FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Body, Mind & Spirit

The Secret Spiritual World of Children
Tobin Hart
Inner Ocean Publishing
978-1-930722-19-4
(September 24, 2003)

"When I consider the brilliant observations and analyses made in the last century by the great pioneers in child development, I am astonished that the key element, children's inherent spiritual nature, was missed for so long," says well-known writer Joseph Chilton Pearce, who wrote the foreword for this book.

Indeed, the author, who was catapulted into an awareness of and interest in children's experience of the transcendent by his daughter's communications with an angel, was also astonished to find that in whatever textbook on child psychology or development he looked, there was no mention made of children's spirituality.

A founder of the ChildSpirit Institute, a psychologist and associate professor of psychology teaching research at the State University of West Georgia, Hart set out to explore children's spiritual life, designing and conducting in-depth interviews with more than one hundred individuals and families. These interviews provided an opportunity for families to talk about what had previously been secret.

"My daughter has been telling me things about what she sees and hears," says one mother. "I'm amazed especially because we've always been so close, yet she never mentioned these things before." The reason, Hart suggests, is because until recently, children describing spiritual experiences would have been ridiculed, dismissed, left confused, or, even worse, diagnosed as mentally ill.

Hart divides a child's approach to the spiritual into five different kinds of capacities: wisdom, wonder, wondering, the meeting between you and me, and seeing the invisible. He devotes a chapter for each type of knowing or "temperament" in the first part of the book, using both personal experiences with his own children and the many stories gathered during the interviews.

In the second part of the book, he tells his readers how to understand, encourage, and

support the spiritual in children, as well as what and how to teach them about spirituality and the divine, whether the reader is a parent or friend or mentor.

Acknowledging the sacredness of a child's spiritual life, Hart yet stresses the importance of "thoughtful dialogue and fresh understanding." He writes: "As children's spirituality rises to the surface, as spirituality becomes of central importance to millions of adults, and as the state of the world demands the wisdom and compassion of a spiritual perspective, it is time to welcome and nourish our children's spiritual intelligence."

This book is an important addition to any adult's library, whether as a parent wishing to educate or as a grown child wishing to reclaim and validate past experiences.