

## Laying the Structure of Morality Awakening Children to a Spiritual Dimension A dialogue between Patrick Bryson<sup>1</sup> and Nick Drummond

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### Summary

In this dialogue Nick Drummond discusses with Patrick Bryson his experience of using the model *It's Your Choice!* in a small school in Sweden. Nick feels that the example, "*shows a possibility for creating change on a much larger scale. These very inspiring stories that we are now documenting point to a hidden potential within children, parents and teachers.*" One of the stories concerns a nine-year-old boy, diagnosed with ADHD, hyper activity and receiving amphetamine medication (Ritalin). After two and a half months his asocial behaviour and bad language radically decreased. His ability to sit still and concentrate on a task, such as maths, increased from five to thirty minutes. The teachers and parents were, "*able to create a basic and fundamental structure of order that was clearly missing.*" One of the teachers used the following example showing the impact of the model *It's Your Choice!*, "*Either I ring your parents and you'll be sent home or you choose to calm down, sit at your table and work.*" The teacher returned shortly afterwards and said, "*Have you calmed down?*" and the boy replied, "*I'm going up the ladder! I'm going up the ladder!*"

This structure of order, a recognition of traditional values, is fundamentally important because, as Patrick Bryson explains, "*Now some of these children are actually benefiting from standing on that structure and are asking, 'Well if this ladder goes upwards where is it going and what's next?' whereas before that wasn't possible. They weren't able to look up because there was no ground to stand on to look up!*" This sort of question now puts pressure on the teachers; they then have to ask, "*Well, what is next?*" And as Patrick points out, "*If they don't have the experience, they may need to call on someone who has higher experience in order to find out what next is.*"

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These experiences reveal a potential for something very creative, positive and inspiring emerging within and between us. As Patrick Bryson says, *"What has emerged is a wholesome dynamic for creating the future. And that's really what the world needs desperately more of."* Because *"If you encourage children to get interested, ask questions, and to awakening to something that is positive, they inevitably respond."* But, *"If you encourage wrong behaviour, immoral actions and selfishness, that comes back on you as well. So you see how much responsibility we have as parents and teachers. We are actually creating the next generation...and so we want to accept responsibility for that."*

## **1. A great story about change**

**PB:** I've heard some great stories about the changes that are happening in the school that you were recently brought into assist (Svansjöns resursskola). I'd like to hear more fully about what this has opened up for the children and the teachers, what it now means, and expose what the way ahead is, because what has occurred is really the awakening of an evolutionary dimension. And because this isn't a static discovery, it implies an awakening up to something that is moving – evolution in the children and the teachers. So what are the implications of all of that?

**ND:** Svansjön is a small Swedish school, but it shows a possibility for creating change on a much larger scale. These very inspiring stories that we are now documenting point to a hidden potential within children, parents and teachers.

One of the people I interviewed is a mother to a nine-year-old boy. He is diagnosed as having ADHD, hyper activity and is on amphetamine medication (Ritalin). I interviewed her two and a half months after beginning. She described the change in her son's behaviour and thinking as being very significant and also recognised a very significant change having taken place in her own attitude, way of thinking and parenting style and how all this was brought about by the change that had occurred in the teachers. She saw the teachers as having changed very significantly in the way they were motivating her son as well as the other students. The simple fact that the teachers were being consequent and authentic in what they were saying and doing impacted her. Their leadership had become authoritative in a very positive sense. They were taking charge of a situation that was previously regarded as being a catastrophe, and doing so in a way that now instilled an atmosphere of confidence and security. They were recognising positive behaviour in the children and finding ways to rewarding it appropriately depending on the child's level of development. For example, instead of focusing ninety five percent of their attention on themselves and allowing their own attitude to be dependent on what mood they were in, and focusing ninety five percent of their communication on other peoples negative behaviour, they chose to take a big step back from their own self concern and focus on encouraging and rewarding positive behaviour in others. They chose to ignore negative behaviour and when necessary implement sanctions that required little time and effort, and this done in close cooperation with parents.

She told about how she, much like the teachers at the school, had until my intervention been very tolerant in regard to negative behaviour, and how she had now become very tough and very consequent in order to help her son. She described how difficult this change in attitude was, partly because of her son's extreme behaviour, but also because what I was saying, despite it making sense, was not found in any books or talked about by the child development professionals she had been in contact with, in effect because of the GREEN meme. She expressed herself very enthusiastically and authoritatively when speaking to me about the

dramatic change that had taken place as a result of my intervention at the school. For example, her son's ability to concentrate on a task, such as maths, had dramatically increased from five to thirty minutes.

