

ENDORSEMENTS



Forming Resilient Children

The Role of Spiritual Formation for Healthy Development

September 21, 2021 | \$24, 200 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0172-1

We can't protect children from all hardships, but we can promote healthy development that fosters resilience. In this interdisciplinary work, Holly Catterton Allen equips educators, counselors, children's ministers, and parents with ways of developing children's spirituality so they can persevere when facing trauma and thrive in challenging times.

Healthy Childhood Development Through Spiritual Formation

"What makes this book work so well is the pairing of Holly Allen's interdisciplinary breadth and her ability to root her insights in relatable stories. I'm delighted that the important connection between children's spirituality and resilience has been given such thoughtful and well-informed treatment. This is a really worthwhile addition to literature on children's spirituality."

—**Rebecca Nye**, associate lecturer in childhood studies and child psychology at The Open University, UK, and author of *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters*

"With masterful use of engaging story and sound research, Holly Catterton Allen has given us a thorough and thoughtful exploration into the innate connection between children's spirituality and resilience. She offers practical insights that enable each of us to participate in nurturing resilience in children within the everyday fabric of life where hope and wonder reside. Dr. Allen doesn't avoid the hard topics but gently offers guidance around accompanying children as they process their grief and trauma. *Forming Resilient Children* is the book the world needs right now. Every adult who hopes for good needs to read this book for the good of the children within their circle of influence; our present and future demand it. *Forming Resilient Children* is a book that I will be returning to over and over; I recommend it highly."

—**Lacy Finn Borgo**, spiritual director and author of *Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together*

"*Forming Resilient Children* shines a bright light toward the need for churches, mentors, and caregivers to partner together to attend to all the places where grief, trauma, and the general struggle of being a human can feel like wading through the darkness for our little ones. Holly Allen brilliantly makes her own research and scholarly work inform the very practical day-to-day conversations we nurture. She provides even more evidence from the field for what we've always intuitively and culturally known to be true: our children need a host of people attending to their spiritual formation."

—**Jared Boyd**, spiritual director and author of *Imaginative Prayer: A Yearlong Guide to Your Child's Spiritual Formation*

"*Forming Resilient Children* is a much-needed addition to the field of children's spirituality. Especially now, as we continue to face the ongoing effects of a once-a-century pandemic, children need adults who can help them recover from trauma, process grief, and nurture hope. Whether you're a parent, grandparent, pastor, teacher, or children's ministry volunteer, Holly Allen's superb research will help you understand connections between spirituality and resilience. What is more, she offers strategies and resources that you can use to foster resilience among the children that God has placed in your life."

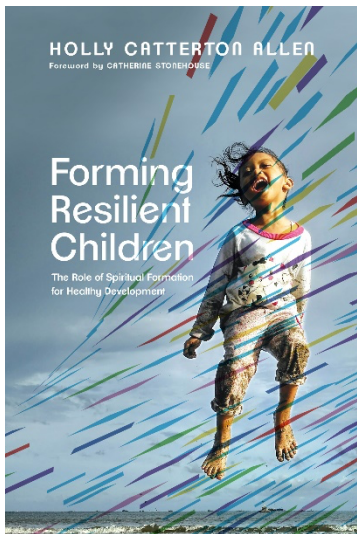
—**David Csinos**, founder of Faith Forward and associate professor of practical theology at Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia



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"Timely! That's the first word that came to mind when I read this book, given the events of 2020–2021. *Practical!* is the second word. Holly has done a huge service for those who work with children in any setting by providing an extensive resource that connects resilience and spirituality. Acknowledging that all children are spiritual beings is foundational as her starting point for facilitating resilience in children who endure crises of any kind. While recognizing the effect of the pandemic on children, she bookends her work with a powerful story of family resilience while enduring a natural disaster and its aftermath. Well-researched and loaded with stories that put flesh on the guiding principles Holly has developed, *Forming Resilient Children* is a must-have addition to my library of resources focusing on the intrinsic value and capability of children and their families."

—**Scottie May**, associate professor emerita of Christian formation and ministry at Wheaton College, coauthor of *Children Matter*

"Holly Catterton Allen provides great wisdom and assistance, which come from her lifelong journey of ministering with children and studying what is best for them. She highlights the importance of the spiritual nurture of children in the forming of resilience. . . . The book is written for a wide range of persons: parents, grandparents, persons leading ministries with children and families in the church, counselors, and those who work in settings where overt spiritual conversations are not allowed. It is a valuable resource for those who desire to raise resilient children to know God and live well in our changing world."

