

Combatting Children's Pester Power

by Michael Grose

The rule of thumb that many children work by is 'you get what you can bargain for' Marketers now recognising the effectiveness of children's pester power increasingly cater to children in the advertising of even household goods.

Children also place a great deal of pressure on each other to acquire the latest fashion item, toy or foodstuff. Invariably, it is parents who are the butt of this pressure as children turn to them to fund their consumer-driven lifestyles. 'Mum, can you buy me a....' seems to be the new modern mantra heard in kitchens around the country as weary parents put their hands in their pockets to purchase items for their children before they provide for themselves.

If your child places you under inordinate pressure to buy, buy, buy the following ideas may help combat his or her pester power:

... **Avoid feeling guilty for saying no to a child's request for material goods.** Bear in mind that delaying gratification is not only virtuous but is actually good for children in the long run. There have been some interesting studies done that have shown that educational and social outcomes tend to be better for children who are able to defer gratification rather than get what they want immediately.

... **Help children differentiate between a want and a need.** Children want many things but in actual fact need far less than they think to get by.

... **Introduce pocket-money from an early age and encourage them to save for the things they want.** Not only does saving encourage children to work toward goals but it places responsibility for purchases on children.

... **When children tell you that everyone else in their class has the latest fad** ask them for the names of three so you can contact their parents to find out where they purchased it!

... **Encourage a sense of generosity to match children's growing consumerism.** When new items are bought then maybe old items can be given to a sibling, a friend or someone else who can use them.

The consumer culture is both all embracing and persuasive. There is little that can't be bought these days. Gifts and snacks are bought rather than homemade. Clothing is rarely mended. Even simple games such as noughts and crosses have commercial versions that can be bought in a store. Kids place enormous pressure on their parents to keep up with the Jones' kids but that doesn't mean that parents should give in. **OK**

Michael Grose is a leading parent educator, a trained teacher and author. For further ideas about raising confident kids and resilient teenagers visit www.parentingideas.com.au

Getting kids to talk by Michael Grose

"How was your day, dear?"

"Aw right!"

"Anything good happen today?"

"Nuh"

Talking with some children can be as much fun as getting teeth pulled as they withhold information as if their lives depended on it. Its frustrating as you just want to show your interest and also get a picture about their state of mind and emotional well-being.

Even the toughest nut will crack and open up given the right time and conditions. Here are some ideas to help you open up some dialogue if you have a conversational clam in your family:

1. Set the mood for communication. Turn the TV off, and put on some quiet background music during mealtime. It helps if you share a little about your day or ask your kids something a little off the wall such as –

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“If you were an animal what would you be and why?”

2. Talk on their turf. Many kids will open up in the privacy of their own bedroom as they feel comfortable and relaxed. Think of where your child feels most comfortable and least threatened next time you begin a conversation.

3. Talk while doing something together. Boys, in particular, are more likely to open when their hands are busy. So go for a walk together, do a job or make something together and watch the tongue loosen as they relax and become lost in activity.

4. Drive with children with the radio OFF. If you drive long enough someone has to break the silence!

5. Say it with a note. Some children find it easier to put their thoughts down on paper than rely on the spoken word. You can begin written communication by supplying a diary or message book for your child. You may even write your child a note from time to time when you have something important to say.

The best communication in families happens when no one is working at it. However there are times when parents need to be proactive to get some communication going. OK

Michael Grose is a leading parent educator, a trained teacher and author. For further ideas about getting your family flying in the same formation visit www.parentingideas.com.au

What parents should know about.....Resilience

by Michael Grose

Resilience refers to psychological hardiness and a person's ability to deal with life's knocks and setbacks, both big and small. Resilient children accept life's disappointments, bounce back quickly from social rejection, persevere when learning doesn't come easily and generally have a positive attitude to life.

Resilience is a mixture of attitude, skills, abilities and character. Some children are born with a resilient spirit. They are naturally determined and spirited. But resilience is also fostered by early childhood experiences.

Resilient kids have healthy thinking habits. They tend not to catastrophise when things go wrong. They have a sense of optimism about themselves and the future. Some kids are born optimistic but most pick up their optimism from the significant adults in their environment. It pays for parents to be optimistic rather than negative as children will probably pick up their optimism.

Resilient kids are also independent and good problem-solvers. Parents can develop autonomy and resourcefulness by teaching kids the skills of independence and giving them opportunities to resolve some of their own problems. Overprotection robs children of opportunities to develop resilience. Chores and domestic responsibilities, caring for siblings and looking after their own well-being are some ways children can show their capability as family members.

Social competence is an attribute resilient kids have in common. They are able to mix well with others and link with friends when they experience disappointment or some hardship. Parents can develop social skills by interacting with their children, providing opportunities for children to interact with others, and teaching and modelling appropriate social behaviours. OK

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