



You Are Your Child's First Teacher: What Parents Can Do with and for Their Children from Birth to Age Six

Rahima Baldwin Dancy

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Nowadays parents are bombarded by any number of approaches about how to be with their children. **YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER** introduces a new way of understanding the human being so that parents can be best equipped to serve as their own children's best teachers. Chapters include: Caring for the Newborn, Helping Your Toddler's Development, The Development of Fantasy and Creative Play, Nourishing Your Child's Imagination, Rhythm and Discipline in Home Life, Readiness for School, and more.

You Are Your Child's First Teacher: What Parents Can Do with and for Their Children from Birth to Age Six Details

Date : Published August 1st 2000 by Celestial Arts (first published May 1st 1989)

ISBN : 9780890879672

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Format : Paperback 400 pages

Genre : Parenting, Nonfiction, Education, Childrens

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Ariana Norgren says

I liked this book overall. A lot of the information (particularly about infant care) seemed a bit obvious, but there was a lot of interesting ideas as well. This book was largely influenced by the work of Rudolph Steiner, whose writings form the basis for Waldorf Schools. I appreciate the strong emphasis on art and music, as well as a belief in minimizing TV watching and respecting children's natural development. I had some difficulty with some of the more metaphysical beliefs regarding incarnating children, but I am interested enough in the aforementioned positive points to do more reading on Waldorf Schools.

Bird says

I love the premise behind this book, but the execution didn't work for me. There's too much touchy-feely/woo-woo/philosophical weirdness going on. There's quite a bit of talk about religion/spirituality, which isn't my cup of tea, and which I don't think was at all necessary in this book. And some of the author's ideas are just wacky.

She claims you should never read more than one book to a child at a time, even if they want you to, because it's not good for their soul. Yes, you read that right. Apparently reading more than one book will damage your child's soul. Parents everywhere, take note. I can see the psychiatrist's offices overflowing with children whose parents read **gasp!* multiple books to them in one sitting!*

She also believes that parents should basically ignore their children during toddlerhood. She says that toddlers need to be free to explore on their own without parents shadowing their every move and talking constantly to them. I definitely think those things can be overdone, but many studies have shown that the number of different words a child hears each day has a direct correlation to how successful they will be in school. And I'll never believe that children with these seemingly indifferent parents are as happy and well-adjusted as those with parents who actually get down on the floor and play with them.

I gave it two stars instead of one because I think the author does a good job of capturing the wonder and magic of early childhood. I've always felt that the first few years of a child's life are such a special time, and the author clearly feels the same way, and that enthusiasm spills over into her writing.

Rebecca says

I have been curious about Waldorf education and wanted to get a flavor for it without going directly to the Rudolf Steiner primary writings. I learned that a lot of the philosophy is similar to what I already do, I'm just not as extremist about it. I have two renewed goals after reading this book, (1) instead of purposely doing chores when the children are otherwise occupied, to do them with or at least in front of the kids, so that they can either "help" me or at least learn to respect letting me do my work, and (2) removing some automation

from my life. For example, spreading dough, grating cheese, and assembling pizza together is much more fun and rewarding than grabbing one from the freezer or (gasp) ordering one.

Stacey Miner says

The title and description of this book are entirely misleading. I don't know exactly what I expected going into it, but I can tell you what I did *not* expect. I didn't expect to be reading a 370 page advertisement for Waldorf schools. There was some useful information, tips and tricks, mixed into it all, but for the most part I felt like I was reading a spiritualist's guide to figuring out how to pay for private preschool for your children. At first everything seemed dry and scientific, but then suddenly you're plunged into a theistic story of where babies come from and how they're somehow still connected to the spirit world until they become adults and forget or something asinine like that. I wasn't sure if I was reading a Christian viewpoint or a New Age Neo-Pagan Native American viewpoint half the time, or both. Good thing I borrowed it from the library and didn't waste any money on it.

Laura says

A great Waldorf inspired classic. This book will reassure you as a stay at home parent that the first three years are crucial, and that you should trust mother's intuition. If you are wondering what you should be doing all day, it is full of gentle suggestions about how to integrate your child into your family's lifestyle, by using everyday chores as teachable moments. It emphasizes reading, nature hikes, and other gentle, healthy ways of parenting.

I get tired of people rushing their 2 years old into academic preschools so that they can get ahead. This book is a nice antidote to that mentality.

Sarah says

I rated this book four stars based on what I got out of it, which I will mention following. However, there is a lot of other topics, principles, viewpoints, etc of which I do not agree or really think are unimportant. I will not go into that but just disclosing that I tend to overlook the things I could criticize about Many books.

What I did like about this book is her explanations about how toddlers learn - through their bodies, motion and imitation. This is very applicable to me right now and was such a good reminder/eye opener about the way to teach and play with my two year old. As well as giving me insight to why he behaves the way he does. Just what I needed to read at this point in my life.

Ashley says

Whoa, kooky. The first two chapters had some good information, but after the rainbow bridge, I was done.

