

**ROLAND GILBERT'S**

Stress-free Power Parenting System®



**ROLAND GILBERT'S**  
Stress-free Power Parenting System®

Volume 1  
PARENTING TROUBLED YOUTH:  
Success Secrets for Parents, Professionals,  
and Volunteers

[www.PowerParenting.net](http://www.PowerParenting.net)



Aventine Press

"I believe these tools will help men and women everywhere. I've never experienced anything like it before. Thank you, Roland."

*-Tisha Boissiere*

"I've learned a lot, and now I'm a better person who is ready to move on to a better life. Now I'm ready for leadership with my children."

*-Nolia Harrison*

"I found out some issues about myself that I did not know existed. Roland taught me solutions. . . . This was one of the greatest experiences I've had in my life."

*-Barbara Riley*

"I'm going to use these tools in my everyday life. . . . If I had known what I know now I would have changed my program a long time ago."

*-Alice Foy*

"I have been so blind . . . even Ray Charles could see what I have been doing to myself and my family . . . but today I can see. Thank you, Roland."

*-Ronald Young*

"I learned that I had a lot of pain from the past, but most importantly, I learned how to forgive and let the hurt go . . . so I can be a better parent."

*-Lesley Hines*

"Roland taught me how the bad messages I received will be past to my child if I don't learn how to separate the good ones from the bad. Roland's teaching has given me the courage to face this head on and work on recognizing and changing these messages. I have to be responsible to me before I can be responsible to my kids. I recommend these tools to the world."

*-Rudolph Lincoln*

"I learned how to control my anger and attitude. I realize that I have been programmed to live a life of fear. I now know I must come out of my box in order to be able to be a good mother to my children."

-*Vicki Moore*

"Roland has helped me with a problem I've been dealing with for fifteen years. I'm going to get to work on this so I can help my children."

-*Lutner Hill*

"Since learning these tools, I am committing to turn my whole life around and to become a new person. My children will live a different life."

-*Vickie Jackson*

"I now have the tools to help deal with anything that comes my way—without violence."

-*Patricia Lopez*

"I learned . . . to teach children how, the right way, without raising my voice, and still be direct to them and show the child what I am."

-*Archie Hollman*

"I have finally learned the truth instead of having a therapist sugar coat what I needed to know, what my real issues were with my children."

-*Doreen Villasana*

"Roland has helped me allow myself to open up and be a more loving parent. My children will not have to experience the emotional pain and abuse that I have known. I've grown from the pain and now I can let go of the past. Thank you, Roland."

-*Monique Singletary*

"I learned a lot about myself that I did not know. But what I learned is very valuable to me and my child. I will use what I have learned to help my child in many ways. . . . It was easy to understand what you were teaching and thanks to Roland, I can move along with my life."

*-Timothy Wade*

"I have learned tools to break the cycle of the way I was living and show my children there is a better way—a healthier way."

*-Karmen Johnson*

"I am now forty-three years of age. I have been to all kinds of groups: NA, AA, Post Acute Withdrawal, Delayed Detox Syndrome, Male and Female Relations, and Feeling and TAC groups. But I have never experienced anything like your tools. You have the tools for life and I thank God that He sent them my way."

*-Vince Taylor*

"I never thought I could stop using drugs, or be able to get my life back together, to be once again a mother to my kids. . . . Roland gave me the strength, courage and faith that I could have whatever I want by being the person I am. . . . And everything Roland taught me I am going to practice with my kids today, before it's too late."

*-Lynne Webb*

"I have learned that I had resentments against my parents and women, and now I have tools that I can use to free myself. I feel that honestly now I am free to let my essence out, the spirit of my youth, the innocence and the love of life. These tools should be shared with my children and other family members. These are tools and rules to live by."

*-Anthony Moore*

"I learned that there is nothing wrong with Arnita. . . . I learned that somewhere out here in this world there is a place for me. . . . I have a choice today. And that choice is to make things better for me and my children."

—*Arnita L. Osborn*

"These tools have caused me to look at myself and others differently."

—*William Beal*

"Roland taught me a lot about self-love, goals and how to reach them, the welfare of my child, and basically how to change my life."

—*Tracie Taylor*

"I learned to be more honest with my children and to give respect to my wife and myself. . . . What I was like before these tools was nothing like me today."

