

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, smiling warmly. They are wrapped in a thick, textured green blanket that covers their heads and shoulders. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The text 'How We Love Our Kids' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font. 'How' and 'Love' are in all caps, 'We' is in title case, and 'Our Kids' is in a smaller, italicized font.

How We Love *Our Kids*

The 5 Love Styles of Parenting

One Small Change in You...One Big Change in Your Kids

Milan & Kay
Yerkovich

Praise for
How We Love Our Kids

“Milan and Kay provide us with the tools of self-awareness which can enable us to consciously examine the love styles of the past and become conscious of the stored feelings and emotions that we carry forward into parenting. This book will now be one of my primary reading recommendations.”

—MICHAEL W. SHANNON, MD

“Another home run for Milan and Kay Yerkovich!”

—SHERRIE ELDRIDGE, speaker and author of *Twenty Things
Adoptive Parents Need to Succeed*

“After reading this book, our first thoughts were, *Every parent needs to read this book—regardless of the ages of their children*, and, *Reading this book could not only protect children from the pains of growing up but also heal the parents’ hearts*. This book offers insightful, practical ways of understanding children and parenting. We recommend it.”

—ROGER AND BECKY TIRABASSI, authors of *Let Love Change Your Life*

“This book is a true gift to parents who yearn to understand and communicate with their children, thus bringing about healing and restoration. Milan and Kay remind us that God is our perfect model for parenting. This book has touched my life, and I know it will touch yours too.”

—ELIZABETH JOHN, MD

“Milan and Kay provide us an entirely new way of looking at parenting. Rather than focusing solely on the how-tos of parenting, they help us explore the powerful forces of our own upbringings on how we parent and provide a path to change those forces for good in the lives of our children. As a parent educator for over twenty-five years, I see this book as the resource we’ve been missing!”

—LAURA TAGGART, licensed marriage and family therapist

“Finally! A treatment of parenting that acknowledges the eight-hundred-pound gorilla in the room: parents working out their personal issues on their children. If you want to transform your child’s life, then let Milan and Kay gently, firmly, and skillfully guide you on this amazing journey of personal change.”

—KENNY LUCK, author of *Soar, Fight, and Dream*

“Imagine decreasing the drama in your home by simply learning how to comfort one another. *How We Love Our Kids* unfolds five distinct love styles in parenting—their traits, strengths, and pitfalls. The real-life stories allow us to see ourselves and how we naturally express ourselves to our children. Whatever blend of love styles is under your roof, Milan and Kay will show you the direct route to building deeper love, intimacy, and connection.”

—SHERI DENHAM, PhD, MFT, and co-host of *New Life Live*

“If you’ve ever struggled with being a good enough parent, ever been triggered by your child’s behavior in ways you’d be too embarrassed to recount, or ever compensated with your child to override your guilt, then you won’t want to miss *How We Love Our Kids!*”

—JILL HUBBARD, PhD, co-host of *New Life Live* and author of *The Secrets Women Keep* and *The Secrets Young Women Keep*

“Milan and Kay have given us great insights into how our own attachment issues affect our parenting styles. Every parent needs to read this book, regardless of the ages of their kids.”

—DAVID STOOP, PhD, author of *Just Us* and *Forgiving the Unforgivable*

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To April, who penned this poem after overcoming a chaotic attachment
and discovering what bonding feels like in a secure relationship.

Our hope for all you who read this book is that someday
your kids will say this about you as a parent.

• • •

You are gusts of gentleness
Cool, swift movements of grace
My Wind

You are drops of truth
Wet, clean pieces of trust
My Rain

You are shades of safety
Green, sheltered canopies of peace
My Tree

You are heights of radiance
Blue, calm spaces of kindness
My Sky

You are acres of freedom
Fresh, new blades of courage
My Grass

You are blankets of promise
Soft, comfortable layers of protection
My Bed

You are an ocean of love
Deep, strong currents of beauty
My Heart

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The Amazing Result of One Simple Change

One fall, at the conclusion of a weekend marriage seminar, a young mother named Melissa approached us. Her eyes sparkled, and she grabbed my (Kay's) arm as she spoke. "I had the most amazing experience," she said. "Because of your teaching, my husband and I have started seeing our marriage problems in a whole new light. But I didn't expect to get parenting help as well. This morning, when we dropped our seven-year-old girl off at the baby-sitter's, I remembered what you taught yesterday about the importance of self-awareness and offering comfort for others' feelings. We've had difficulty with this in our marriage, but even more so with our kids."

