Antidotes to Spoiling Kids...
And Not Just Over the Holidays

Parents have to know the difference between their kids’ **needs** and their **wants**. Kids don’t know the difference.

“I’ve **got** to have it! I need it!”
“I’m the **only one** who doesn’t have one!”
“I’ll **die** if you don’t let me!”

**Do not fall into the “Happiness Trap.”** Be willing to be unpopular which often means saying “no” when your child is bugging you (or pleading, arguing or having a tantrum) to say “yes.”

**Once you’ve said “no”, stick to it.** Don’t falter even if your child acts like you’re “the meanest mom” or “the worst dad in the world.”

**Don’t say “no” if even a little bit of you means, “Well, maybe...”** Children will do **anything** to try to get parents to turn a “no” into a “yes.” They have an uncanny way of knowing when we’re ambivalent about rules and limits.

**Remember that a disappointed child or unhappy child is NOT an unloved child.**

**Don’t bribe unless you want your child to become manipulative.** A bribe almost always starts with “if you...”. Example: “If you clean your room, I’ll buy that toy you’ve been nagging me about.”

**A reward, as opposed to a bribe, is after the fact.** But if you reward children, don’t do it with material things. What children really need is time alone with their parents and simpler is better – a walk in the snow, a bike ride, going out with you to pick out bagels for breakfast, a trip to the library or to the zoo, etc.

**Children need fewer toys – most of them are overwhelmed with too much “stuff”.** Instead, try making things by hand: designing cards on the computer, baking cookies, drawing a picture, or knitting a scarf. Or do something for family members: reciting a favorite poem, reading to your sister, or picking out a book at the library. These gifts are much more meaningful because they involve your **time and effort**. Example: Instead of buying pricey toys, decide what your family could do for each other over the holidays. Make Mom breakfast in bed; take over your sister’s or brother’s chores for a day; give your daughter a manicure; take the kids bowling; spend an evening playing your child’s favorite games with the whole family.

**If your kids are bombarded with toys anyway, help them decide which of their presents they’re willing to give away to kids in a shelter or hospital.** Go with them so they have the experience of **giving**, not just **getting**.

www.samalin.com