

# Raising Spiritually Healthy Children

## *Cultivating Resilience and Honoring Sensitivity*

By Mara Bishop, MS, ThM, CSC

**W**e are all born with a blueprint of core energy characteristics. This energy personality affects how we interact with others and our environment. We may be able to influence the way a child behaves (for better or worse) because children often model our actions and repeat our words. However, we are not able to change their natural temperaments. Their energetic personalities are their own.

By allowing children to be who they are, we help them stay connected to their inner divinity, an enduring source of spiritual direction not reliant on any institution or specific religion. Current research shows that the more children are connected spiritually, the more resilient they become and the less they suffer from depression and addiction as they get older. According to Dr. Lisa Miller, author of *The Spiritual Child*, children with a spiritual connection of some sort are 40 percent less likely to abuse substances and 60 percent less likely to become depressed as they move into their teenage and adult years.

A young child's energetic personality is often easier to identify than an adult's because they haven't learned to hide it yet. As children are immersed in the environment of their homes, and surrounded by the energy of other people and the culture of their families, they start receiving explicit and implicit

messages about themselves. They soon pick up on whether the way they are naturally is valued and approved, or believed to be deficient and in need of changing.

When adults are kind, respect a child's reasonable assertion of boundaries, and communicate love and appreciation, children are enabled to grow into themselves safely. They learn to navigate the world and their relationships from a place of appropriate power. When adults do not create this kind of supportive environment, the repercussions can cause serious emotional and physical issues. This is true for all children, and especially so for empathic children.

### EMPATHIC CHILDREN

Learning how to stay healthy and happy in relation to one's particular energetic make up is part of the Energy Ecosystem work I do with individuals and groups. One type that I see frequently is the empath. When children come into the world in a highly empathic state with many energetic "receptors," they feel the world around them to a heightened degree. While many people have compassion, empaths literally feel what's happening around them. Empathic children do not have the ability to shield themselves from the emotional states of their family members.

Empathic children are more vulnerable to what is communicated to them directly and indirectly than someone who does not possess this heightened state of energetic perception. When adults are not thoughtful in how they communicate to and around empathic children, they can make lasting and injurious impressions. Highly sensitive children adopt different ways of coping, depending on whether their early environments have been supportive or detrimental.



this coping strategy lose touch with themselves. If they felt they were not valued as children, they grow up to devalue themselves, the voices of criticism lodged firmly in their psyches.

When children receive the message from parents, teachers, or society that their preferences and personalities are somehow undesirable, they learn to disconnect from what is meaningful to them in order to fit in. They seek to please others rather than themselves. They sacrifice what

is true and inspiring to them in order to be accepted. This can lead to high levels of stress, depression, and anxiety, which research has shown can lead to an increase in many other physical ailments.

We can address these issues from the shamanic perspective. We work to clear the influence of negative energies that don't belong. The damage from trauma can be actively repaired, as we recover the client's true self from under the thick skin. Rather than having to address these issues in adulthood, however, it would be better to create environments that support our children in loving, respecting and taking care of themselves. Most families teach the importance of physical health; however, we also need to understand and nurture our children as unique energetic beings in order to support their health on all levels. **HL**

### CAMOUFLAGE AND DISCONNECT

Some empathic children, growing up in unsupportive environments, learn camouflage skills. They create the sensation of safety by blending in. They quickly learn how to read the danger signs of unpredictable or violent people around them and shift their way of being to avoid drawing negative attention to themselves. In homes where sensitivity was overtly disparaged, these children learn to shut down those receptors that kept them deeply connected to their own instincts, other people and the world around them. They grow a "thick skin."

As adults, the pattern frequently persists. These individuals morph to fit each new situation, relationship, or social group they enter. While adapting to different settings is a good skill to use temporarily, changing significantly on a consistent basis is not healthy. The clients I see who have adopted

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