Melissa continued, "Our seven-year-old, Gina, is superemotional, and honestly, it's always annoyed me. Every October she gets scared by the Halloween decorations, and she has crying fits if she gets anywhere near them. I've been telling her all week that they are just plastic—that none of it is real and she's a big girl now. This morning at the baby-sitter's house, the entire front porch was covered in Halloween decorations. Gina started to have a fit in the car. I got so irritated and was just about to launch into my 'It's all pretend' speech when I remembered the feeling question. So I asked, 'Gina, how do all those decorations make you feel?'"

"She wailed, 'Scared!' I didn't know what to say. But I walked around to open her door, and before she got out, I knelt down and said, 'It's okay

to be scared, Gina. How can Mommy help you right now?’ Her sobs turned to whimpers, and she looked right in my eyes. I could see her little mind racing.

“‘Mommy,’ she said, ‘you hold me and let me hide my eyes on your shoulder. I’ll keep them covered while you ring the doorbell. And then you go inside and close the door, and I’ll keep my eyes shut tight. After we’re inside I can open my eyes and I’ll be fine.’ So I did. I followed her instructions, and when I put her down in the house, she looked up at me and said, ‘Thanks, Mommy. That really helped me.’

“I was shocked! Not only could she tell me what she needed, it was so *easy*! Maybe I don’t need to change her at all. Maybe I just needed to change my response.”

By this time, Milan and I were getting excited with her. “Think about that one change, Melissa,” Milan said. “One small change in you made such a big difference in your relationship with your daughter. What if you made it a goal to continue working on that—to become comfortable with all kinds of emotions in Gina? Today, you helped her manage her anxiety instead of telling her why her fears were silly. You can change her life forever, and give her a different future, by making that one change a way of life.”

It has been numerous encounters like this that have made us excited to write this book. Melissa isn’t alone; we’ve received literally thousands of stories, e-mails, letters, and comments from people who’ve read our book, learned about love styles, and found countless great ways to apply the ideas. It’s so gratifying to hear of lives changed and relationships restored, but it’s all because of the inherent strength in responding to others’ natural emotions rather than ignoring, diminishing, or rejecting them.

Of course, there are so many parenting books that it can be more than a bit overwhelming. That’s why we’ve tried hard to make this one different. The main focus isn’t curbing behaviors with discipline or using techniques to get kids to behave. We’ve found such books can be helpful, but our parenting took a dramatic turn when Milan and I discovered

specific changes we needed to make in ourselves, which automatically changed what was happening with our kids.

Taking a close look at how *we* were brought up helped us to pinpoint our defenses and difficulties we learned in our original families. We realized that often our kids were not the problem. We began to recognize *how* we loved our kids was often at the root of the struggles, and that understanding and changing our damaged love styles affected our children's behavior dramatically.

Once we changed as parents, almost *everything else* in our relationships with our kids began to change as well. There was less defensiveness, less misunderstanding, and less heartache all around. Best of all, we began to develop closer, deeper connections with them almost immediately. Maybe the greatest news for a parent is that once you know how to change yourself to be that better parent you've hoped to be, parenting can and does become far easier, as well as more rewarding!

Imagine that for a moment—simple, relational parenting. Are you tired of sabotaging your own fulfillment and happiness as a parent? Are your children tired of seeing how frustrated you can get?

As any discouraged parent can tell you, trying to change your kids is hard. The easiest thing you can do as a parent is to learn what you can do to change yourself for the better. And, ironically, this is the only thing that creates the peaceful home you've been longing for.

Here's our hope: once you discover what you've been bringing to your parenting from your family of origin and learn to overcome your personal challenges and *parenting baggage*, you'll be able to respond to your children in a way that greatly reduces the behavior problem you're currently facing.

When we first discover our own deficiencies and begin making the positive changes that improve our performance as parents, it leads to more enjoyable relationships overall. Now Milan and I didn't start our parenting careers with this profound wisdom in hand. With the exception of our youngest, our kids were much older when we first discovered

our damaged love styles. It came as quite a surprise after more than a dozen years of parenting, because we had learned to hide our personal difficulties so well, even from ourselves, as dysfunctional-but-functioning adults.

If you're parenting with your spouse, you may also want to read our first book, *How We Love*, to get an idea of how your love style is playing out with your partner and how that naturally affects parenting.

