



# Calm and Compassionate Children: A Handbook

*Susan Usha Dermond*

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Building on such inherent qualities as openheartedness and trust, parents and teachers can help children develop empathy and integrity as they grow and mature. From nature activities to conscious quiet time to tips on daily routines, CALM AND COMPASSIONATE CHILDREN provides practical guidance to help grown-ups model behavior and suggests dozens of activities to foster children's joy, wonder, kindness, and love.

A parents' and teachers' guide to developing children's concentration, self-discipline, and compassion, as well as heartfelt qualities like openness and enthusiasm. Includes more than 90 techniques and exercises drawn from the author's experiences as a teacher and director of the Living Wisdom School, a nonprofit elementary school that emphasizes nonsectarian spiritual principles and practical skills for living. Recommends books, music, games, and other resources to help grown-ups nurture calm and compassionate kids.

## **Calm and Compassionate Children: A Handbook Details**

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## From Reader Review Calm and Compassionate Children: A Handbook for online ebook

### Charity says

This book has some really helpful suggestions. Nothing amazing, but helpful. My two favorites were the suggestion of developing routines/rituals (Dermond gave more detail on how to do this than other books I've seen) and the image of an eternal stream of love and as parents, when we're angry, we need only dip into this stream to offer this love to our children (or ourselves or our partners). It helps me when I'm angry to not feel like I have to come up with the loving feelings on my own, that the love just exists and I merely need to access it. Kind of a simple idea when I write it out like that, but I've found it quite helpful.

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### Jess says

Excellent book on how to help raise calm and compassionate children in our crazy world!:o) Easy read.

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### Kylie Traill says

this book changed how I parent. At the time of reading I took the outlook that parenting was something to 'get through'. After reading this I knew how different being a parent could be from that.

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### Molaika says

It took me a loooong time to finish this one but I am glad that I did! The book turned out to be insightful and I sense that it will be helpful to me/my children for several years.

#### CONS:

- a little new-agey, but her suggestions are easy enough to adapt to Catholic spirituality and it is to the author's credit that she included Christian prayer and thought in her book
- seemed a bit dated, can it be that a book published in 2007 seems dated? We live in a rapidly changing world!
- the challenges and solutions she described mostly pertained to children in the 6-12 age group

#### PROS:

- chapters can be read individually based on what the reader needs or wants to work on
- activities and practices are listed at the end of each chapter for quick reference
- thoughts seemed really on-point!

Money quote #1: "When your child makes a mistake in judgment and treats someone poorly, as you talk to him about it, reassure him that you know he has to make mistakes to learn. Assure him that he has the power to choose love and compassion, even when it is hard to do. \*\*\*Always assume that he can improve and that any mistakes are made out of self-absorption, not meanness.\*\*\*"

Money quote #2: "Parents tend to be either strict and threatened by negotiation and compromise or permissive and unable to establish consistent boundaries. It is not easy to strike a balance between providing our children with the environment and guidance that enables them to be the best they can be and simply relaxing into acceptance and affection for who they presently are. \*\*\*It helps to remind yourself that your children's future is not solely up to you. Each child has his or her own qualities at birth - before our input even starts - and a set of life circumstances that you influence, but do not control.\*\*\*"

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### **Megan says**

I really enjoyed this book and found it to be very helpful with my children. I have noticed how easily my girls pick up on my anxieties and frustration, and I want to model dealing with emotions positively. I was happy to randomly stumble on this book in the library. Everything about it is calming--the tone, the suggestions, the quotes, the examples. It doesn't make me feel guilty or inadequate, but instead gives a lot of clear and thoughtful advice. I copied all the "Practical Advice" sections before returning the book to the library so that Jake and I would have reminders of games, activities, exercises, etc. that the author suggests. Maddie has always been a calm child and has just the past year or so started to get regularly very frustrated and emotional (maybe it's the age, maybe it's the little sister, maybe it's being home for the summer??), and I feel like this was the perfect book to help me. I learned a lot about being calm myself, too, and I have noticed that when I put it into practice, our family is happier and our house is a peaceful place to be.

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### **Shawna says**

I wasn't sure what to think about a book like this when I read the title. I found myself wondering whether the author would blatantly tell us how to raise our child or tell us that we have parenting all wrong. It wasn't like that. After reading it, I think my husband and I are doing a great job! The author tells you stories about how small techniques and changes can help a child become more peaceful, mindful of others and one with nature and family. There are activities that families can do with their children as well. I thought this was a great, easy read!

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### **Michael Fitzgerald says**

A disappointment. There is in this book some useful information, but it is swamped by multicultural relativistic nonsense. Invent rituals and traditions! Borrow from any and all various traditions to create your own hodgepodge (without any of the underlying foundations that give these things meaning). You end up with a caricature of "spirituality" that is entirely superficial. Heaven forbid that you would deal with real traditions and real rituals that are tightly interwoven into actual religions. That wouldn't sell to the whole reader market, would it? Wouldn't ever want to offend anyone. But what's actually offensive is to see this kind of "everything is equal" garbage that bows down to the almighty gods of diversity and tolerance and bases everything around that. Some of the activities and practices are decent - but these could be presented in a much better way.

