

# How can I raise unspoilt children?

By Linda Blair



No one wants to have – or to be around – demanding, selfish, spoiled children; those who throw tantrums or sulk when they're not given everything they want immediately.

Paradoxically, the parents of such children encourage this demanding behaviour in the mistaken belief that if they give their children everything they can, their children will be happy.

Perhaps in the very short term, they're right. In the longer term, however, such children end up lonely, dependent, chronically dissatisfied and resentful of the parents who tried so hard to please them.

How can parents raise happy children; individuals who are self-confident, capable and likeable rather than spoiled and miserable? Some suggestions:

1. Rather than giving them material possessions, give them the most valuable gift of all – your loving attention. The quantity of time that you spend together is less important than the content of that time.
2. Instead of instantly gratifying their wishes, help them work out a plan to earn things they'd like to have. This teaches them to value their effort as well as what it achieves.
3. Allow them to enjoy anticipation. Children who learn to wait for things they desire are more likely to succeed in a number of ways later in life, as Walter Mischel, the psychologist

who created "the Marshmallow Test", showed. In the 1960s, he conducted a series of experiments in which he gave three- to six-year-old children a choice. Either they could have one small reward (a marshmallow, cookie or pretzel) immediately, or if they waited 15 minutes, they could have two. The children have been followed up many times since and researchers have found that those who chose to delay gratification are now more academically successful, have greater self-worth and even tend to be healthier.

4. If they fail, encourage your children to keep trying rather than to give up, as long as you believe they really want the result. This teaches resilience, which is associated with greater success and satisfaction academically, financially and in personal relationships.

5. Focus on and praise their efforts, even more than their actual achievements. This teaches children to live more mindfully; more in the present. As a result, they'll feel satisfied more often than if they enjoy only the moment of reward.

6. Set clear guidelines for your children and remain consistent, particularly during disagreements. This allows them to feel safe and to understand how to maintain boundaries themselves.

7. Encourage them to look at life from other points of view as well as their own. This teaches compassion and empathy.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/wellbeing/mood-and-mind/how-can-i-raise-unspoilt-children/>