



Director's Corner

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One day I was taking my turn at feeding the family. My wife and I are one of those liberated couples that share in household tasks - which essentially means that we're equally intent upon washing the clothes - tomorrow. After completing dinner, I called for the children to come to dinner. After a delay that was apparently too long to my liking, I called out using my "this-is-the-last-notice" voice. Two of the three came scabbling to the table, but the third, and oldest, remained a no-show. I called a few more times, loud enough for the neighbors to dial "9-1-"; anticipating the scream that would necessitate the final "1"; still no response.

Of course now I'm in seek-and-destroy mode. When I find him he's sitting in front of the computer. He turns before actually seeing me, apparently hearing the electrons crackling around me. I'm barely able to maintain my composure long enough to get out, "Didn't you hear me calling you!" To which he responds with utter innocence in his face, "I didn't hear you Baba".

Several weeks later I'm sitting at the computer with no distractions, and finely focused. That is until I feel the air crackling, and turn to see my wife with eyes so tight she looks like Cyclops from the X-Men. "Are you eating or not", her deathly eyes locking me in a frozen trance. It becomes apparent that she's been calling me for a while, and, on this point I'm reasonably certain, I haven't been responding.

When our first child was born, my wife and I didn't know who he looked

like. This was OK, since we knew he belonged to us (one of the benefits of a monogamous relationship). It wasn't until later that I realized the physical similarities, while making for great family portraits, is far less significant than the similarities of behavior, nuance, and spirit. There certainly aren't too many things cooler than helping your daughter with homework and realizing, "hey, those are my hands she's writing with!", but when your child behaves like you, it is an education of self that can't be duplicated; to literally see yourself raw, and miniaturized.

Our children are certainly not clones of us, but they most certainly reflect particular aspects of our character. It's a marvel in divine intelligence. The person best suited to teach a child, is the person most like the child. This

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is why we believe the parent is the first teacher. However, this only works well if the parent is sufficiently self-reflective to see themselves and their own imperfections. Otherwise we have parents chastising children for behavior for which the parent is equally guilty. Parents are saved from being absolute hypocrites, only because they've had years to mask their imperfections. Where a parent takes pride in having multiple interest, they accuse their child of lacking focus. The parent who is perceived as being outspoken and articulate, berates the child for being disrespectful and bossy. When in fact these are mirror images, differing only by the passage of time and maturity - and not always by maturity, because where you may see yourself as having multiple interests, everyone else just thinks you're flaky.

Before chastising a child for being prisoners of their own DNA, ask yourself How much of their behavior is reflected in you? Before berating a child for being loud, pose the question to yourself. Why are you so loud? Or disorganized, or forgetful, or confrontational, or scared

to assume leadership? Or why do you lie so much? Our children are as much our teachers, as we are theirs. If we're truly open to the transformation that greatness requires of each of us, then we'll better understand that the lessons are bidirectional. The lessons we impart to our children, are many times the very lessons that we must learn.

This applies equally to frustrated parents of adult children. They're perplexed as to why their child does not heed their pearls of wisdom - not realizing that aging does not impart wisdom; wisdom comes from self-awareness and transformation. Unfortunately the absence of self-reflection does not allow older parents to realize that someone gave them the same advice that they didn't heed either. So the lesson is not to transfer advice that they didn't respond to, but to better understand why they didn't, and to be open and honest with their adult child - so the child doesn't just receive the advice, but the life lesson.

Through my oldest I came to realize that he may need a "walk up" notice, not because he is being disrespectful, but because he zones in on activities that engage him; whether on the computer or building legos - in the same way his baba does. While I try to "zone" out less, not so much to avoid family dinners (although this is important), but because I also tend to lose sight of greater priorities.

Nevertheless, we still have the responsibility to correct our children's behavior. The child does not get a free pass from cleaning their room, because we suddenly realize that our life is in as much disarray as our children's room. But before offering the correction, do a personal inventory. How can you correct your own similar behavior? And use this knowledge to help yourself and your child, so that in 20 years they won't have to address the same lessons as adults.

"...in pursuit of the whole African".