

SAVING OUR KIDS SAVING OURSELVES



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“There is no greater insight into
the future than recognizing...
when we save our children,
we save ourselves”

— Margaret Mead

Saving Our Kids – Saving Ourselves

Non-Fiction book

By

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*I dedicate this book to my children and
husband.*

~

*To Matthew, who first awakened me to a new
way of parenting and teaching.*

*To Kamil, who forced me to look deeper than I
ever would have imagined needed.*

*To Kalila who demonstrates unconditional
love and was a second mother to her littlest
brother.*

*To my husband, Mo, without whom this life
and learning would not have been possible, or
as enjoyable.*

~

*I thank you all from a depth in my heart
that I did not know existed until you all came
into my life. xo*

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PREFACE

Our children are crying out in pain. The rate of school violence, not only shootings, but stabbings, beatings, bullying, as well as depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, dropping out, and teachers burning out – are clarion calls to a new way of being with our children. So far, we are standing around shocked at their deaths and despair, complaining, blaming, and altering – and we are not solving a thing.

We carry with us old beliefs and ideals, as well as manners of behavior, that no longer serve us. Yet, we are attached to them as if our lives depend on it. This needs to change; we need to become more adaptable and flexible because living in this time, and at this speed, demands it of us. Humans do not like change, yet we must now expect, be prepared for, and adopt change quickly and easily if we are to

continue evolving rather than perish from stubbornness.

We are overdue in changing our perception of childhood, of learning, as well as teaching. Like any complex mechanical object that is broken – we must take it apart to find the problem; and when we do, it's a big scary mess unless we're already sure we know how to rebuild it. I am asking everyone to trust that there will be a way to integrate these different ideas about childhood and learning into the lives we lead now.

INTRODUCTION

Witnessing the first belly laugh from my seven-year old in over a year, I struggled to hold back tears so as not to ruin this moment of sheer joy. His step-dad had merely told a silly joke, but the reaction it triggered in Matthew was a dream come true. As I watched him throwing himself in a fit of laughter, his eyes watering up and the hint of hiccups coming on, I stood in silent wonder at what was transpiring before me; my child was coming back to life, back to his former care-free self. I knew I'd just been given a gift. I knew in that tender but powerful moment, that our long-running nightmare was over. The only difference in my son's life was my decision to permanently remove him from school just two weeks prior.

Only weeks before, we could imagine no way out: The family anxiety over the daily struggle of school

felt hopeless. From coaxing Matthew to get up and get ready in the morning, to struggling to get him into the car, then into the school building each day required enormous emotional and physical strength. Fighting over homework and dealing with his moods throughout became our hell. Some days I literally couldn't drag him inside the school doors, and his crying pleas broke my heart. The ultimate panic hit me on one of those days where I had taken him to work with me again at our café: My friend, a social worker in a youth protection facility said to me "You know Marilyn; they could take Matthew away from you for truancy".

This was all I needed to hear to turn me into Psycho-Mom. Now entering our third year of constant struggle, I felt helpless about how to get my child to cooperate, and exasperated at having to bring him to work with me once again. With no idea where to turn for help -- as neither his teachers nor the

principal could offer a cause or solution for his fear of school -- I felt alone and without options. *Was there no one else who could understand what we went through each day?* It didn't make sense to me why no one bothered to understand that Matthew was authentically panicked by the act of entering school, and that there was something needing to be addressed rather than blindly enforced.

My friend's voicing of this very real possibility sent me into a hysterical response: I found myself standing over my beloved child, screaming as forcefully as I could that they would take him away from me; terror taking over my every cell, and injecting it into his. I was in the grips of being the kind of explosive mom I had committed never to be again. I could think of no way out, no better response, but to try to bully him into school. Suddenly, at the height of my screaming, a calm thought floated gently into my mind:

*"There is something bigger going on here,
something needing to be understood."*

I have since come to understand that there is always a cause behind behavior, and there is always a loving solution; no matter the circumstances, and no matter the ideas we currently hold about it. My research began, and from what I observed, as well as read about in hundreds of families' stories, I can now assert and substantiate the following: The bullying, self-mutilation, dropout and teacher burnout rates, the extremes of depression, violence, and diagnoses; and yes, the suicides and shootings, are caused by the way we school and treat our children, and therefore can never be eradicated within the paradigm of the current system of learning.

*"All truth passes through three stages:
First it is ridiculed, second it is violently
opposed, third it is accepted as self-evident."
- Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860).*

Chapter 1

NO LESS THAN GREATNESS

"We are, most of us, less than we have the demonstrated capacity to be."

Jean Huston, Founder of the Human Potential Movement.

We all seek success and happiness for our children, and schooling is our hope to get them there. With so many children struggling, being diagnosed and medicated, dropping out, being bullied, or simply failing - what are we left with as a path and a means? Is there a different way of educating that could meet our children's needs along with our parental, and societal goals? Is the solution outside of school, as many have chosen, or with the experts within who seek to reform it? Perhaps it is a merging of the minds that is needed. Thank you for joining me on this journey in search of the elusive answers.