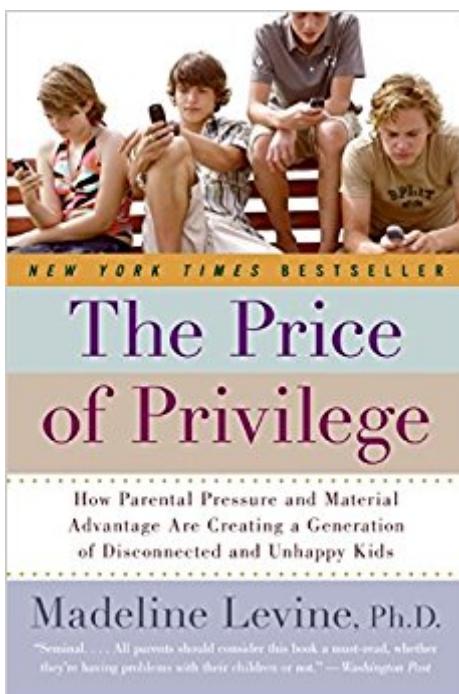


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# The Price Of Privilege: How Parental Pressure And Material Advantage Are Creating A Generation Of Disconnected And Unhappy Kids



## **Synopsis**

In this ground-breaking book on the children of affluence, a well-known clinical psychologist exposes the epidemic of emotional problems that are disabling America's privileged youth, thanks, in large part, to normalized, intrusive parenting that stunts the crucial development of the self. In recent years, numerous studies have shown that bright, charming, seemingly confident and socially skilled teenagers from affluent, loving families are experiencing epidemic rates of depression, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders; rates higher than in any other socioeconomic group of American adolescents. Materialism, pressure to achieve, perfectionism, and disconnection are combining to create a perfect storm that is devastating children of privilege and their parents alike. In this eye-opening, provocative, and essential book, clinical psychologist Madeline Levine explodes one child-rearing myth after another. With empathy and candor, she identifies toxic cultural influences and well-intentioned, but misguided, parenting practices that are detrimental to a child's healthy self-development. Her thoughtful, practical advice provides solutions that will enable parents to help their emotionally troubled "star" child cultivate an authentic sense of self.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A practicing psychologist in Marin County, Calif., Levine counsels troubled teens from affluent families, and finds it paradoxical that wealth "which can open the door to travel and other enriching opportunities" can produce such depressed, anxious, angry and bored teenagers. After comparing

notes with colleagues, she concluded that consumerism too often substitutes for the sorts of struggles that produce thoughtful, happy people. If objects satisfy people, then they never get around to working on deeper issues. The teen years are supposed to be a time for character building. Avoiding this hard work with the distraction of consumer toys can produce "vacant," "evacuated" or "disconnected" teens, Levine believes. She is particularly useful when explaining common parenting dilemmas, like the difference between being intrusive and being involved, between laying down rules and encouraging autonomy. Alas, while Levine pitches to the educated moms, since they do much of the actual child-rearing, she may be preaching to the choir. Those who need her most may be too busy shopping to pick up such a dire-looking volume. Still, school guidance counselors should be happy to have this clear, sensitive volume on their bookshelves.

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Wandering among suburban estates, sports clubs and prep schools are overlooked children of a perplexed generation. Their lives overflow with abundance and praise, yet ironically, the mask of apparent health and success may hide a gloomy world of emptiness, anxiety and anger. Strangely, argues Madeline Levine, a clinical psychologist practicing in Marin County, California, the nation's latest group of at-risk kids comes from affluent, well-educated families. Despite advantages, these children experience disproportionately high rates of clinical depression, substance abuse, anxiety, eating disorders and self-destructive (even self-mutilating) behaviors, according to various studies. Based on criteria from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Levine says these children "are exhibiting epidemic rates of emotional problems beginning in junior high school and accelerating throughout adolescence." One may brush off these youngsters as overindulged products of wealthy, narcissistic parents. But Levine says many of these kids are really ill. They suffer from a weak sense of self, often struggling to fill inner emptiness with objects and praise. Too often they know something is wrong and grope desperately for help yet fail to escape a downward spiral. Could it be, Levine wonders, that privilege, high expectations, competitive pressure and parental overinvolvement yield toxic rather than protective effects? Levine explores such issues as social isolation, the fine line between parental underinvolvement and overindulgence, and the perverse role of money and material goods in creating false promises of fulfillment. Yearning for outward approval, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the delusion that wealth causes happiness. In many cases, a rude awakening occurs only after many years of anxiety and depression. Levine's writing is surprisingly reflective and interesting. A

constructive therapist, she offers practical guidelines and parenting strategies for those struggling with troubled teens. The advice is useful to any parent of any income level and includes ways to foster healthy autonomy, impulse control and sense of self. Levine emphasizes the importance of discipline, monitoring and limit setting as ways to encourage kids to construct healthy "inner" homes. More important, parents must "stand on their own two feet" before expecting their children to stand on theirs; noting that many parents scold their children for social behaviors that they themselves cannot manage, such as substance abuse and lack of self-discipline or self-assertion. Parents must strive to get their own inner homes in order before they can expect kids to straighten out theirs. Richard Lipkin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a parent and teacher in an affluent suburban community, this book was eye-opening and helpful. The author directly address the issue of perfectionism that is creating a society of emotionally damaged and isolated individuals. The author also addresses materialism, values, discipline, warmth, acceptance, and the act of being present.

