



Parenting a Preschooler: How To Avoid Raising A Spoiled Brat!

By Kelly Nault

Studies tell us that child behavior between 2 - 6 years of age impacts their future personality more than at any other stage. Talk about pressure for parents!

A toddler's increased mobility and expanding vocabulary mark the dawn of a new stage in life—one in which preschoolers want to explore more of their world, long to play with others, and look to experience greater independence from their parents. Although the preschool years can be exciting, they can also signal a time of many parenting challenges.

These parenting challenges can leave a parent bewildered and frustrated, especially when deciding how to best deal with child behavior that includes: temper tantrums, toilet training, bossiness, hitting, and sibling rivalry. Parents who try to do a lot of things "right" when dealing with child behavior from 2 - 6 fall into a common parenting trap, one that undermines all of their positive efforts to raise responsible, happy and compassionate children.

The "Good" Parenting Trap: Pampering the Child

We've heard of Generation X and we've heard of Generation Y, but Generation S—the Spoiled Generation—is reaching epidemic proportions.

A child who grows up being the center of their parents' universe can turn into a school-aged child who has difficulty developing and maintaining friendships, a child dreaded by their peers, adults and teachers alike! Later on, this same child can become an adult who falsely believes the world owes them everything and expects they don't have to do anything in return.

If your child grows up with a sense of entitlement, they will neither develop healthy self-esteem, nor be able to meet life's challenges. Entitlement creates such problems because a fulfilling life is the product of caring about others, being confident in our own abilities, and being motivated to share our talents. A spoiled child rarely learns any of these skills.

Spoiling a child leads to more toddler temper tantrums, bigger meltdowns, and even anti-social conduct (including aggressive behavior—biting, angry child), all of which can lead parents to the brink of the parenting "deep end." Thus, one of the best things you can do for a child aged 2 - 6 is to provide opportunities to contribute to others. If you don't, you may wind up regretting it—just like Jasmine's family did.

Parenting True Story: The Little Prince

“Jasmine” was a young woman who I counseled years ago. One of the issues she struggled with was her “little 34-year-old brother”. As our sessions progressed, I began referring to him as “Little Prince.” “Little Prince” used Jasmine’s home as a free B&B opportunity. He paid no rent, ate Jasmine’s food, tossed his dirty clothes on the floor, and consistently brought the family car back with an empty tank of gas. The longest he had ever held down a job was two months. He had no savings, no friends, and no ambitions.

Upon hearing Jasmine's description of her younger brother, I correctly guessed that he had been a pampered child. Not only did he have one mother, but he had five sisters who mothered him! “Little Prince” wasn’t even expected to walk on his own until the age of five, when he became too heavy for any of his “moms” to carry. The sad result is a grown man who still expects the entire world to dote on him, and who resorts to childish outbursts and temper tantrums when that doesn’t happen.

Three ways to avoid parenting a spoiled child:

1. Encourage Your Child’s Independence. One of the best things you can do for your child is to have them help out with family chores. Most parents don’t realize that by not encouraging their young children to help out with simple chores now, they are unknowingly teaching their children to not want to do chores later on.

As soon as they show interest in helping out, start teaching them! After seeing how interested her three-year-old was in Saturday morning laundry, one mom in my parenting class gave her child the task of taking the wet laundry and moving it to the dryer every week. This simple task would take her no more than ten seconds, took her son up to ten minutes! Yet, this mom knew the power of training. To pass the time, she brought along the newspaper to read. Now, four years later, her child is enthusiastically helping with dozens of other chores, including setting and clearing the table.

2. Refrain from Modeling Temper Tantrums Yourself. Many parents actually model for their children how to perform temper tantrums by yelling, screaming and even hitting when they get to the end of their rope. Realize that by doing so, you are teaching your kids how to misbehave—no matter how loudly you tell them how to behave. *Actions speak louder than words.* Make certain you are walking your talk in this parenting area.

3. Put Yourself First for the Sake of Your Child. You’ve probably heard the saying “When mom ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy!” Choose to be a happy parent ... for the sake of your children. If you are burning the candle at both ends, you are likely headed for burnout. And when “Super Mom” turns into “Super Stressed”, the results can be ugly for the entire family.

Choose to do more than just give lip service to self-care. Self-care needs to be treated as a necessity, rather than as a luxury. Modeling for your child what a happy, healthy adult looks like is essential. It is also essential for your child to know that you think enough about yourself to put some of your needs first. Even if this means spending a little less time with them, the time you do spend together will be more fulfilling and rewarding for both of you when you are truly happy.

Child behavior (2-6 year olds) can be a parenting challenge, but very rewarding if you take the time to teach by example, to actively model good self-care, and to give your child satisfying opportunities to contribute.

Kelly Nault, MA corporate spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* inspires moms to put themselves first—for the sake of their children. She shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! Sign up for her free online parenting course at www.UltimateParenting.com.

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