they've never been grounded or subjected to a curfew. In fact, they've never been 'disciplined' in any way, shape or form.

They've simply been encouraged to live their lives.

As a result, Mary and I have *enjoyed* our experience of parenthood and, amongst all the *pleasure and delight*, have had none of the difficulties with our children's behaviour that parents are often led to believe are an inevitable part of 'having kids'.

The truth is, the supposedly ‘normal’ problems associated with “raising children” are by no means inevitable. Most have been entirely absent from my own experience.

I invite you now to discover the *fundamental principles of human potential* that have been the heart and soul of my happiness and success as a parent and stay-at-home dad throughout more than twenty years. In my experience, they underlie *everything that really works* to make parenting our children a more positive experience for everyone involved.

You will find this book is a very quick read.

That’s because it focuses on only a few crucial understandings from which *all the details* of my day to day parenting activities have emerged of their own accord - activities that have, for the most part, been both improvisational and idiosyncratic. And difficult to describe to anyone not physically present.

So, please remember as you read this book that it’s NOT a book of parenting advice.

This book is, start to finish, about how I have successfully parented and continue to parent my own children - ‘how I parent’. Just like it says on the cover. You will need to *judge for yourself* what is useful to you and how exactly whatever you might learn from this book can be adapted to your own unique and personal way of doing things.

I am not you, and I have no idea what is best for you.

I am not your children. I am not your circumstances.

And I don't give parenting advice.

Actually, I don't really *do* 'parenting'. Not as most people would recognise it anyway, and never have done.

What I do is called 'personal development'. I work on myself and I apply what I learn from that to my relationships with my children. That's how it has been ever since I became a parent in 1985. And I'm very happy with what that particular attitude of mind has achieved.

I'm confident you will find something in *How I Parent* that will make a *positive* difference to your life and – through you – to the lives of your children.

With my best wishes for your happiness and success,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Collier'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Bob Collier
Publisher of the Parental Intelligence Newsletter
www.parental-intelligence.com

The Purpose of Life

On the Fourth of July 1985, in the birth centre at the Royal Women's Hospital in Sydney, Australia - in the presence only of a midwife, her own mother, and her husband (that's me!) and with soft music playing in the background - my wife Mary gave birth in the way that nature intended to our daughter Bronwyn.

It was official. I was a daddy!

And there at the outset of parenthood, I started to understand that being alive is about *growing*. You couldn't have one without the other.

"A seed, dropped into the ground, springs into activity, and in the act of living produces a hundred more seeds; life, by living, multiplies itself. It is forever becoming more. It must do so, if it continues to be at all.

Intelligence is under this same necessity for continuous increase. Every thought we think makes it necessary for us to think another thought; consciousness is continually expanding. Every fact we learn leads us to the learning of another fact; knowledge is continually increasing. Every talent we cultivate brings to the mind the desire to cultivate another talent; we are subject to the urge of life, seeking expression, which ever drives us on to know more, to do more, and to be more."

The purpose of life is *more* life. That's why we have children in the first place.

It's our biology.

When our babies are born, we don't need to persuade them that they must breathe oxygen to survive. We don't have to convince them that they must eat, drink and sleep in order to thrive. Nor that they must learn how to walk in order to explore their world, or learn how to talk in order to communicate with other members of the society in which they find themselves.

They know.

Our children are born with the desire inherent within them to become all that they are capable of being. Just as the tiny acorn has within itself the impulse to become a mighty oak tree.

We don't have to impose a desire for success onto our children by telling them how to think, or how to act, where they should go and what they should do. The desire for success is already there.

We don't have to 'train' our children to be motivated. They already are.

Our children are born to grow. Physically, emotionally, intellectually, and in every other way.

There are biological processes within ourselves and natural processes in the world at large that support this reality. Even when we don't understand them. Or aren't even aware of them.

One day, all being well, our babies will be adults.

Grown ups.

We can't escape that. It's meant to be.

As parents, we have one very simple decision to make. Wherever we are in our experience of parenthood.

Do we want our children to be happy and successful adults?

Are we *willing* to encourage, facilitate and support our children's growth? Whatever it takes.

This is what I call *love*.

To love our children is really *all* that Life asks of us.

One single commitment that will guide *everything*.

