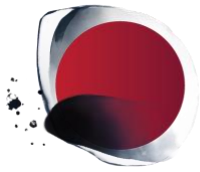


Man on a Bus



Just a man, riding on a bus, caring for a child.

“The seats and aisles were filled with early-morning commuters, families, and craftsmen. On top of the bus travelers sat with their luggage. Hanging off the sides, others held on tenuously. Bulging with humanity, we rocked and rolled toward the suburbs.

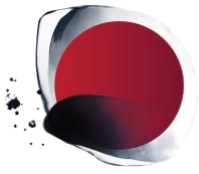


As I stood watching, a man wearing a well-pressed western business suit picked up a small child with a runny nose and dark mascara under his eyes. He smoothed the child's hair and rubbed his skin with a knowing, loving affection. They talked and played together for several dusty miles as the morning heat began to build inside the bus. I was struck by how attentive and caring this man was with the child. His briefcase sat on the floor between his polished loafers, his full awareness focused only on this child. At some point, the old bus creaked and ached to a stop, as it had been doing every few minutes for the last hour, allowing an exchange of passengers. It was then that the man stood, kissed the child lovingly, and pressed his way out into the streets, leaving the boy behind. My initial response was akin to shock, I remember thinking that he had remembered his brief case and forgotten his child. I then watched as the little boy returned to a woman seated a few feet away, the mother, and I realized that this man was not the child's father. He was just a man, riding on a bus, caring for a child. (Fathering Journal, 1992)

Interpretation

This event often surfaces in my thoughts as I investigate fathering. The ease with which this man attended to a young boy seemed remarkable at the time. Perhaps, in India, cultural and religious influences allow for such familiarity. Adults in India seem to attend to other people's children, like so many aunts and uncles. However, I wondered how, when he had no prior experience or relationship with this child, he was able to set aside other concerns and enter relationship so fully, in such a short period of time, while under stressful circumstances.

What makes a man a father?

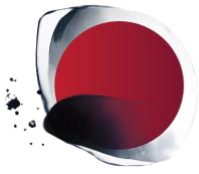


“I am a father,” I declared to family and friends soon after the birth of my first-born. Calling from the hospital, I spoke these very words to my father. He was happy for me and welcomed me into fatherhood and my child, his only grandson, into this world. It may have been the first time that I claimed the true meaning of fatherhood and an odd moment when I realized that I had become both my father’s son as well as my son’s father.

When I became a father, I went through many transitions. These changes were even more alarming because they were completely unexpected. My wife – we knew she would change. We could watch her becoming a mother, almost by the hour. She had all that physicality of pregnancy: new life inside her, organs shifting, hormones blazing, nesting instincts emerging. She was pre-programmed for this extraordinary unfolding, but what about me?

The French word “couve’e,” meaning to hatch, is used when men take on the symptoms of pregnancy: vomiting, weight gain, mood swings. I had some very personal and dramatic developments of my own, and I realized that as men, we, too, change the very moment we discover that we have helped create life.

Before the baby, my wife and I were travelers, workers, and I expected that we would find our way into parenting much like we had accomplished most everything we did: we worked hard, took risks, and approached each opportunity together as an adventure sparked by our curiosity. Fatherhood, whatever that meant, was a role I had signed up for. I knew I was ready for the part, but I had trouble identifying with the script. I was slow to

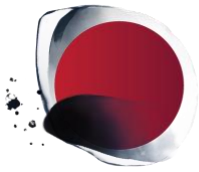


realize that all of this was happening to me. As a passive participant, I had yet to understand how to become a genuine and active partner, to be a father. Then the baby was born, and it all became real. In the fathering moments, life unfolded with an intensity that had the power to usurp all other considerations.

