OVERINDULGENCE ONLINE COURSE

What Research Says About Overindulgence

Overindulgence comes from a good heart, done by caring people who are surprised or perplexed when it doesn’t turn out well. Overindulged children get bored easily and can be whiny and disrespectful when they don’t get their way. Adults who were overindulged as children told researchers in the Overindulgence Research Study Project about a long list of its hazards they experienced that limited their adult success and happiness.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A common question is "I overindulge my kids and they're OK, so is it really all that is important?" Adults who had been overindulged as children said, "Yes, it is important," so in 1996 David Bredehoft, Connie Dawson and Jean Illsley Clarke decided to find out how important. The first study findings were filled with surprises, so they looked some more. They thought too many toys would be the biggest problem. Wrong, study participants complained about lacking skills, no chores, and no rules. By the end of 2013, they have completed 10 studies and found more surprises.

The Three Ways of Overindulging

Adults participating in the Overindulgence Research Project reported experiencing all three forms of overindulgence as children. The three ways of overindulging include:

- **Too much**- Having too many toys, clothes, or too much entertainment, anything that costs money. Children learn to be disrespectful rather than appreciative.

- **Over Nurture (Helicopter Parenting)**- Doing things for children they should be doing for themselves. Children learn to be helpless.

- **Soft Structure**- Being lax or having no rules, no chores or household tasks. Children learn to be irresponsible.
STUDY FINDINGS

The Overindulgence Research Project found that adults who were overindulged as children had these things to say. Remember, these study findings do not imply that overindulgence is the only cause of these attitudes and behaviors only that it is a possible factor. With that in mind, consider what adult study participants told the researchers:

Adults who were highly overindulged as children told the researchers:

- Too many toys didn’t cause as much angst as having things done for me that I should be doing for myself.
- We didn’t have rules or they weren’t enforced so I have difficulty following them. That gets me in trouble at work.
- I wish we had done chores. Other people know how to do so many things I don’t know about. It makes me feel dumb.
- I never seem to know what is enough. I am not enough. I will never be enough.
- Mostly, I felt unloved.
- I wished my parents would get a life besides me.
- They gave me things and I wanted them.

In addition, those who had been highly overindulged listed wealth, fame and image as their major life goals. They were not interested in learning or growing, contributing to the community, making the world a better place, or helping others unless it helped them too. In other words, overindulgence can have profound effects on both individuals and society.

HOW TO AVOID OVERINDULGING

This course offers many suggestions and tools for avoiding overindulgence and raising likeable, responsible and respectful human beings. Learn more by reading “How Much Is too Much?” by the experts conducting the Overindulgence Research Project: Jean Illsley Clarke, Connie Dawson, and David Bredehoft. See the Reference section below for details on the book.

REFERENCE


QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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