Self-Authority

As our children grow up, they will inevitably develop a strong ‘social self’ and will gradually modify their behaviour in order that they can live successfully in the society into which they have been born and in the world at large.

Even so, their biological nature remains always predominant.

Think of trying to persuade a child to sit still through an important social occasion of some kind when they’re bursting to go to the toilet, for example, and you’ll know exactly what I mean. That particular dilemma won’t resolve itself in favour of sitting still even when our children are adults!

Nor will many others of a similar kind.

We need to be careful, then, to begin with, *not* to have unreasonable expectations of our children for our convenience or the convenience of others.

Nonetheless, helping our children to adapt their biological needs to the *reasonable* requirements of the society into which they have been born may well, of course, be a necessary and important part of the process of growing up.

But, in my experience, there are ways to do that and there are ways *not* to do it.

Whenever even reasonable sociological expectations are in conflict with a child’s biological needs and the child is unwilling or unready to

adapt to the requirements of a particular situation, I've found, myself, that we serve Life best by giving priority to the biological.

As much as I possibly can, I've always allowed my children to eat when they're hungry, drink when they're thirsty, sleep when they're tired, work when they want to work and play when they want to play.

And I've encouraged them to make their *own* choices about anything and everything that affects their personal life experience without deference to the opinion of others. Yes, even *my* opinion!

I might suggest. I might recommend. I might advise.

And I might not.

Beyond the obvious fundamentals, we can never truly know what's best for another human being, any more than another human being - no matter how wise and experienced - who is *not us* can possibly know *our* most desirable course of action if we're to get what *we* really want.

We are *all* unique individuals with a unique perception of reality.

We *all* have an understanding of ourselves, the world we live in and the people we encounter in our world that generates in our minds highly *personalised* ideas about what we need to do to be happy and successful.

This is as true for our children as it is for us.

Like us, they are at the centre of their universe and they have a perception of reality that is all their own; and, like us, they are the servants of their biology. *They want what they want* - regardless of whether or not anybody else approves of it, accepts it or even takes any notice of it.

This is what I call their “self-authority”.

In all my years of parenthood, no single factor has contributed more to the positive quality of my relationships with my children than my willingness to accept and *honour* their self-authority.

Have you any idea how *wonderful* life can be when you simply allow your children to *be* who they are?

It's wonderful indeed.

Our Self-Image

Successful parenting is really not about children. It's about adults.

It's about *us*.

We can understand, if we choose to, that our children are born with the desire and potential for success already within them and that our *highest purpose* as parents is to *help* our children *express* that desire and *realise* that potential.

But what if nobody has ever done that for us?

Where then is our *own* natural desire and potential for success? Our own innate biological impulse to become all that we are capable of being?

How can we create circumstances for our children in which they will be happy if we *don't know* the experience of happiness ourselves?

How can we develop in our children the positive attributes they will need to be successful in the world if we *do not have* those attributes ourselves?

We may want with all our heart for our children to be happy and successful, and we may be willing to do all the work we can possibly do to make that a reality, but we can *only* do what our 'self-image' will *enable* us to do.

Our *self-image* is how we ‘see’ ourself. And we can never get away from it.

Wherever we go, there it is.

It’s our hugely *complex* and mostly subconscious *perception* of ‘who we are’, established in our brain by our own life experiences, our feelings about those experiences and what people have *told us* about who we are.

Our self-image comes from our *own* childhood.

It’s an *expectation* we have of ourself – of how we should be and how our life should be.

Our self-image is so *crucial* to our sense of existence and to our sense of identity and place in the world that we will do everything we can to maintain and protect it.

It’s *who we are*.

And it has an incredibly powerful effect on our motivation.

Our self-image *governs* our actions.

As we go about our daily life, every thought we think, every feeling we feel and every behaviour we engage in will *conform* to our self-image.

Without us even being aware that it’s happening.

If we ‘see’ ourself as a basically happy and successful person, all the better for us – we will be compelled to act in ways that will most probably make us happy and that are likely to achieve success.

But, if we see ourself as a basically *unhappy* and *unsuccessful* person – if we have a self-image of sadness and failure – we will tend to discover sadness and failure in our life.

We might *want* success, we might long for it, we might be *determined* to achieve success, but if we cannot see ourself *having* what we tell ourself we want, we will find a way to *sabotage* our efforts in the world at large, so that we ultimately will produce the failure that, in our imagination, we always ‘secretly’ *expected*.

