

Komisar Transcript (copied from Prager U [Why Even Atheists Should Teach Their Children about God | PragerU](https://www.prageru.com/video/why-even-atheists-should-teach-their-children-about-god) “”on 8/29/21 https://www.prageru.com/video/why-even-atheists-should-teach-their-children-about-god/?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_2683793

As a therapist, I’m often asked why depression and anxiety are so common among children and adolescents. One explanation—almost surely the most neglected—is declining interest in God and religion.

I see the consequences of this in my practice almost every day.

And this is not merely my personal observation. A 2018 Harvard study involving 5,000 people examined how being raised in a family with religious beliefs affects the mental health of children.

The study found that kids who attended a religious service at least once per week scored higher on psychological well-being measurements and had lower risks of mental illness.

Weekly attendance was also associated with higher rates of volunteerism, lower probabilities of both drug use and early sexual initiation, and a sense of purpose.

Yet, despite all the evidence that religious involvement leads to positive behaviors, Gallup reports that the U.S. has seen a 20% decrease in attendance at formal religious services in the past 20 years. In 2018, the American Family Survey revealed that nearly half of adults under 30 do not identify with any religion.

From a purely psychological point of view, this is not a good trend.

Nihilism—the belief in nothing—is a rich fertilizer for anxiety and depression. In contrast, the belief in God—a guardian figure who loves us—is an invaluable source of support and comfort.

I am often asked by parents, “How do I talk to my child about death if I don’t believe in God or heaven?”

My answer is always the same:

“Fake it.”

There are a many things you don't tell your children the full truth about. For instance, if your children hear about a tragedy that has occurred in your community, you tell them that it will never happen to them. We don't have a crystal ball and cannot know that bad things will not happen to our children, yet we reassure them with a hopeful narrative.

The same applies to believing in God and heaven.

Even if you believe that when your life ends, your bones turn to dust and you are gone for eternity, such beliefs don't help children, they only scare them and create anxiety over death and dying. Belief in a benevolent God and a heaven does help children with their fear.

In our current age of broken families, distracted parents, school violence, and nightmarish global-warming predictions, imagination plays a big part in children's ability to cope. It is far better for kids to use their imagination constructing something positive—such as a God who cares

about us—than the dark, nihilistic idea that there's no creator and protector, and no purpose to our existence.

I am also frequently asked how parents can instill gratitude and empathy in their children. Again, the best answer is involvement in an organized religion. All traditional faiths encourage gratitude and empathy as antidotes to entitlement and selfishness. These are the building blocks of strong character. They also protect against depression and anxiety.

Additionally, religion provides children a chance for community. Being with people who share their faith can act as a buffer against the emptiness and isolation of modern culture. This is more necessary than ever in a world where teens can have hundreds of virtual friends and few real ones.

And religion helps teach children mindfulness, a sense of self-control, and discipline. Your young children might not be aware they are entering a house of worship, but they do know they're supposed to act in an appropriate manner when they are there. They have to relax their bodies and calm their minds.

It is true that if you feel ambivalent about God and religion your children will likely follow your example. However, if you practice religion or send your children to religious school knowing it is good for them, you might surprise yourself and get something meaningful out of it too. In other words, your children may bring you back to faith. It's certainly worth an extended experiment for their sake and for yours.

Consider one more argument: if you take the idea seriously that your children should be free to choose or reject God and religion, they need to be exposed to God and religion. How else will they be able to make a free and informed choice?

We live in a competitive, stressful society that idealizes materialism, selfishness, and virtual rather than real human connection. Having a religious community and a belief in God is the best antidote to all of that.

Whether children choose to continue to practice as adults is something you cannot control. But at least give them a chance to believe in God and find comfort in religion.

They deserve it.

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