

Family ties

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DR BOB JACOBS

Dr Bob Jacobs is a clinical psychologist, family law solicitor, registered family dispute resolution practitioner and director of The Parenting Centre, Maleny. Established in 2009, the centre is dedicated to advocating for children and specialises in helping families through separation, as well as providing parenting support and counselling. With more than 30 years in private practice, the dedicated father of three and internationally-renowned doctor is passionate about helping families, so much so he became a lawyer for that very reason nine years ago. Profile had the pleasure of talking with Dr Jacobs about the milestones that have helped shape who he is today.

That happened in 2009, and on 16 November of this year I proudly became an Australian citizen.

Life changing milestone 3: Being inspired by parents, 1980 to present

I have been blessed with the opportunity through the years to work with extraordinary parents. These parents have consistently educated and inspired me about the power of parenting and the strength of the human spirit.

Life changing milestone 4: The day I decided to become a lawyer, 1996

I was working as a clinical manager at a facility that served children identified as 'severely emotionally disturbed'. Most of the children came from indigent families and some were in foster care. Unfortunately, there were often violent episodes between children and staff, and much of the time there were no outside witnesses. One day I overheard two staff members discussing what they were going to write in an incident report about an altercation where a child had been injured. One of them suggested a story and the other said, "We can't write that; that isn't how it happened", to which the other laughed and replied, "What is the kid going to do? Hire a lawyer?". It was that day that I decided I wanted to become a lawyer so I could represent children who were powerless and whose voices were drowned out by adults in authority. I started law school a few years later and became a lawyer in 2003.

Life changing milestone 5: Writing my book, 2010

I published *Perfect Parents, Perfect Children: Changing the World by Celebrating our Perfection* in 2010 and I've been so excited to get the book into the hands of as many parents as possible. I've received the most gratifying feedback imaginable and it suggests that the book has helped bring optimism, love and joy into the homes of many families. There could be no greater gift for me than the knowledge that I contributed to those things. ■

MILESTONES

Life changing milestone 1: Becoming a single parent of two young children, 1995

While I had been working with families professionally for many years, having the experience of actually being a single parent helped me to personally empathise with parents in a powerful way. Aside from knowing firsthand the issues adults deal with in separation and co-parenting, I watched my own children cope with the situation and recognised the profound impact of parental separation. Raising my children was the greatest joy in my life and also taught me the most about myself and about parenting.

Life changing milestone 2: Coming to Australia, 2002

While attending law school in America I organised an externship in international childrens' advocacy that brought me to Australia for the first time in June 2002. Despite having lived my entire life in America, I immediately felt more at home in this country. I visited Maleny that winter and determined that someday I would try to migrate to Australia and live in Maleny.