Once we become *aware* of the constant presence in our life of our self-image and we can *understand* that our self-image is the dominant influence on how we *live* our life, for better or worse, we can make a decision to change it if we want to.

We can change our self-image into something that will encourage, facilitate and support the innate desire and potential for success that has always been there inside *us*.

I could *not* have been a happy and successful parent with the self-image I had when I *became* a parent.

Since the day that happened more than twenty years ago, by far the *most important work* I've done as a parent - and the work from which my children have *most* benefitted - has had nothing directly to do with “raising” children. It's the work I've done on *improving my self-image*. And I'm still doing that work. It's an ongoing process.

Our self-image is the *deciding factor* in how we choose to live our life. And it's the deciding factor in how we parent our children.

Our self-image *can* be changed for the better. If we need to change it and if we make that choice.

And if we're willing to make the *huge* commitment of time and energy that it can take. Don't allow anybody to fool you into thinking it can be done by waving a magic wand!

Though it's not that the work *itself* is hard or difficult necessarily - it's just that we have to *do* it to do it.

We need to pay attention to not only *consciously influencing* parts of our thinking that are usually operating *outside* of our everyday awareness, our ultimate objective is always nothing less than to *convince* 'who we are' that we're something *other than* who we are.

Sometimes that takes a lot of determination and persistence.

But it's worth it. Even the smallest improvement in our self-image is positively life changing.

And, thankfully, in these 'modern times', there are not only *easier* and *more effective* ways to change our self-image than there used to be, the *expertise* that will help us make those positive changes is also more *readily available* to us than ever before.

You can take a look at some tools for making positive changes in our lives that I *personally recommend* at [my website](#).

The Language of Success

Who we are is really the place to start in *all* matters of success.

Who we are tells us what we can do, and what we can do leads us to what we can have.

We can *become* everything we can *imagine* ourself to be. If we're willing to do the work.

So can our children.

What kind of people do we *want* our children to be?

Right now *and* when they're grown up.

In the beginning, our children believe everything we tell them. About themselves and about the world they live in.

We must be very careful what we imagine for our children - and we must be very careful how we *communicate* our ideas.

What we say to our children will affect *their* self-image and their beliefs about the world at large.

Words have power.

Is this really true? No.

It's whatever the words *cause us to imagine* that has the power.

Words direct attention.

Whatever attributes we wish to see in our children, we can see them *now* in our imagination.

What we can imagine, we can communicate to our children in words that will cause our children to imagine those same attributes.

There is a *vocabulary* of success.

Success in life is becoming what we want to be, and when we consistently use words that we associate in our imagination with *being* what we want to be, we are directing our attention to the experience of success.

We have no need to force anything onto our children that they do not like. By purposely directing our children's attention, we can allow them to generate the desired behaviour for themselves.

Where attention goes, motivation follows.

Do I *want* my children to be wonderful? I can *imagine* that they're wonderful. I can *tell them* that they're wonderful.

And *are* they wonderful? Yes, of course. If they accept that they are and act as if it's so.

After all, what does the word ‘wonderful’ actually *mean*?

Whatever we imagine it means. Whatever our children imagine it means.

What we accept and hold in our imagination becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Once we have ‘learned to talk’, we are verbalising our ideas in virtually every moment we’re awake throughout every day of our life. We can ‘hear’ the words in our head.

To get more of what we want, we can learn to verbalise our ideas in ways that produce mental images of our *desired* outcomes. Not something else.

Do *positive* words always produce *positive* effects? Not necessarily. It depends.

Do negative words always produce negative effects? Not necessarily. It depends.

Test and discover through the art of conversation.

It’s not the words in themselves that have the power - it’s whatever the words *cause us to imagine*.

The Law of Correspondence

All success *begins* in our imagination.

Just as our ‘self-image’ is a way of ‘seeing’ *ourselves*, we have a way of ‘seeing’ everything.

We have a unique ‘*perception of reality*’. And, as far as our brain is concerned, reality *is* what we *believe* it to be.

As we move around in the world, we will tend to *notice* more than anything else all the things that *confirm* what we believe, about ourselves and about what the world is ‘really like’.

