

# Children's Wellbeing Cards

Review By Dr. Evelyn Connolly



When I opened the bright red box containing a set of *Children's Wellbeing Cards*, by Dr. Maxine Thérèse, I felt like a child. I wanted to grasp the mandala "pin wheels" on the back of each card and run in the wind! At the same time, as an adult, I recognized the colors of the chakras, which signified a deeper well of meaning. Like a child, I slid my fingers back and forth over the smooth cards, and then flipped them over, only to notice a whimsical child magically sitting out in the cosmos reading a book amid the stars! As an adult, I recognized the diverse, non-stereotypical pictures of children engaged in play, conversation, fantasy and even contemplation! Then, my inner-child noticed words—only some of which I recognized, printed around the pictures. As an adult, I recognized the phrases as a doorway of communication between child and adult—positive affirmations that stimulate conversation with the child to reveal needs and challenges, and offer a simple way to express them. With a knowledgeable adult, children can be led to identify their chakras and relate their feelings to them. The deck is quite appropriate in these days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when both children and their parents and caretakers are immersed in worry, grief and loss.

There are 28 cards in the deck, and accompanied by an eighty-eight-page booklet with colored pictures of the images and readings that support parents and caregivers to guide the children's feelings, and help them to come to their own interpretations. Additionally, the cards help children discover new words and images to help know that their needs matter. Dr. Thérèse affirms that this is vitally important to their well-being. The accompanying booklet also includes instructions on how to use the cards. Particularly refreshing is the suggestion to have younger children, whose hands are too small to shuffle, swirl them on a table and re-collect them into a pile. Another section contains a simple diagram showing the location of each chakra and the foundational need with which it is associated. This is followed by a helpful conversational model to guide the discussion.

*Each morning you can select a wellbeing card as the focus for the day. Get your child to shuffle the cards any way they feel comfortable... After the cards are shuffled, spread them into a fan with the images facing down. Have your child run their fingers along the fan of cards until they pick one of the cards that they feel drawn to. When your child has chosen a card say the affirmation on the card to your child and have them say the affirmation also. You might also like to get them to affirm while looking in a mirror. Read the meaning of the card to your child. You can ask your child to notice as you read what part of the meaning seems the most important to them. This card will have a special theme that your child can focus on for the day (p.6).*

*Children's Wellbeing Cards* are bright, shiny, and smooth with child-like pictures that seem as though they jumped from a child's imagination to a canvas. They have very strong child-appeal. However, an affirmation like, "I am integrated. I am part of a harmonious whole" might be very challenging to an early reader, and needs guided interpretation—not an easy task for everyone. As a kid-lover who loves to play, I can envision gesturing, re-stating unfamiliar words, and play acting, to draw the child into the conversation, and lead them to understand. This is certainly not easy terrain those who are more literal minded.

The *Children's Wellbeing* deck (Rockpool Publishing, 2021) is also appealing to adults. The art, design, and focus on the chakras can become a means of drawing out one's inner child, and healing old wounds. A friend, educated in tarot and oracle decks ordered three. The first for herself and the others for longtime friends! Dr. Maxine Thérèse has infused the deck with wisdom and understanding of children's needs to know that their lives matter. She has set the stage for children to affirm their needs, and thereby bring balance to their lives. The ensuing self-awareness allows them to become centered, balanced and connected to their wellbeing. In spite of the setbacks, they encounter from outside people and situations.