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### **Susan says**

This book, I think, will have trouble finding its way into the hands that need it most. Those who pick up this book are likely already inclined to raise calm and compassionate children and won't find many surprises within its pages. Those that could use a dose of its wisdom are unlikely to pick it up in the first place.

One of the best features of this book are the activity lists at the end of each chapter that give the reader specific ways to implement the author's guidelines. Like many books of its ilk, however, the narrative voice often suffers from a bit of smugness. Yes, the author seems to have discovered a method of parenting/teaching that is mindful and loving, but when its described, sounds self-satisfied and a bit precious.

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### **Douglas Lord says**

Dermond, director of the Living Wisdom School in Oregon, encourages readers to soothe the long-term effects of overexcitement and agitation plaguing children by creating calming environments, exploring nature and music, reading aloud, and modeling nurturing behavior. Lacking these, children "may not develop the emotional reserves to give much compassion to others." While only the most determined readers will, for example, spray frenzied children with calming, lilac-scented water, most will be able to pick up a few tips, like using pets and stuffed animals (termed "pseudo-pets") to teach kids about love. Though Dermond's heartfelt writing occasionally seems platitudinous (e.g., "pay attention to the beauty and kindness surrounding us"), readers will note her unwavering, gentle appreciativeness. This is like a starter kit to help balance life's busyness with oases of literal (and figurative) silence and will serve as a good companion to Kenneth R. Ginsberg and Martha M. Jablow's *A Parent's Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings*. Recommended.

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### **Alicia Shafer says**

A good resource. Each chapter is centered around a theme and the reader is encouraged to dive in wherever seems most interesting. Lots of good, practical ideas and nice stories and illustrations. I may need to buy this book so I have it to dive into whenever I am in the mood to be a better parent.

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### **R. C. says**

I hate reviewing parenting books because the results of applying any philosophy of parenting are always a bit iffy even when the kids seem to be good. When will we know if the ideas in this book worked? When my kids are dead, if some brilliant person (with access to the archived internet of 2009) biographizes them. And who wants to think about the likelihood of seeing that day? Not me.

So I'll have to review this against all the other books like it.

The author is respectful of and awed not just by children but by the human being, coming from a strongly spiritual perspective. It's definitely a heart-out approach to raising good people. It's all about how to preserve and empower your kid's soul.

Her book includes all the behavior management ideas you'll find in other non-punitive discipline books, plus a few I had seen rumors about on the fringes of the internet. She doesn't write prescriptions for those immediate situations where most parents would punish. Her suggested activities are pro-active, not reactionary. It's in her anecdotes that she reveals the attitude she takes when she has to do-something-because-that-is-not-okay, and I think her spirit comes through these tales and is just as instructive as the lists of activities at the end of each chapter. She weaves together the spirit of her childrearing approach and the feet of it with clarity and a deft teacher's hands.

The author is inspiring and has a gift for bringing gentle parenting out of the clouds. Read this one.

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### **Rochelle Torke says**

Our children are actually good, innately kind little beings. Who knew? But when you start following these loose tips, magical things do tend to happen. I'm due to re-read soon.

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### **Margi says**

i count this as one of the three or four books that i turn to for perspective in parenting. a few of my favorite chapters include

- \*concentrating to calmness
- \*in silence we know ourselves
- \*nature awakens feeling
- \*music to soothe

our home-life is better for this book.

to name a few!!

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### **Anna Goldsmith says**

Well ... I enjoyed the possibilities that this book presented of encouraging children to become more in touch with their 'calm and compassionate' natures.

Perhaps it is more feasible to foster these traits in children within the private school setting that Usha Desmond is used to working in. I must admit that it seems more like a lovely dream and a far stretch in the public school environment.

It is difficult for me to imagine being able to create a gently loving, positive and peaceful environment with the rambunctious, rebellious (and sometimes hopelessly chaotic) class in which I am currently an Assistant Teacher.

However, the book does offer practical, concrete suggestions that teachers and parents can utilize, both with the children and for themselves to help maintain and improve psychological well-being.

Perhaps even if there is no complete solution to behavior management problems with some kids/classrooms,

it would still be worth trying some of these ideas to find out what works.

I would recommend educators to read this book. It offers an uplifting message that it is possible to make a difference in the lives of children, even under increasingly challenging circumstances.

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### **Emily says**

The best parenting book I have ever read, and I've read tons. Most parenting books tend toward generalizations that we all already knew and allow for little adaptation to different the temperaments of child and parents. What I loved about this book is that it has really concrete activities and ideas to work into your life that dramatically shift the energy of yourself and your child. It's great for children of all ages, teachers, and anyone who is regularly in contact with youth.

Oh and did I mention the author taught at a school in Nevada City?

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