

Estate Planning

How to raise children who are not entitled

By Patricia Annino, Esquire



If you don't want your children to grow up entitled, rather than buying them toys and tricks, give them what they really want: your invaluable time and attention. As a parent, you are the greatest influence in your child's life – greater than any teacher, TV show, or friend. It is important to your child that they know how much they matter. From a very early age, they will watch you and model their behavior after your behavior. So, look in the mirror. What do you see? What do they see? Make sure it is what you want them to observe, understand and imitate.

To avoid raising an entitled child, you must make them understand that each of us is connected to a much bigger community and to the world at large. Explain that we are all connected to each other and that we have a responsibility not only to ourselves, but also to each other. Expose your child to those who are less fortunate by bringing them on site visits to organizations such as the food bank, a homeless shelter, or a school for disabled children.

Also, make sure that you are teaching them responsibility by giving them tasks and chores they must account

for. Consider whether it is a good idea to reward them with money or other means. Keep in mind the message you are imparting and ensure they understand why you are asking them to do the task or take on the responsibility.

What do you say when your child asks you why they cannot have the newest toy or the computer that all their friends have? Tell your child the truth – whether it is that you can't afford it, that it is too extravagant, that they don't need it, that they have to earn it, or whatever your reason is – and then turn that into a deeper conversation

about what matters in your value system.

When your child makes a mistake, like skipping homework, lying about being too sick for school, breaking curfew, or drinking too much, resist the temptation to bail them out and let them off the hook.

Instead, hold them to be accountable and teach them to face the consequences. Don't do your child's homework for them. Don't write a note to the teacher that is not true. Don't set a month of curfew and forget about it after the first week. Stick by your rules and use the word "no" when it is important to use it.

When the child is held accountable, talk through the consequences of what that means with them, placing the value on the accountability and not on what triggered it.

On the other hand, expect your child to take positive action and appreciate them when they do so. When a child fails, receives a bad grade, lies, or gets in trouble at school, explain that we are all human and that imperfection and setbacks happen to everyone.

Educate your child that not meeting your own expectations, failing, and falling short are part of everyone's life, but that one's actions when that happens is what matters. John Maxwell put it perfectly when he said, "Fail early, fail often, but always fail forward."

If you feel that your child is entitled past the point of any discussion with you on what that means, consider enlisting other people the child respects. For example, ask other family members, friends, or a religious leader like your priest or rabbi.

All in all, shine the light on yourself first. Make sure that the lessons you are teaching by your own

example are the right ones.

Hold your children accountable to the values you stand by. Most importantly, keep the conversation going.

"Some children are spoiled and it is not their fault, it is their parents'."

Roald Dahl



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