—**Catherine Stonehouse**, author of *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, from the foreword

"*Forming Resilient Children* is a fresh, honest, and deeply valuable resource for anyone whose work includes the care, mentoring, sheltering, counseling, teaching, adopting, fostering, or parenting of children. True stories enhance the insights, research, and practice that Holly Allen has done so well from Sunday school to university classrooms, from African villages to inner-city America, from the fragility of infants to troubled teens. This book is a valuable guide to helping families, congregations, counselors, and teachers equip children with the resilience needed to live well-shaped lives in a world so often out of shape!"

—**Robbie F. Castleman**, author of *Parenting in the Pew* and professor emerita of theology and New Testament, John Brown University

"A career walking alongside children experiencing hard places has taught me that trauma and grief respect no one. Holly Catterton Allen understands this. She knows that everything in this world is tested, even the faith of children. So she guides us in realistic practices empowering children to shape a faith resilient enough to endure the blowing and beating winds of life. Holly sagely sifts through work from multiple disciplines of scholarship, countless conversations with peers, hundreds of stories from the field, and her own research and experience to give us a model of resilient spiritual formation that works with all children—those living a blessed life and those walking through hard places. This book is a gift of wisdom and hope."

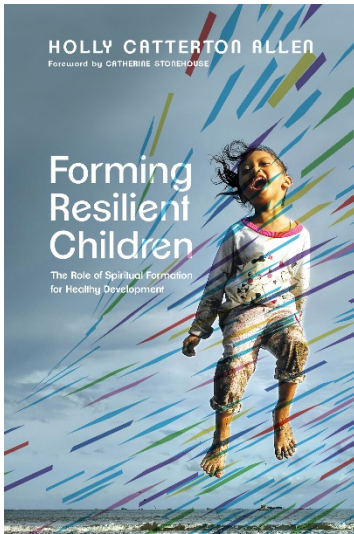
—**Ron Bruner**, executive director of Westview Boys Home, Hollis, Oklahoma



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"Holly Catterton Allen loves children, and it shows in every aspect of her life and work, and especially in this new book, *Forming Resilient Children*. One of the heartbreaking realities of our world today is that there are many children caught in difficult circumstances who experience trauma, loss, and suffering. For so many of us, our desire is to protect them from this reality or distract them from it, hoping they can somehow escape it. This is both foolish and futile. Instead, Holly invites all of us—parents, grandparents, teachers, and others who love and care for children—to learn how to foster and support the kind of spiritual growth and vitality that enables children to hope, lean on God, and persevere in the midst of the hard times that come to us all, young and old. This book is a gift to us all, so I urge you to receive it as such and lend your ears to someone who has much wisdom to share. Your children will thank you for it."

—**Kevin Lawson**, professor of educational studies at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

"In a field burgeoning with new research, Holly Catterton Allen provides a concise, engaging resource for Christian leaders, parents, and caregivers searching for ways to support the spiritual lives of children in their midst. This book offers a practical guide for Christian leaders to merge findings from the fields of children's spirituality and resilience. Weaving together stories of traumatic events from children's lives, Allen invites the reader to explore the simple but profound ways that support for children's spiritual lives can help them find resilience and hope."

—**Heather Ingersoll**, executive director of Godly Play Foundation in Ashland, Kansas

"Holly Catterton Allen's passion to bridge robust academic research with grounded practical applications immediately surfaces in the first few sentences of the introduction and weaves its way through every page of this book. Further, Holly ties together the various strands of literature from resilience studies, children's spirituality, psychology, sociology, and more to give readers a comprehensive primer on how people who care about children can foster spiritual practices that help children thrive through challenges they may face. The many anecdotes Holly uses from her own personal and academic life as well as from around the world enable the book to speak to international audiences and contexts. As a sociologist interested in how children make meaning of their worlds, I appreciate the way Holly foregrounds children's voices and how she takes every word shared by the children in this book seriously. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in learning more about the connection between spirituality and resilience, and the real (and surprisingly simple) ways we can connect children to meaning and purpose that can contribute to resilience in the face of difficult times or devastating trauma."