Whether you're planning a family, currently a parent, or have grown children, freeing yourself to feel and deal with emotion appropriately will give your children solid, secure foundations as adults. As you use this book to foster open, healing conversations with your children, you will realize just how true it is that one small change in the parent can make a huge difference.

As I write this, I'm thinking back to just last night when a mother told me, "After seeing you and Milan demonstrate active feeling and dealing, I realized we'd never shown our kids how to really listen to others. So I apologized to my adult son and asked him to share how he felt about it. At first he didn't want to, but soon we started talking, and we've continued now for a long time. One little change—just learning to listen—has totally changed our relationship, and I can actually see his wounds healing."

Many parents who call Milan and me for help with their kids are surprised when we ask to see them—the parents—instead. Nearly every time the problems are greatly alleviated or completely solved when parents become aware of how they are contributing to the difficulties.

How you love your kids is a matter of learning to become the truly great parent you've always wanted to be. Ironically, the greatest gift you can give your child is to be the best you've ever been. And who doesn't want that? By learning how you love, initially by becoming more self-aware, you will know exactly how to love your child better. It won't always be easy or a walk in the park, but the decision to see yourself clearly and identify those places you have blind spots will give you a road map to reach your full potential as a parent.

Beyond that, learning to love well will require a bit of training and some regular practice. But if you're patient and remember that you're just like anyone training for a challenging task, with those blind spots that will hold you back, you'll gradually improve in time. With an open mind, you'll begin to see yourself as you really are for the first time, and your view of your child as the source of your problem will begin to change.

And in our experience, that's when you may realize your problem is being solved.

With the right perspective, behavioral, emotional, and relational challenges can be improved—even future generations will benefit. Who doesn't long to hear their kids say, "My parents are the best! They've taught me everything I need to know in life"? To us, that sounds like the highest compliment any parent could receive.

If you're ready now to make that one change—to see yourself honestly and learn to listen and grow—we believe you'll be hearing your child say those words to you someday.

Part

1

Helping Yourself as a Parent



The Miracle and the Mess

Kay, have you seen my socks?” I was bummed. I had just arrived home from work and wanted to go for a run, but I only had forty-five minutes before dinner. I checked the usual places: drawers, dryer, and washing machine. I even rummaged through the dirty clothes, but the lineman-strength stench knocked me on my heels and made me resume my search for a clean pair.

Then I remembered my secret stash, hidden from view on the top shelf of my closet. I dashed to look. *No!* They were gone as well. Now I was starting to get mad.

“Those kids snaked my clean socks again!” I yelled. I thought back to a bumper sticker I had seen earlier that day. “Driver carries no cash... has three teenagers.” Evidently, the driver didn’t realize they also take your clothes.

Who knew living with three teenagers could create such a high demand for white crew socks?

“I just bought a dozen,” Kay hollered up the stairs.

She’s always buying socks, I thought bitterly, but are any left for me?

No. There were none. Not a pair to be found. And I wasn’t about to go running in business socks; it was a matter of principle now. In my frustration, I decided to take matters into my own hands. I stalked to the kids’ rooms.

Amy’s netted me nine, but I wasn’t satisfied. I passed up little Kelly’s room, took a deep breath, and plunged into the boys’ room. Hunting

through the thick layer of clothes, books, papers, skateboard parts, magazines, and shoes—down to the surfboard wax that had melted into the carpet—the clean freak in me rose up, bursting into a rampage for my socks. I tore through the room, every square inch of floor space, every horrible corner of the closets, every drawer. Privacy was more than invaded, and I was well past the point of caring. Any lofty idealism I'd had about ethical parenting codes was gone. I was regaining *my* property.

The sock pile in the middle of the room grew like a magical snow-drift in the middle of the wasteland. It grew and grew: white, dingy brown, gray, many in advanced stages of decay. I couldn't believe how many socks I found.

Forty minutes later—I kid you not—I loaded the massive pile into the washing machine downstairs, threw in a cup of soap, a cup of bleach, and slammed the lid. I huffed to the couch to wait, considering that I might finally have found where our discretionary spending was disappearing every month. When the wash cycle was complete, I threw the giant load into the dryer. Once the socks were dry, I sorted them into piles of like colors and relative elasticity. I then stomped back up the stairs to hide the best ones in more clever hiding places. I left the remaining carnage on the living room floor for them to rummage through.

By now my window for a stress-reducing run was long gone. So I went upstairs to the shower to decontaminate and decompress.

Kids, I thought to myself. *What a mess.*

I slid to the floor of the shower and thought back to the days each of them was born. How little had really changed. Each one was still such a fascinating miracle—wrapped in such a convoluted mess.

