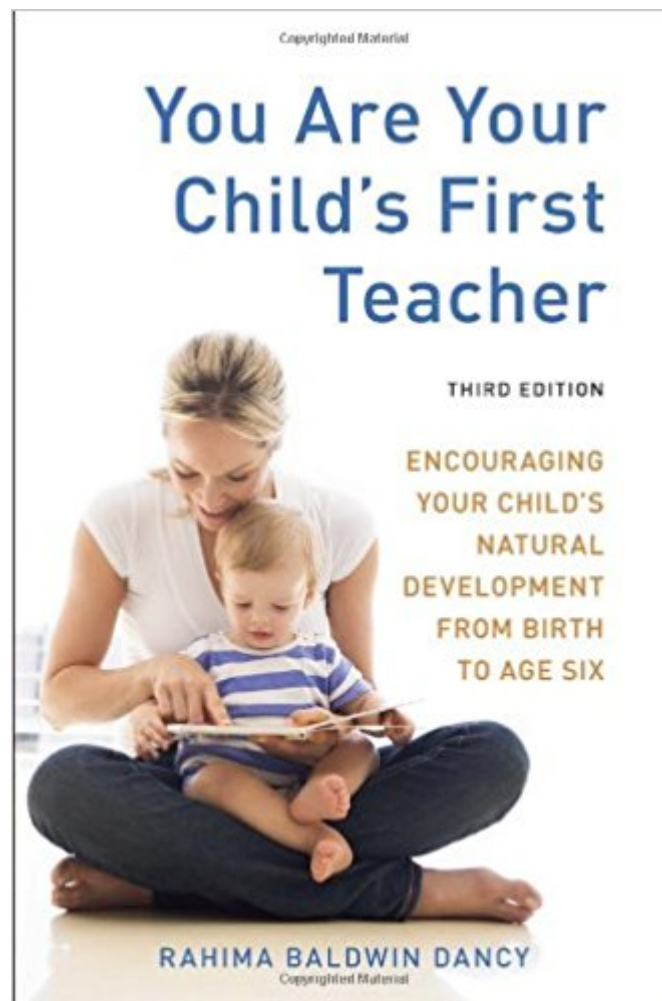


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# You Are Your Child's First Teacher, Third Edition: Encouraging Your Child's Natural Development From Birth To Age Six



## Synopsis

*You Are Your Child's First Teacher* was the first book in America to popularize the insights of Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf schools, regarding the developmental needs of young children. This revised and updated edition offers new ways for parents and educators to enrich the lives of children from birth to age six. Some of the most important learning years happen before your child reaches school. In *You Are Your Child's First Teacher*, respected Waldorf educator Rahima Baldwin Dancy explains the different stages of learning that children go through from birth to age six, giving you the wisdom and understanding to enrich your child's natural development in the right way at the right time. Today's society often pressures us into overstimulating young children with flashcards, workbooks, videos, and electronic gadgets in a well-meaning attempt to give them a head start. But children are not little adults—they learn and grow in radically different ways at different ages, and what we do to help could actually hurt instead. A trusted classic for over twenty years, this newly revised edition contains updated resources and additional information on discipline, early childhood programs, toilet training, using home life as curriculum, and more. From language and cognitive development to appropriate toys and nourishing your child's artistic abilities, Dancy speaks up for a rational approach to child-rearing, one that helps children be children while we fulfill our important role as parents and first teachers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I tend toward the "crunchy" end of the spectrum as far as parenting styles are concerned, but something about this book just bugs me. There are lots of things that I appreciate about the Waldorf

