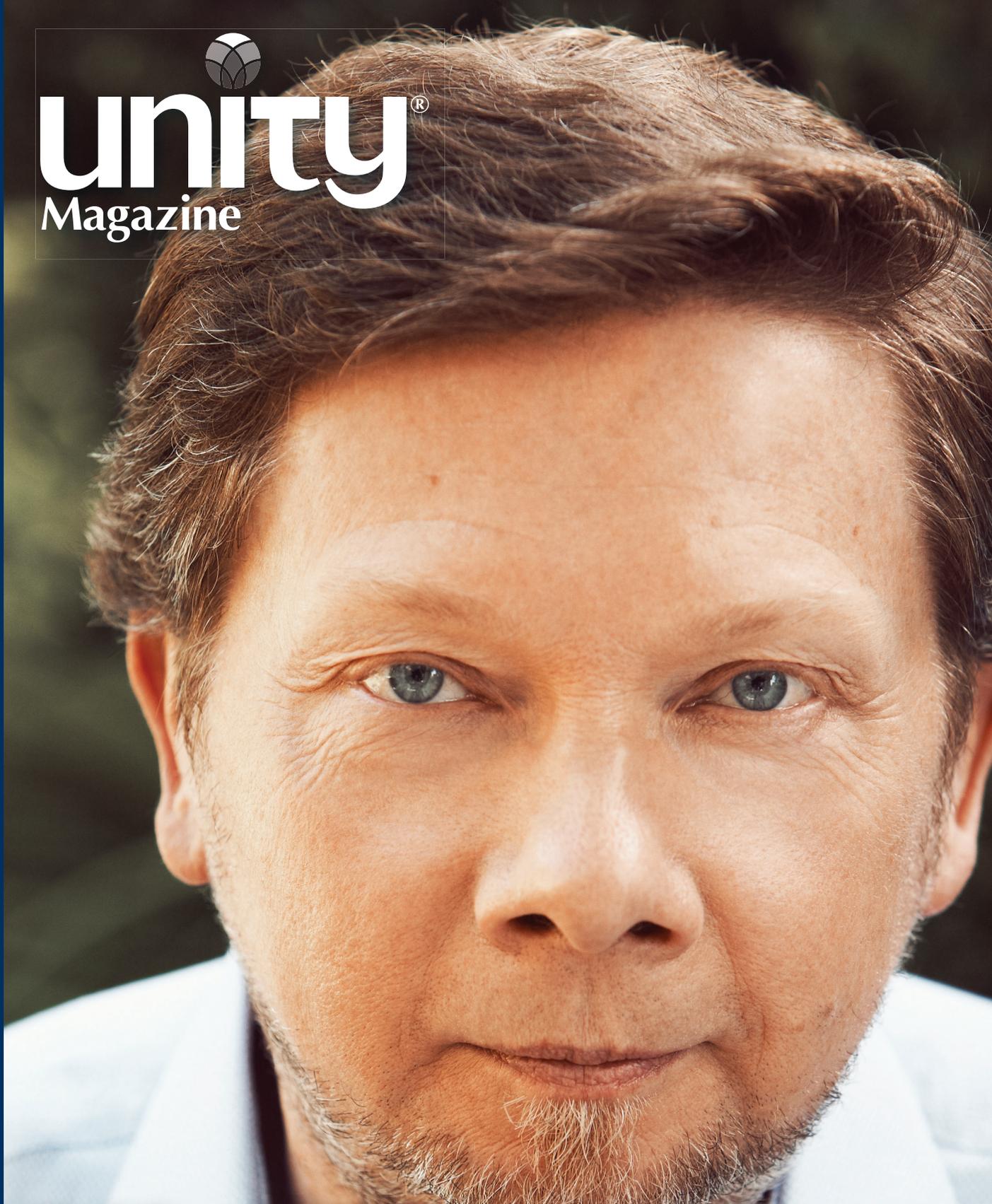


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Magazine



**Eckhart Tolle:
Raising Kids With Consciousness**

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Listening in With ...



Eckhart Tolle

Eckhart Tolle

is comfortable with silence the way a chef doesn't think twice about handling a razor-sharp knife. For each, these are essential tools of their trade. Tolle, the best-selling author of *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth*, has long taught that silence is less about zilch and more about Zen. Learn to be truly present, he urges, and doors you never before noticed will open wide to reveal exquisite treasures that exist only in each moment. Here, he talks with *Unity Magazine* editor **Katy Koontz** about teaching kids to be more conscious—and how our children are returning the favor.

Raising Conscious Kids

Katy Koontz: Why did you choose a parenting book as the first book in your new imprint with New World Library?