THE MIRACLE OF BABY

Hot water streaming over my head, my reverie stretched out for several minutes. As angry as I was, I thought how different they were, and how each unique quality first presented itself. Kevin's wide, enthusiastic smile.

Amy's sweet voice singing through the day. John's wonderful free spirit. I was just as amazed to meet Kelly and see her sweetness, her persistence, and bubbly energy. I laughed as the water soothed away my frustration. They were still the same kids. I'd see the same characteristics that night when they all came home and did what teenagers usually do...consume food and make messes.

Though each of them was different, they'd begun taking their first cues from us during their nine months of gestation. As embryos, among the first parts to develop are the brain and spinal cord—the capacity to feel and receive sensations. As babies grow, their brains begin to recognize new data about their environment—Mom's heartbeat, her breathing, the amniotic fluid, the muffled sound of voices. Everything makes imprints on the developing brain. Because they lived with Kay for nine months, she became familiar to them. Newborns recognize their mothers from the very beginning.

Ironically, the incredible mystery of the process began to calm me. Even in the first hour after birth, God wires babies for connection. You'd think they'd fall asleep following the ordeal of entering the world. Yet for a very important reason, all babies have a period of wakeful alertness for one to two hours after birth. We didn't know this when our own kids were born, but those initial few hours following baby's arrival provide the first opportunities for the miracle of bonding. When our kids were becoming parents, we had a chance to see this amazing imprinting happen right before our eyes.

At our granddaughter's birth, our son John and his wife requested that if she was healthy, Penelope stay with them immediately after she was born. In the quiet of the birthing room, John spoke to Penelope for the first time, and her head turned toward him. He sang a quiet song to her, just as he had when she was still in the dark, and her little face looked up at him and she listened intently. Just think of this brand-new life encountering humans for the first time. They let her hear their voices, smell them, and feel their hands. She even looked into their eyes. Years later as

a toddler, Penelope was soothed by music and fascinated by John's guitar and singing.

THE MIRACLE OF GOD'S DESIGN: WIRED FOR CONNECTION

Think of a baby's new brain as a computer coming off the assembly line. It's waiting to download its new operational system. And unless some specific, intentional adjustments are made later on, it will carry that initial programming it receives for life. Dr. John Bowlby first wrote about imprints in the early 1940s to describe what happens as newborns acquire their emotional coding in the first two years of life.¹ Of course, it isn't based on computer technology, but as a metaphor, the idea of new computers helps us explain and understand this initializing process better.

Over the first three months of life, infants seem fairly unresponsive. Yet within the first two hours of birth, the baby is taking in the new world around him, and this imprinting is already taking place. In modern hospitals, routine procedures often overlook these precious first hours between the baby and her parents, interrupting the opportunity for connection. The baby may be whisked away to a nursery or placed in a sterile warming crib. While birthing rooms have adapted to the new understanding of the importance of mother-infant bonding, this wonderful opportunity for connection is still too often unappreciated.

After the birth of our granddaughter Holland, our son Kevin and his wife, Stephanie, took advantage of her first hour of alertness. They whispered and spoke to her, and we watched as she took everything in. A year later her responsiveness was just as strong. She listened, learned, and imitated them as her personality formed from the inside out. And as she grew, she enjoyed connection with her parents that literally shaped and wired her little brain for connection and social interaction. It was marvelous to witness, and this may be something you have seen yourself.

In his book *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, Dr. Louis Cozolino provides the following explanation:

Like every living system—from single neurons to complex ecosystems—the brain depends on interactions with others for its survival. Each brain is dependent on the scaffolding of caretakers and loved ones for its survival, growth, and well-being. So we begin with what we know: *The brain is an organ of adaptation* that builds its structures through interactions with others. So maybe it is better that we forget we have brains. Because to write the story of this journey, we must begin our guidebook with the thought: *There are no single brains.*²

A fascinating thought. According to Cozolino, it's the interconnect- edness of our minds—and in this case, the parent's developed mind to the child's developing one—that defines our existence and survival. That interaction defines who we become.

Another expert on child development said,

The infant's inner sensations form the core of the self. They appear to remain the central, the crystallization point of the "feeling of self" around which a "sense of identity" will become established.³

God's miraculous design involves an inherent readiness to connect with and be shaped by our caregivers. This is why it's so important for parents to be ready and willing to connect with their children from the very beginning. God has literally designed you to form the mind that will serve your child for a lifetime. As a parent, you have the most influence in building and shaping your child's brain.

