

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

[Home](#)[How Much is Too Much](#)[Our Research](#)[Resources](#)[ParentTalk](#)[Overindulgence Online Course](#)

How It Feels To Be Overindulged As a Kid by David Bredehoff

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As a psychologist I don't have to tell you that significant experiences in childhood have profound, long-lasting affects well into adulthood! You can verify this from your own experience. For example, take a moment and think of one bad thing that happened to you in elementary school and immediately all of the feelings come flooding back to you as if it were yesterday even though it may have been 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years ago!

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Childhood overindulgence appears to be one of those "significant experiences", that have profound long-lasting affects well into adulthood, especially if the overindulgence was a pattern that continued over time, and for many years!

The great majority (71%) of our [overindulged subjects](#) (age range 19-80; Mean = 42.2 years old) reported having difficulty knowing what is enough, or what is normal as adults.

Participants' own comments confirm this:

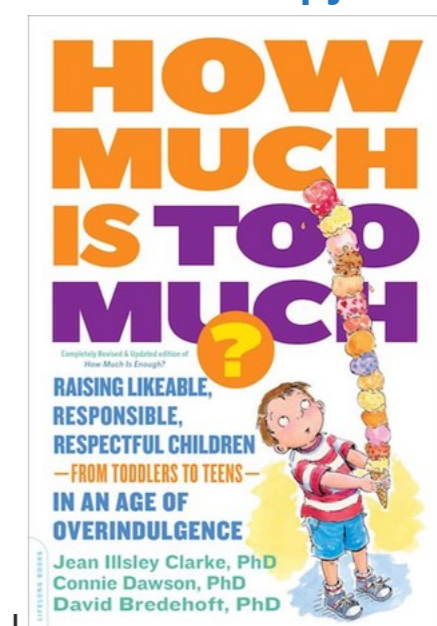
✓ "I have extreme difficulty making decisions."

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How Much is Too Much? is the only book on overindulgence with scientific support that tells parents and professionals what to do instead.

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- ✓ “I need praise and material reward to feel worthy.”
- ✓ “I don’t have to grow up because other people will take care of me.”
- ✓ “I feel like I need lots of things to feel good about myself.”
- ✓ “I’m unlovable.”
- ✓ “I have to buy gifts to be loved.”
- ✓ “I constantly need outside affirmation from my friends.”

Negative Results

How do children who were overindulged feel about the overindulgence when they grow up and look back on it? Overwhelmingly childhood overindulgence triggers negative feelings; confused, embarrassed, guilty, bad, sad, ashamed, ignored, and mad! The only “positive feeling” reported was love. Think of it, 48% interpreted the overindulgence as “my parents loved me”. Why else would my parents be doing this? But that being said, the feeling of love is so overshadowed by a cloud of negative feelings.



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Feelings Resulting From Overindulgence

1. I felt **loved**. (48%)
2. I felt **confused** because it didn’t feel right, but I couldn’t complain because how can I fault someone who does so much for me? (44%)
3. I felt **embarrassed** because at times I was expected to know some skills that I’ve never learn. (40%)
4. I felt **guilty, bad, sad**. (31%)
5. I felt **good** at the time, but later I felt **ashamed**. (29%)
6. I felt **good** because **I got everything** I wanted. (28%)
7. I felt **embarrassed** because I knew it wasn’t right. (27%)

8. Felt **bad** because other kids didn't get what I did. (23%)
9. No matter how much I got, I never got enough, so I felt **sad**. (19%)
10. I felt **good** because **I got to decide** about everything. (15%)
11. I felt **bad** because the other kids made fun of me. (15%)
12. I felt **embarrassed** because other kids didn't have stuff. (14%)
13. I felt **ignored**. (13%)
14. I felt **confused**. (13%)
15. I felt **embarrassed** because other kids teased me. (11%)
16. No matter how much I got, I never got enough, so I felt **mad**. (11%)

n=124, percentages do not add up to 100% because participants were allowed to check "all that applied to them."



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I'm A Parent Concerned About Overindulgence - What Do I Do?

As a parent I know you are concerned and do not want to overindulge your children, but you may not always know what to do instead. You may not always know whom to ask. Here are a few "rock solid" things you can do to help you avoid overindulging your children and thus avoiding the damaging effects of childhood overindulgence.

1. Read A Good Book On The Subject

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

2. Take A Four Free Online Courses On The Subject

✓ [Parenting in the Age of Overindulgence Online Course](#) - University of Minnesota

Extension

This course is an exploration of overindulgence and how you can avoid it with your children.

In this course, you will:

- Learn what overindulgence is.
- Use tools to identify and address overindulgence.
- See real examples and hear ideas for addressing overindulgence in families.

This course is for:

- Parents who are unsure what overindulgence is.
- Families concerned they may be overindulging.
- Child care providers, teachers, caregivers, or other family members interacting with children.
- Professionals who work with parents and families.

✓ [Parenting with a Good Heart Online Course Part 1](#) - University of Minnesota

Extension

This course will give you tangible tools that you can begin to integrate into your parenting right away. It is part one of a two part course.

In part 1, you will explore these topics:

- Overindulgence comes from a good heart.
- Family values — what are they?
- Has overindulgence become the “new normal”?
- Increasing our “brain awareness.”

✓ [Parenting with a Good Heart Online Course Part 2](#) - University of Minnesota

Extension

This course will give you tangible tools that you can begin to integrate into your parenting right away. It is part one of a two part course.

In part 2, you will explore these topics:

- Identify the three ways of overindulging and what to do instead.
- Flip the negatives of overindulgence into positives.
- Use the Test of Four to decide if something is overindulgence.
- Use the Developmental Parenting Highway to stay on the road to success.

✓ [Developmental Parenting Highway Online Course](#) - University of Minnesota

Extension

Am I giving my child too much? Am I doing too much for my child?

Are you asking yourself those questions a lot as you struggle to meet the challenges of parenting in the age of overindulgence? If so, taking the Developmental Parenting Highway Online Course can help.

This course is for:

- Parents who are unsure what overindulgence is or families concerned they may be

overindulging.

- Teachers, childcare providers, caregivers, or other family members interacting with children.
- Professionals who work with parents and families regularly.

3. Read, Understand, Practice, and Use The Test of Four

✓ [Overindulgence: The test of four](#) - University of Minnesota Extension

The Test of Four tool helps parents and children learn about what is enough. It guides adults and children towards personal responsibility and self-control. It also encourages clear thinking and good decision making.

4. Read An Article By An Expert On The Subject

✓ [5 Tips for Parents to Avoid the Damaging Effects of Overindulgence](#) — In this article, Jean Illsley Clarke discusses the concept of overindulgence, offering five tips on how to recognize it and what to do about it.

5. When In Doubt Ask For Help!

- ✓ Join a support group.
- ✓ Find a [family life coach](#). Sometimes you need more than a friend's advice. A family life coach can help you.
- ✓ Find a therapist. Sometimes you need expert help to work through longstanding patterns of behavior. [Psychology Today](#) has an online link to help you find a therapist near you.

In my next blog I will discuss common feelings that parents experience when they realize they have overindulged their children.

Do all things with Love, Grace, and Gratitude

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