approach: creating a calm, loving home environment with reassuring rituals and rhythms through the days, weeks, seasons and years; providing an environment that nurtures creativity, with quality, open-ended toys; limiting "screen time" for young children. Basically, let your kids enjoy their childhoods, let them get outside and get dirty, and take it easy with all the lessons, teams, camps, and enrichment whatever. If this is your general philosophy, skip this book and try "Simplicity Parenting" by Kim John Payne or "Calm and Compassionate Children", by Susan Dremond. Both of these are Waldorf-inspired, but written for a more mainstream audience. "You are your child's first teacher" is very strongly based on Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy philosophy. While I think it's possible to appreciate and incorporate many of Steiner's indications, "You are your child's first teacher" is quite dogmatic from my perspective. While others' have commented that they find the author's tone to be supportive I find it to be condescending in a lot of instances. While she pays lip service to the fact that guilt is not helpful to anyone, the exhaustive list of very specific "Do's" in this book can't help but be guilt-inducing, especially for a newer parent. If you're not familiar with Waldorf, these "Do's" include things like: music in the pentatonic scale (Major scales, with C & F, are "too bright" for a young child and interfere with the "incarnation" process), surrounding an infant in a particular colour (peach blossom), and providing a young child with beeswax for modelling purposes, because clay is too cold and associated with the earth to be appropriate for a young child. Again I appreciate many aspects of Waldorf education/parenting - I just think that it's possible for kid's to do wet-on-wet watercolour painting while also enjoying markers and puffy paint. You can have play silks AND "dress-up" costumes. Of course you want your children to be comfortable but for my giant-headed kid, cotton shirts with a bit of spandex are perfect - despite the fact that synthetics are so "inappropriate" for children, according to this book. I also think that there are some good toys out there that... wait for it... contain plastic. If you're looking for a less dogmatic approach, try "Simplicity Parenting" or "Calm and Compassionate Children". If you're already feeling a bit guilty about something in your parenting life, you could also check out "Buddhism for Mothers" by Sarah Naphthali. The "Creative Family" by Amanda Soule is more of a craft book than a parenting book, but very sweet and worth the read.

OK, I'll admit I didn't read this book in its entirety. However, I am already familiar with many of the Waldorf concepts, and agree with some of the ideas (barring some of the weird fruitcake notions). My major complaint is that, reading excerpts of this book that I came across, there is evidently BAD breastfeeding advice in this book. This book is not supportive of mothers who continue to nurse over a year. In fact, it seems that the author has some very unscientific, silly ideas and would

encourage mothers to wean around nine months. This completely goes against the very uncontroversial and scientifically sound medical advice to breastfeed for AT LEAST a year. Know your facts! How can an author that claims to be some self-appointed expert on child-rearing peddle such ideas? She says things that are so kooky, so beyond the pale that I find it to be dangerous to anyone that would take her seriously! For example, the notion of milk and heredity, and that by weaning our children earlier we are "releasing" them from the clutches of our "lineage". Such nonsense! Honestly, it makes me want to throw the book out the window. To sum up: wooden toys, low media, organic snacks- great. But all the other silly unscientific advice? Give me a break. If you support breastfeeding and believe in weaning babies and children when they are developmentally ready, I think you can give this book a miss.

As a new mom, I was curious to know more about the Waldorf philosophies on early childhood development and education. I found this book to be very enlightening and fun to read. It confirmed many of my thoughts on things like television and toys that inspire creativity, but also inspired me as I read about what my 14-month old might be learning through her everyday experiences. I noticed that during a recent trip to the park, I felt more relaxed and patient to allow my daughter to play and experience the newness and materiality of the sand and a found pinecone on her own. I've also been challenged to slow down and regard the rhythm of my movements in daily work around the house as important keys to her development. As a SAHM, it is easy to consider mundane household tasks such as washing dishes and doing laundry as less important than, and even in competition with, directly interacting with my daughter. This book values a child's observations of, and later interactions with, this kind of work in the home, and encourages parents to allow their child more time for independent play and exploration. I am not sure that we will ultimately choose a Waldorf education for our child, but I do feel I've gained a lot of insight into ways that we can promote her natural growth and development during these important first few years. And I feel that we'll be better-equipped to evaluate our early-schooling options when the time comes.

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