The Differences between Children Today and Children of the Past

Children today aren’t that different from children decades ago. They like to play, and laugh. They are curious, and sometimes reckless, and they occasionally get into trouble, without knowing why. It’s not so much the children that have changed, as the world that they live in, and the adults that run it.

Years ago, children were expected to remain children for a long time. Growing up was a gradual process, and while you had chores to do and rules to obey, you were also expected to play and enjoy the formative years. You were not expected to understand “grown up” problems, nor were you exposed to them.

Today’s children are subjected to every imaginable scenario from the time they are old enough to know what is going on around them. They are forced to try to understand family break ups, and intricate relationships that they shouldn’t be involved in until much later in life.

TV, movies, and events in their own homes, that once were considered taboo, are now common. Parents have come to the conclusion that children should be told everything, and some schools have proposed teaching explicit sex education to children as young as first grade.

In days gone by, children as old as thirteen and fourteen were still playing with toys. Now, children as young as five or six are made up to look like twenty something budding movie stars, and told that to succeed they must be prettier, and better than everyone else.

Waiting lines for pre-schools and accelerated educational programs form before children are born. Programs are provided to teach the child to read and write at earlier and earlier ages, and the rush is on to get them into school and out of college before ages when their ancestors were barely allowed to cross the street without supervision.

The danger in all this pressure is that the behaviors, language, values, and morals of children today, are reflecting all the pressure that has been put on them by society. It also reflects the attitude of some parents that their little ones should be allowed to fend for themselves, mature at the speed of light, and need as little attention and guidance as possible.

Given the opportunity and the time, children today could once again have time to be kids, adjust gradually to the world, and grow up better adjusted and happier, if the world would only let them.

By Lenna Gonya


10 Ways to Raise a Spoiled Child

Plus tips to reverse the damage by fine-tuning your approach to child discipline
When you picture a spoiled child, you may think of a kid with a house full of extravagant toys. But child discipline experts say its behaviors — not possessions — that define the spoiled child.

“A spoiled child is one who’s demanding, self-centered, and unreasonable,” says Harvey Karp, MD, creator of The Happiest Toddler on the Block DVD and book. He tells WebMD spoiled children may be easier to get along with when they get their way, but giving in to their demands ultimately makes them feel isolated and confused. “There is a seed of discontent that you sow when you allow a child to be spoiled,” he says. “They’ve used so much manipulation to get what they want, they don’t know when someone is genuinely giving to them.”

Psychologist Ruth A. Peters, PhD, author of the child discipline manual Laying Down the Law, agrees. “Spoiling doesn’t prepare them for anything but heartache later in life,” she says, adding that a spoiled child typically grows into a spoiled adult, and spoiled adults have trouble maintaining a job, a spouse, and friendships.

So how can you tell if you’re spoiling? Read on to learn 10 common mistakes parents make that can allow a child to become spoiled. If some of these sound familiar, don’t worry — it’s never too late to change course.

1. Making Your Child the Center of the World
Making your child’s wishes the top priority in every circumstance teaches her that the world revolves around her. This could prevent her from learning to consider other people’s needs and desires, says Susan Buttross, MD, chief of the Division of Child Development and Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. “Children need to understand give and take,” she tells WebMD. “When take is the only function they know, they tend to be frustrated.”

2. Ignoring Positive Behavior
Today’s busy parents may not notice when children play quietly or stay out of trouble. If you never let them know when you are pleased, Karp says, you miss the opportunity to reinforce positive behavior.

3. Accidently Rewarding Negative Behavior
Karp tells WebMD many parents make the mistake of simultaneously ignoring the positive and rewarding the negative. If you only notice your kids when they whine and cry, you send the message that tantrums and tears are the best way to get your attention.

4. Failing to put Clear Limits on Your Child’s Behavior
If you don’t set and enforce guidelines for good behavior, Buttross says, you’re likely to raise a child who is rude, uncooperative, and disrespectful. Karp adds that young kids are uncivilized by nature — part of your job as a parent is to teach social virtues, such as patience and respect.

5. Not Enforcing Rules Consistently
While some parents fail to set limits, others set “mushy or inconsistent” ones, Karp says. This occurs when you tell your kids, “Don’t do that,” but allow them to do it anyway. Examples of inconsistent limits are allowing your toddler to play with his food on some days but not on others or allowing an older child to violate her curfew when you just can’t muster the energy to fight about it. If you don’t enforce rules consistently, you give your child the message that they’re really not that important. And of course what you really want to teach your child is the opposite.

6. Picking Fights You Can’t Win
“You can win the battle of not giving your child candy,” Karp says, so no-candy rules are worth upholding. But there are many other standards that are much harder to enforce — such as making your child eat broccoli. “They can close their mouths or spit it out,” Karp points out. In cases like this, you are destined to lose the battle before it begins. And unfortunately, the consequences of this loss go far beyond wasted broccoli — picking fights you can’t win proves to your kids that they can defy you and get away with it.

