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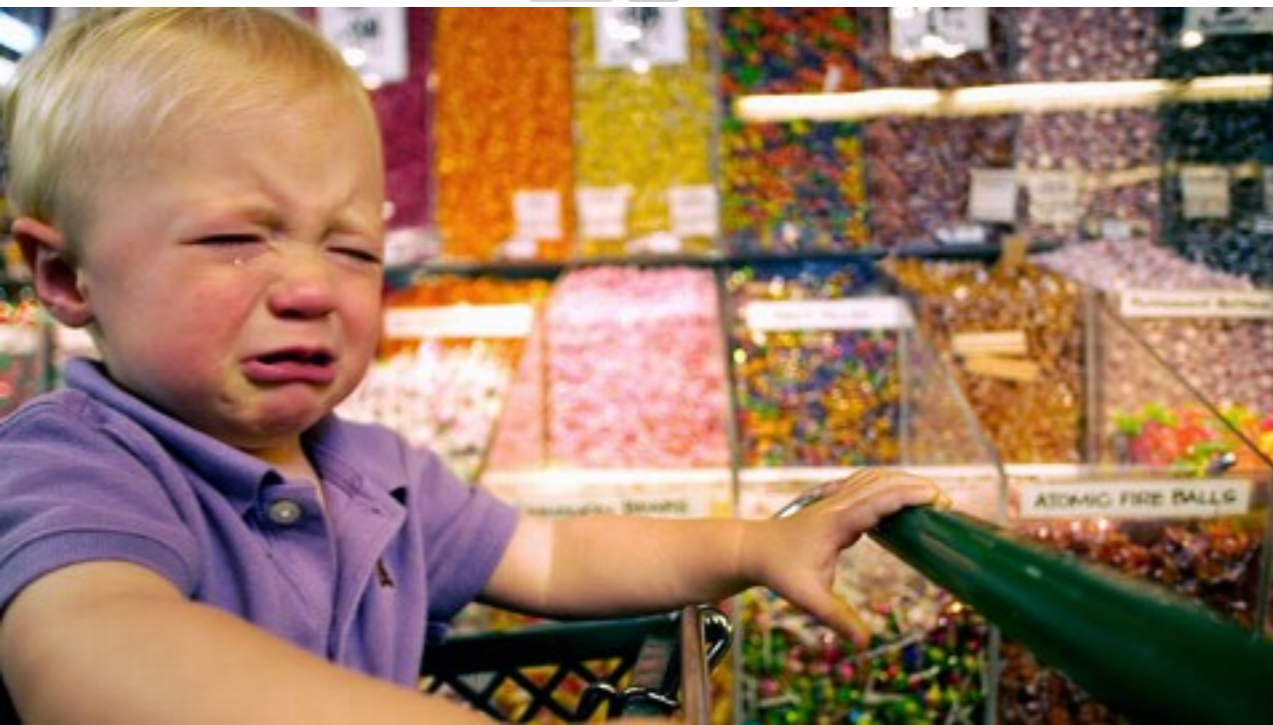
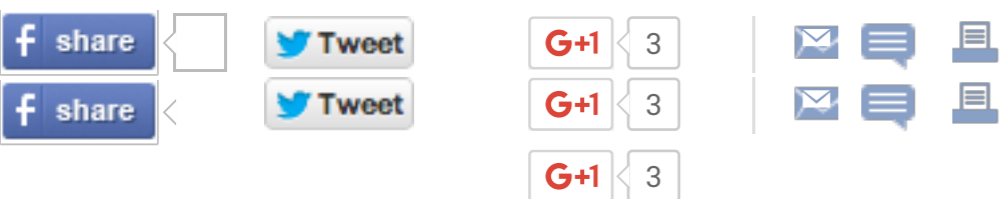
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How Not To Spoil Your Children: Parenting Experts and Parents Weigh in

July 4, 2012

By NADINE SHUBAILAT



"CRASH! Oh nooo," cooed my toddler happily. It took my son, who was one and a half at the time, less than five seconds to break my mother's clock. He grabbed and threw it down with as much force as his chubby arms could muster. The broken clock was not what upset my mother the most, it was my reaction or rather lack of it. "You should not spoil your son Nadine. You have to impose limits and discipline, otherwise both of you will pay the price," she said tersely and gave me "the look," which till now makes me gulp.






Sadly, I have not inherited "the look" or at least if I have, it does not work when I utilize it. My mother used to count and never got to three with me and my two siblings. My son, on the other hand, trills "three" cheerfully while embarking on his naughty adventure. Stern words and looks do not faze him.

I do try to discipline and that puts me at odds with my little man - more often than I want. He charms me when he sometimes spontaneously says "tenk you, I lab you" (thank you and I love you), but usually he is planning his next mischievous deed. I want to raise a thoughtful responsible child and then use this successful technique on his baby sister, who watches his every move and I am sure is taking notes. I turned to my sister, a mother of two, for advice and she lamented, "I have none! My kids are spoiled."

Apparently we are in the same boat as the majority of American parents, according to a recent *New Yorker* article, "**Spoiled Rotten Why Do Kids Rule the Roost?**" The article blames over-helpful parents who give their children "unprecedented authority" with minimal chores whilst shielding them from failure.