—*Kenneth Adams*

"I am not afraid anymore to feel my real feelings today and share them with my children."

—*Eugena Washington*

"Thank you Roland for saving my life, so I can raise my children properly."

—*Robert Evans*

"I thought my life had no meaning until I received the tools from Roland."

—*Sharon Young*

"I personally want to thank Roland. You have given me my life back."

—*Luana Talton*

"I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent."

*-1 Chronicles 29:17*

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## Books by Roland J. Gilbert

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Look for these forthcoming books in the *Roland Gilbert's Stress-free Power Parenting System*<sup>®</sup> series:

*Volume 2, Surviving Childhood: Re-Parenting Yourself for Success and Happiness*

*Volume 3, Power Parenting: Doing It Right the First Time*

Please visit [www.PowerParenting.net](http://www.PowerParenting.net) for updates, news, and free stuff.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this book series to the unlimited possibility of human kind to reach its full potential as human beings.

And to Jesus Christ, my risen Lord and Savior, and all my big brothers and sisters whose shoulders I stand upon. Especially, Buddha, Muhammad, Abraham, Ptah-Hotep, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, The Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas K. Gandhi, Viktor E. Frankl, Virginia Satir, Paulo Friere, John Bradshaw, Wayne W. Dyer, John & Linda Friel, Ken Keyes, Jr., Brooke Medicine Eagle, L.S. Barksdale, Malcolm X, Anthony Robbins, Louise Hay, Napoleon Hill, Catherine Ponder, Mother Teresa, Gerald G. Jampolsky, Earl Nightingale, Charles E. Blake, Claud Anderson, Abraham H. Maslow, Kenneth C. Ulmer, Carter G. Woodson, Na'im Akbar, David Walker, Dorothy Corkille Briggs, Anthony T. Browder, Frederick K. C. Price, Thomas D. Willhite, Norris Blake Lewis, John Gray, Charles Stanley, James Arthur Baldwin, Deepak Chopra, Neale Donald Walsch, James P. Comer, Alvin F. Poussaint, Les Brown, Carl Gustav Jung, Kenneth Copeland, Joseph Campbell, Robert A. Schuller, Albert Einstein, M. Scott Peck, Alice Miller, and Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela—to name a few.

Life is perfect, whole, and complete. There is nothing wrong, nor is there anything missing. We have everything we need, right now, to do whatever we choose. On this exciting adventure, called life, we only have love to give and challenges to overcome. Our intelligence satisfies our self-interest for this time, and wisdom satisfies all interest for all times. Our challenge is to be both intelligent and wise.

The purpose of life is to give and receive love. And each of us will find our own individual meaning in life through discovering and cultivating our talents and sharing them with others. Giving is our key, to financial wealth, human happiness, and fulfillment. Are you a giver, or a taker in life?

*-Roland J. Gilbert*

## Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge God for being my best friend, family, and primary protector, provider, teacher, and parent. And my earthly parents, Maurice and Mary Ellen Gilbert, for choosing to love me and be my secondary protectors, providers, and teachers. Dad and Mom didn't have to do it, but I'm so glad they did.

To my family: my beautiful daughter, Terry, who is here for me, although I have not always been there for her; and my loving and compassionate sister, Rosemary Jacobs, who always believed in me, and soothed and motivated with, "everything is everything darling."

This book would not be possible without them.

Thanks to my editor, Bobbe Needham. She earns her Web site moniker: "theworddoc."



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# Introduction

## Why Should You Read This Book?

I wrote this book for you.

"When the student is ready, the teacher will appear," is an old Buddhist proverb. There is a reason you are reading these words. Our meeting is not by accident.

The Central Alaskan Yup'ik people have an ancient language with fifteen different words for snow. *Webster's Dictionary* says we have one word for "parenting." *Webster's* also says this word first appeared in 1958 and has no synonyms. I believe parenting transcends "the work or skill of a parent in raising a child or children," or "the act or process of becoming a parent," or "the act of caring for someone in the manner of a parent."

Too many people confuse nurturing with parenting. Nurturing provides elements for growth and healthy living. Nurturing is

necessary, but parenting has its own definition apart from nurturing.

I believe parenting is a higher calling with a profound purpose. Parenting is a sacred responsibility, because parenting is the only way individuals can achieve their full potential as human beings, the only way humankind can achieve its full potential. Parenting transforms life and connects us to the future.

