

Seeing the Indigo Children

The Indigo children are touted as the next evolutionary stage in human development, and their supporters boast that these children are like nothing ever seen before. But what exactly are Indigo children and just how unique are they?

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Many believe Indigo children are the next step in human evolution, and they are often described as possessing a new energy never before seen on Earth. Believers claim they have special gifts, such as psychic abilities, and are “sensitive” to the world around them. They are allegedly wise beyond their years and thirst for knowledge incessantly. Their parents often see them as gifted with above-average intelligence. Above all, believers agree on one thing: they are here to teach us a lesson.

The first Indigo child was allegedly observed in the early 1970s by Nancy Tappe, who intuitively “sees” people’s auras (Tappe 1999). Tappe claims that she can decipher a person’s life mission by the color he or she emits. She further states

that she was aware that two new unknown colors—one of which would become Indigo—would be emerging around that time, since apparently, fuchsia and magenta disappeared from the spectrum. It wasn't until 1982, with the publication of her book *Understanding Your Life Through Color*, that the proclamation of the Indigo aura and its meaning was announced (Carroll and Tober 1999). The Indigo children movement, however, did not gain full momentum until 1999, when Lee Carroll and Jan Tober wrote the book *The Indigo Children: The New Kids Have Arrived*. Since then, the Indigo movement has been featured in books, television, a feature film titled *Indigo*, and even two videogames titled *Fahrenheit* and *Indigo Prophecy*.

What Is an Indigo Child?

The ten most common traits of Indigo children, according to Carroll and Tober, are:

They come into the world with a feeling of royalty (and often act like it).

They have a feeling of “deserving to be here,” and are surprised when others don't share that.

Self-worth is not a big issue. They often tell the parents “who they are.”

They have difficulty with absolute authority (authority without explanation or choice).

They simply will not do certain things; for example, waiting in line is difficult for them.

They get frustrated with systems that are ritual-oriented and don't require creative thought.

They often see better ways of doing things, both at home and in school, which makes them seem like “system busters” (nonconforming to any system).

They seem antisocial unless they are with their own kind. If there are no others of like consciousness around them, they often turn inward, feeling like no other human understands them. School is often extremely difficult for them socially.

They will not respond to “guilt” discipline (“Wait till your father gets home and finds out what you did”).

They are not shy in letting you know what they need. (Carroll and Tober 1992)

The descriptors can change a bit depending on the source, but these traits are congruent with the typical account of an Indigo child. Nancy Tappe goes on to claim that at least 90 percent of children under the age of ten are, in fact, Indigo children (Tappe 1999).

Tappe (1999) lists and describes the four subtypes of Indigo children. The humanist is characterized by strong opinions, is socially outgoing, and is easily distracted. The conceptual subtype is comprised of children who are more interested in completing projects than human interaction. Tappe offers a warning that this subtype is prone to addiction, particularly in their teen years. The artist is a child who is typically smaller in size and often more sensitive. The fourth subtype is the interdimensional child, who is larger than the other three subtypes, is often seen as a bully, and can be expected to bring in new religions and philosophical beliefs.

These traits are numerous and vague. Given the breadth of

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individuals these descriptions cover, it would not be surprising if every child was identified as Indigo at some point in their lives, including those children who lived before the first Indigos supposedly made an appearance. Take for example the refusal to conform to social rules: there are a lot of children who do not like to wear clothes—being naked is natural. Most people can think of at least one story involving a child running around the house sans-clothing at an awkward moment. Is this child free-spirited and socially defiant? Doubtful. Most likely they are just doing what feels natural. It is too easy to turn a mundane situation like this into evidence of being Indigo:

I remember when Johnny was only three and he would tear through the house buck naked! He was so confident with who he was. He didn't care who knew it, he was proud of himself and wasn't afraid to show his true form. That's what cued me in to Johnny being Indigo.