Events and circumstances will seem to *match* our expectations, as if our physical reality is a kind of *reflection* of what we *imagine* it is inside our head.

This is no mystery. It’s a very real effect of how our brain seeks to adapt us to the world we live in, so that we are able to function in that world, whether successfully or otherwise. Our brain chooses what to give our attention to as it *recognises* what is meaningful to us. In this way, we are able to *make sense* of our experiences.

Over time, our life becomes, generally speaking, as we *expect* it to be.

Some people call this ‘The Law of Correspondence’.

“As within, so without”.

Knowing this, we can *choose to purposely generate* whatever events and circumstances we want in our life by *constructing* the experience of those events and circumstances *first* in our imagination.

What would the thing we want *look* like if we were in its physical presence right now?

What can we hear? What can we smell? What can we taste? What can we touch and how does that feel?

How do we feel inside? What are our emotions?

What kind of *self-image* will give us the power and ability to *achieve* what we want to achieve?

If we were watching ourself in our 'mind's eye', what would we be doing?

And all of this must be more than just an idle daydream. We must repeat this same 'imagined experience' as many times as it takes for it to become *established* in our neurology.

Once our desired event or circumstance has become 'real' in our imagination, our brain will *automatically* begin to co-ordinate our thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviours, words and actions in ways that are *consistent* with our imagined reality.

It's what our brain does.

It will guide us to do whatever it's *humanly possible* to do to turn our imagined reality into our physical reality.

Whatever the imagined event or circumstance might be.

We have only to *respond* to our ideas. We must do the work in our physical world that we are prompted to do. We must take the actions that we feel compelled to take. We must trust our intuition if necessary.

Our brain knows far more about the world we live in than we can ever be aware that it knows and our brain knows *how* to get what it wants.

It's what it always wants. The realisation of what is expected.

A sensation that all is '*as it should be*' in our world.

"As within, so without".

But, we must remember that the 'Law of Correspondence' doesn't operate to *serve* our imagined reality.

The 'Law of Correspondence' operates only to make our *imagined* reality and our *physical* reality *compatible*.

That's all.

We are always *compelled to act* from our *imagined* reality and there are *no limits* to what we can create in our imagination - but our *actions* will always be in *real* reality.

And, from time to time, we may be *unpleasantly surprised* to discover that our physical reality does not conform to our expectations.

Sometimes the 'Law of Correspondence' will pressure us to *change* our imagined reality in order to suit our physical reality.

And we must then decide for ourself whether to push forward or to give way.

We can influence our physical reality and change our world to a far greater extent than most of us believe we can and sometimes when we choose to push forward we will discover that what we have learned from our apparent failure can lead us to ultimate success. But we must choose our objectives wisely to begin with.

We cannot produce in our physical reality everything we can imagine.

Sometimes what we want is not physically possible.

Sometimes what we want is so far beyond reasonable probability it's impossible for us to invest the time and energy required to make it a physical reality.

Sometimes what we want will be unachievable simply because we have yet to develop a self-image that will enable us to achieve it.

Sometimes what we want will depend on deciding factors that are beyond our control - and then we are at the mercy of chance. Perhaps on these occasions we will get what we want, but we might not.

But if it's humanly possible for us to have what we want, it's within reasonable probability, we have the necessary abilities and we're in control of the deciding factors – and we're willing to *train our objective into our brain* and *take the actions in the world at large* that our brain prompts us to take - we can certainly *have* in our life whatever events and circumstances we *choose*.

So, the question is, if our experience of parenthood was everything we want it to be – what would our life be like?

Further Reading

Thank you for reading this short but hopefully useful book. The one and only ‘parenting book’ I will ever write!

In *introducing you* to some powerful ideas that have been a strong and *positive* undercurrent in my own life for a very long time, I hope this book will spark your enthusiasm for learning more about the ‘psychology’ of happy and successful parenting.

After all, our happiness and success *depends* on what’s happening in our mind!

If you’d like to explore the principles you’ve read something about in *How I Parent*, please stay in touch by subscribing to my newsletter, *Parental Intelligence*.

[You can do that here](#)

Each issue of the *Parental Intelligence Newsletter* is packed with opportunities to explore, connect and discover - and to “sail outside the mainstream for a while without running aground”.

All that and more.