**PD:** That's amazing!

**ND:** His use of bad language had also reduced very dramatically. When I first met this boy he gesticulated with his fingers what he thought about me and everyone else. His mother and teachers were certain that he had an additional diagnose such as Tourette syndrome, to explain his obsession in using bad language. Yet now they could testify on how he had become aware of his behaviour and that through choice it had almost nearly stopped.

**PD:** Amazing! Was this done on his own?

**ND:** Yes, but instead of regarding his bad language as being a serious problem, they chose to focus on rewarding him for his positive behaviour. They described their focus as having changed 180 degrees.

**PD:** And therefore he'd changed his other behaviour because of that?

**ND:** That's right.

**PD:** That's amazing!

## **2. Encouraging a step up the ladder**

**ND:** His teachers and parents changed their thinking [Lower Left quadrant] and began using a token reward system [Lower Right quadrant] appropriate to the level of the Spiral most active [Upper Left PURPLE - RED]. They rewarded him immediately and tangibly for his positive behaviour [Upper Right] using stars, diplomas and special privileges. They focused on recognising the things that he was already good at, and then lifted their expectations to encourage him to do even better. For example, they rewarded him for the five minutes he sat still and concentrated, and disregarded commenting on his negative behaviour for the rest of the lesson. They wanted to lift him up, not bring him down. So the teacher would say, "I know that you can sit for ten minutes and I'll reward you with a star when you do." So the boy was encouraged to take a step up the ladder. And at the end of the day if he received a maximum number of stars, he would be given a diploma to take home and show his family. His mother would then give him recognition and this made him feel very proud for what he had achieved. She also become resolute as to the positive behaviour she expected from her son. She had to be one hundred percent tough in setting boundaries, not giving in, no matter how much he provoked her in a battle over power. For her sons best she had to be a Big Boss RED. In order to instil discipline she could not allow herself to relinquish authority. At the same time she had to be very encouraging in recognising and rewarding positive behaviour [PURPLE] whenever she saw it. This was a significant shift for her, she realised that she had not been as tough and consequent in her behaviour as she had to be, and in effect had often rewarded negative behaviour.

The culture [Lower Left] changed. The teachers began holding the students responsible for their behaviour. So when this boy tested boundaries, tested their authority and behaved aggressively, they responded accordingly. They gave him a choice between doing what was good or a predetermined consequence. The teacher said, "Either you choose to calm down, sit

at your table and work or I ring your parents and you'll be sent home." His teacher returned shortly afterwards and said, "Have you calmed down?" and the boy replied, "I'm going up the ladder! I'm going up the ladder!"

So teachers assume responsibility and pass judgment as to what is good and bad in order to lift the students. This goes very much against the unhealthy GREEN values in our culture which treat everything equally.

The teachers emphasise "immediate reward" [RED] and not "punishment/negative consequences" [BLUE] as the method of motivating their students.

The problem is unhealthy GREEN cannot see depth. It does not like to "punish" or use negative consequences [BLUE] as this is considered repressive. It believes that everybody is born good, even RED, and that good behaviour does not need to be rewarded materially. To help create a breakthrough I used the film *Officer and a Gentleman* to inject the need for healthy BLUE in lone wolf/cowboy RED. Their GREEN humanistic thinking was provoked quite a lot in seeing the opening scene at the cadet school where sergeant Foley [Louis Gossett] talks to Zack Mayo [Richard Gere] and others in tough RED. But the film is about transformation and even here a breakthrough eventuated. They saw the film in a way they hadn't done so previously.

As one teacher commented, "The film made me look at my own way of thinking, and made me realise that I must dare to be that same mature adult I tell other people they should be. And through making this decision I've returned home to being true to myself, a self that I have been separated from over a long period of time. Instead of being very mature at the top of the pyramid [Leadership pyramid], I've been very immature at the bottom. But during these meetings I've been able to find my true self once again and understand the truth in this. It's very important that I behave as a mature adult in order to be a guide for students."

They now give the student clear and specific choices, allow the student to make his or her own decision, and then hold them responsible and accountable for what they choose. They are given one chance, the teachers want them to choose the positive side, but this has to be supported with tough RED leadership otherwise the teachers will be saying one thing while behaving very differently, and this never works. These kids are used to having teachers and parents give up on them [weak RED] so they place no trust in a sudden change, and in fact increase the level of their negative and aggressive behaviour in response. This in itself can become very trying if parents and teachers aren't resolute and in agreement. "They've always given up on me. I've always gotten what I wanted when I've behaved aggressively, so I'll do the same now." But in this case when he chose to behave aggressively, the teacher rang his mother and he was sent home four times in the first week. So parents and teachers need to have open communication and trust, they need to understand how one instils discipline and they need to make a firm stand, backing one another up completely. "And when he came home," as his mother said, "that's where the real consequences started."