This book gives you a new definition for parenting. My description explains why you parent, and what to do. My system is built upon three major principles—Integrity Structure, Discipline, and Balance—plus new definitions for parenting and discipline.

### **How to Read This Book**

I suggest you read the whole book from beginning to end like a novel because, like a novel, it goes somewhere. On your first reading, I recommend you don't try to dig too deeply. Notice what interests you most and keep going. The people and stories are real—enjoy them. I changed some names to protect privacy, and some characters are composites. But if you like real-life dramas, you won't be bored.

Don't worry about understanding everything as you go—it will make sense later. The meaning of stress-free power parenting will crystallize for you in the last chapter. You will then be in a position to fully appreciate the powerful tool you have acquired, and its sweeping implications.

The second time you go through the book, you will understand much more because of the perspective you bring with you from the first

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reading. Now is the time to read more slowly, look for subtleties, and apply the principles to your own experiences. With each rereading, I believe you will discover new insights.

This book will answer your questions and help solve your problems. It will also help you and your child find more peace, happiness, joy, fulfillment, purpose, and meaning in life. After reading this book you will *feel the power!* In success seminars I conduct all over the United States, I help people discover and cultivate their greatness and give their gifts to the world. Through this book, I hope to help you as I have helped thousands of others.

### **What Is Parenting?**

What is parenting? Why do you do it? These are the ultimate questions, because the answers to them provide the ultimate solutions. How you answer these questions will greatly determine your degree of stress and power while parenting, and the results you get. I have some answers to help you become the most effective parent you can be. Parenting will be more a joy, and less a job. My strategies can relieve stress, eliminate guilt, and create more fun and fulfillment in your parenting experience.

This book will give you the answers.

Roland Gilbert's Stress-free Power Parenting System® is a philosophy of parenting. It is a system of principles to guide the conduct of your life as a parent. You will also find it useful in most other areas of your life. I call it Roland Gilbert's Stress-free Power Parenting System® because I'm the person who culled an assortment of ancient principles and arranged

them in a unique way that is practical and easy to understand and apply—for anyone.

My claim to fame is much like Alexander Graham Bell's. The story goes that Elisha Gray invented a working telephone before Bell did. Gray's phone could transmit some sounds, but not speech. Gray sued Bell for stealing his invention, because the only difference between his phone and Bell's phone was the turn of a screw. Bell turned the screw on his phone one-quarter turn farther than on Gray's phone, producing the continuous electrical current needed to transmit speech. Gray's phone had alternating electrical current.

The judge, when awarding the patent to Bell, is reported to have said: "While it is true the devices are the same, except for the turn of a screw, Mr. Gray did not think to turn the screw and Mr. Bell did, and that little change made all the difference in the world between success and failure."

I cannot attest to the accuracy of this story, but it does make two important points that apply to parenting. First, my new definition for the word *parenting*, my *turn of the screw*, is the main reason I call this philosophy Roland Gilbert's Stress-free Power Parenting System.<sup>®</sup> Second, sometimes a small change in our parenting philosophy can make all the difference in our results.

### **New Times Require New Methods**

All human beings conduct themselves based upon what they consciously or unconsciously believe. We each have philosophies about many things. Every so often, I have found it helpful to look

at where my philosophies come from—as the woman in this story does.

Once upon a time, a husband stood in the kitchen having a happy conversation with his wife, while watching her prepare dinner. She cut both ends off the beef roast before she put it into her roasting pan. Puzzled, he asked her why she did that. She replied she had always done it, and she never really thought about it, because her mother always did it. Now even more curious, he asked her to call her mother and ask why she did it.

The woman called her mother, who said she had always done it, and she never really thought about it, because her mother always did it. Now the wife was intrigued. She called her grandmother to inquire about this beef preparation procedure.

Her grandmother replied that when she first married her grandfather, they were very poor and she could afford only one small roasting pan. Whenever they were fortunate enough to have a beef roast, she would cut off the ends to make it fit into her pan.

Many of us are parenting according to part or all of a philosophy that no longer applies to our current life.

## **The Way I Teach**

This book does not have a chapter dedicated exclusively to questions and answers. You will not find the answers to specific questions like “How do I get Johnny to clean up his room?” To me, the difference between answering such questions and Roland Gilbert’s Stress-free Power Parenting System® is the difference between giving you a fish and teaching you how to fish. One fish may meet

your immediate needs, but learning how to fish will keep on meeting your needs forever. Rather than answer specific questions, my system will show you how to be with Johnny in any situation and get better results for both of you—one of which could be that Johnny cleans his room.

