

# Raising Likeable, Responsible, Respectful Children in an Age of Overindulgence

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## 5 Ways Overindulgence Is Hazardous to Your Health [Research] by

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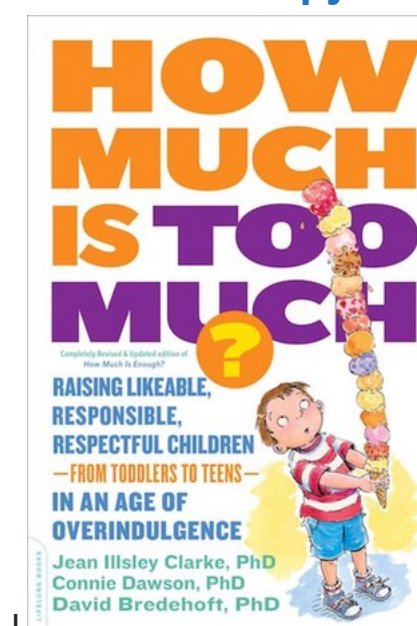
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**"What is the result of overindulgence in your life?"** the researcher asked. **"Fat, and still feel empty"** one said. Another said, **"I'm so far in debt I can't see the light of day. I'm overweight and hate that I'm so tired."** These were the responses of two adults who had been overindulged as a child. These statements are typical of the reports from adults who were overindulged as children. They were part of [the Overindulgence Research Study](#) at Concordia University in St. Paul, MN. It turns out that from a laudable wish to have children be happy, or sometimes just to get through the day, parents can slip into overindulging children with too many things, too much help, and too much freedom. [All three of these ways](#), Too Much, Over-nurture, and Soft Structure create a platter of risks in adult life that are not supportive of healthy life styles, and are surely not what parents intended. Here are 5 ways overindulgence is hazardous to your health.

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## 1. It Carries On - *it's not just young children who are spoiled*



We have all heard horror stories about helicopter parents. Think about the mom who insisted that the high school teacher give her child a grade for a paper he didn't turn in but she knew he "thought" about doing the paper so he should get a grade. Or the tale of the young woman who left her smart phone open on the desk during a job interview. After she had answered all of the interviewer's questions, the interviewer asked if she had any questions. The applicant leaned toward her phone and said, "Mommy, Daddy, do I have any questions?" (She did not get the job.)

These examples sound extreme, but the habit of overindulging can become insidious and can create very undesirable risks. The stories told in this article are all true, and the observations in this article are all based on the [Ten Overindulgence Research Studies](#). In these studies adults who had been overindulged as children were asked questions about their parenting styles, workplace experiences, relationship satisfaction and self-image. Of course the outcomes reported would not have been solely caused by childhood overindulgence, but we can expect that overindulgence contributed to these adult experiences and attitudes. Let's look at a few of the ways overindulgence can be hazardous to a healthy life style.



## **2. Physical Health - *Fat and still feel empty.***

Overweight was mentioned frequently. Two ways that parents overindulge, Soft Structure and Too Much, factor in here. Coming from a position of wanting children to be happy all of the time can easily lead to the three scoop ice cream cone. Lax structure can contribute to irregular meal times and inattention to nutrition. A childhood habit of eating what you want, when you want to does not contribute to physical health. Unfortunately, the media and marketing regularly support the child's feeling of entitlement. Their constant messages can infect adults as well. Recently a state that has been striving to support health and reduce obesity by improving the quality of school lunches is under fire to reintroduce sodas, candy and high fat foods back into the schools. Why? "The children do not like to eat fruits and vegetables."

Also, too much freedom, including too much couch, and screen time, and too little exercise are depleting children's strength and vitality.





### **3. Unhealthy Debt - *I'm so far in debit I can't see the light of day.***

If, as a child, one was accustomed to getting everything one wanted, it isn't hard to see how that can carry over into adult life. One of the things study participants complained bitterly about is not knowing how much is enough and the empty feeling it left. If a belief of entitlement is coupled with not having been taught money management skills the resulting attitudes can bubble up in unexpected ways. Compare for example, the old expectation that students will find or create a summer job with the current prevalent attitude of expecting to have the whole summer to play and hangout. Or consider the position of the college graduate who wants to quit his job (which he really doesn't like anyway) and come home for the summer because it is "the last time he will be able to take a whole summer off." Who is paying the college loans?





#### **4. Unhealthy Work Place Skills - *I have trouble keeping a job.***

"Why am I always getting fired?" His friend laughed. "You come to work late, you don't follow the rules, and you contradict your boss! What do you expect?" Adults who have an overblown sense of entitlement often have trouble in the work place. In addition, if they didn't learn work skills by doing chores as a child, the demands of the workplace may be confusing and seem irrelevant. Consider the research findings on self-image. The more people were overindulged as children, the more apt they were to agree that their life goals are wealth, fame, and image. Understandable goals- to have plenty of money, to be recognized, and to look good certainly beats being poor, being ignored, and dressing poorly. But wait! These same people agreed that they are:

- ✓ Not interested in personal growth or building meaningful relationships
- ✓ Not interested in the betterment of society
- ✓ Not willing to assist people in need
- ✓ Not willing to make the world a better place
- ✓ Not willing to help people improve their lives except in order to get something in return

Think of being on a work team with a couple of colleagues who are only interested in their own wealth, fame and image. Or consider a friendship, partnership, or marriage. One research participant said, "Besides not learning how to set boundaries (saying no), I sometimes feel totally bereft of socializing, intimacy, and communication skills."



#### **5. Unhealthy Parenting Skills - *In order to have my plans work, I make sure they fit with the desires of my child.***

The more adults had been overindulged as children, the more they agreed with the following items:

- ✓ My child usually gets his or her way. So why try?
- ✓ My life is chiefly controlled by my child.
- ✓ Neither my child nor myself is responsible for his/her behavior.

If this is surprising, remember that parents who were overindulged as children learned how to be overindulgent from their first teachers, their own parents. Unless the young parents get help from friends, or books, or classes, or parent coaches, or counselors, they may have a hard time learning how to balance firm structure and avoid nurture without sliding into giving and doing too much as they raise their own children.

## **How Much Is Too Much? - *Raising Likeable, Responsible, Respectful children.***

The book [How Much Is Too Much](#), recognizes that we are all caught in the sticky web of overindulgence that has become the New Normal. We are all in this together. This book, written especially for parents and grandparents, assumes that giving too much comes from a good heart. It offers tips about avoiding overindulgence and tips for adults who are recovering from childhood overindulgence. Let us all choose to recognize overindulgence for the risky business it is, work on one aspect at a time and stay underwhelmed. Our children will thank us for it (much later).

There is more help about avoiding overindulgence in [How Much is Too Much? Raising Likable, Responsible, Respectful Children – From Toddlers To Teens – In An Age of Overindulgence](#) (2014, DaCapo Press Lifelong Books).

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