**PD:** Yes. Right at home where it should be.

**ND:** She now says, "If you are good at school today I'll make you you're favourite spaghetti." Previously he came home and said, "What's for dinner?" She replied, "Have you been good today?" He said, "No, I hit someone at school and they were very angry at me." She would then make him his favourite meal. Today she says, "No. You have chosen to not have you're

favourite meal" and she doesn't hesitate in taking away his privileges. She carries out from his room his TV, his video, his computer, and his PlayStation. He gets put in his room, is allowed to read a book, and gets served a simple dinner: a sandwich, a glass of milk and a piece of fruit. And goes early to bed. And that's not fun. "He gets very angry if he doesn't have his spaghetti and meatballs," but that's how he begins to learn about cause and effect, that his behaviour has consequences. As she said to him, "Choose to do something positive and you will go up the ladder. Choose to behave badly and you will go down the ladder." And it's a necessary conflict she has to have with her son to get him to choose.

There's no way avoiding this painful conflict from RED to BLUE, but she described her newfound resolution to stand her ground and not give in to his negative behaviour. I asked her what happened when her son protested and retaliated against these boundaries. She said, "He screamed, he threw things; he threatened to kill me with a kitchen knife. He was very angry, violent and aggressive. He went crazy!" These episodes would last for periods of two hours or more. And, as I said before, he was sent home four times in the first week.

**PB:** Wow.

**ND:** And then his behaviour started to change. In the first month he was sent home ten times. He realised that the teachers and his mother meant what they said, they stood firm and didn't back down. Together they created an atmosphere that made him feel secure as they now responded to his behaviour in the same way, and this reinforces a healthy PURPLE where bonding and healthy relationship strengthens. So as his sense of security developed this further encouraged him to consequently choose positive choices, as these were being seen, recognised and rewarded by the adults around him. He was being rewarded with the things he enjoyed such as having access to his TV, video, computer, PlayStation and eating his favourite meals. And because he enjoyed these things he felt motivated.

### **3. A return to traditional values – a moral framework**

**PB:** It's very interesting what you are saying because what it sounds like is basically a return to traditional values. It's common sense really that there is an obvious need for this kind of structure, and that the onus does rely on the parents fundamentally working together with the teachers with the same goal in mind.

It isn't just that the child is suddenly becoming very mature and understanding why they need to do right and wrong. There is a structure for what right and wrong is and I see that as laying down the framework for morality. Because if you don't have those basic indicators of what right and wrong is, then you couldn't expect a higher understanding to emerge out of that. And obviously the solution to this issue lies at home. Because if children are not receiving this moral framework, and the teachers are being expected to be giving them that – and that's often the assumption these days when teachers are increasingly becoming more and more burdened with this responsibility – then it's not going to work. And therefore when children grow up and become citizens in this moral vacuum that leads to even more issues, problems and dysfunctionality. This example very much illustrates how morality is born at home because it sounds like the mother decided that it was important that discipline was established.

I'm curious to know why she suddenly took on that view because it's only when you realise that it's that important that you would be willing to take it that seriously. Because as you and Mats Edin have discussed previously, discipline [and the BLUE value system] has been thrown out as a means, it's sort of outmoded because the context for using discipline led often

to unhappiness and repression when it turned into punishment. But if we talk about discipline within this higher context then it is actually a very important ingredient for children's development, as a building block for character, sense of purpose and higher development. When we see this from a larger context it all fits together in a way that is very satisfying and understandable. And this story is a great example of that. You know what you are doing and why you have to be strong at certain times. It determines how you act in relationship to kids if your focus is on their development and not on a fixed state or set of values.

**ND:** That's right. In this case they worked closely together and were in agreement as to what was to happen. The mother was prepared for the teachers to ring her at work should it be necessary for her son to be sent home, whereupon she would enforce sanctions. There was no disagreement on the strategy or the thinking. She realised that this conflict with her son would be painful but that it was necessary and she was determined to realise something better emerge. And in fact, his behaviour worsened over the first few weeks before it improved. So she had to be very tough on herself in the beginning, to take a bold stand against his threats and to prioritise his behaviour and character development more than her own feelings and work. This is very significant because in a culture with GREEN values we don't want to be this tough all the time. We want to be caring but in a very naive way. It doesn't feel nice being tough in GREEN, in fact it feels very oppressive and leads to conflicts. And GREEN doesn't associate conflict as being good. Also, we really don't understand why the school can't take care of negative behaviour themselves.

