



for the Kids

And who says children do not suffer from stress.

by Rachel Oakes Ash

The healing qualities of the human touch are well documented. Dr Fritz Talbot regularly prescribed cuddles and hugs for orphaned babies in the mid-1900s and found that infant mortality rates halved.

The skin is the body's largest organ that provides us with the information that we need to survive. It informs us if we are hot, cold, loved, safe or in a hostile environment.

Spa treatments have played their part in calming and soothing stressed-out adults with the human touch. The human race has known about the healing miracle of touch for thousands of years. The spa industry now extends this benefit to kids.

Destination spas, previously a child-free domain, are joining in the fray to capture a slice of the pre-teen, or 'tween' trend of pampering and primping, hoping to bring in the hundred of billions of dollars that 'tween' spend.

A 2003 Kalorama market research report projected the 'tween and teen' grooming market to be worth nine billion dollars in 2008 in North America. The estimated 'earnings' from teens by then was ninety billion dollars. That's a lot of spending power.

On a physical level, spas for kids make sense, as children too experience stress within their peer groups, schooling and family relationships. They too, need a reinforcing time-out. If a parent is tense then traditionally the child will mirror that stress.

It's no coincidence that the advent of pampering for young princes and princesses have happened at a time when magazines, television and fashion are directly targeting the pre-teen market. Ten-year-olds spend their pocket money on magazines featuring appearance-obsessed television starlets and don clothes of similar styles. According to a recent study done by the Kaiser Family Foundation, seven out of ten American girls aged ten to seventeen said they wanted to look like a television character.

At an age when young children, girls in particular, are more self-conscious, it seems at odds to provide them with appearance related treatments. But the empowering quality of wellness is about mind, body and spirit and not just about what colour to wear on one's lips. Spa treatments are about relaxation, feeling comfortable in one's own skin and being in a safe environment that allows the client to be at one with themselves.

Mother-daughter spa treatments allow quality time out for both involved and introduce young girls to honour their bodies rather than shame them. It's important when introducing a child to their first spa experience that they feel safe. Parents can request to supervise the treatment or get one in the same room themselves. A good therapist will talk the child through everything that's going to happen in order to dispel any fear of the unknown that may lurk within them.

The Jiwa Spa at the Conrad Bali Resort & Spa has its own spa Kiddy menu for children over eight years of age. Here is where children can enter the soothing space of exposed wood and arched ceilings and feel their blood pressure drop.

Treatments for children here are about fun, not appearance. Kids are treated to baths of a thousand bubbles in double chocolate fudge, banana split and even milk flavour. Freestanding black granite baths are big enough to splash around in and can be shared with mum, dad or both.

The footbath and mask is designed to sooth sand-worn feet and introduces youngsters to paint-on treatments. They are also welcome to try their hand at applying the soothing mud. It's important to make the spa experience as much fun as possible for children short on attention span.

For over-active children or those suffering from jetlag, the back scratch massage involves traditional Balinese lullabies with lavender back massage for children under twelve.

With twelve treatment rooms including two spa villas bordering a private spa pool, the Jiwa Spa at Conrad Bali Resort & Spa provides a safe haven for the entire family. A purpose-built hair and nail salon means mother and teenage daughters can book the entire salon and have a hair wash with scalp massage, manicure and pedicure together accompanied by soothing ginger tea or pink lemonade.

When done correctly, spa experiences for children can set them on a road of wellness and health with an emphasis on using spa therapies to calm the inner spirit, rejuvenate and energize. With so many young girls concerned about their physical appearance, it's a fine line to walk within the spa industry.

The makeovers offered at increasingly popular 'tween' make-up parties are more than likely about being the prettiest and put undue pressure on girls whose peers judge them and themselves by their

looks. Age-appropriate spa treatments, like those on offer at Jiwa Spa, can empower young girls to feel good about themselves while teaching them the benefits of a simple cleansing routine for the skin that is of equal importance, if only as a matter of hygiene.

There's no reason why family holidays can't include spa time-out for parents and kids alike. Check with your hotel if the spa accepts children before making your holiday booking. Chances are if they have a kids' club then they may have a kids' spa service. Alternatively you can introduce your child to the benefits of massage by booking a spa massage in your hotel room for the whole family.

Taking time out for yourself to rejuvenate and refocus is a valuable lesson to give children, especially in today's highly competitive world. A lesson one can learn between the four walls of one such as the Jiwa Spa. www.conradbali.com

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