

# Raising Likeable, Responsible, Respectful

## Children in an Age of Overindulgence

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## 7 Strategies For Raising a Spiritual Child In An Age of Overindulgence

By David Bredehoft

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### AS A PARENT...

- ✓ Do you want your child to grow up to be resilient?
- ✓ Do you want your child to have a sense of awe and a deep sense of empathy?
- ✓ Do you want your teenager to not use drugs, engage in unprotected sex, or depressed?
- ✓ Do you want your child to be optimistic and have a sense of belonging and peacefulness?
- ✓ Do you want your children to be self-controlled, grateful, and happy?
- ✓ Do you want your teenagers interested in making society a better place



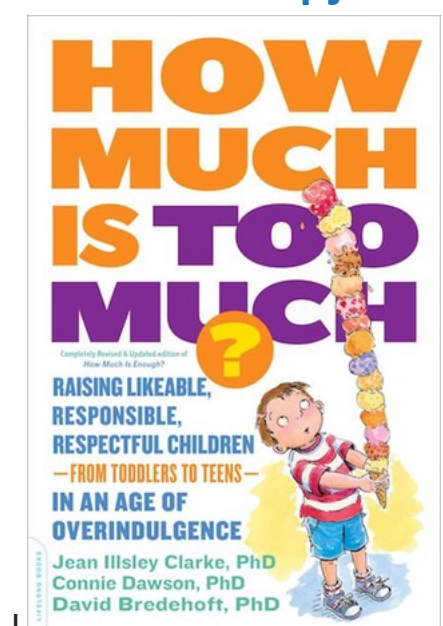
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even though they don't get anything in return?

Then you need to consider raising spiritual children.

*“[Spirituality](#) is an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding. The word we give to this higher power might be God, nature, spirit, the universe, the creator, or other words that represent a divine presence. But the important point is that spirituality encompasses our relationship and dialogue with this higher presence.”*

## WE ENCOURAGE OUR CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY WHEN WE\*:

**1. Avoid overindulging by not giving too much, doing things for children that they should be doing themselves, and by setting reasonable rules and requiring children to do chores.**

There is a relationship between childhood overindulgence and spirituality or the lack thereof. [Adults who were overindulged](#) as children:

- **feel** entitled to more of everything they deserve,
- **not interested in spiritual growth,**
- **have difficulties** finding meaning in times of hardship, and
- **are less apt** to develop a personal relationship with a power greater than themselves.



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**2. Notice your child's spiritual questions and experiences.**

Everyone has questions relating to spirituality, even your children. If you ignore your

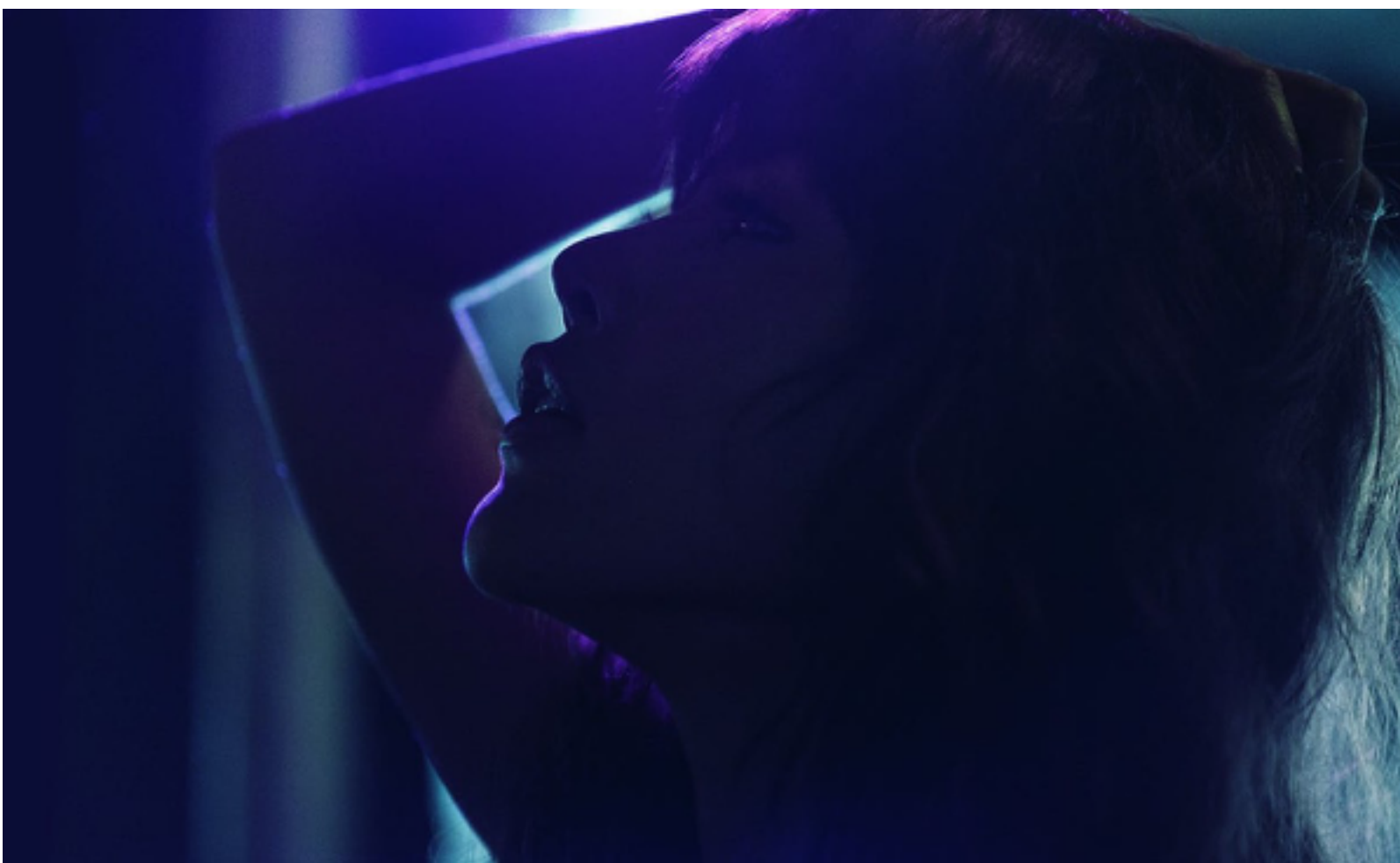
children’s questions they will assume the topic is off limits or not important. A few questions your child may be wrestling with.