#### **4. Taking responsibility for what we have done and the consequences**

**PB:** That's right. It's all lob sided because my understanding of what you are describing is that this mother had to take responsibility for what the child had become because of what she had done. So she was simply taking responsibility for what she had made of her child, it was her responsibility and I think this is something that as parents we have to face humbly. How children are, is really related to how we are or how much responsibility we are taking. And so there would have to be an undoing process in order to change this. Because she created him like that, mostly, and therefore she had to take responsibility for undoing that. And of course it's not his fault, in a certain way, but it sounds like he is aligning with a different focus, which he is doing willingly because he wants to.

**ND:** That's right, and the important people around him, his teachers and family, are supporting him. In fact everyone is choosing to accept a responsibility for what they are doing. He is choosing to accept responsibility to not become involved in conflicts with his classmates or teachers. His mother is taking responsibility for her part and his teachers are taking responsibility for their part.

**PB:** Right, everybody is being where they should be and doing what they should do.

**ND:** Exactly! You can appreciate the potential that this has when everybody works together.

**PB:** Is that unusual, that teachers and parents work together?

**ND:** Well this was the first time I saw this kind of cooperation within a developmental context and was able to document the vertical change happening in the parents, teachers and students. But of course parents and teachers do work together; it's just that the context is not on supporting vertical change.

## **5. The first step in laying down an essential moral structure**

**PB:** I'm very curious as to where this is all going to lead. By introducing a whole new different context and focus, a process seems to have been started up. And this is like the first stage of laying down the essential structure for fullness, coherence, working together, and sharing responsibility for more positive ways of interacting.

I also heard that one of these children who had been a lot of trouble was very happy to go to school each day and excited about engaging with others in this new atmosphere that's happening at school. And that he suddenly became curious and asked, "Well if this ladder goes upwards where is it going and what's next?" Which is very exciting to hear already. It indicates that something in the child is getting woken up to.

**ND:** Yes exactly. When I speak to children about this model they can identify an immediate sensation or experience of going up on the positive side and going down on the negative side. It is a direct experience for them, not something conceptual. They recognise a ladder going up and a ladder leading down. I help them identify, recognise and confirm this experience that they already have of feeling positive about something that leads upwards. They can identify this immediate experience of a certain behaviour that leads them upwards, and they can identify its opposite. So the question then becomes: where is this stairway leading? If I'm the one choosing to go up, then where is this path leading? And I think this is one very amazing experience because to my knowledge it is very different to what school children in Sweden normally experience when asking existential questions about the future. The future is not normally discussed in terms of this distinct choice between good or bad, nor an experience of going upwards in moral responsibility and respect. It is more like, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

**PB:** That's true. That's the only way the future is related to which, in comparison, is very dull. Obviously it has some bearing.

**ND:** It has some bearing but in terms of ones relationship with the future it is basically based on the past, on what has come before. So it is very limiting. It's like the future is reduced to reorganizing pieces that already exists, rather than boldly heading out into nothing and creating something radically new.

**PB:** In a way the framework is a very materialistic one, of what role are you going to play in the machine of society where you get rewarded with your material successes? But in terms of thinking very openly about what you could do or what the future could hold, it is very limiting. Depending on which age they are at they want to be a soldier, a spaceman, a hairdresser, or a star on MTV [laughter].

**ND:** Or else they may not know.

**PB:** That's right, because they are being given no real way of relating to the future. I know we are speaking about simple basic things, but it is very exciting just to introduce this larger context and dare to encourage thinking bigger and more openly.

## 6. Instilling a deeper sense of purpose and meaning

**ND:** That's right because nobody dares to think this big. It goes against our GREEN cultural norms. My response to this teacher was to tell the student, "You will be creating those next steps. You will be creating them and deciding where they lead." This felt very exciting for her as it suddenly opened up whole new possibilities that weren't there previously. Instead of being restricted by a materialistic framework, the teacher and student could now choose to accept responsibility to create what was going to come next.

**PB:** Potentially yes. It's really very interesting because I was also thinking about how initially this was a recognition by the teachers, and then a communication from the teachers and the parents to the child. But very quickly there is a demand being asked of the teachers and the parents. So this kind of interest works both ways. If you are awakening interest in children they are going to be asking those of us who are older, "What does this mean?" It isn't then just going one way from higher to lower, from older to younger, it's coming from younger to older as a demand. So then there is a pressure applied on us, if we don't know, then to find out.