Throughout this book, I use the term *parent*. I am talking to birth parents, grandparents, stepparents, foster parents, adoptive parents, teachers, tutors, child-care providers, counselors, coaches, friends, neighbors, mentors, bus drivers, social workers, police officers, probation officers, recreation supervisors, employers, entertainers, athletes, actors, actresses, radio and TV personalities, writers, doctors, nurses, judges, and all other adult human beings.

When I say *your child* and *my child*, I mean every youth you interact with at any time, because I believe all children are *our children*.

Every adult who meets a youth is parenting. Like it or not, you matter. This book will help you be stress-free, feel more confident, and know exactly how to be in every situation with youth. How you are with youth—or more accurately, whom you choose to be—is more important than what you say.

Anyone can be a stress-free power parent. It is as simple as a choice, and as difficult as changing an old habit. If you follow the advice in this book, it can work for you.

Please forgive me if I sound like I have all the answers. I don't. I have had an extraordinary experience that has created a conviction and passion within me for certain truths that have proven over the years to work for me and others

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in a powerful way. I cannot share them with you without the passion Spirit has given me. As the Blues Brothers said, "I'm on a mission from God." Please do not mistake my confidence and passion for arrogance. It is not. Nevertheless, if you still believe it is arrogance—please forgive me.

## **What This Book Is About**

*Simplifying the parenting process is what this book is about.* Making your life easier is my goal. My objective is to help you get better results with youth while having more peace, joy, and fulfillment in your life—no matter what your circumstances, level of prosperity or poverty, race, gender, age, culture, nationality, or education.

*Describing and explaining the parenting process is not what this book is about.* You will not find academic definitions and pie-in-the-sky theories here. I am advocating we use real-life evidence, research, and data to teach our children how to do things, but we use something else to teach our children how to grow up in a hostile world and yet still learn to become better human beings. That "something else" is my new parenting system. You will receive hard-core tools and techniques based on my more than fifteen years of experience in the trenches.

## **My Experience in the Trenches**

I founded the nationally acclaimed Simba youth development program in Oakland, California, on September 1, 1988. Simba teaches people how to be 100 percent responsible for how they think, feel, and act.

Simba is dedicated to the "ghetto solution." Simba's ghetto solution is to eliminate the ghetto mind-set of children and adults who live in the inner city, of those in the multibillion-dollar professional industry that services the inner city, and of the silent co-conspirators who keep the inner-city ghetto in place.

Simba believes this mind-set is the "victim program." This program has all three groups blaming each other and blaming circumstances; no one takes full responsibility for getting better results. (You can learn more about Simba, and my autobiography as part of its creation, by reading my previous book, *The Ghetto Solution*, by Roland J. Gilbert and Cheo Tyehimba-Taylor.)

The process I used in Simba is foundational in this book. My process intensively investigates and analyzes an adult's childhood. Some adults I've worked with called their childhoods "perfectly normal." But a great number of them came to see that resources—material things such as money, cars, nice clothes, good schools, safe streets, friendly churches—are not substitutes for relationships. My procedure helps people see how their childhood still shapes their behaviors and circumstances. Finally, I show them how to make changes and achieve more success and happiness.

This book is the result of thousands of hours of adults' childhood-parenting testimony from my seminars, countless personal hours working directly with troubled youth, and years of experience with hundreds of mentors I have trained. God blessed me with the opportunity to work directly with people—from the very wealthy to the extremely poor and of almost

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every physical description—who are the products of ineffective parenting. I have used what I learned from them in real-world situations, with hard-core troubled youth in the inner city. In this book you will receive the benefits of these years of mistakes and successes. What I learned from helping adults overcome their negative parenting, I applied to youth who are becoming adults. It works!

### **What to Expect**

Reading this book will give you a deeper understanding of human nature and answer some age-old questions. For example: Why can't this kid see what's best for her/him? I'm only trying to help, why can't this youngster understand? What's wrong with my child? Why do young people behave the way they do? What are the purpose and meaning of my life? Why am I alive? (The answers to these last two questions reveal major secrets of successfully parenting troubled youth.)