7. Not Holding Your Child Accountable
Refusing to hold your child accountable when he does something wrong sends the message that he never makes a mistake, Buttross says. This teaches your child to blame others whenever problems arise. Instead, teach your child the importance of taking responsibility for his own actions and then user firm boundaries to make sure he does so.

8. Giving Your Child Gifts for the Wrong Reasons
What you buy your children is not as important as why, Peters tells WebMD. She cautions against making “unreasonable” purchases, such as buying your child a new bike because she is bored with the one you bought her a few months ago.

Another common mistake is buying out of guilt, Karp says. When a child makes a pitiful face or says, “You’re the worst mother in the world,” this is not the time to buy a gift. Allowing yourself to be manipulated won’t do your kid any favors. She may get what she wants, but her joy will be diminished in knowing that you bought the gift because she goaded you into it.

9. Giving in to Temper Tantrums
Relenting when your child throws a temper tantrum is an extreme form of rewarding negative behavior. It proves to kids that they can get whatever they want by throwing a fit — which is not how things work in the real world. “If you throw a temper tantrum as an adult, bad things happen,” Peters points out.

10. Acting Like a Spoiled Child Yourself
How you interact with your family serves as a model for how your children will behave with others, Karp says. “If you whine and complain in front of [your kids], they will emulate that.” He says the proverb has it right — “They do what you do, not what you say.”

Spoiled for Life
Spoiling has consequences that go beyond the immediate trouble of managing an unruly, spoiled child. It sets up patterns that can last a lifetime.

“Probably one of the greatest disadvantages that spoiled children face is the fact that they have not learned to work for something that they really want,” Buttross tells WebMD. “There is no work ethic, no lesson to really strive for something.”

Since spoiled people get what they want through manipulation, they develop “a dysfunctional way of relating to people,” Karp says. “Those habits can take 10 years of therapy to break.”

Reforming a Spoiled Child
Don’t panic if you’re just realized your child may be on the path to becoming spoiled. Child discipline experts say you can repair the damage.

“Tell your child the truth,” Peters advises. “Say, ‘I’ve blown it’ and explain why there are going to be some changes.” When setting new rules, be clear about the consequences. “The less nagging, the more action, the better.”

The experts we consulted suggest the following strategies to get a spoiled child back on track:

- **Set consistent limits** — Give your child clear rules and boundaries. If you decide to bend a rule every now and then, explain that it is a special exception.
- **Establish consequences for breaking the rules** — Consequences can range from revoking privileges to confiscating a favorite possession.
- **Create incentives for good behavior** — Depending on your child’s age, you may want to try a “star chart.” The child gets stars for good behavior, with 10 stars earning a coveted prize.
- **Teach that giving is as important as receiving** — Encourage your children to participate in activities that help others. Take them shopping to choose gifts for friends and family members.
- **Help your child learn to take “no” for an answer** — If you have decided to decline your child’s request, don’t let temper tantrums or any other form of manipulative behavior change your mind.
- **Be a positive role model** — Show respect and consideration toward others and your child will follow your lead.

Toddler Tips
If your child is in the under-three age bracket, it may not be time to worry yet. “It’s common in the beginning of the toddler period for kids to have some of the characteristics of being spoiled,” Karp says, “but that doesn’t necessarily mean they are.” In The Happiest Toddler on the Block, he explains that toddlers are primitive and uncivilized, like little “cavemen.”

In addition to clear limits and positive role models, toddlers need a crash course in civilized behavior. “Think of yourself as an ambassador from the 21st century to the Neanderthal people,” Karp suggests. This means you must learn to speak your child’s language and respectfully show him your ways. A couple of Karp’s tips for taming toddlers:

- **The fast food rule** — When you order food at the drive through, the cashier always repeats your order to let you know she got it right. Karp recommends doing this with frustrated toddlers. Before reprimanding them, “first repeat back what they want. Say, ‘You really want that ball? You’re mad that Billy took it away? OK, but that voice hurts my ears.’” This lets them know you empathize with them, while conveying that whining is unacceptable.
• **Catch them being good** — Acknowledge your toddler’s accomplishments throughout the day, whether it’s stacking blocks or sharing a toy with a sibling. This will help identify positive behaviors, rather than just singling out negative ones.

**Lifelong Benefits**

Maintaining a consistent and effective approach to child discipline isn’t easy, but it bestows lifelong benefits. “You raise a child who is loving and self-loving, who empathizes with others, who is honest and not manipulative,” Karp says. “You teach them how to pick their friends and their spouses, because if they learn how respectful people communicate, they’ll look for that in their own relationships.”

