

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

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## Affluenza vs. Overindulgence. What's the Difference? by David Bredehoft

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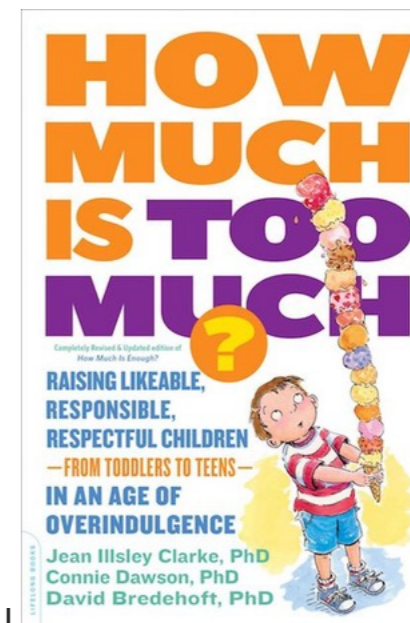
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Some call it Affluenza. Some call it spoiling. **WE CALL IT CHILDHOOD OVERINDULGENCE!** What's the difference? Or are we just talking semantics? I don't think so. Words and ideas really do matter. Let me take a moment to define each and point out some important differences.

[\(click here to download a free pdf copy of this blog\)](#)

### DEFINITION OF AFFLUENZA

**Affluenza:** "A psychological malaise supposedly affecting wealthy young people, symptoms of which include a lack of motivation, feelings of guilt, and a sense of isolation."

The term affluenza dates to the 1970's and is a blend of two words affluent and influenza. The term was popularized by an [Oregon Public Broadcasting TV special](#), a book titled ["Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic"](#), and by [Ethan Couch](#) who at age 16 drove drunk killing four people and injuring a total of nine. His attorney successfully argued that he had affluenza and needed rehabilitation instead of prison. He has since become the poster-boy for the term "affluenza."

### DEFINITION OF SPOILING

**Spoiled Brat:** "A spoiled child, spoiled brat, or simply a brat is a derogatory term aimed at children who exhibit behavioral problems from being overindulged by their parents." This term is most often used to describe a child's behavior, one who is acting out or throwing a temper tantrum. [Tantrums](#) occur most often in young children and tend to decrease with age.

### DEFINITION OF CHILDHOOD OVERINDULGENCE

#### [Three Ways of overindulging](#)

[Overindulgence](#) is giving children too much, too long or too soon so that it keeps them from doing their developmental tasks and creates risks for their adult lives. It is done in three ways.

## Too Much

Too much of anything- food, clothing, lessons, sports, entertainment, attention, anything that is over the top. Leads to lack of appreciation.

## Overnurture

Call it spoiling, helicopter parenting, or by any name that tells you someone is doing things for children that they should be doing for themselves. Leads to helplessness.

## Soft Structure

Lax boundaries. No rules or rules not enforced. Low expectations. Leads to irresponsibility.

## HOW IS CHILDHOOD OVERINDULGENCE DIFFERENT FROM AFFLUENZA AND SPOILING?

The concept of overindulgence, as we define it, is more comprehensive than either the terms of affluenza or spoiling. Here are some additional differences.

1. Affluenza sounds like an official medical condition or ailment, but it is not. You won't find the term affluenza in any medical dictionary.
2. Affluence or wealth does not "cause" the condition affluenza. An argument can be made that there are many people who are wealthy or came from affluent families who were not overindulged. [Our research has shown](#) that overindulgence is caused from a continuous pattern of behavior (see three ways above) on the part of parents and other people who care for children.
3. The term "spoiled child" is a derogatory term, whereas the term overindulgence is not.
4. Being "spoiled rotten" usually refers to a child's tantrum or inappropriate behavior. Childhood overindulgence originates from some unresolved issue a parent is struggling with. For example, "I feel guilty because I work too much and never see my children." "My oldest child died and I am scared something terrible will happen to my other children." "Our divorce is final and I don't have custody. I only get to see them every once in a while."
5. Childhood overindulgence can occur in functional and dysfunctional families.
6. Childhood overindulgence occurs in one, two, or all three ways.
7. Research on the effects of affluenza and spoiling is hard to find, in contrast there is [a growing body of scientific research](#) on childhood overindulgence.

## CONCLUSION

Use the term "Childhood Overindulgence" in place of "Affluenza" or "Spoiling?"

Learn more about overindulgence and how it affects children by getting your copy today: [How Much is Too Much? Raising Likeable, Responsible, Respectful Children – From Toddlers To Teens – In An Age of Overindulgence](#) (2014, DaCapo Press Lifelong Books).

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