No book is a substitute for competent professional psychiatric or medical care. If you are concerned that you or the young person you are working with has this type of problem, please seek a licensed specialist.

Thank you for allowing me to meet you this way. It is a privilege, honor, and sacred responsibility for me to spend time with you, in the privacy of your mind and heart, through the pages of this book. I pray my words are worthy.

Please allow me to add you to my list of friends.



## Chapter 1

### When Being Right Is Wrong

At eight o'clock, Saturday, May 20, 2000, the morning sun awakens me before my alarm clock does. In two hours, I must face the children—alone. I have done this before, but never alone. My teeth grind as the thought replaces with anxiety the feelings of peace and renewal I awoke with. I pray my past does not cause me to hurt any of the children.

All my life I have battled failure. Today, I battle success. Maybe the structure of life is one continuous battle. Maybe not. I ponder this question as I get out of bed.

Thirteen troubled kids. I do not want to fight with them as I have fought with life. I want to help them solve their problems and fix what is wrong. I want to take away their ignorance and fallibility.

I open the sliding glass door of my bedroom and step out onto my balcony.

I breathe deep. The spring air relaxes me as I take in the view. I have lived on Lakeshore Avenue in Oakland, California, for six years, with God's blessing, and I never tire of it.

My eleventh-floor corner apartment overlooks Lakeside Park and Lake Merritt. The expansive amoeba-shaped lake is home to the annual Lake Merritt Sprints Regatta and to our nation's oldest bird sanctuary. My balcony wraps around the length and width of the apartment. From one corner, I behold a 270-degree panorama. From my right, the majestic forested Oakland hills roll past the monastery-gray Mormon Temple and flow on, in front of me, beyond U.C. Berkeley's cobblestone-brown Sather Tower into San Francisco bay. To my left, gleaming glass gargantuans scrape the sky and march toward magnificent malachite-black bay waters. Then the mountain-blue Bay Bridge takes over and advances into glittering San Francisco.

Below me gentle breeze-driven ripples shimmer on the lake. Birds of almost every description stroll, swim, fish, fly, and hunt. A seagull floats in the air directly in front of me. I could reach out and touch his cloud-white wings as he hangs motionless, suspended by invisible threads.

Floor-to-ceiling glass walls transport this serene expanse into every room of my home except the three bathrooms. Built for six people, with three spacious bedrooms, my home now serves one man, his office, and his mission.

God gave me the mission: to help people discover and cultivate their greatness, and give their gifts to the world. This is why I risk braving my kids alone this morning. I could cancel the meeting. But I choose to keep my commitment.

I finish dressing and head for the garage.

I smile. "Choose?" "Commitment?" Who could have imagined I would ever use these words? I hope my thirteen children do not take the path I took . . .

I start my car, breathe in this sunny Saturday spring morning, and pray I don't lose control and harm the kids.

I was a troubled youth who became a troubled adult, because hidden programs controlled my life . . .

It is 10:00 p.m. on a Friday in 1960, and two thirteen-year-olds are on the prowl. Eric and I have been walking the streets of East Los Angeles, robbing pedestrians at knifepoint. I hail a taxi. We get in the back seat.

"Where you boys goin'?" the driver asks.

"Take us over to Vernon and Central," I say. "We'll tell you where to go from there."

The stench of cigarette butts, sweat, and scrubbed-out vomit fills my nose. My right hand cradles my switchblade.

"Okay, we're here," the cabby says. "Where do I go?"

"Make a left onto Central," I say. "Go down two blocks and turn right."

He turns onto Central Avenue and adjusts his rearview mirror so he can see me behind him, slightly to his right. His eyes, beneath bushy gun-metal-gray eyebrows and above his salt-and-pepper walrus mustache, focus on me. He drives past his turn and parks on Central Avenue, near Newton Street.

"Sonny," he says, "I been hackin' for twenty years. I ain't goin' down no dark street with you two. Now pay me and get out."

My left hand snakes under his chin and snaps back his head, his tombstone-gray hair against my chest. The switchblade clicks, shoots six inches of steel into the air, then into his neck, thrusting again . . . and again . . . and again . . .

I do not know the Newton Street police station is a hundred yards down the block. A returning patrol car intervenes. The cab driver lives. Eric goes free. I get three years' probation. Everybody wants to know why I did it.

Why? It made sense to me at the time.