Eckhart Tolle: It emerged as the first book through a series of synchronistic events—including meeting the author a couple of times and discovering strange synchronistic connections between us, and then learning that she was writing a book at the time. That was a clear message. I always pay attention to synchronicities. So the universe actually chose this book rather than me.

KK: I love that you allowed synchronicity to drive that!

ET: I always listen for messages through synchronistic events or chance encounters. Most humans are so absorbed in their thinking that there's not much attention left for perceiving the miraculous universe around them at every moment. They don't have the wakefulness necessary to listen to messages coming from outside or promptings coming from within, such as intuitive realizations and creative insights. Spiritual awakening involves stepping out of that complete absorption in your thought processes so that you can become aware and present, and then living from that level. Thinking can still operate beautifully, but you are rooted at a deeper level of awareness and presence.

KK: I think most people in our culture—including me—are addicted to thinking.

ET: Thinking is truly an addiction, and it starts at a fairly early age, especially for young children bombarded by messages on iPads, television, and other electronic media. All of that draws the attention out of the body, so they get lost in the thinking mind. Of course, children need to learn to think, but the problem occurs when they become totally identified with thinking, which is the arising of the ego—a separate sense of self.

You cannot prevent a child from developing an ego, nor should you, but we are meant to grow beyond it as young adults. That is beginning to happen more frequently as a greater percentage of young people undergo spiritual awakening. But most people stay stuck in their ego, living with a false sense of identity that creates separation between human beings.

KK: That's where conscious parenting comes in.

ET: Yes, and now there's a generation of parents trying to bring their children up consciously, which hasn't really happened before. I'm sure there were parents who were conscious before now, but I never met anybody like that in my generation. My parents loved me, but they were very much trapped in their egos. My dad had huge problems with anger—he was like an unexploded bomb that could go off at any moment. There was this constant underlying fear within me, and whenever there was harmony in the house, I knew it wasn't going to last. Most children in

my generation grew up in a similarly unconscious environment.

KK: When did that start to change?

ET: It probably started in the '60s with the hippie revolution when young people rejected the old ways of living. That's also when Eastern teachings came to the west for the first time and the Human Potential Movement began. There had been previous periods when waves of consciousness came in and then subsided—such as the time of the Buddha and various other teachers, like Laozi with Taoism—but what is happening now is the largest ever.

Even so, when you listen to the media, you do not get the impression that a big shift in consciousness is occurring because what's considered newsworthy is concerned with the most unconscious parts of the planet.

KK: Maybe we need a new type of news.

ET: Yes, and obviously there are exceptions. Oprah has influenced the media to some extent and she's been very important in bringing the possibility of awakening to millions of people. Some fringe ideas are now suddenly becoming mainstream. Still, about 90 percent of the media continue to focus on unconsciousness. How people become more conscious is not reported because it does not attract people's attention.

For example, if I do a retreat in California where 600 people come together for five days in a beautiful

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unfolding of presence, a reporter would not find it newsworthy. But if one person there suddenly started becoming violent and threatening people, that would certainly be newsworthy. This is very strange.

KK: What percentage of parents do you think are employing conscious parenting?

ET: My guess would be 25 percent or so at the moment.

KK: That's pretty good.

ET: Yes, and it will grow. And also a greater number of children are coming into the world more conscious from the start. You might remember the talk of the Indigo Children that started about 20 years ago.

KK: Yes, of course!

ET: In the past few years, I have met children and teenagers who have amazed me with how conscious they already were. They're so much more advanced than I was at their age. I had to go through deep suffering in my life for consciousness to emerge, for the spiritual awakening to happen. It may well be that many children may not have to go through that. That certainly is good news.

KK: I agree; that would be a great blessing.

ET: There are still large parts of the planet that are pretty unconscious, though. The universe seems to have arranged things so that for many humans, their evolution can only happen through suffering. That's sad, but it's not *really* sad because such suffering is to a large extent self-inflicted—by conscious thinking and identifying with the ego. Suffering eventually breaks the shell of the ego. But those who are open to the new energies that are coming in and the consciousness that wants to emerge here will not have to experience that intense suffering.

KK: When you say, “the consciousness that wants to emerge here,” it sounds as though you're saying consciousness as a whole is evolving.

ET: The universe wants one thing, and that is to become more conscious. The entire universe is here to manifest greater consciousness. There is a transcendent consciousness that is totally timeless and eternal and does not evolve, but that is not in this realm. We might call it God.