- ✓ Why do bad things happen to good people?
- ✓ How do people feel gratefulness after suffering particularly difficult times?
- ✓ Why don’t people like me?
- ✓ Is there a God or higher power?
- ✓ What is my relationship and responsibility to the environment?
- ✓ What happens to you after you die?
- ✓ Why is there poverty and suffering in the world?
- ✓ What is the relationship between science and religion?
- ✓ What is the meaning of life?
- ✓ How would God want us to respond to aggression and terrorism?

Click here for a related story: [Can Parents Raise a Spiritual Child In An Age of Overindulgence?](#)

### 3. Encourage your child’s spiritual discovery.

Spiritual development takes encouragement. Take every opportunity to support your child’s spiritual discovery. As [Dr. Lisa Miller](#) suggests, “You don’t have to agree with your child - you simply need to be interested, curious, and open to his exploration.” Developmental opportunities abound during what Piaget calls “formal operations” beginning around age 12 and lasts into adulthood. This is a stage in which your child begins to think abstractly, “if-then” and “what-if” thinking.



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### 4. Honestly answer your child’s questions.



We feed a child's cognitive growth by allowing them to question. You may not know the answers to many of the questions your child asks. However, a curt "I don't know," or "Nobody knows" shuts down the conversation. Discussing these challenging questions is key to your child's spiritual development.

Click here for a related story: [The Link Between Spirituality and Overindulgence \[Research\]](#)

## **5. Base your affection and discipline on values that are aligned with the spiritual values of unconditional love.**

All parents give both affection and discipline to their children. It is important that you are consistent and that these processes are in tune with your own spiritual values. Remember, "What you stroke is what you get."



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## **6. Make spiritually supportive communities available so that children can discover their own identity and be accepted.**

As your child begins to wrestle with spiritual questions it is important for you to listen, answer as honestly as you can. Further, it is helpful for you to find a supportive spiritual community where your child feels welcome.

## **7. Encourage, value, and model nonmaterialistic values and behaviors.**

There is a [negative relationship between materialism and spirituality](#) so it is important for parents to encourage and model nonmaterialistic values. This will be a challenge in our overindulgent society. Parents often reward their children with things (toys, phones, iPads etc.) for being good. Conversely parents take away things when a child misbehaves. If this strategy is used excessively to shape their children it fosters materialistic values that undermine a child's spirituality.