I detonate into drug use, drug dealing, stolen goods, pimping, and—at nineteen—armed bank robbery. During this time, people ask me why.

Why? It made sense to me at the time.

The FBI eventually catches me. They send me to the Federal Correctional Institute in Lompoc, California. I am twenty-one.

I face death many times. For some reason, life spares me.

At twenty-five, I enter the University of California at Irvine under a special program for paroled criminals. I graduated high school with a D average and never thought I would go to college.

I excel in this environment and become a straight-A student in economics for my bachelor's degree, and a straight-A student in operations research for my master's degree in administration.

The dean recommends me for an invitation-only national three-day competition authorized

by President Carter. Top graduates from the best schools in America vie for Presidential Management Internships. At thirty-one, I am among the best of the best and am appointed to the U.S. Small Business Administration in Washington, D.C.

After government service, I become a successful business consultant in Huntington Beach, California. I own a home at the beach, drive a new Corvette, and travel about the country doing business deals.

One day I visit my lifelong friend and cab-robbing companion, Eric, at his home in Irvine. We met in kindergarten and we have been brothers ever since.

"Hey, man," I call, "what are you doing in the kitchen so long?"

"I'm cooking up something," Eric says. "You want some?"

I walk into his kitchen. On the stove top, a small saucepan, half full of water, is beginning to boil. In the center of the pan stands a cylindrical glass vial about six inches high and an inch and a half in diameter. Its open end protrudes three inches out of the water. The vial appears empty. Eric grabs it with tongs and cools it with running tap water.

"What is that?" I ask.

"Cocaine," Eric says. "I'm freebasing. You want some?"

"Sure," I say. "I'll try anything once."

The euphoria transports me beyond sexual orgasm.

Within six months, I squander \$240,000 on cocaine and cocaine-related activities. I lose my business. I lose my business partners' money.

I lose my home, my car, my friends, and my self-esteem.

Destitute, I take shelter with my mother in Los Angeles.

One night, recovering from another relapse and a three-day crack-cocaine binge, I lie in bed at my mother's house watching television. I am deep into guilt, shame, and despair. Not only did I relapse again, but this time I left my sister's car somewhere and somebody stole it. She lent it to me because she loves me and believes in me. My depression and self-loathing choke me.

I fall onto my knees and pray. "Dear God," I cry, "please help me. I cannot do it alone. Without you, I am nothing."

My eyes are closed, but I hear a TV evangelist saying the prayer of salvation, and I follow along. "Jesus," I plead, "please come into my life and make me whole. I repent my sins. I give my life to you. You are my Lord and Savior."

A great peace comes over me.

"I forgive you, my son," God says in a voiceless voice. "I love you. I have work for you. A new journey awaits you. Let us begin."

I sleep peacefully.

For the next three years I do not use drugs, smoke cigarettes, or drink alcoholic beverages. Also, I am celibate.

God leads me into a multitude of various preparatory studies and experiences, including the Bible, Qur-an, Bhagavad-Gita, I Ching, the Christian church, Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology, and lectures, seminars, books, videos, and audio tapes by myriad authors.

God guides me into the knowledge of programs

. . .

All human beings receive programs from birth—without our consent. Programs are habitual ideas that we perceive as reality—how we think. Programs influence our experience of life. And if we do not question them, they control our lives.

Assume, for example, we take you from your mother at birth and give you to Aborigine parents in the Australian Outback. Today, you would look pretty much the same, but you would speak Aborigine and eat Aborigine food. Your politics and religion would be Aborigine. You would think Aborigine. You would be Aborigine.

That is programming.

And you would not question any of this unless an intervention occurred. The mythical Tarzan epitomizes this experience.

All of us receive programs about relationships, trust, safety, love, money, sex, power, food, violence, honesty; about what is possible for us; about every aspect of living. Programs are not good or bad. They either work for you or they don't. If a program gets you the results you want, keep it. If not, change it.

My mother gave me one program called "German Chocolate Cake." This works for me and I have no intention of changing it to something else, like "Raw Fish Eyes." My mother also gave me another program, "Eat Everything on Your Plate." These two programs combined do not work for me. I do not get the health result I want. Therefore, when I eat German chocolate cake, I choose to leave most of it on my plate.