Denise Schipani, a mother of two boys (9 and 7) and the author of *Mean Moms Rule: Why Doing the Hard Stuff Now Creates Good Kids Later*, agrees. She highlights a parenting flaw of how children are "not allowed to feel disappointment, ever." One of her mean mom's anti-

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spoiling manifesto is "let your child own her failures as well as her successes." Parents do not want their kids to feel failure, she explains. Schipani believes modern parents want to childproof like crazy, get the best teachers, interfere with their children's friendships and help them deal with problems, all of which are not bad things individually except when taken to extremes.

Prior to her book, she launched a popular blog called **Mean Moms Rule** to buck the helicopter and permissive parenting trend. One of those rules is disciplining poor behavior and starting when the child is quite young. The key, she maintains, is consistency.

"I think a lot of parents understand that intellectually. No you can't have a cookie because you haven't finished lunch. You know it's important to make a rule that's not negotiable, but you give in," she said. Every time you give in, the child knows and that is what he is looking for. You have to "not be afraid of pushback," she cautioned, whether it is in the form of a tantrum from a younger child or an argument from an older one.

Be consistent, be calm and do not be emotional about your decision. "Apologize when it is warranted but do not apologize for discipline and certainly don't apologize for something they don't have. If you do, they will assume they deserve all these things," she noted.

Another rule is to teach kids life skills like how to cook a meal or run a washing machine. "Your job as a parent is to prepare your children for the world. Require them to do things. It gives them pride and feeling an accomplishment now," said Schipani.

However, I want to go beyond "not spoiling." I want to be a mother who raises not only well behaved children but also positive contributors to society. So, I turned to Melissa Lawrence for advice. Lawrence is not only a mother of five (1.5, 3.5, 5, 7 and 8), but is also co-founder and CEO of **Cloudmom**, a how to video resource for new and expectant moms also offering a daily vlog for moms of older children too.

Lawrence is a firm believer in setting a foundation of good manners and instilling responsibility into children from a young age. "I encourage them to look people in the eye - to be respectful in how they communicate with others. I also encourage them to do very small things so they are used to the notion of taking care of other people and are part of a community of the home," she said.

Lawrence assigns her children simple chores such as picking up their dirty clothes and putting them in the laundry room, setting and clearing the table and helping her with diaper changes. "The chores are small - even symbolic - but it gets them into the habit from an early age. So they don't assume people are serving them and they are not just living for themselves," she noted.

Lawrence also followed the lead of a friend whose children are now in their twenties. When they were young, he gave them a weekly allowance with the proviso they save a third, spend a third and give a third away. Lawrence is implementing the same principle with her children. "My children are giving their money to charity and being invited to events to learn about different causes. This is getting them into the habit of helping others and being aware of other people's lives and circumstances," she said.

Amy Carden, the founder of **Frugal Mama** and mother of two daughters (10 and 8) and two sons (4 and 2), expands on the allowance and chores theme. "Our kids get a monthly allowance (**one dollar per year of life**): 50% of their allowance immediately goes into a Save tin, 10% into Share, and the remaining 40% they can spend as they like." As a result her children have quickly learned the difference between wants and needs, as well as the satisfactions of delayed gratification and discipline.

As for chores, Carden maintains a regular, consistent system of assigned tasks and rewards and consequences to keep things fair and running smoothly. She recommends assigning days of the week for everyday chores like setting the table, helping cook, straightening up common areas, and entertaining little siblings. For home and yard maintenance, she uses charts, wheels, and pocket card systems, much like elementary school teachers do. "For getting ready for school and bed in time, my kids either get a smiley face (which add up to an eventual prize) or Xs (which equal an extra chore or going to bed early)," she explained.

Will all these guidelines and precautions work? Lawrence admits like all mothers, she is petrified her children will grow up spoiled and entitled. But she believes if we continue to talk to our children and get them used to the notion they are part of a larger world, then we have a good chance of succeeding. "Good manners are about respecting other people. The core of children, who are spoiled, is they are not aware of their environment; they feel people should do things for them vs. their doing things for other people," she stressed. "Who knows if things will work out - we will see!"

Here are other useful tips I solicited from other moms and please add your own in the comments section:

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"When you're speaking to someone don't let your kids interrupt you." - Tamam Mango (31 year old mother of two boys 4.5 and 2.5)

"House point system: +1 point for good behavior, -1 for not tidying up, +2 for doing well on a spelling test...this is cumulative. At the end of the month, the points convert into money (depending on parents). This is their source of pocket money, which they have to earn." - Andrea Shen (mother of two)

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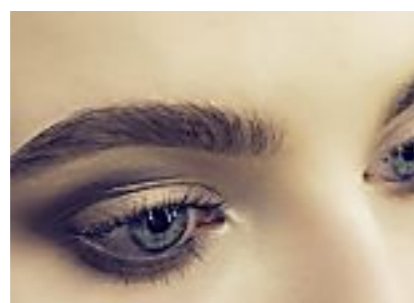


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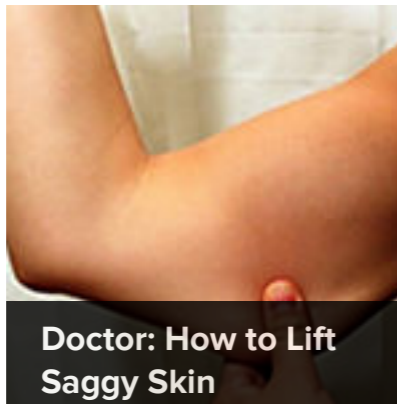
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