—**Henry Zonio**, director of the Center for Academic Excellence at Asbury University

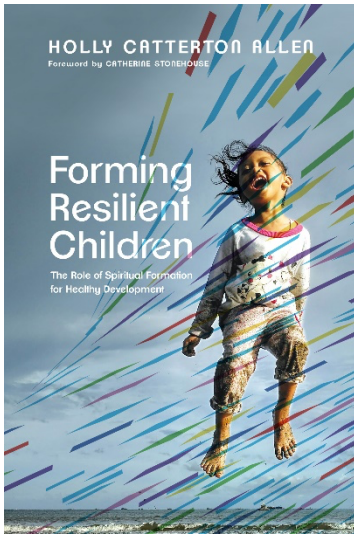
"Following years of experience and extensive research, Dr. Allen has provided a scholarly and practical guide to assist those who serve with children to create experiences that help them develop resilience. Allen tackles the difficult task of constructing solid definitions of children's spirituality and spiritual formation that are likely to become commonly accepted. Building from these



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definitions, Allen offers a comprehensive analysis of the many contexts in which resilience can be developed in the lives of children. Her groundbreaking work will have a lasting impact on those who desire to assist children in forming resilience."

—**Leon M. Blanchette**, chair of the department of Christian ministry at Olivet Nazarene University's School of Theology and Christian Ministry

"I wish I had owned this book when my student emailed me. It was the second month of her student teaching semester, the final phase of her teacher preparation program at the university where I serve as the chair of teacher education. 'Dr. K., can we visit? I just want to talk to you about how to respond in healthy and helpful ways to the hard stories my students bring to the classroom.' As a Christian teacher candidate serving in a public school context, it was important to her to nurture children academically, emotionally, and spiritually. Her desire was to provide them with the kind of support that would help them develop healing and hope. But the stories the children brought with them seemed overwhelming. Holly Catterton Allen's book was just the resource she needed. Holly develops a clear and powerful framework based on sound theology and meaningful research. And she provides practical strategies for application in various settings—strategies to support the development of resilience in children recognizing the critical aspect of spirituality. You can be assured I will be sending this book to my former student as she begins her first year of teaching."

—**Dana Kennamer**, associate dean of the College of Education and Human Services, professor and chair of teacher education, Abilene Christian University

"This book is designed for adults who care for children: parents, teachers, pastors, and anyone who desires to support and encourage resilience in the young people in their lives. Using strong research, clear direction, and practical help, Holly Catterton Allen offers valuable guidance to help children address various kinds of significant trauma in their lives and to thrive. An important resource for today and the days yet to come."

—**Tori Smit**, Regional Minister for Faith Formation, Presbyterian Church in Canada

"Holly Allen's *Forming Resilient Children* is a necessary and important book that examines the connection between a child's spirituality and resilience. As a significant contribution to the field, this book provides both foundational knowledge as well as practical insights into how parents, grandparents, and ministry leaders can enter into hard places with children and nurture both their resilience and spirituality."

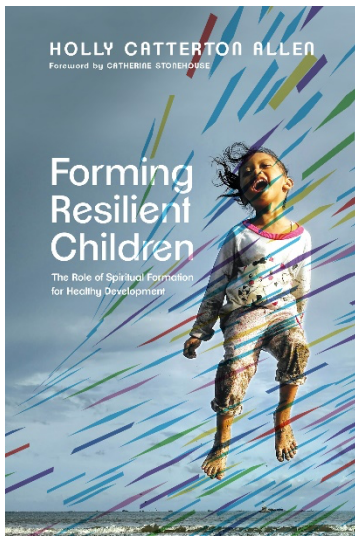
—**Mimi Larson**, visiting assistant professor of Christian formation and ministry at Wheaton College, coeditor of *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality*



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"This is a book filled with poignant accounts of trauma and hope and resilience. The stories in this book brought me to tears at times and also caused me to stop and reflect on my own life and the children within my sphere of influence. But more than these rich stories, this book is simply needed in a world in which resilient people are too often in short supply. It is needed by parents, grandparents, teachers, ministers, and volunteers who engage in the formation process alongside children. Holly Catterton Allen has gifted us with an important book on the effective convergence of resilience and spirituality for such a time as this when, more than ever, children need listening people and spaces to ask questions about God, wonder about their world, and make meaning of their experiences as they live into their own stories and discover their place of belonging in God's story."

—**Trevecca Okholm**, adjunct professor in practical theology at Azusa Pacific University and author of *The Grandparenting Effect: Bridging Generations One Story at a Time*

"In the 1980s, researchers began to notice the strengths people need to recover from adversity. One critical factor that kept appearing was religion/spirituality. Professor Holly Allen successfully connects the current research of such specialists as Ann Masten and Lisa Miller to the place where ordinary people live. She richly develops what we can do, especially as religious and spiritual people, to give children greater resilience to manage the hardships that confront them. Her book celebrates the seemingly simple but critical practices anyone, including grandparents, can do that support a life of resilience—or may we say, a life of grace."

—**Jerome Berryman**, founder of the Godly Play Foundation and author of *Teaching Godly Play*



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