## 7. Awakening a learning process for all of us

**ND:** So we awaken a very natural process. The questions that they are asking us have not been imposed on them; these questions are coming spontaneously from them.

**PB:** That's right, this is the exciting bit! This is what I have found when you encourage this kind of direction in children then they respond to it. They align with what's interesting in them selves and they just basically do what you ask. If you encourage children to get interested, ask questions, and to awakening to something that is positive, they inevitably respond. But just like when you don't lead them in the right direction, if you encourage wrong behaviour, immoral actions and selfishness that comes back on you as well.

So you see how much responsibility we have as parents. We are actually creating the next generation. I know we all know that, but what we put in comes back, and so we want to accept responsibility for that. So if we focus on and encourage higher things, and awaken this interest then it's going to come back to us, and then it becomes a cycle, a learning process for all of us.

**ND:** The teachers and the parents aligned their behaviour and thinking with a higher objective, and when this happened they experienced a response which further reinforced what they were learning. So they have gone from feeling very uncertain and insecure in how to respond to different forms of behaviour, to now feeling very secure and very certain. As one teacher said, "I no longer have to question what to do in every new situation I experience. Before it was like there were a thousand different buttons to push, whereas now I know exactly which buttons to push. I have a couple of different alternatives to choose from and I know they work."

So they became consequent in their actions and defended a higher position. The children changed and came back to ask, "Where is this leading?" And then I started asking the teachers; "Okay, so you've never experienced children in this school behaving and thinking in this way. How significant is this change? What does your experience imply if we compare it to the way your colleagues teach in this district?"

**PB:** You see how it's really all about evolution [laughter]! So if we are focused on going up the ladder, then what is further up the ladder?

## 8. What's next up the ladder?

**ND:** Exactly. The individual seems to awaken to and recognise a moral compass that can clearly distinguish higher from lower and good from bad. There is an up, there is good, there is a map with levels of development, and we have a choice as to what to do.

**PB:** That question from the child, "What's next?" is calling on what the next level can be. Using this example about the school, they've been able to create a basic and fundamental structure of order that was clearly missing. Now some of these children are actually benefiting from standing on that structure and are asking, "What's next?" whereas before that wasn't possible. They weren't able to look up because there was no ground to stand on to look up! So this seemingly very simple question becomes very profound when put into an evolutionary context. The teachers then have to ask, "Well, what is next?" And if they don't have the experience, they may need to call on someone who has higher experience in order to find out what next is. So the implication is that we all have to stretch and learn something here.

**ND:** It certainly has implications for everyone further up the hierarchy. What does it mean for teachers, what does it mean for school leaders?

**PB:** Exactly. What kind of school or home do we want to have? When I read your recent interview with Mats Edin<sup>2</sup>, where you said that your particular focus was on this overarching context of evolution, I think it forces us to stretch our attention to what all this means and where it can go, because sooner or later someone is going to be asking.

## 9. Overcoming resistance to change

**ND:** As Mats Edin and I have said before, we sense a huge potential for catalysing a second tier awakening in our society, and that gathering inspiring examples from education could play an important role. And because negative GREEN or Boomeritis, as Ken Wilber refers to it, resists change, conditions are being created in schools and education that desperately cry out for a higher level of awareness of who we are, along with a deeper sense of purpose and responsibility for what we do. This larger sense of responsibility comes alive when we put ourselves into an evolutionary context.

**PB:** How have you encountered resistance amongst teachers and parents to broaden ones context? And what have you used to deal with it?

**ND:** Great question. The day before meeting with them I was still unsure of what to do. I thought of how to present an outline of Ken Wilber's four quadrants as well as Spiral Dynamics. You know, I'm a typical guy who loves theories. Then that evening something amazing happened. I took part in an Enlightened Communication dialogue at the Andrew Cohen centre in Copenhagen and I realised that if I wanted to bring about change then *I* had to change first. That meant changing the way I was communicating to them in a radical way. So I resisted theorising and getting stuck in my own head, put all my own ideas aside. I created space in order to be present to what was happening, listening to them and what was being said. And when I did that I was able to make and point out important distinctions about what

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<sup>2</sup> What is Integral Education? Facilitating Human Emergence and the Evolution of Consciousness. An interview with Mats Edin, May 22, 2004. ([www.nordicintegral.com](http://www.nordicintegral.com))

was higher and what was lower. I made things as simple as possible and it happened very naturally.