The next time your child throws a tantrum at the supermarket or tries to guilt you into bending the rules, think about the long-term consequences of giving in. But don’t worry about being perfect all the time. Karp says the overall pattern is more important than any given moment. “Do it right 80% of the time and you’ll end up with a really good kid.”

Source: http://www.happiestbaby.com/10-ways-to-raise-a-spoiled-child/

**Is Your Child Spoiled?**

Who’s ruling the roost? Set age-appropriate guidelines, and take back control.

**No Such Thing as Spoiled Children?**

Most child development experts cringe at the use of the term "spoiled child."

David Elkind, a professor of child development at Tufts University and author of *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, says, “That's really a term from a different era. Parents who 'spoil,' often out of the best of intentions, really want to give their children everything without their having to work for it. But the world doesn't work that way.”

**Why You Can’t Spoil a Baby**

You cannot "spoil" an infant, Elkind says. "Infants cry when they need something, and it's hard to spoil them because they're not trying to manipulate or maneuver. In infancy, you really need to build the feeling that the world's a safe place."

Later on, he says, it's certainly possible to spoil your child by giving him or her too much, not setting boundaries, and not expecting your child to do what's healthy. But there's no spoiling a 6-month-old.

Peter A. Gorski, MD, director of the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies, says, “There is so much questionable parenting literature out there that still talks about spoiling babies. This is a myth that really needs to be addressed.”

Research shows that infants whose parents respond quicker to their needs, including their cries, are happier and more independent by their first birthday, Gorski says. They learn to trust that you'll be there when they need you.

What about toddler temper tantrums? Are these children spoiled? No, Elkind says. Tantrums are simply a part of normal development. “This is a time kids are differentiating themselves, and they do that by saying no,” he says. “That's normal.” It doesn't mean you don't need to set limits for your
toddler or that you should always give in. But saying "No no no no no!" every time you want him or her to get dressed or eat lunch doesn't mean the child's spoiled. It just means he's 2.

3 Signs You're Spoiling Your Child

So if an often-cuddled infant and a toddler with tantrums are not spoiled -- how do you tell if your child is?

- **The cafeteria dining plan.** "You serve dinner, and the child doesn't want to eat what's on the table, so you always have to go out of your way to make a special meal," Elkind says. Once or twice is one thing, and of course children with special dietary needs must always be accommodated. But a child who insists on special orders every night could be on the way to being spoiled. "If a 5-year-old misses a meal it won't hurt him," Elkind says.

- **Tantrums.** They're normal in toddlers. But when a 5- or 6-year-old throws a fit because she doesn't get what she wants, that's age-inappropriate. "For little ones, it may be the only way they can express their feelings, but in older children, tantrums are manipulative," Elkind says.

- **Extreme dependence on parents.** If your child can't go to sleep unless you're there, won't ever let you leave him with grandma or a babysitter, and throws fits when it's time to go to school or day care, that's a problem, Elkind says. "Your child depends on you, yes, but as they get older, children have to learn to be comfortable with other people and with being on their own."

Instead of "spoiled child," Gorski prefers to use the term "overindulged" or "overprotected." These children may indeed "run the house" -- but it's because parents treat them like they're much younger than they are. "A key warning sign," he says, "is any child much older than the toddler years who continues to act like a baby or toddler -- kicking and screaming, biting other children, not using age-appropriate ways of communicating thoughts and feelings. This is a sign that they're not very secure about themselves."

5 Hints to Help You Raise an Unspoiled Child

Set age-appropriate boundaries so that kids go after life exuberantly, testing the limits, Gorski says. You can start in the toddler years.

- **Establish your outer limits of safety.** For example: "Never touch the hot stove," and, "Never run into the street." Relay what is and is not acceptable and never vary the message you give about safety, Gorski says.

- **Reinforce positive social behavior in a similar way.** Know what you will encourage, such as saying please and thank you and playing gently with friends. "Reinforce positive behavior more than you harp on negative behavior," Gorski says.

- **Talk openly with your children about behavior as they get older.** "School-age and adolescent children are capable of insight, so sit down and to try to figure problems out together," Gorski says. For example, if you ask a child "Why are you doing this?" the child may not be able to tell you. But if you say "I wonder why this keeps happening," that open-ended question might give the child room to speculate. You might be surprised by what you learn.

- **Stay calm.** Losing your temper with bad behavior only makes you feel bad and look out of control (kind of like a spoiled child), and it doesn't teach the child better behavior.

- **Be consistent.** Always do what you say you're going to do. If you tell your child there will be consequences for a certain behavior, he or she should know you mean it. "This time I'm really taking the toy away if you don't play nicely," doesn't work when you've already said it 10 times.

A kid being out of control is a cry for help, not a sign the child is spoiled, Gorski says. "What's best of all is to start early and consistently to set limits, to understand developmental needs of the infant and young child for this delicate, critical balance between freedom and limits."