

Nondual Parenting: Detached Involvement

by Robert M Dittler, Ph.D.

You can't lead something you yourself identify with.

The paradox is that detachment

(not withdrawal, escape, or indifference)

coupled with involvement (not addiction)

– in other words, detached involvement –

enables mastery.

The Zen of Management Maintenance:

Leadership Starts with Self-Discovery,

Jagdish Parikh

Harvard Business School

<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4790.html>

Parenting – it comes in many shapes and sizes. For the sake of discussion, let us just summarize and say that a Parent envisions a future and empowers the child to realize that vision.

To distinguish parenting from managing, management involves specific work tasks at hand that need be accomplished by the child and is based upon a set of objectives. Perhaps the old adage suffices: parenting is doing the right thing and management is doing things right. The parent might educate, draw out of the child what to do. Whereas, the manager might instruct, put into the child how to do it.

Nondual – it has no shape and no size. It actually has no explanation and certainly no definition. The ancients define nondual as not this, not that. A metaphor comes in handy to explain nonduality. We can describe the mind of an infant as nondual. The infant just absorbs all that it senses without difference or distinction. The infant has no belief systems to filter its sensations. The infant has no self or ego to judge the rightness or wrongness of a sensation. The infant has no thought about this or that or anything else. The infant, some may say, has no mind. How often we say in response to something we determine as negative: *Pay it no mind. Just let it go.*

How would one parent without a mind? How would one parent without an ego? How could one envision a future? How could one empower the child to realize that future? What is a nondual perspective?

First and foremost, the parent realizes that there is a difference – a grave difference – between the way s/he hopes things to be and the way things are. Speaking henceforth in the masculine, he has resolved his conflict with his perception of Ideal Reality – his hopes and dreams – with the way things actually are. He has also resolved his conflict with his perception of Real Reality – the way he thinks things are – with the way things actually are. He has recognized and let go of his beliefs: his hopes and dreams and his biases and prejudices. The Parent perceives with clarity just the way things are, just as they are simply because they are what and how they are in the moment.

How? He has realized that he essentially is not his thoughts, feelings or emotions. His thoughts, feelings, and emotions are metaphorically just background noise in his field of experience. Likewise, he has realized that what he perceives, besides his thoughts, feelings and emotions, but also people, places, things and events are also just his own creation. As Gertrude Stein once echoed: *there is no there there* (although she was probably referring to her house in Oakland). The Parent accepts unconditionally whatever is occurring now in the moment – just as it is, now.

The Parent maintains an attitudinal stance that tends to be neither flexible nor inflexible, neither

soft nor hard. He is inclined neither liberally or conservatively. At best, the Parent may be described as fluid. He succeeds because he takes the shape of any container, yet retaining his integrity. The Parent is much like water, in this regard. How does he maintain a fluid, rather than flexible or inflexible attitude? He has resolved his conditioned resistances. He appreciates the natural biases inherent in his belief systems through which he filters his perceptions of reality. He accepts these conditioned resistance for what they are, his own creation. He lets them go. The Parent has become the center of the cyclone, being Peace amid the chaos of ever present change in its myriad of forms. He is detached. The Parent is Nonduality.

Being detached from his perceptions – thoughts, feelings and emotions, peoples, places, things, and events – the Parent is absolutely responsible for his own integrity as he changes the shape the moment. He has resolved his basic human resistance to change. He has recognized his desire to keep things as they are even while recognizing that everything is changing moment by moment. He does not create guilt or take pride in what he does or does not do. Leaves fall from a branch. Rain drops. Ivy grows. The Universe expands. Hence, the Parent engenders no feelings of blame for what others do or not do. He holds no residual emotional image of his own self or of others. He lets go moment-by-moment. Hence, the Parent tends not to experience the past emotionally. His own self image is no longer that of edited memories.

Being detached from his perceptions, he does not perceive reality from emotional or I-based conditioning. He has resolved the great trinity of Me, Myself, and I. Hence, he has learned that his subjective feelings are nothing more and nothing less than conditioned reactions that he had learned. He recognizes them to be just what they are: products of his own imagination. As such, they are fantasy, existing only in his mind. He created them. He lets them go.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Parent is not bogged down by unnecessary pain and suffering: psychological, emotional, or otherwise. The Parent is simply present. He engages thought when needed. He does not need to be constantly thinking, verbalizing, conceptualizing, or forming images. The Parent, taking the shape of the moment, being fluid, maintains his own integrity. He is totally unconditioned and one with the universe, his immediate moment. In essence, he recognizes when he is resisting his own resisting and lets it go. Therefore, the Parent experiences no conflict. The Parent can eschew a sense of calm composure, excitedly or more subdued, in the moment. Boredom, accordingly, is never an issue.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Parent is not depressed being caught in his memories of the past. He is not anxious being caught in his imaginings about a future. Nor is he worried being caught in the illusive present wondering whether or not to be depressed or anxious. The Parent has recognized the illusion of the alleged *continuity of events*. He lets it go. The moment, accordingly, does not necessarily evoke an emotional impact. Again, he has integrated the sacred trinity (Me, Myself, I) of the Human Condition. He lets the trinity go. Only he in his awareness remains. The Parent is not the center of the (narcissistic) Universe. The Parent connects with others naturally, empathizing with others however they may be: liberal realist, liberal conservative, conservative idealist or conservative realist.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Parent may become angry, yet his anger is not me-based. The Parent does not take the moment personally or seriously. The Parent recognizes flattery and abuse as just as what they are and lets them go. If angry, the anger is very short lived. The Parent has no need to keep a residual mental image of the event. The Parent just lets it go. The Parent's basic temperament remains just as it is, yet the Parent responds rather than reacts to his thoughts, feelings, emotions, perceptions or people, places, things or events. Whether the Parent responds or reacts in the moment, he does so by choice reflecting his absolutely objective grasp of the moment in the moment. The Parent experiences his emotions minimally and

momentarily. He does not need to engage in the drama of the moment echoing the Human Condition. Likewise, the Parent does not create romantic images of the past or even nostalgic feelings about the past. The Parent knows no benefit.

Being detached from his perceptions, the Parent, therefore, being in the moment and being the moment, envisions a future and empowers the child to bring that vision to Light. He adapts his style to meet the vision and - for the lack of a better expression - the Parenting team (the extended family, teachers, etc.). The Parent recognizes not only his own the idiosyncrasies, personality, style and intellect, but also those of his team just for what they are. He lets his considerations about them go. He realizes that the best instruction is often the most subtle. The Parent, being detached from his perceptions, has the freedom to grow along with his team members as all grow in awareness given the subtly of instruction. All acknowledge that mistakes happen, good things happen and in absolute reality, nothing happens. Light is.

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