

Raising Likeable, Responsible, Respectful

Children in an Age of Overindulgence

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The Link Between Spirituality and Overindulgence [Research] By

David Bredehoft

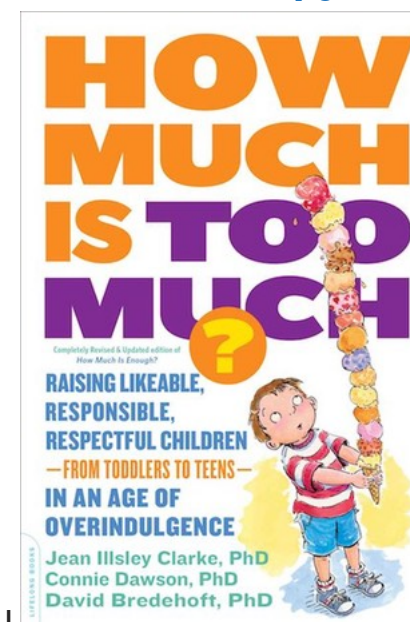
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I BEGAN WRITING THIS BLOG WITH A GREAT DEAL OF TREPIDATION AND A SENSE OF URGENCY!

My feelings of trepidation comes from the “taboo like” aura that discussions around spirituality has had in both public discourse as well as the social sciences. An irony since the majority of [Americans believe in God](#), experience [frequent feelings of spiritual peace and wellbeing](#), and the number of [peer reviewed publication titles on religion, spirituality, and health research](#) has reached almost 8,000 annually.

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My sense of urgency to tackle this “taboo like” issue stems from events over the last month; especially the evil perpetrated by neo-Nazi and white supremacists in Charlottesville, VA.

(Click here to download a free PDF copy of this blog)

I believe that **NOW, MORE THAN EVER**, we need to have a discussion about raising spiritual children. **NOW MORE THAN EVER** we need our spiritual children to grow up into spiritual adults. Children who have a sense of peacefulness, curiosity, industry, and awe, as well as a deep sense of empathy with others’ suffering. Children who

grow up into adults who are resilient, optimistic, and have a sense of belonging and feel connected to others.

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

ARE RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY THE SAME?

At this point I think it is important to point out some of the similarities as well as differences between religion and spirituality. I found the explanation offered by The University of Minnesota's "[Taking Charge of Your Health and Wellbeing](#)" page to be helpful.



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"While spirituality may incorporate elements of religion, it is generally a broader concept. Religion and spirituality are not the same thing, nor are they entirely distinct from one another. The best way to understand this is to think of two overlapping circles like this":



Relationship Between Religion and Spirituality

Note: For a more in-depth discussion on the definition of Spirituality and Religion please see Doug Oman's Chapter titled: "[Defining Religion and Spirituality](#)" in The Handbook of The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality 2nd Ed.

RESEARCH ON CHILDREN AND SPIRITUALITY

In his book titled [The Spiritual Life of Children](#), Robert Coles interviewed hundreds of children from all walks of life and religious traditions including Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hopi, secular. "[He reported](#) what they had to say about how God speaks to them and how they listen and react." He calls his method "[documentary child psychiatry](#)." He first gets to know the child, then asks a significant question, then lets the child speak. Coles believes that children's stories speak for themselves. Three examples of his work...

10-year-old Hopi girl:

...they [the Hopi children] gave me some memorable thoughts that crossed their minds, so memorable that now I recall those children when I find myself saying that I began then to have some fairly solid notions about the spiritual life of children.



Pexels-photo: Lisc. CCO

Here, for example, is what I eventually heard (in 1975) from a ten-year-old Hopi girl I'd known for almost two years: "The sky watches us and listens to us. It talks to us, and it hopes we are ready to talk back. The sky is where the God of the Anglos lives, a teacher told us. She asked where our God lives. I said, 'I don't know.' I was telling the truth! Our God is the sky, and lives wherever the sky is. Our God is the sun and the moon, too; and our God is our [the Hopi] people, if we remember to stay here [on consecrated land]. This is where we're suppose to be, and if we leave, we lose God." [\(p.25\)](#).

10-year-old Carl:

And then Carl made a comment (asked a question, really) that had everyone nodding or smiling in agreement: "How can you know if God is happy, of if He isn't happy, if He's sad?" [\(p. 32\)](#)

Betsy, when asked to draw a picture of God:

Most children who draw God's face more than once, or that of Jesus, repeat more or less the same thing again and again - the same proportion to the features, the same use of colors, the same overall shape. Not Betsy. She once colored God's face brown and told me that if she were black, as some of her classmates are, she'd want to draw God's face that way "all of the time." But a second thought took this expressive form: "I'd want to make Him white some of the time, because He's white as well as black. Don't you think?" To that question I answered yes. [\(p.46\)](#).