Now if you're like us, you may find this a bit daunting. As a young

parent, many days I found that my shortcomings were getting in the way of this brain downloading, and I often felt woefully inadequate.

THE MESS OF NEEDINESS

Looking back to that sock tantrum, I realize I was trying to sort out many things besides socks. Why was I so irritated despite my strong affection for my kids? Linking up the past with my present feelings was a new concept to me then, and I couldn't see what became so clear twenty years later. Yes, they had robbed me of my socks and my time to have a run. But I was beyond agitated, pushing well into twisted-undies territory. Other parents might not have responded quite so strongly to the same situation.

The truth I only realized much later was that for some reason, I was *triggered* by the sock-stealing.

And the question was, why did I care so much?

The very presence of children exposes messes in parents' lives. That mom in the store yelling at her five-year-old to "Shut up!" Your child's friend in second grade with the house overflowing with toys. The neighbor kids whose mom won't let them out of her sight. Each likely indicates a mess from that parent's past. Wounds from childhood create triggers in the present that make parents overreact with their kids. Long before my kids even entered my world, I was set up for the Great Sock Sabotage.

Not only were kids messy, they were exposing *my* mess.

And I *hated* the feeling of being exposed.

The truth of that startles me even now. There's no doubt in my mind that my reactions to them at that time came directly and nearly completely from my childhood.

Pause and consider that. Do you know what I'm talking about?

As a child, my home life alternated between love, smothering, anger, overprotection, and fits of volatility. The unpredictability caused me huge anxiety; the eruptions set off horrible screaming sirens of impending

danger in my head. I began to worry about everything and developed obsessive-compulsive tendencies. I created a neat, orderly world around me and carefully hid my special things from imaginary intruders—even checking them several times a day to reassure my threatened mind.

When my cousins or friends came over, I would proudly display the items but not let them hold them too long, lest they be damaged in some inexplicable way. I became Possessive Guardian, preserver and protector of order. My refuge from the outbursts of anger was to hide the few things I owned. I had forgotten how I had hidden my cap gun, my pocketknife, and my flashlight, but as I reflected back, I realized why I had hidden my “sacred” socks—they weren’t really sacred to me, but I was protecting them and myself from the same feelings of intrusion.

The sudden spotlight on my past injuries left my pain exposed. What I felt in the shower that day was the same vulnerability and loss of control I’d had when my cousin ran off with my cap gun, laughing, taunting me.

The reemergence of these old feelings shocked me.

And I wasn’t alone. Little did I know, but Kay was having similar challenges as well. Babies and teens are a bundle of feelings and needs. Facing this as a new parent will draw upon how feelings and needs were handled in your home growing up. A sensitive child, Kay was deeply affected by the pain she saw in the world. She moved through adolescence and adulthood battling the wide gap between idealism and the harsh realities life brought. And because her parents divorced, she was committed to being a stay-at-home mom.

As a young mother, she endured, with grace, mothering three young children all under four years old. She always maintained her cool. But when Kevin started high school football, things began to change. While Kevin’s intensity and aggression were valuable assets as an offensive lineman, it wasn’t working well for his mom. Suddenly, confident Kay began to freeze up, struggling to speak when Kevin would display power or noise. In those moments, she saw her dad, lashing out with reprimands and displaying impatience with her sensitivity. Against her will, her mess

of neediness was exposed, and just like I experienced, a door to her past was opened.

Kay was not an adult at those moments. She reverted to the feelings of a six-year-old in front of an aggressive dad. Now Kay had a choice: face her lack of a strong adult voice, or ignore her weakness and give Kevin free reign.

THE MESS OF INADEQUACY

Of all the things about parenting I dislike, this one may be the one I dislike the most: our children's messy development reveals the mess within us as parents.

Performing competently in my personal and professional life is very important to me. Like many, I take pride in good performance. If there weren't any kids around, I would look pretty good most of the time. There would be far less opportunity for my weaknesses to be exposed. But every child increases the chances of exposure and failure exponentially in ways that confound and frustrate me to no end. Kids have a natural knack for revealing the things we like least about ourselves. Even shortcomings we're completely unaware of, things we deny, things we've successfully hidden for years. All of them suddenly begin to parade around your neat little life when you have children.

