

Developing Likeable, Responsible and Respectful Toddlers:

Have you become a Pushover Parent?

By Madeleine Taylor.

In today's world it is more and more difficult to hold a line and expect people to meet it.

Have you noticed the traffic lights take longer to change – because people are running not only the orange but also the red lights – so to prevent an accident the lights take longer and longer to change – all because our society has decided to not hold the line.



Parents, community leaders, police, nurses, teachers and medical staff have long been held up as the back bone of our society and supporters of the limits in which we as a society thrive. Now more and more frequently these stalwarts are being challenged in their day to day jobs, in the media and in the courts.

We know, however, the impact of not maintaining rules and boundaries. Specific research has looked at the impact of overindulgence on children. This is what the impact is on children when they have been overindulged:

They have trouble learning delayed gratification and giving up being the centre of attention, trouble being competent in every day skills, self-care skills and skills relating to others, trouble talking personal responsibility and developing a sense of personal identity, trouble knowing what is enough and what is “normal” for others.

We all know adults, children and teens who meet this description. We may even recognise this in ourselves.

Because we are up against a tsunami of expectations to overindulge you may find it harder and harder to hold the line as a parent.

Do you notice that you give in to your child and breach your own boundaries?

Let's look firstly at the jobsⁱ of your child:

- Before birth
- Birth to 6 months
- 6 months to 18 months
- 18 months to 3 years

So, if you are thinking that you have been caught in the trap, firstly well done for noticing and secondly there is something you can do to be different.

If you have been a pushover parent, there are four questions to ask yourself that will help you know if you may have been overindulging:

1. Does the situation hinder your child from learning the task that supports his or her development and learning at this age?
2. Does the situation give a disproportionate amount of family resources to one or more of the children – includes money, space, time, energy, attention and psychic input?
3. Does this situation exist to benefit the parent more than the child?
4. Does the child's behaviour potentially harm others, society, or the planet in some way?

If you say yes to any of the questions the suggestion is that you may have been overindulging. So what to do?

1. **Ideas for changing old behaviours and attitudes.**

- a) **Pick one** attitude or behaviour to change at a time. Only one. Stay underwhelmed.
- b) List all the ways life would be **better** for this child, and for you, if you were to change that attitude or behaviour.
- c) List the **disadvantages** to changing. Everything from “This child will throw more tantrums” to “This child may not like me” to “I’ve not a clue what to do instead”.
- d) Make a **decision** to change
- e) **Describe** your new attitude or behaviour by turning around the old one in words that make sense to you. “I allow my child to get away with things” might become “I do not allow my child to get away with things”. Say it aloud five times morning and night. Post it on the mirror, or in your wallet.
- f) In the morning think of **one little way** to act on your new attitude or one small way to behave in a new way that day and do it.
- g) When you are ready, choose **one big way** to act on it each week and do it. Get help if you need it.
- h) If you **fall back**, congratulate yourself for being on the journey. No beating yourself up.
- i) When you notice a **positive shift** in your own attitude and behaviour, celebrate. When you notice a positive shift in a child's behaviour or attitude, celebrate, but don't overindulge.
- j) Go back over the list and notice how many other ways things have changed in a positive way.
Celebrate.

Keep going and don't give up. You matter.

You can be powerful and ask for help at the same time.

Kind regards
Madeleine

ⁱ How much is too Much?