

Clarion Review ★★★★☆

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

The Dance of Parenting

Natasha Solovieff

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The Dance of Parenting firmly places the burden of responsibility on parents to realign themselves when their work begins to overwhelm.

Natasha Solovieff details how to overcome parenting challenges in *The Dance of Parenting: Finding Your Inner Choreographer*. This clear self-help guide offers caregivers a broad, loving way to reframe their thinking while respectfully acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all advice. With a philosophy firmly rooted in the peaceful parenting movement, an encouraging voice reminds busy adults to practice self-care. Useful, reflective exercises serve as road maps for better relationships.

The book features a vivid dance metaphor that likens parenting to the give and take of a strong partnership. At times dancers may fall out of step. At other times, they may experience graceful harmony. A longtime public health nurse and a parent herself, the author illustrates common problems using brief anecdotes from her own life as well as stories she's been entrusted with. These include guilt, worry, and a lack of time that can lead to a loss of identity outside that of being a parent.

The second half of the book explores five "L.O.V.E. capacities"—listening, om, visualizing, voicing, and exploring—that offer strategies to help parents get back to their ideal dance. Even though the underlying issues may not change—particularly when they involve special needs or mental health concerns—it can help to remain vulnerable and receptive to new ways of relating. Listening to one's inner voice becomes an essential practice.

Many chapters focus on guiding parents through a series of pointed questions. These questions help evaluate thoughts, feelings, memories, preconceived ideas about parenting, and personal histories. Forming a clear understanding of the reasons parents respond to their children in certain ways can lead to fresher insights. Especially apt sections acknowledge the cultural influences that shape parents' expectations. With a consistent, empathetic voice, the work revisits concepts drawn from yoga and other sources to demonstrate how a family's dynamics can be renewed. A refreshing view shifts the focus from trying to change a child's behavior to learning how to lead from a place of less judgmental calm.

Anecdotes provide pithy glimpses of struggles from toddlerhood to teendom. These are followed with advice to look toward relevant sections in later chapters. The roundabout arrangement sometimes makes the anecdotes less memorable and too removed from the L.O.V.E. capacities under discussion. Still, the emotions they contain appeal to a broad range of experiences. A thoughtful emphasis on the mind-body connection also stands out.

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KAREN RIGBY (October 17, 2017)

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