

## Noble Subjects

# Synchronizing for Life

That dog was ruining my hike.

Big time.

When Mike invited me to do a day hike in the local mountains, he neglected to mention that his best friend was coming along.

At first I admired him. Clearly this poor pooch had been cooped up in a city yard for way too long. He was exulting in racing up one hill and down the next. It was a joy to watch his uninhibited exuberance being expressed in a harmless way.

I was also impressed with his obedience, a rare thing in kids and dogs. No matter how far away the dog was, as soon as Mike called him, he raced back at top speed and stopped by his master, grinning and panting, looking for the next instruction.

With all that going for him, however, I still wished he had stayed home because he had no sense in the entire world of synchronizing with us (or specifically me). Time and again he would run over and stop to rest, right smack dab in front of me on the trail. I would step around him - or over him - and keep going.



It was then that I connected a couple of dots. The two kinds of dogs I really admire are sheep dogs and retrievers - the two dogs who consider synchronizing with the human in their life as their sole purpose for existence.

As we walked back down the mountain that day (still dodging the clueless dog), I realized that he had become a lightning rod for my resentment against endless humans who could no more synchronize with anyone than the dog could. That was the day I came to understand how utterly, viscerally, I was designed for teamwork. I have no need to be #1. I think I could probably play the best second fiddle in the whole wide world, if I had a boss who was going somewhere and I believed in him. I just HAVE to have team work, or something vital in me just shrivels up and dies.



In this day and age of disconnected, clueless, self-absorbed people, teamwork is hard to come by. We currently have close to a dozen people in our core team and every single one of them can synchronize as exquisitely as a calf roper at a rodeo. I know I am a wealthy man!

Learning to synchronize is counter intuitive, and parents need to be very intentional in making the transition early in life.

When a child is born, they have no comprehension of synchronization and even less desire to. Their basic approach to life is to inflict auditory pain on all adults within range until those adults synchronize to them and cause their physical or emotional pain to subside.



This is rather normal and acceptable - for about three months. But after that, the role reversal needs to start taking place with fierce intentionality on the part of the parents.

The average five year old today has no sense of their personal responsibility to observe the adults in their community and to synchronize with them emotionally or even physically. This is flat inexcusable and bodes poorly for their functioning in society. As I watch teenagers today, I marvel at their disconnectedness from each other, even when they consider the human being next to them a good friend.

So where to start? The answer is with physical synchronization. Ultimately you want your kids to know how to and be willing to synchronize emotionally, but the beginning place is to do a lot of physical activities with them that require physical synchronization. By the time a child is able to sit up in a high chair, you can start with something as simple as a high five. This trains them to recognize a gesture which you start and to match it physically, although they are probably clueless about the emotional content of a high five.

An older version of this is the old standby, Patty Cakes. When I was a kid, there were some pretty complicated versions of this that required great memory of the cadence and rather speedy tracking with the leader.

When they can crawl, you can get down on the floor and have them crawl after you. Make an unusual pattern where you crawl under the table, go around the high chair and end up by the rocking chair.

At about this stage you can begin using a ball to teach them to synchronize to you, as you roll it to them and then indicate whether you want them to roll it to your right side, or to your left side or straight up the middle.



As they get a little older, you can do full body activities which have to be mirrored by the child, and when you have more than one child the prize, of course, is synchronizing the best, so you can be the leader of the next round.

So the parent starts by standing up facing the child, hands at his side.

Then you put your right hand on your hip and they mirror you. Left hand on your head. One step forward. Turn around. Right hand in pocket. Hop on left foot three times and so forth until the parent is worn out and the kid is too wired for bed.



These things can all be presented as game times. What the child receives is your undivided attention, which they cherish, but you are not just entertaining them, you are equipping them for life.

By the time a child is two, they should be learning to synchronize with your time and your connections with other people.

That training takes place at meal times and in the car where they should be taught not to interrupt when someone else is speaking.

On the heels of that lesson is the instruction that when Mom or Dad are on the phone, the kids have to wait with their question and not barge in.

These are basic parenting tasks which need to take place before the child goes to school. Failure to teach those levels of synchronization will produce children who force their parents to adapt to them, all the way through childhood.



Parents who don't force their children to learn how to do community by synchronizing physically and emotionally to others end up pushing away their demanding child to the TV or video game. While this may quiet their intrusiveness for a few minutes, it does nothing to teach them the needed lessons.

They come to believe at the core of their being that the world absolutely should synchronize to them, and when they get out into the real world, they are shocked when it doesn't.

The lessons not taught before age five will produce some bitter fruits at age 25.

Arthur Burk

