



## The Danish Way of Parenting: What the Happiest People in the World Know About Raising Confident, Capable Kids

By Jessica Joelle Alexander, Iben Sandahl

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**The Danish Way of Parenting: What the Happiest People in the World Know About Raising Confident, Capable Kids** By Jessica Joelle Alexander, Iben Sandahl

**From free play to cozy together time, discover the parenting secrets of the happiest people in the world**

What makes Denmark the happiest country in the world--and how do Danish parents raise happy, confident, successful kids, year after year? This upbeat and practical book presents six essential principles, which spell out P-A-R-E-N-T:

Play is essential for development and well-being.

Authenticity fosters trust and an "inner compass."

Reframing helps kids cope with setbacks and look on the bright side.

Empathy allows us to act with kindness toward others.

No ultimatums means no power struggles, lines in the sand, or resentment.

Togetherness is a way to celebrate family time, on special occasions and every day. The Danes call this *hygge*--and it's a fun, cozy way to foster closeness.

Preparing meals together, playing favorite games, and sharing other family traditions are all *hygge*. (Cell phones, bickering, and complaining are not!)

With illuminating examples and simple yet powerful advice, *The Danish Way of Parenting* will help parents from all walks of life raise the happiest, most well-adjusted kids in the world.

**\*\*As seen on Yahoo, Salon, MindBodyGreen, Parents, and more\*\***

**\*\*International bestseller -- translated into 20 languages\*\***

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"An emotionally smart, gem of a book. *The Danish Way* offers a shining alternative to high-stress modern parenting, and families from New Delhi to New York will shout with joy. Forget the pursuit of happiness, this book gets to the authentic roots of family happiness. I guess I'm Danish."

--**Heather Shumaker, author of *It's OK Not to Share* and *It's OK to Go Up the Slide***

"Everyone around the globe can gain something from the valuable wisdom found in this book. Concepts such as reframing and hygge prove useful to families from all cultures. It's wonderful to see that Danish parenting has so much in common with Positive Parenting! I highly recommend this book!"

--**Rebecca Eanes, author of *Positive Parenting: An Essential Guide***

"With a profound understanding of the positive impact that empathy and connectedness bring to parenting, *The Danish Way* empowers parents across the globe to check their own default settings and consider the whole child. Their take on the importance of free play is a breath of fresh air in a time when young children are over-scheduled and under stress. Highly recommended for parents everywhere."

--**Katie Hurley, LCSW, author of *The Happy Kid Handbook***

"Having studied the the reasons behind the Danish happiness model for years. I found this book to be a clear-sighted, very useful and smart guide on how to improve your own happiness level as a parent and how to foster happier children the Danish way. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to give themselves and/or their children the best chances of a happy life."

--**Malene Rydahl, keynote speaker and Goodwill ambassador of Copenhagen**

"I believe in free play. I read this amazing parenting book called *The Danish Way of Parenting*, which talks so much about free play and how it really develops their mind."

--**Kristen Bell, on Parents.com**

#### About the Author

**Jessica Alexander** is an American wife and mother who is raising her family in Copenhagen.

**Iben Sandahl** is a licensed therapist in private practice just outside Copenhagen. Learn more at: [thedanishway.com](http://thedanishway.com).

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**Play**

**Authenticity**

**Reframing**

**Empathy**

**No Ultimatums**

**Togetherness and Hygge (Coziness)**

### What's the Secret to Danish Happiness?

**Denmark**, a small country in the north of Europe famous for Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Mermaid," has been voted as having the happiest people in the world by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) almost every year since 1973. 1973! That's more than forty years of consistently being voted the happiest people in the world! If you stop to think about that for a second, it's a staggering accomplishment. Even the new *World Happiness Report* that was recently launched by the United Nations has seen Denmark top the list every year since its inception. What is the secret to their consistent success?

Countless articles and studies have been devoted to solving this mystery. Denmark? Why Denmark? *60 Minutes* did a report on it called "The Pursuit of Happiness"; Oprah did a show on it, "Why Are the Danes So Happy?" and the conclusions are always conveniently inconclusive. Is it the size of their social system, their houses, or their government? It can't be the high taxes or the cold, dark winters, so what gives?

The United States, on the other hand, the country with "the pursuit of happiness" built into its Declaration of Independence, isn't even in the top ten. It's barely in the top twenty, closer to number seventeen after Mexico. Despite having an entire field of psychology devoted to happiness and an endless sea of self-help books instructing us on how to attain this elusive state, we aren't really that happy. Why is that? And moreover, why are the Danes so content?

After many years of research, we think we have finally uncovered the secret of why the Danes are so happy. And the answer, quite simply, is in their upbringing.

The Danish philosophy behind parenting and their way of raising children yields some pretty powerful results: resilient, emotionally secure, happy kids who turn into resilient, emotionally secure, happy adults who then repeat this powerful parenting style with their own kids. The legacy repeats itself, and we get a society that tops the happiness charts for more than forty years in a row.