Gail says

If you hadn't gathered this by the description or other reviews, this is a book based on the Waldorf principles. Turns out there are a lot of elements of the Waldorf approach that I really like. Parts of it seem a bit much, but overall there are many things I agree with like simplifying life, minimal material items, emphasizing pretend play, encouraging music and art, not pushing children to excel beyond their years, giving them time to be children, no TV/computer for little ones, no silly "enrichment" classes for preschoolers. I will definitely be implementing parts of this, and the rest of it was definitely worth consideration. It inspired me to think of aspects of development not touched on in other books (such as a child's spiritual development). I didn't appreciate her random, unrelated to the rest of the book comments against immunization in the last chapter, but perhaps that is because of my own pro-immunization stance. She does have great lists of books for further reading at the end of each chapter, which I plan to utilize. Great book for an introduction to Waldorf parenting/education.

Mary says

I am in the middle of this book, and am finding that I want to underline, dog-ear, and discuss something on every page! I am new to learning about the different educational theories, and this is the first book from a Waldorf perspective that I've read. There is so much valuable information- some highlights for me have been:

- having 'rhythm' in daily life- not strict scheduling, but a flexible predictability to the days that help give kids structure, and help keep the household running more smoothly.

- common sense wisdom on breastfeeding and sleep arrangements- it spoke to me because there are so many extremes in parenting books when it comes to these topics- this is neither a cry it out nor a 'co-sleep for years even if you don't get any sleep yourself, or you're a horrible parent' type book. It advocates responding to your baby and child and breastfeeding, but finding an arrangement that works for all in the family.

- The part on the different temperaments is fascinating!

- And of course, lots of good info on the developmental stages and imaginative ways to help your child blossom, without the use of lots of expensive classes or plastic toys.

Jenny says

Full of great insights and ideas for the first few years of Life. Some of the Steiner-based stuff gets a little "woo-woo" for me, but it's easy to skip over it and take the rest. Great recommended-reading lists at the end of each chapter too, though my old edition, which was from the library, had a fair number of out-of-print books still listed.

Among the many "Aha!" revelations for me in the book was the observation that babies, toddlers, and preschoolers (to age 7, according to Waldorf child-development theory) learn mostly by imitation. If we don't give them meaningful things to imitate they don't get the richness of experience they need in these

years. In our technologically advanced world, most of what we adults do at home (typing on computers, pushing buttons on machines) doesn't give them a lot to imitate. Nor can they imitate adults who never do anything but interact with them. I've profoundly changed the way I spend my time at home with my toddler since reading this book.

Laura says

While some of the parenting info in this book made a lot of sense (toddlers need a schedule, etc.), some of it was so many deviations off the bell curve it shocked me. Don't read more than one book to your child per day (even if they ask for more), don't teach your child about anything--wait until they ask you about things they see, don't allow your toddlers to take part in playgroups, music appreciation classes, sports and movement classes. So many don'ts! But apparently they recommend telling your child a story about how they were an angel coming over the rainbow bridge when they were born. What?!?

Bobbie Greene says

One of the most indispensable child development books on my shelves! Not only did Dancy pack this text full of useful information about development, there are also suggestions for activities and a seemingly endless list of resources for further research or exploration (toy companies, etc.).

Through this book, I was also introduced to Waldorf education, and am now employing many of the concepts in our own home: spending time exploring and appreciating nature, using as many natural-resource toys as possible, honoring a child's independence during play, teaching through imitation rather than instruction, using song and dance especially during transitions, and so many others!

I cannot say enough good things about this book! It even deals simply with discipline in boiling it down to how many discipline issues can be prevented through predictable routine: if a child knows that he takes a bath every night after dinner, there shouldn't be a fight over whether a bath will happen. He just knows to expect it. Advice like this has been wonderful for my family, and I've even recommended the book to a few friends who have gained a lot of tips from it. I won't loan out my copy, though! I refer to my notes in it too often!

Marissa Morrison says

I skipped the first chapters, which are about birth and babyhood. There's some interesting stuff here about the importance of play, but also a lot of speculative mumbo jumbo. For instance: "The dreamy state of early childhood is an essential element in the healthy formation of the physical body during the first seven years. The intellect is crystalline and hardening in its effect. When it is engaged prematurely, it can inhibit the proper development of the physical organs and the unfolding of the fluid emotions." In equally nutty passages, the author cautions against reading more than one book to a child per sitting, claiming it's bad for the soul, and recommends telling children on their birthdays that they came down to earth over the "rainbow bridge," because "the young child is still very connected to the spiritual world."

Ashlyn Hunt says

The Rudolph Steiner philosophy is sublime, serene, magical . . . conducive to a utopian existence - of which we do not exist. I want so much for my toddler to be separated from the social media that our western culture harnesses. But in all reality, it's utterly impossible to detach him exclusively from television or any other media outlet that doesn't promote pure, unadulterated goodness.

You Are Your Child's First Teacher was well written, and I embrace Rahima Baldwin's standpoint with the utmost respect. I learned a great deal from her kind and insightful words. And I will aspire to fulfill as many of her rational, obvious, and completely truthful guidance. Because everything she said makes perfect sense. But again, in this modern age of perseverance and success, I hope that I can wield the most protective and secure foundation that I can for my son. Maybe not a carbon copy of her ideals, but I do believe it can be possible with a strong, loving family.

There is some great advice and tips in this book on instilling strength in spiritually and harmonious aptitude in a toddler. But quite frankly, or at least in my scope of reality, not all of her beliefs seem possible.~AH

Kate says

I read this book a long time ago, and it shaped a big part of my parenting....I am rereading it now and still love so much of its wisdom. It's preachy (as are all parenting books) but I continue to pick and choose little nuggets to help with day-to-day life with the children