Programs reside in our subconscious mind as our automatic responses to life. Our subconscious is a powerful force to reckon with. We often pay the price when we make unsuccessful choices guided by our subconscious, and we usually believe this sequence is controlled by external events.

Uncovering programs requires you to focus on your results. Then, regardless of who or what contributed to or caused your result, you take 100 percent responsibility for it. When you do—then you have a choice.

The moment you blame anyone or anything else for your circumstances, you give your power over to that thing you blame.

Say I am walking down Main Street, and I fall into a wide, deep hole in the sidewalk. Here I am at the bottom of this excavation, complaining: "What so and so dug this? Why didn't they put orange safety cones around it? How could they be so inconsiderate and stupid?"

Now while I am doing all this complaining, where am I? That's right; I am still in the hole. It is not my fault I am in the hole. I did not dig it. I did not see it. But as long as I complain about it, I remain in it.

Here is my point: Responsibility does not mean "fault." It means "the ability to respond." Therefore, when we choose to take responsibility for our results, we keep our power—we have a choice. We can take action and create a different result.

What happens to you may not be your fault, but it is your responsibility to do something about it. The paragon of this principle is Nelson Mandela. He was incarcerated for twenty-seven

years in circumstances that dictated hatred, helplessness, and hopelessness.

He chose a different reality.

Mandela chose power, purpose, and unlimited potential and possibilities. And eventually, he became president of South Africa and a loving humanitarian.

Choice is the ultimate human power.

Choice can change internal programs and external circumstances. We can even choose to give our choice away to other people and to events. Indeed, even God allows us to choose to believe in Him or not. God never takes our choice from us. When you think about it, it makes sense. How can God hold us accountable, if we do not have a choice?

We are all motivated to fulfill our needs. We have needs for food, safety, love, respect, pleasure, comfort, excitement, adventure, friendship, power, status, admiration, independence, joy, fulfillment—and the list continues. What we all want is the good stuff, for us and all people. How life programs us to get it causes problems.

There are an infinite number of ways to satisfy any need. Our programs limit our options. They tell us there may be only one way of thinking, feeling, and acting to meet our needs, even if our way causes pain and suffering for ourselves and others. This is the power of programs—they tell us we have no other choice.

Programs rationalize our behavior: *It makes sense to us at the time.*

Anytime a human being generates negative behavior, she has a negative program attempting to satisfy a positive desire. (Of course I am not talking about persons professionally diagnosed

as mentally ill.) Separate the person from the behavior, and help her change the program. Help her identify her desires. Then guide her into her own discovery of alternative behaviors to satisfy them.

When it comes to programs, there are only two types of people: those who don't know, and those who won't know. You can help a "don't know" right away. You cannot help a "won't know" until he becomes willing to learn.

Ineffective programs cause Tina's sixteen-year-old son, Maxwell, to commit crimes.

Tina is my girlfriend. We met in church. We have been in relationship for a year. At her home one night, we relax on her sofa, cuddling and kissing. I resist her attempts to go further.

"Roland," Tina says, "why would God deny me an orgasm?"

With four years of research and spiritual growth behind me, I cannot come up with an answer.

At 4:00 a.m., Tina's telephone rings.

"Wake up, Roland," Tina says, "Maxwell's in juvenile hall. He's been arrested for stealing a car."

"How can I help?" I ask, rubbing sleep from my eyes.

"Thanks," Tina says, "but there's nothing we can do right now. I have to go to juvenile hall later today and find out what's going on, and then figure out what I'll do."

"You seem to be taking this very well," I say.

"You know this is not the first time," Tina says. "And you also know that the last time he stole my car and I called the police and had

him arrested. They placed him on probation in my custody. But you don't know I told him if he successfully completed his one-year probation I would buy him a car. I just don't understand why he does it, Roland. My business provides a good living for us and I buy him most everything he wants.

"I give up. I don't know what to do anymore. My mother and father never had this kind of problem with me and my brothers and sisters. They knew how to raise kids. I guess I don't have what it takes to be . . . a good parent."

Now that I understand programs, I know I must do what works for me today, instead of trying to live up to someone else's, or even my own, standards from the past.

To do this, I had to become a student of life. I studied myself and my motivations. I challenged my ideology, axiology, ontology, cosmology, and worldview. When in doubt, I use God as my touchstone, the final arbiter in my quest to be my own person and not live a programmed life. It took me four years to learn these lessons. How do I empower Tina, here and now?