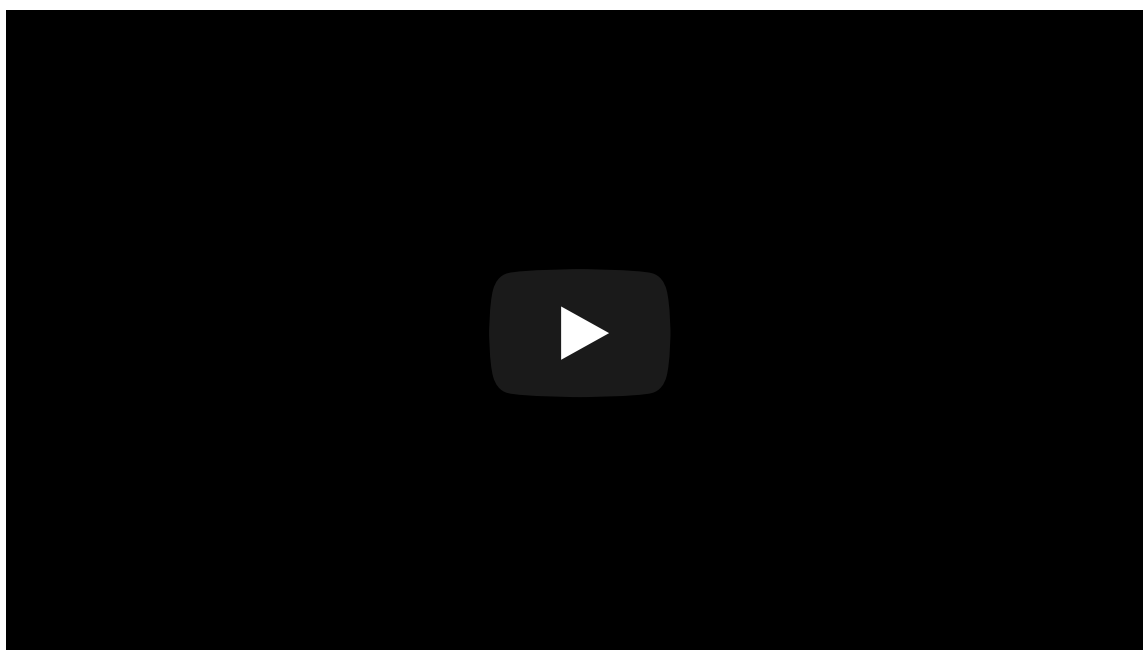




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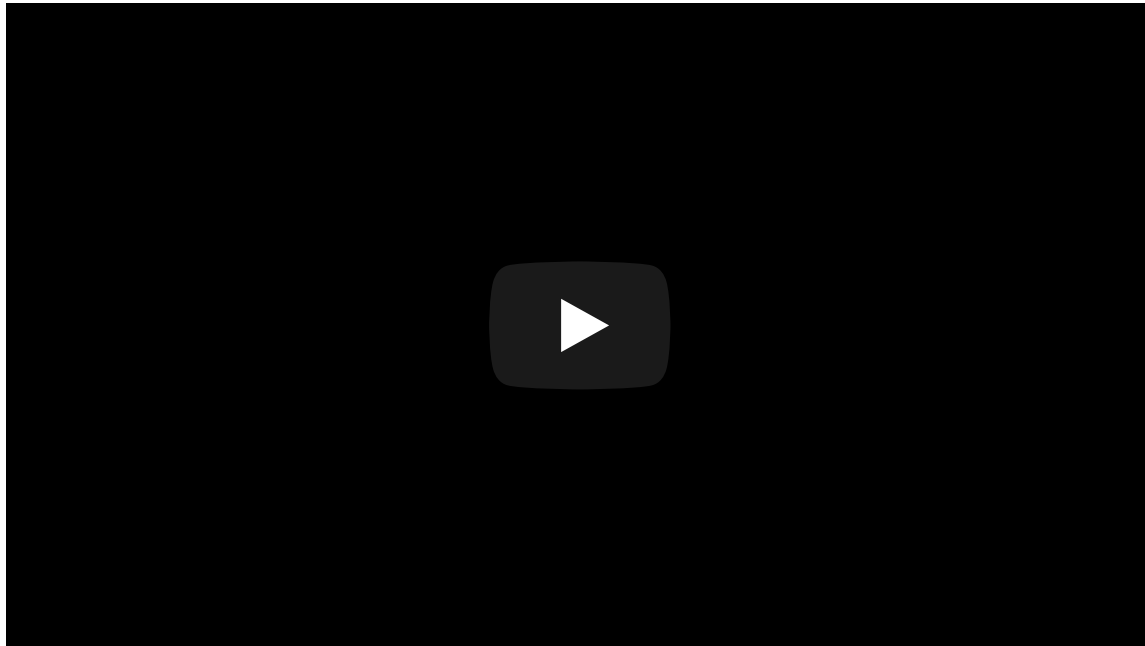
## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT

- ✓ Click here to [develop your spiritual resources](#) (from the University of Minnesota) and take charge of your wellbeing today.
- ✓ 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).



- ✓ There is more on raising a spiritual child in Dr. Lisa Miller's book titled [The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving](#) (2015, St. Martin's Press).
- ✓ Learn about the [12 Risks of Overindulging your children](#) from our free handout.
- ✓ There is fascinating reading in [The Spiritual Life of Children](#) by Robert Coles (1991,

Mariner Books).



Do all things with Love, Grace, and Gratitude

**Photos from Pexels.com.**

\* Strategies 2-6 were inspired by Lisa Miller's "[seven avoidances](#)" - the most common ways we turn off our children's spiritual development.

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