



# The Spiritual Life of the Child



Fostering inner peace, wonder, and connection to a greater purpose.

## Cultivate

Parents can cultivate their children's spiritual life by creating a nurturing environment that encourages inner peace, self-reflection, and a connection to something greater than themselves.

### **Week 1**

Creating a Nurturing Environment

### **Week 2**

Encourage Inner Peace, Silence, and Reflection

### **Week 3**

Foster a Connection to Nature

### **Week 4**

Introduce Meaningful Traditions and Rituals

### **Week 5**

Support Your Child's Sense of Purpose

### **Week 6**

Notice Acts of Kindness and Empathy

### **Week 7**

Honor Your Child's Questions

### **Week 8**

Support Your Child's Unique Journey



# Creating a Nurturing Environment

## Physical Environment



The environment plays a key role in nurturing the spirit of a child and encouraging the practice of inner peace, reflection, and supporting their sense of purpose. By creating a designated space in your home for your child to quietly reflect on their day, actions, or observations, you allow them to naturally seek out connection to self and establish a foundation of how they process and work through emotions and interactions.

You can do this through creating a peace or calming corner, turning a small room into a designated space for prayer and self-reflection, having a chair that your child can sit in when they feel the need to have a moment of introspection, or a quiet space in your house that your child can visit with different materials.

You can set up an altar with a bible, a rosary, prayer cards, pictures of Jesus, Mother Mary, Joseph, Saints, and Angels, religious books with bible stories or stories that have important messages about forgiveness, anger, love, sadness, fear, frustration, happiness, embarrassment, helplessness, and trust in God.

If your child is not old enough to read, set up a CD player that they can play audiobooks or recordings of you reading their favorite books. Have a selection of music available for them to play. This includes instrumental music, meditation music, happy/dance music, and age-appropriate contemporary songs. Show your child how to use the CD player with careful hands and how to put away the CDs when they are finished. Avoid using tablets or electronics with touch screens in this space as they can easily become a distraction.

# Creating a Nurturing Environment



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# Creating a Nurturing Environment

- Find a space in your home that is generally quiet, even when your house is loud or busy that your child (or you) can comfortably retreat to when needed
- Set up a chair or a cushion on the floor
- Add pillows and a blanket
- Add a small shelf or baskets with materials such as:
  - mindfulness activities
  - puzzles
  - matching cards
  - calming books (can be religious or about emotions)
  - journal with crayons or colored pencils
  - sensory toys or materials (rain sticks, touch boards, smelling bottles, color sorting)
  - Posters or cards to show how to pray, meditate, practice mindful breathing, or yoga

**Place all books, materials, pictures, posters, or interactive boards on or below their eye level.**

- If you would like an altar, set up a small table with:
  - bible
  - rosary
  - prayer cards
  - pictures or statues of Jesus, Mother Mary, Joseph, Saints, and Angels
  - a battery-operated candle (or a candlestick)
  - a vase with flowers
    - You can use fake flowers or real flowers. Allow your child to change out the bouquet once a week with different flowers.
  - Tablecloth or placemat (white or the appropriate liturgical color)

# Creating a Nurturing Environment

- a cd player with a selection of music and audiobooks - show your child how to properly use them and how to take care of them. Have a designated space for the cds. Refrain from overstimulating music. A few examples:
  - Instrumental music - jazz, orchestral pieces, piano, guitar, violin, soundtracks from movies, bluegrass/country
  - Meditation music
  - Calming songs
  - Happy/Dance songs - Raffi, The Laura Berkner Band, Caspar Babypants, soundtracks from their favorite movies or tv shows (Disney (Tarzan, Lion King), Bluey)
  - Contemporary songs (age appropriate) - The Okee Dokee Brothers, The Beatles, John Denver, music from different decades
    - Do not be afraid to share music with your children - just be selective in case they repeat the words or can understand what the song is about
- Optional: a telephone (old landline) that can be used to call God, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Saints, Angels, and deceased loved ones. This fosters the child's spirituality and connection to God. They can talk on the phone to discuss their feelings, frustrations, or their day. This helps facilitate a relationship with prayer and encourages faith in what we cannot see.
- Refrain from using bright, neon, or overstimulating colors. Choose more neutral or muted colors.
- Refrain from the use of tablets, touchscreen devices, and game consoles.