What I'm saying now is very hard to put into words, but I'll attempt it. This transcendent consciousness that is God wants to emerge in this dimension—which is the universe—and it does so gradually. Everything is a manifestation of the one transcendent consciousness slowly expressing itself more and more through form, and eventually transcending form, and knowing itself through this process. So it's a wonderful realization that one's personal purpose coincides with universal purpose. Once you know you're here to become more conscious and facing challenges is part of that, then it gets easier because you can actually welcome whatever form those challenges take.

KK: So we may suffer less, but we still have to face challenges.

ET: Life continuously presents challenges—which some people call problems or difficulties—that's how life evolves. But the challenges do not have to turn into suffering, which arises only when we psychologically resist what is happening outside of ourselves. Basically, the root of suffering is resistance to *what is*. That's ego. When you don't resist anymore, it means the challenges are no longer transformed into suffering within yourself. The challenges then drive you deeper—they can intensify the presence, the consciousness, and the awakening. Sometimes humans think there's something wrong if they have what they call problems. They think the universe is treating them unfairly or God is against them. Yet consciousness can only evolve through challenges. Every life form has evolved through encountering difficulties; difficulties generate deep inner resources and then the difficulties are overcome and transcended, only through growing in consciousness.

KK: Do you think that children are more naturally conscious and present than adults?

ET: Time does not mean very much to children. They live in the present moment in the same way that, for example, your dog or a tree lives in the present moment. But they are not present in the same way as somebody who has actually gone through identification with thinking and has then transcended that. There is an added dimension to the adult's experience.

We're all born with that deep connectedness with Source. Then we go out so far that we cannot feel our connection anymore. Fear arises,

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anxiety arises, suffering arises, and then suddenly there's an awakening. Then we sense our connectedness with Source more deeply than ever before. We are now *consciously* rooted at that deeper level, rather than being *unconsciously* rooted at the deeper level as a child is. It seems to be our destiny for humans to lose connectedness in order to regain it at a deeper level. So paradise lost and paradise regained.

KK: You mentioned earlier how bombarded kids are by electronic devices. These are clearly not going to go away anytime soon, so how can parents counteract that?

ET: They can't totally stop children from using these devices, nor is that necessary because there are good things about them too. But I believe every responsible parent needs to restrict access, especially for very young children, instead of giving the child the iPad or switching on the TV whenever the parent wants some peace and quiet.

But it's not just restricting our children's access. Parents also need to do that for themselves so that they have periods at home when they're having a meal together or sitting together, and they don't answer the phone or look at text messages or emails. Instead, they're giving all their attention to their children.

KK: That sounds like the "formless attention" you recommend in *A New Earth*. Can you describe this more?

ET: Spend time with your child when you just give your fullest attention without teaching them something or telling them what to do or not to do. Just be with the child. If the child is talking to you, completely listen. This giving of attention is extremely important. The child actually wants your attention and longs to be seen by you fully.

Many parents don't realize that they almost never give full attention to

their child. Although that parent might say, "I love you," the deeper connection isn't there. That's a terrible loss. The child unconsciously senses that you are withholding yourself, and something vital is missing in your relationship. That often causes resentment, which can come out very strongly in teenagers.

The conscious parent doesn't necessarily have to be 100 percent conscious, but they endeavor to be present with their child. Perhaps the most important thing about conscious parenting *is* presence.

KK: I see two layers of benefit—experiencing the conscious connection itself, as well as modeling formless attention so children learn to apply it to other situations in their lives.

ET: That's exactly right. The most fundamental way in which we teach our children is not an active teaching. They observe how we live our lives and then they begin to imitate that.

KK: What's the flip side? What do children teach their parents about presence?

ET: Many things, including showing them a way of being in the world that most adults have lost—such as the state of innocence or being joyful in the present moment. When you look into the eyes of a very young child, you see the light of consciousness shining through in a way that would not be as intense later on. There's still the complete absence of the conceptual mind. The child is teaching you absolute oneness, because for them, the sense of separation hasn't started yet.

Later on when the child starts to speak, you may find a lot of wisdom comes through. But first you need to give attention so that the child also learns what it means to be present and so you're present together. If you do that, you will be amazed at what you hear. You may even think, *Where did that come from?*

KK: I know what you mean! When my daughter was 2, her father was driving her to preschool one day when she suddenly blurted out, "Life must not really be so, Daddy." He said, "*Excuse me?* What did you say?" So she repeated that for him.

ET: Oh, that's wonderful. If parents are open and listen, they will find that their child is more than just their child. There's an amazing being underneath the surface, and there's a depth to the child that they can't know if they're not fully present. 🌍

Eckhart Tolle authored the foreword for Susan Stiffelman's book *Parenting With Presence: Practices for Raising Conscious, Confident, Caring Kids*—the first offering in New World Library's new Eckhart Tolle Editions imprint. The book is excerpted on page 14.