**PB:** To start dealing with reality, peoples real experiences and being true to that.

**ND:** Yes. By explaining a theory I would have lost them. I would have created another barrier to open communication.

**PB:** Because unless we can negotiate sticking points and resistance, we're not really of much use. Here you're demanding a shift in your own development.

**ND:** Exactly. And I could feel the resistance inside myself. I would have loved to tell about Spiral Dynamics! Instead I listened and used their examples, the problems they were having, how they were tackling them and the results they had been getting as a way to point out levels in development and thus helping them move to a higher level. I started making them aware that they had to choose. Which perspective sounds more mature? Which is better? Which is higher?

**PB:** That's fascinating.

**ND:** So using their own experiences, including the quality of our immediate experience of listening and talking to each other, I was able to point out a vertical dimension, that these different experiences had different qualities, some higher, some lower. This helped them recognise the existence of vertically almost immediately. So when I pointed out different levels of behaviour [Upper Right], I was then able to point out different correlating levels of thinking [Upper left], leading [Lower Left] and reward systems [Lower Right] without any models!

**PB:** That's fascinating, because you are pointing out to them something that is already in their experience, which is also where the solution lies.

**ND:** That's right. The solution was in getting them to change their thinking, attitudes and behaviour. To have them recognise the necessity to stretch to something higher, morally higher, that they had to pass judgement on what was higher and what was lower. It's easy explaining a theory, but it's hard to get someone to change his or her attitude and way of thinking, in particular GREEN, which dislikes being judged or to rank levels of development. I explained early on that they would feel I was being harsh when I said that their personal feelings and opinions were of no interest to me and would only keep everybody in an egocentric victim position. For the sake of a higher purpose we had to leave behind our personal agenda and support each other in this choice to go higher.

**PB:** This leads us back to the very basic model that you were using (figure 1). It's a living model; it's not just showing a map. It shows us making the choice and encouraging the choices to be made. In your mother and son example, she's forcing him in that way to make the choice. But depending on the circumstances and people you are dealing with, you can also set up the conditions that will encourage people to make this choice. This differs from a therapeutic approach where you are basically trying to comfort the ego, accept it and make room for it.

## It's Your Choice!

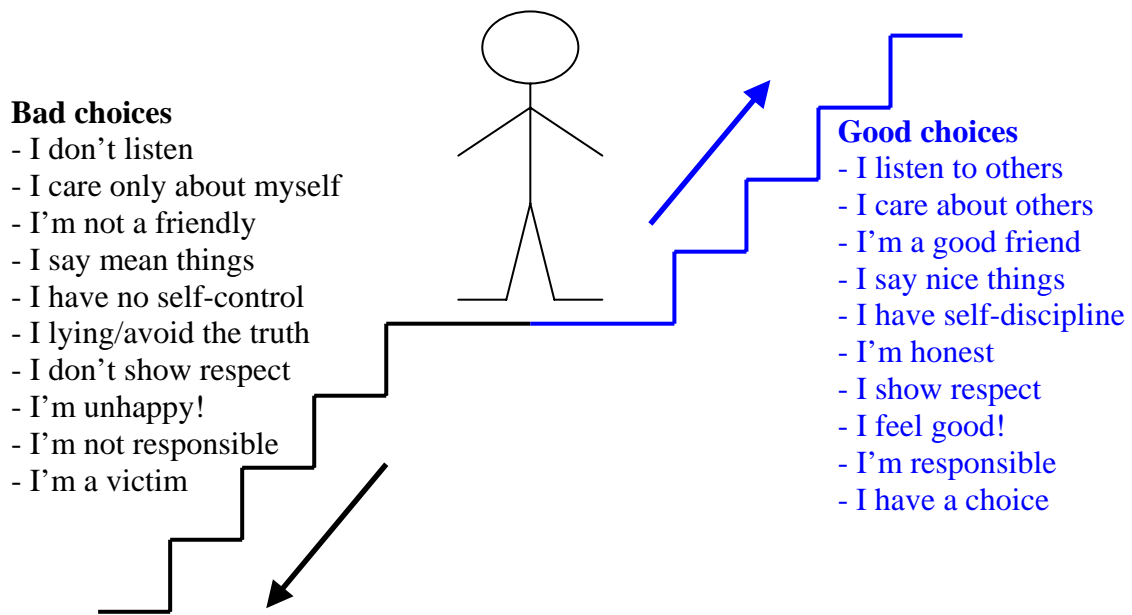


Figure 1. *It's Your Choice!* (A staircase representation of the Hell and Heaven model by Andrew Cohen. Based on enlightened communication dialogues held by Patrick Bryson together with groups of children).