# Creating a Nurturing Environment

Model how to use the space for your child. Pray, use the materials, journal, meditate, listen to music, or sit quietly. Honor how your child uses the materials, even if it is “wrong”. Only interfere when they are breaking or misusing the materials or space. Explain that this is a peaceful space and we need to honor the materials. If they have too much energy or feel the need to be destructive, remove them from the space and encourage them to run around, build things and knock them down (safely), and move heavy objects. It is okay if they need to take a break from using the space. They will learn over time and through your guidance what is acceptable behavior to have in your designated calming/prayer space.

Honor their need to retreat once they are using the space properly. If they are using it when you are getting ready to leave the house, before meal times, or before bedtime. Give them a visual timer to show they have 5 - 15 minutes to finish what they are doing and to clean up if they are finished with the materials. If they want to continue what they are doing, have them place the materials in a basket or bin until they return.

If the weather allows and you have a safe area outdoors (patio, fenced in backyard) you can set up a space outdoors with a few materials so they can connect with nature. You can provide a journal, pencils, magnifying glasses, a bowl to collect items they find, books about the outdoors, and a mat that they can move around easily.

**Some places you can find religious materials for this space:**

**Shining Light Dolls**

**Gather & Pray**

**The Little Rose Shop**

**Be A Heart**

**Holy Heroes**

**Etsy**



# Creating a Nurturing Environment

## Emotional Environment



The environment plays a key role in nurturing the spirit of a child and encouraging the practice of inner peace, reflection, and supporting their sense of purpose. By supporting your child as they navigate their emotions and test boundaries, you can honor their natural development and spiritual growth.

**Modeling behavior** is the best way to demonstrate how you would like your child to treat others, objects, and the world around them. The home and you (the parents) should always be a safe, reliable place for self-expression. Sometimes this means that your child will act out in ways that they do not anywhere else, but it is essential that they understand you are there to support them while they work through emotions, behaviors, and consequences.

When you model behaviors that you would like your child to practice, such as prayer, mindful breathing, reflective pauses, peaceful rituals, and acts of kindness, it is easier for your child to start incorporating these habits into their life. You are your child's first teacher, and by observing you, they replicate your actions. When you are feeling stressed or anxious, use the calming corner or prayer altar that you have set up for your child.

**Practice active listening** with your child by listening attentively to your child's thoughts, feelings and questions about life, faith, and the world. Pay attention to what brings your child joy, wonder, or deep reflection – whether in nature, during play, or through acts of kindness

# Creating a Nurturing Environment

## Emotional Environment

**Encourage reflection and gratitude** through everyday activities. Help your child recognize and appreciate beauty in everyday life by asking. “What was the best part of your day?” or “What are you grateful for today?” You can write down what your child says each day and keep a journal of it when your child cannot think of anything to be grateful for. You can show them that they have so many things to be grateful for, even when it’s hard to remember.

**Create rituals and traditions** at home that your child can be a part of. Establish meaningful family rituals like lighting a candle before meals, observing feast days, or having "quiet moments" before bedtime. Incorporate faith-based or cultural traditions and explain why your family is taking part in the tradition. What values do these traditions have, and why are they important to your family’s values?

**Family activities**, separate from rituals and traditions, are important to foster family connections, practice values, and model behavior. A few examples are:

- Family movie night or game night
- Going to the park every Sunday
- Baking a cake as a family for someone's birthday
- Plant a garden with herbs, fruits, or vegetables, and take care of the garden
- Cook dinner together once a week. Your child/children get to pick out the dinner and buy groceries for it. You can create a picture list for children who do not know how to read.
- Bake bread, muffins, or other goods and donate them or bring them to neighbors, friends, family, or your Church community

# Creating a Nurturing Environment

## Emotional Environment

Life can be busy, but it is important to do this not only for our children but for ourselves. Our home should be a priority to honor ourselves and our children with the tools to support us when we need help.

**Think of how we are all God's children. How does He treat us? Does He forgive us when we make mistakes or do something wrong? Can we always count on Him? How can you model this with your children?**

**Think about the type of home environment you want your child to be brought up in. Is it one full of support, love, forgiveness, respect, freedom of expression and emotions, encouragement, communication, and honor? What can you do to achieve this?**