**ALL SCHOOL SHOULD TEACH THIS CLASS TO FUTURE PARENTS, AND IT SHOULD BE A MANDATORY CLASS.** The teachers should have to read it, as well! I sure wish I read this while raising my kids. You cannot imagine the problems some of us very loving parents have created.....teachers, also!

Definitely glad I read this book. I got so engrossed I panicked about the state of my child, only to learn my concern was overblown. After reading this and How to Raise an Adult, we have planned an "adult transition plan" beginning on 16th birthday (soon).

The Price of Privilege is one of the better books I've read in quite some time. I found it insightful, approachable, and practical. While the majority of the book is about the psychological challenges kids from affluent homes are experiencing, I would recommend this book to any parent. The book also indirectly points out challenges facing our world and society, which I found refreshing. While we, to a large extent, live in a capitalist world, there are many dangers to becoming a materialistic society. Madeline does a nice job acknowledging the dangers and offering a perspective that is workable within our culture and society.

I was frustrated as I observed someone struggling to parent successfully and I found this book after

browsing some blogs. It came highly recommended. So I bought it with the idea of trying to help someone else, but I found what I needed for my own children and myself in this book too. As I read this book, I realized that I wanted my book club to read it (7 women with children ages toddler to college, and different economic situations) and discuss it. Two of the women just wanted to borrow my copy and read it, however after getting 50 or so pages into it, they both went and bought their own copy. This book needs to be read with a pencil in hand, so you can underline and make notes. Five of the seven women bought the book, we had a great discussion. The advice applies to all ages and we also decided as a group that even though the book is geared towards high income families, the core values taught are universal and it is just an overall good parenting book. In my own words, here are just a few of the ideas I took from the book--- it takes TIME, interaction, and listening ears to be a good parent, a warm and attentive mother figure is very important, no success (money or prestige) will compensate for failure in your home, helping kids practice and learn self-control is necessary for them to be successful adults, people matter more than objects and we have to teach that to our children, serving others and having your children help you do that is vital, and allowing them to make their own choices (even at the risk of failure sometimes) will help them develop into happier individuals. As a book club we also decided that aligning yourself with family, friends, a church or organization (Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts) will help to teach the core values you believe in and will be most beneficial for your children.

This book was recommended to me, and I found it helpful, insightful, and honest. I don't quite understand some of the comments in the small number of negative reviews. One review criticized Levine, saying it is the parents who messed up the kids, not the parents. I think if you reread the book, this is the exact message the author is trying to communicate. Parents are spoiling kids by not not setting limits and boundaries. In some cases parents are too absorbed in their own lives and are incapable of teaching children to participate in community activities, and develop a sense of community. This manifest itself in affluent families as it is sometimes far easier to provide laptops, i-phones and all the grown up toys as a substitute for real parenting. These toys further provide isolation (texting, video chatting, and "facebooking" is not real communication) as distractions to maturation and developing normal healthy relationships. To get a more in-depth understanding, I suggest one also reads John McKinnon's excellent book " An Unchanged Mind". The author is a Harvard/Yale education Psychiatrist who now runs a therapeutic boarding school in Montana and has probably treated over a thousand students through his program. He shares his observations from firsthand experience as a clinical psychiatrist working with adolescents.

I had attended one of Dr. Levine's talks and am familiar with the organization ChallengeSuccess.org. That talk made me want to purchase this book coz I found myself nodding in agreement to nearly 100% of the points Dr. Levine mentioned in her talk. I belong to an "affluent" community (Silicon Valley) and have a 7-yr old kid, and thought that the book would help me avoid common parenting traps that ultimately make our kids pay the "price of privilege". I have to say, Dr. Levine raises some very valid points about pushy parents and I found myself thinking of examples I have observed all around me each time she raises a point. The price our kids pay is that they are unprepared to face the real challenges that life throws, and that is what gets them to a breaking point very easily.

A book that will make you think twice about buying that updated iPhone and all the other gadgets that are so readily available to keep your kid up to date. Open the door, send them outside with their friends and tell them to find an adventure in the natural world!

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