The subtypes of Indigo children sound rather stereotypical. There's the sensitive artist, the isolated youth who self-medicates, an upbeat, energetic child who is easily distracted, and the large unpopular child who uses his or her size to gain control over others (the artistic, conceptual, humanistic, and interdimensional subtypes, respectively). These don't sound like evolutionary advances; they sound more like one-dimensional, easily identifiable characters.

Indigo children, as mentioned above, can supposedly be identified by their auras (the “energy” that believers claim is emitted by humans and other animals). Unfortunately, not everyone (or anyone?) can see people's auras, so identification based solely on reading someone's aura can be problematic. It has also been suggested that Kirlian photography may be an effective way to identify such children. Kirlian photography is a photographic process in which a sheet of film is placed on a metal plate and the object of interest is then placed on top of the film. High voltage is sent through the plate, which creates an exposure of the object. As James Randi has shown us, Kirlian photography can be explained by the changes in pressure the subject exerts on the film or by environmental effects, such as temperature and humidity (Randi 1982). The aura identification strategy is oft debated in the Indigo community. For many believers, being labeled Indigo was merely that—the label had nothing to do with the child's aura. The only identification strategy, then, hinges on meeting the criteria based on the descriptors.

Disciplining the Indigo Child

Robert Gerard offers advice on how to properly discipline the Indigo child based on what he calls “loving discipline” (Gerard 1999). Loving discipline consists of informing the child of the purpose and course of discipline using simple explanations, avoiding reactions, orders, and verbal and physical abuse, following through with your punishment, using a time-out procedure, dealing with discipline in the moment—not delaying punishment—and discussing the situation when it is over.

Cathy Patterson (1999) gives advice on setting boundaries and guidelines to help raise an Indigo child. These guidelines include giving the child choices, using brief explanations, giving only one direction at a time, using time-outs for discipline,

using a chart to track positive behaviors with stickers, and setting a regular and consistent routine.

In considering the disciplinary strategies advised by Patterson and Gerard, it appears that their advice is the same offered by one of the behavioral pioneers in psychology, Montrose M. Wolf. Wolf, responsible for the creation of time-out, developed these and similar recommendations in the early 1960s (Risley 2005), roughly forty years before Patterson and Gerard offered their pearls of wisdom. Is it amazing that these techniques have been around and working pre-Indigo? If the Indigo children are different from non-Indigos and require special instructions on discipline, then why are the disciplinary suggestions the same as those applied to “normal” children? These “special” recommendations on disciplining Indigo children are not unique to this population; they are universal and highly researched in the psychological community.

Indigo Children and ADHD

Doreen Virtue (1999) offers several diagnostic features of the Indigo child in addition to those listed above. These features include: high levels of energy, easy boredom onset, resistance to authority, learning through exploration combined with a distaste for rote memorization, the inability to sit still unless they're interested, and giving up in the face of failure, to name a

few. Several of the traits describing Indigo children are comparable with a diagnosis of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision* (DSM-IV-TR, American Psychiatric Association 2000), the handbook of diagnoses for the psychological community. Virtue asserts that Indigo children are easily misdiagnosed as having ADHD.

Kathy McCloskey, like Virtue, believes that many Indigo children are being diagnosed with ADHD (McCloskey 1999). McCloskey makes the argument for the misdiagnoses based on case studies of children who are diagnosed with ADHD and score high on IQ scales but perform average to below average in school. It sounds as if McCloskey is surprised that an ADHD child can be of above-average intelligence. As is pointed out by Schuck and Crinella (2005), it is not uncommon for children with ADHD to be of normal intelligence. Missed assignments, boredom, and forgetting to study for a test do not reflect intelligence but are reflected in a child's grade. ADHD does *not* mean a child is below average intelligence.

