

# Can putting your child before yourself make you a happier person?

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While popular media often depicts highly-involved parents negatively as "helicopter parents" or "tiger moms, how does placing one's children at the center of family life really affect parental well-being? New research published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science* finds that parents who prioritize their children's well-being over their own are not only happier, but also derive more meaning in life from their child-rearing responsibilities.

"These findings stand in contrast to claims in the popular media that prioritizing children's well-being undermines parents' well-being," the researchers wrote.

Researchers Claire E. Ashton-James, Kostadin Kushlev and Elizabeth W. Dunn conducted two studies with a total of 322 parents. In Study 1, parents were asked to complete a child-centrism scale to measure their parenting style and were then given a survey to measure the [happiness](#) and meaning in life that they experienced from having children by responding to statements such as "My children make my life meaningful." The researchers found that more child-centric parents were significantly more likely to report higher happiness and a sense of purpose in life derived from having children.

In Study 2, participants were asked to retell their previous day's activities and report how they felt during each activity. The results indicated that more child-centric parents had greater positive feelings, less negative feelings, and experienced more meaning in life during child-care

activities. In addition, the well-being of more child-centric parents was not affected negatively throughout the rest of the day, suggesting that the child-centric approach to parenting does not hurt parental well-being when parents are not taking care of their children.

"These findings suggest that the more care and attention people give to others, the more happiness and meaning they experience," the authors wrote. "From this perspective, the more invested parents are in their [children](#)'s well-being—that is, the more 'child centric' [parents](#) are—the more happiness and meaning they will derive from parenting."

**More information:** The article entitled "Parents Reap What They Sow: Child-Centrism and Parental Well-Being" published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, is available free for a limited time at: [spp.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... 479804.full.pdf+html](http://spp.sagepub.com/content/early/.../479804.full.pdf+html)

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