Another unfortunate fact: kids instinctively know how to mess with your weaknesses. I was twenty-five and a seasoned Southern California driver when I found myself chaperoning our first newborn son home from the hospital. Hours before, I could have effortlessly changed lanes, downshifted, popped sunflower seeds—all while singing “Layla” at the top of my lungs. Yet within moments of the five-mile drive, I fumbled with the brakes, screeched to a halt on the freeway, and almost caused a major accident as Kay wondered what in the world had gone so very wrong with me (and whether we should turn back and pick up any required medication).

I didn't realize it quite then, but being responsible for others, especially our newborn, made me a nervous wreck. The simple drive home exposed an anxiety in me I had no idea was so deeply buried. Even before the little culprit in the backseat was able to say my name, he'd ferreted out one of my major issues.

When my mother came to help the week after the birth, her hovering and intrusive tendencies made Kay very uncomfortable. Raised to expect a lot of autonomy and space, Kay nonetheless tolerated it for several days and internalized heavy anxiety. After a few days, Kevin began to vomit forcefully every time he nursed. We hurried to the pediatrician.

"Your mother-in-law is making you anxious, Kay. And you, in turn, are making Kevin sick. Milan, you need to have your mom go home." We both sat in shock at the doctor's prognosis. I began to wonder if there wasn't something easier I could do—maybe swim to Catalina Island or hope my mom would get a sudden case of the flu. Surely there were better options than asking her to leave.

But somehow I got through the confrontation with my mother and she went home, and the vomiting stopped. Kay's anxiousness disappeared. But our little exposer had struck again.

Not only do kids reveal our weaknesses, they frustrate our need for control and predictability. Of course, we know logically that there's very little we control in life, yet we still fiercely defend our illusion and desire for it. But life changes. Somebody moves the cheese. We have kids, and on the day you've just started to understand them, they grow up and change and become completely different people.

This leaves us parents with a choice. We can allow our inadequacies to help us grow, or we can choose not to. Like little coaches pointing out weaknesses and defining our training, children and teens point spotlights on places we need to grow in our lives. In the area of faith, James put it well: "Consider it all joy. . .when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. . .that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2–4).

If we deny the truth about ourselves, then by choice or default we choose not to grow. These are the angry parents, the ones who have no purposeful solution. For them, it's a constant battle to shield themselves from the spotlight and figure out how to manage the discomfort when they find escaping it impossible. Their children end up alienated and neglected, eventually becoming angry adolescents and bearers of hand-me-down emotional injuries.

Trials in child rearing are opportunities to become more perfect and complete, yet the change must first be embraced. And the sad reality is that most parents will never take this first step to grow and will stay stuck in the old patterns they see as inescapable.

We recently asked an audience two questions: "How many of you had parents who grew and matured during your childhood?" Few hands were raised for that one. "How many had parents who apologized for some way they hurt you?" Again, only a few people raised their hands, but to those, we asked, "How did it feel when parents admitted their shortcomings?"

And what do you think they said? "Great." "I loved them for it." "I felt validated and seen."

CHANGING HOW YOU LOVE YOUR CHILD

You may not have had parents who admitted their weaknesses or attempted to learn from them. But you can be that kind of parent. And it may be easier than you think. The focus of this book is not on getting your children to change. As Jo, the professional nanny from the hit TV show *Supernanny*, points out, despite their behaviors, kids are usually not the problem. It's about *you* as a parent.

This book will reveal some blind spots in you as a parent. How are those unseen forces shaping your parenting? Through the course of this book, we'll discuss how to respond to your children, free from the dictates of your past. If you're willing to accept your children's spotlight and set

some goals for yourself to improve your responses, you *will* change your children by changing the quality of love you are giving them.

And you'll change their lives as well, even for future generations.

Imagine that. If you're like most, you didn't get this from your parents. You have probably already messed up with your kids in some big ways. The good news is that there's always time for redemption. It's always possible for parents to set things right. The great news is that brains are remoldable, especially kids' brains. And as we know from experience, all mistakes are redeemable.

No matter what water has gone under the bridge, there is hope for a better parenting future if you are willing.

And just in case you're still wondering how large that sock pile became that day: *one hundred twenty-three* socks.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What have you learned about yourself since becoming a parent that you didn't know or hadn't faced before?
- If you're married, what have you learned about your spouse since becoming a parent?
- What are some things your kids do that make you feel inadequate?
- How do you typically respond to those feelings?
- Did you ever feel inadequate as a kid? If so, did anyone know this and help you?
- If you did not receive help for feeling inadequate, is it possible that some feelings from your childhood could be bleeding into the present when your child makes you feel inadequate?