Leaders in the Indigo community also offer advice on what to do with Indigo children diagnosed with ADHD. This advice usually entails the cessation of any medication the child is on to treat the ADHD. Holly J. Roberts, a licensed psy-



chologist in the pediatric psychology department at the Munroe-Meyer Institute in Omaha, Nebraska, which is known for using empirically supported psychological techniques for helping children, responded to a question regarding the danger of removing medication from ADHD children:

It is well known that psychostimulant medication is the single most efficacious treatment of ADHD as it reduces the primary symptoms of ADHD (MTA Cooperative Group 1999). That is, psychostimulant medication reduces inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity in children with ADHD. Therefore, discontinuing medication for a child with a definitive diagnosis [of] ADHD can have a negative impact on home and school functioning as children with ADHD typically evince a pervasive set of problems spanning behavioral, social, and academic areas.

For the Indigos who have ADHD, several alternative treatments have been offered (Carroll and Tober 1999). These treatments include supplemental vitamins and minerals, eating blue-green algae from Lake Klamath, biofeedback, neuromuscular integration, rapid eye technology, and electromagnetic field (EMF) balancing, which is purportedly a technique in which two people use each other's electromagnetic fields, which allows them to form their own reality, whatever that means.

Biofeedback is a process in which children are hooked up to an electroencephalograph (EEG) and are taught to control the brain waves that appear on a monitor by controlling their thoughts, which supposedly increases the ability to concentrate at school. Biofeedback has been considered potentially effective for treating children with ADHD (Monastera, et al. 2005), but more tightly controlled studies are required before any valid conclusions can be drawn (Loo and Barkley 2005).

It is only a small step, then, to make the same claim with neuromuscular integration—described as being very similar to biofeedback—except that this therapy is performed to “...progressively realign the entire body and recondition the nervous system” (Carroll and Tober 1999, 193) over the course of ten sessions that involve therapeutic techniques such as dialogue, journaling, and deep tissue manipulation.

Are These Children Gifted?

One claim heard from many parents of Indigos is that their child is special or gifted. Holly J. Roberts also commented on the nature of gifted children. She writes:

There is evidence to suggest that children may achieve beyond expectations based on caregiver expectations. Outcomes of children identified as “gifted” or “early bloomers” are best demonstrated by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) examining teacher expectations on student achievement. The findings of this study showed that children who are randomly identified as gifted showed an increase in IQ scores at the end of the year due to the preferential treatment received by teachers based on the expectancy information. Thus, telling a child they are gifted at a young age may be beneficial but could take time and attention away from other children with similar abilities.

As indicated by Roberts's statement, caretakers' perceptions of children can easily shape their intelligence and thus how others perceive their intellectual performance ability.

What They've Come to Teach Us, and How This Will Save Us

One central theme of the Indigo movement is the idea that the Indigo children are here to teach us a lesson. Some of these lessons are outlined through stories from Indigos and parents or grandparents of Indigos in Carroll and Tober's 2001 follow-up book, *An Indigo Celebration: More Messages, Stories, and Insights from the Indigo Children*. According to several Indigo proponents, many Indigo children are “old souls,” indicating that they have experienced several lifetimes and carry with them tremendous knowledge and wisdom from these past lives. Parents who believe this is true tend to keep an open mind and report their child's statements as true. For example, one child stated that the reflection of the sun's rays on the water, which were called “God spots” (p. 59), were used to take people's souls back to heaven when they die. Because the child used the phrase “back up to heaven” (p. 59), the parent unquestionably deduced that the child had knowledge regarding the existence of souls in heaven prior to a person's birth. The child of another set of parents explained that he once ruled an entire planet, but unfortunately for him there was a large disaster (an earthquake, in this case) that caused him to suffer a traumatic impact from bumping his head on a rock. This caused his spirit to fall from his body and land inside of his Earth-mother. The parents decided it was best to keep an open mind about the story.

Other stories presented in *An Indigo Celebration* (2001) include teenagers, who identify themselves as Indigo, struggling to fit in because they know they are Indigo and thus are different and isolated. A teenager reporting that he or she feels isolated, unique, and above average is not an exceptional statement—many teens feel this way. The imaginary audience and personal fable come to mind when reading these stories; both phenomena should be easily identifiable to anyone who has taken an introduction to psychology course. The imaginary audience syndrome is a common experience for teenagers—they feel that everyone is focused solely on them, and the world scrutinizes every action they make. The personal fable is related to the notion that many teens feel special and unique to the extent that the law of averages does not apply to them. This is used to explain many risk-taking behaviors by youths, even though they are aware of the potential consequences (e.g., “It won't happen to me!”).

