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# The Importance Of Being Little: What Preschoolers Really Need From Grownups

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Unabridged

THE  
IMPORTANCE  
*of* BEING LITTLE



WHAT PRESCHOOLERS  
REALLY NEED  
FROM GROWNUPS

ERIKA CHRISTAKIS

PERFORMED BY TERI SCHNAUBELT



## Synopsis

A bold challenge to the conventional wisdom about early childhood, with a pragmatic program to encourage parents and teachers to rethink how and where young children learn best by taking the child's eye view of the learning environment. Parents of young children today are embattled: Pick the "wrong" preschool and your child won't get into the "right" college. But our fears are misplaced, according to Yale early childhood expert Erika Christakis. Children are powerful and inventive; and the tools to reimagine their learning environment are right in front of our eyes. Children are hardwired to learn in any setting, but they don't get the support they need when "learning" is defined by strict lessons and dodgy metrics that devalue children's intelligence while placing unfit requirements on their developing brains. We have confused schooling with learning, and we have altered the very habitat young children occupy. The race for successful outcomes has blinded us to how young children actually process the world, acquire skills, and grow, says Christakis, who powerfully defends the preschool years as a life stage of inherent value and not merely as preparation for a demanding or uncertain future. In her path-breaking book, Christakis explores what it's like to be a young child in America today, in a world designed by and for adults. With school-testing mandates run amok, playfulness squeezed, and young children increasingly pathologized for old-fashioned behaviors like daydreaming and clumsiness, it's easy to miss what's important about the crucial years of three to six, and the kind of guidance preschoolers really need. Christakis provides a forensic and far-reaching analysis of today's whole system of early learning, exploring pedagogy, history, science, policy, and politics. She also offers a wealth of proven strategies about what to do to reimagine the learning environment to suit the child's real, but often invisible, needs. The ideas range from accommodating children's sense of time, to decluttering classrooms, to learning how to better observe and listen as children express themselves in pictures and words. With her strong foundation in the study of child development and early education and her own in-the-trenches classroom experience, Christakis peels back the mystery of early childhood, revealing a place that's rich with possibility. Her message is energizing and reassuring: Parents have more power (and more knowledge) than they think they do, and young children are inherently creative and will flourish, if we can learn new ways to support them and restore their vital learning habitat.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A wise, comforting book. Children generally do not present problems to be solved or blank slates to be filled. They are just small people who are eager to learn the game of being human. What they need most of all is kindness and support. There are moments when it may be necessary to instruct them from a position of authority, such as telling them not to cross the street without holding hands. Learning the alphabet, numbers and so on should generally not require that kind of pushing. Kids will learn when they are ready. It is more important that they want to learn than exactly what and when they learn. Christakis is kind to preschool professionals. They have a hard job. Their young charges cannot articulate what they want and the teacher has to guess.

Administrators and parents want to see concrete results and paper Thanksgiving turkeys are a classic example but mass producing such banal stuff is likely to be boring to both the student and the teacher. It can also be frustrating. Some kids don't have the attention span, fine-motor control or even the interest. Even if everybody gets a gold star and a pat on the head, they know that Debbie's turkey looks better than Janny's. Kids aren't dumb. What I take out of this, as a retired guy who spends full time with his four-year-old, is that giving them a lot of time and attention is the main thing. The materials, even curriculum are not terribly important. If the kid is talking, asking questions, seeing new things, and telling you about his life, you are doing the right stuff.

Erika Christakis writes with passion, scholarship, heart and humor. *The Importance of Being Little* offers insights about how young kids think and learn and offers ideas on how we can vastly improve pre-school. Christakis is a fierce advocate for PLAY and through the research she cites, shows how

young kids think and learn. Her writing style is completely appealing, full of stories that hold our interest. This book is a great read for early childhood educators ( bless their souls! ), young parents and grandparents and all who care about the next generation. I hope *The Importance of Being Little* is the first of many from an original and well informed thinker. I look forward to the next scholarly book, or even a novel, by this author...she is that good!

I saw this (Ladybug's) same review on Goodreads just a few days ago, and I disagree as much now as I did when I first saw it. The chief complaint seems to be that there are just too many ideas in the book. Unlike a lot of non-fiction, this book is beautifully written. Erika Christakis is, first and foremost, a wonderful and funny storyteller and a keen observer of our smallest humans. This book is such a delight to read and is so full of witty and charming stories and examples, that a reader might not be prepared for the many thought provoking ideas it contains. But make no mistake this is an important and scholarly book. Impeccably researched, it makes a strong and revolutionary case for a complete rethinking of our country's approach to early childhood education. As such, it does not lend itself to simplistic, one note analysis. There are a lot of ideas in this book. It is challenging. It will make you think. It will make you question what you believe. It is a serious book about a serious subject and it requires a serious reader. Would you want anything less from someone who is proposing a complete sea change in how our culture understands young children? I ask anyone who cares about our future - and who cares about ideas -plural- to read this wonderful, thoughtful, beautifully written book.

Great read from an educator with a long history in early childhood development who has worked at some of the leading institutions in the field. In our never ending attempt to help children race to the top we've missed out on an incredibly important piece of early childhood: letting kids enjoy being kids. This isn't some hippie dippie navel gazing; Christakis persuasively argues that children develop through play in a way that is frankly missing in our skills driven preschool and prekindergarten. Highly recommended for anyone with a toddler and is mulling over the options for preschool and beyond.

After working in the field of Occupational Therapy for forty years, the last twenty involving from - "being very little" persons, to - "being very big little" persons. My love and interest is in the processes observable in the field of "developmental delay" - "developmental delay" - "developmental delay". Captured in this label or scope, are areas of sensory, motor, perpetual, auditory-language and emotional processing,

with differences of various extremes. The common denominator appeared to be that these people are extremely intelligent, intuitive, motivated, cooperative and with unusual initiatives. The common interruption and violation of the education systems, the educationists, the politics and stupidity of people who don't understand children and their development until death. In her, book, Erika Christakis has presented her experiences, insights and tremendous knowledge and understanding, as well as the simple solutions possible to help little people grow to be fulfilled, self-fulfilling and contributing adults. Jennifer Lewkowski Occupational Therapist - Results OT Dip. OT : Jerusalem. Advanced Dip. OT: Neurosciences : Johannesburg. South Africa. Tel: +27 11 887 5945 Email: jenneot@gmail.com

Just started this book and it is such a breath of fresh air!! Please keep standing up for the children!!

Good book for those who don't understand the importance of play, or for parents who are going to put their child into preschool soon. It is a bit redundant though.

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