**ND:** Helping it feel better about the choices being made.

**PB:** Yes. Whereas the method you're using brings in a higher focus, a higher choice making process.

**ND:** This mother was telling me, as I said before, that she felt her son must have been suffering from an additional disorder that could explain his aggression and severe use of bad language. As therapy was not helping she was looking for another disorder with which to label his behavioural problem.

**PB:** When in fact he didn't have one! Well he had a disorder, but the focus was bottom up.

**ND:** It changes what we mean by disorder. His behaviour was not socially acceptable, but the responsibility for causing it lied with her. So when she changed her behaviour and thinking, he changed his behaviour and thinking.

**PB:** That's amazing to hear. It shows that the source of these problems are not psychological they are actually spiritual, it's coming from a bigger context.

### 10. Growing up in a context where authenticity is the rule book

**ND:** Yes and this is where I have benefited a lot from listening to your experiences with the group of children engaged in enlightened communication.

In the time we have left I'd like to discuss more with you the possibility of children growing up in alignment with the authentic self as it's a subject I feel very passionate about.

**PB:** A lot of this is theoretical at this point. But I'm very interested in what it would mean for children to grow up in a context where authenticity was the rule book and where living according to deeper values would be the guidelines. I've started to question my own assumptions about what children can be and could be and what place ego development has in all of this. Of course when children are born they have yet to develop a sense of individuation, a sense of self, in which to function from. But my question is, do we have to go through so many years of life experience, pain, wrong choices and disappointments in order to start to become interested in waking up to and finding something more meaningful? All of that gets put into question. Imagine children being brought up with parents and teachers who are aligned with a higher meaning, it's going to have a huge effect on the development of children and what they become, who would then become part of an evolving whole themselves. So there would be a dynamic contribution, it wouldn't simply be a static passing on of information. You could see it as an ever-deepening discovery. This obviously hasn't happened yet, but I can see that just simply being curious about that possibility and seeing the potential is an important beginning to it.

### **11. What we communicate is what our children are becoming**

**PB:** And definitely the onus is on each one of us as parents and teachers. It has to rely on us taking responsibility for these higher values in order for them to become available for children. For both you and I who are now parents, this isn't theoretical anymore; it's a real time urgent situation. It calls into question: who we are and what we're doing with our lives. What we are communicating is what our children are becoming. Just speaking about my own experience with my nine-year-old daughter, I'm actually quite amazed at how quickly things are changing with her in ways that I wasn't prepared for. And in terms of the meetings that we've been having, lately I've wanted to make it much more practical. They've discovered something together that is very exciting. But I want to translate that for them into "who they are, who they become, and what they do" in a much more real way. Because I think this is the true value of spiritual experience; what does it really mean about who we are, what we express and what we become?

### **12. Documenting the process for other children**

**ND:** That's exciting. What ideas have they come up with?

**PB:** Recently we got together to explore what we could do together and how they could be part of the environment they are in when they visit the centre in London. We focused on the practical and had a brainstorm about what else could we be doing together, in addition to spending time doing the things kids their age normally do. Simple that question: What else could we be doing together? As soon as we looked into how this would relate to other children if they came to be part of this group and interact with us in this way, what would that mean? The atmosphere between us became very exciting and there was a sense of being in touch with a very creative vibe and one of the kids said, "We should record what we are discovering and create something." It wasn't pre-empted by me, it came from the children and they were all amazed at what was happening. We had entered into a very creative environment and lots of ideas were coming out of them about what they could do together. This isn't the way you usually interact with children. Usually you're telling them or suggesting what they should do and they're sort of agreeing saying, "Yeah that might be a good idea", reluctantly or not. If they want to be good kids then they'll say, "Yes that's a good idea." If they're being not quite with it or being rebellious they'll say, "No", they don't go along with it. But all of those qualities were not present, we were in something together and

they were viewing what they could do from a very interested and excited place in relationship to what it could mean for other children. This was totally unexpected from my part, but it was instigated by "let's focus on the practical" rather than just having a nice feeling together. The next phase is to encourage them to follow through with these ideas. One of them has responded in an amazing way by actually starting the book! He wanted to write the introduction there and then and started working on that.

