



Antidotes to Spoiling Kids...

And Not Just Over the Holidays

Parents have to know the difference between their kids' **needs** and their **wants**. Kids don't know the difference.

"I've **got** to have it! I need it!"
 "I'm the **only one** who doesn't have one!"
 "I'll **die** if you don't let me!"



Do not fall into the "Happiness Trap." Be willing to be unpopular which often means saying "no" when your child is bugging you (or pleading, arguing or having a tantrum) to say "yes."

Once you've said "no", stick to it. Don't falter even if your child acts like you're "*the meanest mom*" or "*the worst dad in the world*."

Don't say "no" if even a little bit of you means, "Well, maybe..." Children will do anything to try to get parents to turn a "no" into a "yes." They have an uncanny way of knowing when we're ambivalent about rules and limits.

Remember that a disappointed child or unhappy child is NOT an unloved child.

Don't bribe unless you want your child to become manipulative. A bribe almost always starts with "*if you...*". Example: "*If you clean your room, I'll buy that toy you've been nagging me about.*"

A reward, as opposed to a bribe, is after the fact. But if you reward children, don't do it with material things. What children really need is time alone with their parents and simpler is better – a walk in the snow, a bike ride, going out with you to pick out bagels for breakfast, a trip to the library or to the zoo, etc.

Children need fewer toys – most of them are overwhelmed with too much "stuff". Instead, try making things by hand: designing cards on the computer, baking cookies, drawing a picture, or knitting a scarf. Or do something for family members: reciting a favorite poem, reading to your sister, or picking out a book at the library. These gifts are much more meaningful because they involve your time and effort. Example: Instead of buying pricey toys, decide what your family could do for each other over the holidays. Make Mom breakfast in bed; take over your sister's or brother's chores for a day; give your daughter a manicure; take the kids bowling; spend an evening playing your child's favorite games with the whole family.

If your kids are bombarded with toys anyway, help them decide which of their presents they're willing to give away to kids in a shelter or hospital. Go with them so they have the experience of *giving*, not just *getting*.