

5 Ways You are Teaching Your Kids to be Entitled



How does a parent raise an entitled child? Especially since no parent intends to?

Entitlement pervades nearly every aspect of today's culture, which means ...families aren't immune from its influence. In fact, if you aren't proactive, it's almost a given you'll raise an entitled child. It's a sobering thought. Most parents know entitlement develops when a child is given too much, too soon, but many parents don't realize entitlement is also bred in more subtle ways. More lethal ones. Could you be accidentally raising an entitled child? Here are five common [parenting](#) mistakes that can lead to entitlement:

1. Allowing Your Kids to Interrupt

I recently attended a meeting at the home of a family with three adorable kids. Halfway through the presentation, one of the children ran into the living room and stood next to the speaker. “Have you seen Frozen? I love it!”, she declared, then launched into a litany of reasons she loved the movie—smack in the middle of the speaker’s presentation.

Granted, this was an informal meeting, but still, the parents said nothing. The interrupted leader sat visibly uncomfortable, unsure of how to regain control.

This innocent parental mistake holds consequences if not addressed. Kids who don’t learn respect for other people’s time, conversations, or physical space are essentially being taught “the world revolves around you.” When life becomes child-centered, kids become me-centered. Kids who aren’t taught to wait for their turn—whether on the playground, or in the living room—are on the path to becoming entitled.

Is it important to give our kids undivided attention? Of course! At appropriate times. We want to raise engaging kids, not entitled kids.

Does your child interrupt? Try this: First, explain the importance of waiting to speak until others finish. Then develop a “secret signal” your child can use when you’re in the middle of an adult conversation. My kids placed their hand on my arm, then I place my hand on theirs, letting them know I would turn my attention to them soon. It was a win-win solution.

2. Not Making Please and Thank You a Big Deal

Even entitled folks say “please” and “thank you” for the big things in life. But grateful people remember to say these words for the small things, too.

When our kids were young, my husband started a family ritual at dinnertime. At the close of every meal he’d say, “Thanks, Mom, for this great dinner”—even if the meal was take-out. It was a small habit that reaped big rewards. Our kids learned to appreciate the daily things we do for one another. They became grateful people, not entitled people.

Has your family gotten out of the habit of saying please and thank you? Try this: Lead by example. For the next seven days, thank your spouse and/or child for something you might normally take for granted.

3. Breaking the Rules

This one is perhaps the most common in today’s culture. Rules, many of us figure, are more like guidelines. Sure, we want everyone else to follow them, but us? Our kids? Well, we’ll be the judge. Today’s mantra seems to be “Don’t tell ME what to do.”

Here’s the problem: allowing kids to break rules, whether minor, like running at the pool, or major, like breaking curfew, teaches disrespect for authority. It leads to chaos in a home, in a school, in a society. The issue at stake is much bigger than running at pools, or staying out after curfew, or whatever rule happens to be at issue in the moment. The message we send when we allow our kids to make their own rules is “the world revolves around you; it revolves around us.” And that message leads to entitlement.

Does this mean we need to parent like tyrants? Not at all. But we do need to lovingly and consistently teach our kids to follow the rules.

Have you allowed your kids to “bend” the rules? Try this: The next time you’re faced with any rule, whether big or small, (think “keep off the grass,” “no dogs allowed,” etc.) follow it. Use it as a teaching opportunity.

4. Being Too Quick to Step In

We all know that mom or dad—the one who pitches a fit if their child doesn’t make first string, doesn’t get the A, or doesn’t get the recognition. Of course we want our children to succeed, but the goal is to help our children learn how to succeed based upon their own merits. When children receive recognition based upon parental intervention rather than their own initiative, entitlement results.

Have you been too quick to step in? Try this: Give your child the gift of working hard to achieve a goal. Resist the temptation to intervene unless absolutely essential. Be okay with a little failure along the way. Failure isn’t fatal if it helps your child develop character. Allow your child to succeed in his or her own time and own way and you’ll raise an empowered child, not an entitled one.

5. Following the Crowd

These days it’s not uncommon for middle school kids to reserve party limos or preschool children to have birthday parties as elaborate as weddings.

Is all this excess healthy? Who started this trend? And why did we as a society follow it?

There’s a fine line between making our kids feel special and making our kids feel spoiled. If every event is special, soon no event is special. Special becomes ordinary. Parents spend time, energy and money trying to top the last party, the last gift, or the last event. It’s a crazy maker for parents and an entitlement maker for kids.

Have you blindly followed the crowd? Try this: Before mindlessly buying the latest gadget or allowing your child to participate in some activity just because everyone else is, stop. Look beyond the moment. Is the decision in your child’s best interest in the long term? Resist the urge to give too much, too soon. Instead, give your child the opportunity to look forward to things as they mature; then special things really will be special. Anticipation is an antidote for entitlement.

Yes, we live in the age of entitlement. But our families don’t have to be victims. We can chart a new course—a better one—for our children. Entitlement isn’t merely a function of giving our kids too much stuff; it’s also a function of failing to give our kids the stuff they really need: parental guidance, wisdom, and direction. With a little know-how and effort, we can turn the tide of entitlement.

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