**ND:** It's certainly sounds exciting.

### **13. Children responding to an evolutionary call in their own experience**

**PB:** Yes I think it is. What excites me is that I feel I'm in the process of discovery with children. It's very interesting and very positive. And somehow you know that there is a lot of potential and I sense that there is a lot here to discover. Something has begun that is going to keep on evolving because of the way the children are responding. They're not just going along with a nice idea and behaving well. It's different from that. It's not just about behaviour, there's a creative dimension to it that is coming from them. There is something that is pulling them in their own experience.

I'm speaking of three children, which is not a lot of material to deal with, but I can definitely see character development. For example, in one of the boys, there is a noticeable dignity and availability in the way he is, even over several months, that is unusual in an eleven-year-old. So I'm very curious to know what all this means with more children and more structure and more organisation, yet still applying the same context, encouragement and exploration.

### **14. It's your choice**

**ND:** Much of our discussion has focused on the model we began talking about in March, which originated from your dialogues with these three children in London (figure 1). Could you comment more on that?

**PB:** I find in my own experience how our own individual responsibility plays a huge part in this. If we want real change to happen then, as you were saying before, we can't just take a map or a model, it isn't enough. It shows in this case that it can have big impact if some very basic structures are missing but if we want deeper change to happen and also to continue, then the model has to represent something that is in our own heart. It has to be something that we care about. Because the interesting thing is, that life being the way it is, when we apply forces of change then of course everything shifts and moves and the only way to be available to that, to be responsive to more change and positive change, is that we're actually deeply and emotionally involved and engaged in that model as ourselves. This is what then allows us to adapt with the change that is happening. You could say, "Go with the flow." It's a very important part of this and it's about having real responsibility to care for change. Because change in itself doesn't just lead to another static situation, it leads to more change and you want to be available to that and then this model that we are using actually becomes a living thing that is happening between people and that's what makes it very very exciting and very liberating for everyone. What is so profound about this model is that it is actually something deeply true to how life actually is – so it applies to all of us, and if we are helping children to change and to evolve, it does include us as well. So this is where the distinction between the map and the theory starts to disappear and we are asked to engage in a living and full understanding of how things work and where these choices are leading us.

## **15. Parents and teachers interested in wholeness and goodness**

**ND:** What you're saying is quite profound. You mean that the teacher or the parent, who is using this model to facilitate an emergence of something higher in the child, has to have recognised something higher within him or herself for this model to actually come alive.

**PB:** Yes, I mean this would be an ideal situation of course, but in order for a deepening of their understanding to occur and to continue to deepen then implied is that some of us have to be very committed to what this is about. Like I said previously, this is all leading somewhere so there has to be deep interest in that. Otherwise it will just turn into another static situation or another plateau inevitably where it stops once again.

**ND:** What would that imply then for a parent or teacher?

**PB:** Well I think it implies a simple interest in what wholeness and goodness actually means for ourselves and for those we care about.

**ND:** Parents and teachers would be demonstrating that quality?

**PB:** Well they should be, yes, because the unavoidable truth is that where we're at and what we are really caring about is revealed in what we do. So if we are speaking about new generations then that is what they are going to become. So the more interested we can be in goodness and wholeness then the more that is going to become what we pass on.

**ND:** So that would mean expressing this in some way.

**PB:** Yes, and I think just as a way of being. It wouldn't be a theory that you are applying – this is in its deeper sense – it's what we are actually communicating. Because we are speaking about all this in the context of communication, so inevitably who we are is what we communicate. So I'm speaking about deeper levels of what this is all about, and I think it is very exciting to start to enquire into what that is. I don't think we're fully aware of our perspective or worldview and of course then that is what children are going to be absorbing. You can see it all the time – you look at children and you know how the parents are [laughter]!

**ND:** And now the parents would be more alive as to where they were coming from?

**PB:** I think even starting with them having an interest in this question. Realising that it is something important to contemplate, and that in itself would make a change.

**ND:** Because that would change how they are communicating with the child both verbally and at other levels.

**PB:** Right, exactly! Because if you are a parent who is interested and who has a curiosity I guarantee that children will also be like that as well. It can only be a healthy thing.

**ND:** And then when that is happening, this map starts to come alive with examples.

**PB:** Exactly! Then you have the map actually representing a living reality, which you and the child are trying to align with. I have found that using the teaching models of Andrew Cohen help the children to understand. So if you are using maps which are based on reality, on

deeper truths, and then you are also engaged in them and interested in them yourself; you have created a circle of learning and teaching in which the children, the parents and the teachers can all be part of. And what has emerged is a wholesome dynamic for creating the future. And that's really what the world desperately needs more of.

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