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Books: Magical Parent / Magical Child, the Art of Joyful Parenting

by Michael Mendizza & Joseph Chilton Pearce

**North Atlantic Books; 1 edition (May 10 2004)ISBN-10:
1556434979 ISBN-13: 978-1556434976**

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Applies research on optimum states to parenting and to education.

Reviews

“Magical Parent, Magical Child, plays with many ways of getting its message across. In some ways a ‘how to parent’ book, it reiterates that the ‘how to’ is already within ourselves. Mendizza urges us to be informed by our own sense of what is right when relating with our children. And the book does this in the very manner that he describes play –bringing in ideas from different disciplines and thinkers, practical suggestions and principles, examples and anecdotes, live dialogues—all drawing the reader into the message without crystallizing it in any one form of expression.

This is an insightful book for parents of children right from infancy through adolescence. By extension, it is also a book for teachers. We have selected only a few of the many ideas that attracted us in the book to introduce to you.

The book makes a plea to all adults to rediscover the precious place of play in life. Play here is defined not as an activity but as a unique quality of relationship –“Writers and poets have playful relationships with words. Musicians play with sounds. Singers and actors play with emotions. Einstein played with ideas. Children play with anything they can and especially with the people they love. Nature set aside all of childhood to explore and develop this unique and very special

relationship called play.” The author urges us to learn from our children, rediscovering in ourselves our own childhood capacity for play.

Another interesting idea Mendizza introduces is the development of one’s self image. One strand in its development begins between 12 and 18 months of age, when a great deal of learning takes place. Most toddlers, he says, hear a “No!” or a “Don’t!” every nine minutes or so. Received as ‘threats’ by the toddler, the self-image arises as a defensive response. This defensive self image often gets in the way of learning later in life. In fact, what triggers this ‘defense’ of the self-image is any threat, real or imagined. Mendizza then argues for ‘safe’ environments for learning: “When we feel safe, completely safe, and engaged in the present moment or activity, our defensive self-image disappears.”

Mendizza feels that our every experience is filtered through our current state. He defines ‘state’ as “a unique set of physical, emotional and mental patterns...States of relationship are primary – they precede what we think of as content, learning and performance.” The authors suggest that human beings are constantly affected by, learn from and respond to the states of others. Young children do this all the time. The author goes on to say that when the inner state of the adult changes, so does the context for what the child learns. As a result, he would consider the state of the adult-child relationship as infinitely more important than the information or skills the adults wish to teach.

In summation, this is a book that invites us to re-examine what we do in the small, everyday interactions with our children. The implications of doing this, it suggests, are enormous.”

Krishnamurti Foundation India, Chennai, India

“An extraordinary blueprint...A must for all those seeking a more evolved way to parent or coach.”

—Michael Murphy, author of *In the Zone*, *Golf in the Kingdom*, and *Future of the Body*

"This remarkable book invites us to reconsider basic assumptions about learning, teaching, and being with children. It is a rare synthesis of visionary thinking and practicality that will immediately benefit parents, teachers, and children."

—Rahima Baldwin Dancy, author of *You Are Your Child's First Teacher*

"Every parent and grandparent should read this book, study it, demand that it reveal its secrets, and watch the whole world transform itself as a result."

—Peter Kline, author of *Why American Children Can't Think*