

## Resident tackles improved parent-child relationship in new book

Ashleigh Fryer, Senior Editor

A staunch practitioner of meditation since she was 17, Malibu resident Susan Stiffelman thought there were few things that could make her lose her cool — until she became a mother.

“I believe that being anchored to that internal practice made me better able to show up for my son in a more patient and loving way,” Stiffelman said. “But no matter how centered or mature we are or how many personal growth workshops or yoga retreats we’ve attended, no one will push your buttons like your children.”

The premise that children can serve as the teachers of their parents is the main pillar of Stiffelman’s new book, “Parenting with Presence: Practices for Raising Conscious, Confident, Caring Kids,” which will be released on Wednesday, April 15. As Stiffelman’s second book, “Parenting with Presence” is her first to be chosen for the Eckhart Tolle Editions imprint, which features books and authors hand-picked for publication by Eckhart Tolle, the author of “The Power of Now.”

“As parents, we face constant challenges — it’s an incredibly sweet and loving experience to care for a child, but it also pushes us to our limits,” Stiffelman said. “The book explores that instead of resisting difficult moments or wanting to hide and say we’re not up to the task, as parents, we can see it as an opportunity to grow and heal our own unfinished business from childhood.”

In her book, Stiffelman sheds light on situations in which parents may feel ill-equipped to guide their children through experiences that they, themselves, have never had. In those cases, Stiffelman suggests allowing your child to be the teacher.

“Maybe [the parent] was raised in a family where they were always supposed to keep their emotions in check or not be emotionally expressive, but then they have a child who is emotionally expressive in a big way,” Stiffelman said. “Intellectually, that parent wants their child to have a different life and feel free to express their feelings, but in a deeper way it may trigger some deeply embedded rule in them that says children should not yell or shout or express frustration ... Your children can teach you to be fully expressive human beings.”

Stiffelman, who is also a licensed marriage and family therapist, a credentialed teacher and the author of a weekly “Huffington Post” parenting advice column, said that although “Parenting with Presence” is her second book, it was by no means easier to complete than her first, titled “Parenting Without Power Struggles.” In fact, Stiffelman hadn’t planned on producing another book until she led a four-day series featuring interviews with the likes of Arianna Huffington, Tim Ryan, Thupten Jinpa and Jane Goodall, among. That series, entitled “Parenting with Presence,” inspired her to pull together ideas that come to light in her interviews and transform them into a book.

Although both of her books are markedly different, Stiffelman said, the theme they share is “practical, usable parenting support.”

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent,” Stiffelman said. “One of the biggest things I want to convey is for parents to be kind to themselves. We can parent differently than we were parented and forge our own path. Our parenting life can be a transformational path for us.”