Furthermore, some say the Indigo children are here to save us from something or other. Most accounts are vague, alluding to a general change in our way of thinking and a passion for saving the earth and its inhabitants.

Making Money Off the Movement

The Indigo children phenomenon can produce big bucks for those individuals who know how to market it. In 2003, executive producer James Twyman co-wrote the movie *Indigo*. The film centers around a young girl named Grace who uses her natural, unique gift to aid her mother and grandfather in reconciling their differences while evading a mysterious person who wants to kidnap her. While the directing, acting, and plot may be sub-par, it doesn't stop those who support the Indigo

idea from declaring this film accurate and a good introduction to Indigos for the general public. *Indigo* was in limited release in January 2005 and grossed \$1,190,000, according to IMDB.com. The film also received the Santa Fe Film Festival's audience award in 2003.

Along with the Indigo books that are available, there is also a metaphysically related online magazine titled *Children of the New Earth*. In this magazine, one can read about drama therapy for their Indigo child, the newest threat from fluoride, or how to raise your Indigo or Crystal child, which is yet one more unique type of child in the same vein as Indigos but beyond the scope of this article. The online magazine is currently \$32.99 for a one-year subscription, but you can subscribe for a one-month trial at \$4.99. The Web site also features a list of alternative schools that may be appropriate for children whose parents believe their children are Indigos.

There is a wealth of money to be made in teaching parents of Indigo children as well. For example, at metagifted.org, a company run solely by Wendy Chapman, individuals can take an online workshop related to their Indigo children through AIM or AOL instant-messaging services. The fee is \$25 per person or \$40 per couple. For the same prices, there are also online classes for Indigos. You can also purchase an Indigo consultation, which will provide you with information regarding your Indigo child or yourself, if you happen to be an Indigo adult. Prices are \$75 per hour or \$50 for a half hour by phone, \$50 per hour or \$30 for a half hour for an online chat, and \$30 per hour if your consult is conducted via email.

Australian Scott Alexander King, a self-proclaimed animal psychic, offers seminars on Indigo children. For \$250, over the course of two days (eight hours total), you can participate in "The Indigo Child and the Journey Drum," in which you will learn about the sacred art of drum making and even create your own drum. King also offers shorter seminars on learning about the Indigo phenomenon for \$125.

The Future of Indigo Children

The pseudoscientific categorization of children does not stop with the Indigo children. Recently, several new categories have been proposed that offer even more options for children to be labeled as above average and gifted. These new categories include the Crystal children and the Rainbow children to name a few. These children, so named by Doreen Virtue because of the color of the aura they emit, are said to be the next generations after Indigo children. Much like the Indigos, the Crystals and Rainbows are allegedly new life energies on Earth that are here to change our global lives.

Conclusion

To date, there is no scientific way to test many of the claims endorsed by the Indigo movement. Further, the vague criteria noted to describe Indigo children could easily be applied to most people at some point in their lives. Yet despite these hurdles, many have financially benefited from the movement through the publication of magazines, books, films, therapy, and lectures.

Many parents may also benefit from the Indigo movement

by labeling their child as special and gifted instead of suffering from ADHD or behavioral problems. The Indigo movement provides parents and caregivers with a happy, warm explanation for children's behaviors, whether good or bad. While this may not be incredibly dangerous, one begins to see the potential harm when children are removed from ADHD medications, scientifically unsupported diets are implemented, unproven treatments are utilized, and behavioral interventions are ceased for troubled children. When we divert energy and resources away from proper childhood interventions, we run the risk of inflicting long-term harm to our children.

Whether you wear rose-colored or indigo-colored glasses, your perception of the world and its workings will be affected. When we prejudice our children as gifted and insightful, that is exactly what we will get, regardless of the reality. □

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