

**WHOSE BUSINESS IS IT?**  
By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

We waste a lot of time and energy getting involved in other people's business...and trying to involve other people in our business.

In "Steering by Starlight", Martha Beck tells the story of how her Down syndrome son Adam proudly brought his new watch to school, only to see it broken by a friend who accidentally dropped it on the floor. Their teacher felt so bad on Adam's behalf that she continued to scold Adam's friend for the rest of the day and on into the next.

As she tells the story in her book...

"...while the class was working quietly on a project, Adam approached (the teacher's) desk.

'Ms. Morrison,' he observed politely, 'it was my watch.'

'I know, honey,' Ms. Morrison groaned, feeling just awful. 'I shouldn't have let you lend it to Jared.'

'No,' said Adam, frowning with frustration. 'It was *\*my\** watch.'

'And it was awful that he broke it. I'm so sorry.'

Adam began to laugh. Then, for several seconds, he thought very hard, the way he does when he absolutely has to make himself understood.

'Ms. Morrison,' he said very slowly, 'it... was... *\*my\**... watch. Not... yours.'

He looked at her intently to see if she'd get it. And then, for Ms. Morrison, the light dawned.

'Oh,' she said. 'You mean I should let it go?'

Adam burst out laughing again, heaved a huge sigh of relief, and went happily back to his seat."

So, whose business was it that the watch broke? Many of us would say it was the teacher's. But it really was Adams' and his friend's. If Adam had asked the teacher for help in resolving the issue it would have become the teacher's business.

This concept has been one of the most difficult for us to grasp, as well as the most useful once we grasp it. When we were having difficulty with our son and lending him money, we went to see our teacher Dr. Gay Hendricks. He explored with us the core of the issue and we realized that it was that we were afraid our son wouldn't

love us if we refused to lend him money. Gay pointed out that it wasn't our business whether our son loved us, it was our business whether we loved our son, and it was our business whether we chose to lend him money. This allowed us to be clear with our son in a new way.

We invite you to ask yourselves the question, "is it really my business?" before you put energy somewhere. Have you been asked to help? Is it something you have control over? You can save yourself a lot of time and energy by focusing only on what is your business.

*Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Therapy. They specialize in "2 on 2 couples coaching" and in experiential group playshops and retreats. For more information call 613-594-9248 or see [www.marleneandbob.com](http://www.marleneandbob.com).*