"Tina," I say, "it's true your childhood family affects how you have family today. But your son's behavior isn't your fault, for the same reason my past behavior isn't my parents' fault. No matter what life does to us, or does not do for us, our behavior is always our choice, always our responsibility.

"Never give up on Maxwell, regardless of how wrong or hopeless he may appear to be. Allow him to be responsible for his choices and pay his prices. But always keep the door of your heart

open to him, because he may eventually choose to change.

"My life is a perfect example of when being right is wrong, you know. Everyone was right about how wrong I was. But God had a plan for me no one could see, including me. One day Maxwell may wake up, choose to accept his greatness, reprogram himself, and give his gifts to the world."

"He's angry with me for calling the police the last time," Tina says. "Remember I told you he refused to see me when I went to juvenile hall to visit him? He probably won't talk to me this time either. How can I communicate with him?"

"One way you can communicate," I say, "and it will empower your relationship too, is by apologizing."

"Apologize for what?" Tina says. "I am not wrong. He is."

"Apologize for making him wrong," I say. "Apologize for not separating who he is from what he does. Apologize for making him a wrong and bad person. Tell him you love and accept the good person you know he is. But it is his behavior you cannot accept, and he can choose to change that if he wants to."

"Okay," Tina says, "I'll write to him. But how do I deal with my anger? I could just wring his neck."

"Through your power of choice," I say, "you can have a positive relationship with Maxwell, believe it or not."

"How?" Tina asks.

"We're always in relationship with other people, in our thoughts and feelings, whether or not that person is present. Your anger is inside

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you now, and your son is not here. And when you talk with your son, that anger will express itself. Please bear with me, baby, because you know God called me to be a teacher and I can't help it if I sound like a teacher. It's the only way I know to talk about this. You can change your thoughts and feelings by telling yourself the truth."

"The truth," Tina says. "How do I know what the truth is about another person?"

"In every situation," I say, "there are the facts, our interpretation of the facts, and the truth.

"The fact is, your son stole a car. The story or interpretation you tell yourself is, he's a bad kid and doesn't appreciate all you've done for him. The thing is, any fact is open to different interpretations. You can travel to a community in one part of the world, and they would judge a man married to five women to be normal, and a generous contributor to his society. In our part of the world, he'd be in jail for bigamy—same facts, just different interpretations.

"A fact is something that actually happened, so it's in the past. It can't change. The truth doesn't change the facts. The truth—" I pause to arrange my thoughts. "The truth helps you be kind. It helps you get better results for yourself and others, given the unchangeable facts. One way you can recognize the truth is, it will always create freedom for you and the other person involved.

"So here's what you can do. Create a story about the facts that gets you more of what you say you want with Maxwell. What can you tell

yourself about the facts that creates freedom for you and him?"

Tina slumps in her chair, nonplused. Knitted eyebrows, crinkled nose, and pursed lips loosen into a blank face and vacant eyes. Then she sits erect, her eyes beaming.

"The truth," Tina says, "is Maxwell loves and respects me but doesn't know how to express it right now. The truth is Maxwell wants to feel excitement, independence, and power, but he chose an immature, inconsiderate, and dangerous way to get there, by stealing a car. He's only sixteen. He can learn more positive ways to get his needs met.

"Meanwhile, I must accept—what is.

"I accept—life as a learning experience. And I cripple my son by trying to protect him from the consequences of his choices.

"I accept—Maxwell always makes his own choices and pays his own prices.

"I accept—my desire to control him is an illusion, based on my own fear and selfishness. I've been trying to get my needs met vicariously through my son.

"I accept—being responsible for myself first, and then to Maxwell second. This will help him learn to be more responsible for himself. I need to model to him a healthy and happy person who can love him without choosing to be a victim to him."

"Congratulations on choosing consciousness," I say. "Congratulations on having your own life and being your own person."

The key to my overcoming past, present, and future negative programs is always to take 100 percent responsibility for all my results. No

matter what life sends my way, it is my ability to respond, with God's help, that will determine my final outcome.

I am 100 percent responsible for how I think, feel, and act.

This is power.

As Tina and I continue talking, I pray that somehow, I receive a way to help other parents create more power:

Parenting power,

Healing power,

Overcoming power,

Transforming power,

And power to win in parenting relationships—without requiring their children to lose.