Liberating Parents

As you will have read in the introduction to this book, my ideas about parenting have been brought together from “self-help”, “self-improvement” and “success psychology” books, and from other sources *outside* the world of parenting. Not many people, I think, would count Edward de Bono as one of their parenting influences.

To be perfectly honest, I used to ignore parenting books.

I only began to look at them after I had created my *Parental Intelligence Newsletter*, in 2002, and thought then that perhaps it might be a good idea to have at least some awareness of what was ‘on offer’. By that time I had been a parent for 17 years.

Through publishing my newsletter, I’ve come to know of many excellent parenting books - some that are inspirational – have read many of them and have been very happy to suggest or recommend them to other parents.

There are, I’ve discovered, parenting books in the world that are very much ‘on my wavelength’.

In July 2008, I discovered a book called *neuro-linguistic programming: Liberating Parents*, by Keith Gilbert, a Neuro-Linguistic Programming Consultant in Sydney, Australia.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, is “a model of interpersonal communication chiefly concerned with the relationship between successful patterns of

behaviour and the subjective experiences (especially patterns of thought) underlying them”.

Or, as Keith Gilbert writes:

“Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) can be considered a technology for learning to learn. What does that mean?”

Learning is state dependent. If you are in a resourceful state of mind you will be able to learn a new skill or a chunk of information a lot more effectively than if you are in a less than resourceful state of mind. Makes sense, right? NLP is the technology of creating and maintaining resourceful states of mind for the purpose of learning and performing with excellence.”

Keith goes on to write of his book, *Liberating Parents*:

“When I teach parents how they can apply NLP to their own lives they soon see how they can influence their children in exceptional ways. If you have children then you want to ensure that they keep what's most important to any person... the freedom to choose.

With Liberating Parents you can learn NLP to explore what's important to you, set personal goals, develop greater behavioural flexibility and generate resourceful states of mind.”

Now, the thing is this: *Liberating Parents* encompasses, in one way or another, *all* the ideas I've written something about in *this* book.

But in a *cohesive format* that makes them easier to apply and more effective – *and*, very importantly, easier to communicate to others.

More than that, it adds ideas and techniques that take the possibilities to a higher level.

So, I think it would be true to say that, if I was given my almost thirty years of interest in ‘personal development’ over again – and my many years as a stay-at-home dad - I wouldn’t have collected together my ideas about parenting in quite the ‘patchwork’ manner that I did.

I would simply have ‘learnt NLP’ and applied it in the same or a similar way to how Keith Gilbert has applied it to parenting in his book *Liberating Parents*.

Another way of putting that is to suggest that *Liberating Parents* can explain how I parent more clearly and more deeply than I can.

Which is why *neuro-linguistic programming: Liberating Parents* is **my favourite parenting book ever** – and why I am now [promoting it at my website](#).

*“Considered by many to be the most important book ever written for parents *Liberating Parents* shows you how to recognise and free yourself from limitations in your thinking that you have been encouraged to accept throughout your life. You can only give what you have. When you are free you will relate to children through that freedom.”*

If you’d like to know more about Keith Gilbert’s book *neuro-linguistic programming: Liberating Parents*, please visit his website at www.neurolinguisticparents.com.



About the Author

Hi, I'm Bob Collier.

I'm the publisher of the *Parental Intelligence Newsletter*.

I'm from London, England, originally and now live in Canberra, Australia, with my wife and teenage son. We also have a grown up daughter who lives in Sydney.

Since I became a parent in 1985, my primary occupation has mostly been 'stay-at-home dad'. For many years it was my full time 24/7 occupation, including nine years when my son was "growing without school". I feel both grateful and privileged to have had the opportunity to share so much of my children's lives from babyhood to adulthood.

I've been publishing my *Parental Intelligence Newsletter* in various formats since August 2002. It started life as a weekly email, went online in March 2004 and became a monthly publication in July of the same year. Since May 2010, it's been published fortnightly. It doesn't cost you a cent to read it and never will.

[Visit my website](#) to read the current issue and browse the newsletter archive.

[Subscribe to the Parental Intelligence Newsletter here](#)

If you have any questions about any of the ideas in this book, I'll be happy to answer them.

Please contact me at bobcollier@parental-intelligence.com.

Thank you for reading *How I Parent!*