The world as I know it has changed. A tiny being has become the center of my life in a natural and healthy way as I become a significant part of his world, holding him in the center of all that is. His needs eclipse my needs in so many ways. I had no idea what it really meant to function with so little sleep! Life without sleep, real sleep, seems unbearable. Yet six weeks later, here I am, still unable to imagine going on. My boy sleeps for exactly forty-two minutes when he takes his nap. I have forty-two minutes to nap myself, make a few phone calls, or continue with my research. It is precious time, and it is never enough. – My Fathering Journal

Fatherhood changed the way I began to see myself, my wife, my parents, my friends, my associates, men, women, children, the world. My perceptions were altered at my very core. Being a father expanded my capacity for feeling joy and enduring pain. Fatherhood shifted the focus of my goals, priorities, and values and transformed my concept of time and sense of mortality.

It did not really matter what my intentions were prior to these emerging mandates. The call to fatherhood sounded and my participation unveiled as an opportunity, a request, and most often a demand: “Show up in this relationship, and enter our lives as the man we



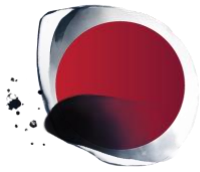
need you to be!” The call was undeniable and often overwhelming. Other times, my engagement was the most natural thing in the world. I felt as though this was what I had been waiting for; this is why I was put on the earth. I was now directly engaged in and responsible for holding, playing, feeding, comforting, and teaching my child. I was now directly responsible and participating in the economic support, care, and wellbeing of his mother.

With my emerging role as father, came a newfound love and tenderness coupled with a healthy wallop of regressive upsurges; all the stuff I thought I had left behind returned to seek me out. One supported the other. I swear. By staying present to both experiences, I was able to touch upon pure, unconditional love even while squirming through my personal discomfort. This, for me, was the greatest transformation of all.

As fathers, we are created by the demands and love of our children. As a father, I have been shaped by each intimate, relational moment spent with my child. My father-bond did not happen in utero; but rather, it began and continues to evolve in my day-to-day, moment-to-moment relationship with my child.

It is a long journey to father a child; it begins with a demand, a call to surrender, to give everything we have. As men, we are used to building, achieving, possessing. But, when we become fathers, we just are.

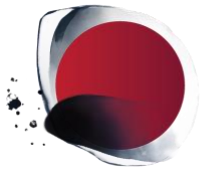
So where do we find the father?



We find father in every moment that he is with his child. We find him when he is with other men's children. We find him revealed as the child reaches for his embrace and his understanding. We find him holding relational ground as the child experiments with rejecting his presence. We find him in his intimate relationship with his partner. We find him in the heart of the interaction with his child. We find father everywhere: as a Calcutta businessman riding on a bus or Dad, Poppi, Da-Da, Pappa, Daddy, Abba. Fathers are men who, quite naturally, put down their briefcases to join, love and care for a child.

It is after dinner and the evening rituals begin. He is dancing and beckoning, "Come on Dad, let's play." We head to the living room, and I assume my position on the floor. For the next hour, we wrestle, punch, and roll about. He remains in control. Now he is an Indian with tomahawk in hand, chopping the air. Now he is a character in one of his videos and ties loose knots around my legs. He grabs rubber balls and flings them at me. I throw them back. Occasionally, a ball catches him a little too hard, and he runs into the other room to show the "wound" to his mother. Moments later, he charges back and pounces, gently nipping at my ears; I blow on his belly; he complains and runs for another weapon. A basket flies in my direction. On we go tumbling, scratching, father and son in our dance of love.

In the deep pools of their eyes swim the wounds of your past, the possibilities of this moment, and the promise of a future. My son teaches me to father. My heart listens and



DR. TIMOTHY DUKES

DrTimothyDukes.com | Sanctuary | Fathering | Man on a Bus | 20231021

aches to open. My wife and community assure me that there is always more to give, always more to receive. In this moment, I simply do the very best I can.

I am a father.

Image courtesy of: [Ankit Pai N](#) [@ankit_pai_n](#)

The Tim Dukes Method provides an opportunity for self-reflective individuals to cultivate the capacity to receive into consciousness hidden aspects of the self, claiming your unique gifts – ensuring that today’s brilliance successfully transitions into tomorrow’s wisdom. The Tim Dukes Method is designed and implemented by Dr. Timothy Dukes for determined creatives to ensure long-term viability — as a continuing investment in the well-being of yourself, family, organizations, culture, society, and the Earth itself.