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SPIRITUALITY, TEENS AND HEALTH

[Dr. Lisa Miller](#) reports that children who have an active, positive relationship to spirituality have:

- ✓ [40% less](#) likely to use and abuse substances,
- ✓ [60% less](#) likely to be depressed as teenagers,
- ✓ [80% less](#) likely to have dangerous or unprotected sex and have positive markers for thriving including an increased sense of meaning and purpose, and high levels of academic success.

Other researchers found that:

- ✓ [High school students](#) who reported turning to spiritual beliefs when experiencing problems were less likely to use substances.
- ✓ [Spiritual children and adolescents](#) who are depressed have fewer thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts.
- ✓ [Childhood overindulgence](#) leads to diminished spirituality.



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CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHILDHOOD OVERINDULGENCE, MATERIALISM AND DIMINISHED SPIRITUALITY

One of the root causes of [diminished spirituality is its connection to childhood overindulgence](#). A second factor is excessive [materialism](#). Three of our studies demonstrate this.

✓ In the [first study](#) we found that individuals who were overindulged as children were more likely to grow up:

- **wanting** the most money and owning the most expensive possessions,
- **not** interested in meaningful relationships,
- **not** interested in a meaningful life,
- **not** interested in making society better unless they got something out of it.

✓ In the [second study](#) we found that children who were overindulged grew up to be adults who:

- **lacked** self-control,
- **more** materialistic,
- **unappreciative**, ungrateful, and
- **less** happy than those that were not overindulged.

✓ In the [third study](#) we found that 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.

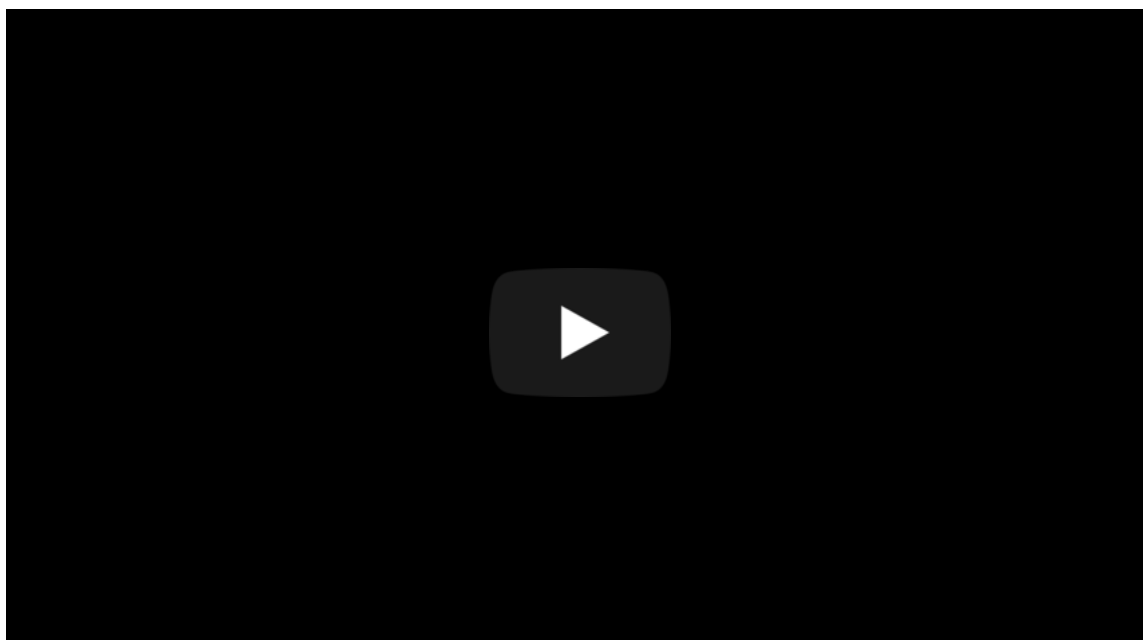


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This is the second of three blog postings on the topic of spirituality. In my next posting I will share “Strategies For Raising a Spiritual Child In An Age of Overindulgence”.

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 developing and maintaining [healthy relationships](#).

- ✓ 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 and Flickr. Graphic “Relationship Between Religion and Spirituality” from University of Minnesota [Taking Charge of your Health & Wellbeing](#).

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