

# Kids Raised Going to Church Are Happier Adults, Study Finds

A new study from Harvard's School of Public Health investigated the mental health and physical wellbeing of children and teenagers who were raised with religious or spiritual practices and found a lot of benefits.

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Photo courtesy of Getty Images

The research, published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that those who attended religious services at least once a week as children or teens were 18 percent

more likely to report being happier in their twenties than those who never attended services.

If that isn't enough of a benefit to wrangle your kids into church clothes on a Sunday morning, the researchers also found that kids who went to church were 33 percent less likely to use drugs in their twenties, were less likely to have sex at an earlier age, and less likely to have a sexually transmitted infection.

In addition, people who prayed and meditated daily either at church or on their own reported greater life satisfaction, were better able to process emotions, and were more forgiving. Researchers were even able to connect church attendance with lower likelihood of smoking and an increased likelihood of voting!

Taking your kids to church doesn't just benefit them, either. It can have positive benefits for the community at large, as almost 30 percent of kids raised in church were more likely to do volunteer work.

If you just can't get yourself to drag your kids to church—or just aren't in the mood for a fight on a Sunday morning—they may still be able to reap some benefits if they take some time to pray or meditate on their own. According to the study, people who prayed or meditated on their own schedule had lower risks of substance abuse and depression later in their lives.

The next time you're trying to get your kids to church on Sunday, go ahead and cite this article—and then maybe bribe them with a trip to get brunch after services.

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