Through this amazing journey of discovery, we have decided to share this knowledge about "the Danish Way" of parenting with you. In this step-by-step guide, our goal is to help mothers and fathers who are about to embark on or have already begun one of the most challenging and extraordinary jobs in the world. Incorporating this method takes practice, patience, resolve, and awareness, but the outcome is well worth the work. Remember that this is your legacy. If your goal is to raise the happiest people in the world, then please read on. The real secret of the Danes' success is inside.

### **Jessica's Story**

When my friends heard that I had cowritten a parenting book, they all laughed. "You, the most non maternal woman we know, cowrote a parenting book?" The irony is, it was precisely my lack of natural mothering skills that made me so interested in the Danish Way in the first place. It had changed my life so profoundly that I knew if it could help me, it could definitely help others.

You see, I wasn't born with all those innate nurturing mother skills supposedly all women are born with. I don't have a problem admitting it. I wasn't a kid person. I didn't even like kids that much, if I am to be completely honest. I became a mom because that's what people do. So you can imagine my deep-seated fear when I got pregnant and thought, "How in the world am I going to do this? Surely I am going to be a terrible mom!" And so I got busy reading every parenting book I could get my hands on. I read a lot. I learned a lot. But still, the fear remained.

To my good fortune, I was married to a Dane. For more than eight years I had been exposed to the Danish culture, and one thing I noticed was that they were clearly doing something right with their children. Overall, I consistently observed happy, calm, well-behaved kids, and I wondered what their secret was. But there was no parenting book I could find on the subject.

When I finally became a mother, I found myself doing the only natural thing for me, which was to ask my Danish friends and family for every single answer to every single question I had. From breast-feeding to discipline to education, I preferred their off-the-cuff answers to all the books I had on my shelf. Through this journey, I discovered a philosophy of raising children that opened my eyes and changed my life completely.

My good friend Iben and I discussed the idea. Iben is a Danish psychotherapist with many years of experience working with families and children, and together we asked the question, “Does a Danish way of parenting exist?” To her knowledge, it didn’t. We looked high and low for some literature on the subject, but there was nothing. In all her years working in the Danish school system and being a family psychotherapist, she had never heard of a “Danish Way.” She knew all the academic theories and the research on parenting practices, many of which she used in her family life on a daily basis, but could there be a distinctive parenting style embedded in her very own culture that she hadn’t seen?

### **A Pattern Emerges**

The more we talked about it, the more it became clear that there was indeed a Danish parenting philosophy, but it was woven so tightly into the fabric of daily life and Danish culture that it wasn’t immediately visible to those of us in the midst of it. The more we looked at it, the more the pattern emerged from the fabric. And there it was, laid out before us: *The Danish Way of Parenting*.

The Danish Way is our theory based on our more than thirteen years of experience, research, supporting studies, and facts about Danish culture and daily life. Iben is an expert in her field, bringing professional insight as well as many supporting studies and cultural examples, along with her personal experience. We have both learned so much along this journey, having researched and conducted extensive interviews with parents, psychologists, and teachers regarding the Danish school system. The collaboration was wholly equal, and all the supporting studies can be found in the back of the book.

We would like to clarify that this is not a political statement, nor is it a book about living in Denmark. It is a parenting theory, which we believe is one of the leading factors as to why the Danes are voted so consistently happy. Happy kids grow up to be happy adults who raise happy kids, and so on. Happy kids grow up to be happy adults who raise happy kids, and so on.

We also know that parenting style is not the only reason the Danes are happy. We know there are many factors contributing to their happiness and that there are certainly unhappy people living there as well. Denmark is not utopia, and surely it has its own internal matters to deal with, as does every country. Nor is this book in any way meant to be disparaging to the U.S. This is an enormous country, and the facts and observations we state in the book are generalizations. Jessica, personally, is very proud to be American and loves her country dearly. She has simply had the opportunity to see the world with a very different pair of glasses on—through “Danish lenses,” if you will—and it has changed her whole perspective on life.

We would like to offer you these glasses to put on for yourself and see what you think when you look through them. If this book helps you see things differently, then, for us, it has been a success. You might not go from “the most non maternal person” to a happier parent and better human being, as Jessica has, but we hope the changes will be positive ones. And

we hope you will enjoy the journey.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Alex Lynch:

The ability that you get from The Danish Way of Parenting: What the Happiest People in the World Know About Raising Confident, Capable Kids is the more deep you looking the information that hide inside words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but The Danish Way of Parenting: What the Happiest People in the World Know About Raising Confident, Capable Kids giving you thrill feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood simply by anyone who read the item because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This book also makes your vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular The Danish Way of Parenting: What the Happiest People in the World Know About Raising Confident, Capable Kids instantly.

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