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Parenting / Jan Faull

## **Don't let whining, bribing or jealousy get the best of you**

When it comes to raising children, every parent bumps up against challenges.

In the big picture of your parenting life you may know the direction you're headed and getting there. You're probably raising responsible kids who like learning. You're probably concerned about the impact of the media, so you control TV and Internet time. You're most likely teaching your children right from wrong: It's wrong to lie, cheat or steal; it's right to tell the truth, play fair and not take items that belong to others.

Then — all of a sudden — you might hit a stumbling block. One parent might find she's raising a chronic whiner. The parent says "no" to one more cookie, but her preschooler whines for another. Sometimes this mom gives in, other times she blows up. She doesn't like this behavior pattern, yet every day these whining episodes occur, and this mom doesn't know how to stop them.

Another parent might realize that when it comes to getting his school-age child to complete chores, dress himself or climb in bed, he's using bribes. It's such a bore to think of an activity, a food item or a dollar amount that will motivate his child to perform a task that should be automatic.

Other parents might find that they're in a trap of trying to be perfectly fair to each of their children. Then, when the parent slips up, one of the children is right there to catch the parent, "That's not fair, I only got two presents, and he got three."

When parents find themselves in one of these irritating situations, it's hard to know what to do. You don't have time to read an entire book and counseling probably isn't necessary, but you need ideas to address your parenting issue. Here's a book suggestion: "Loving without Spoiling: And 100 Other Timeless Tips for Raising Terrific Kids," by Nancy Samalin (The McGraw-Hill Companies, \$14.95).

For the whiner, Samalin suggests any of the following six responses: "You may ask me one more time." "I can't listen when you're whining." "Try a different voice." "Whining will not change my no into a yes." "It's OK to whine, as long as you do it in your room." "Ouch! My ears are starting to hurt." With these responses on the tip of your parenting tongue, you can soon break your child's whining ways.

Samalin wants parents who bribe to realize that their authority alone is usually all that's truly required for children to do as they're expected. She does warn parents, however, that once a

pattern of bribing is established it's tough to break it. Nevertheless, with persistence and a fresh approach, the parent can alter her bribing ways.

Rather than saying, "If you complete your chores, then you'll receive a dollar," she suggests stating, "When you've finished tidying your bedroom, then we can play a game."

This option gives the child something to look forward to but with the clear expectation that the chore will be completed in a timely fashion.

For the parent caught in the fairness trap, Samalin doesn't equivocate. "Fairness is not achievable — at least not in the way kids define it. Trying to treat children equally at every moment is like trying to extricate yourself from quicksand: The more you struggle, the deeper you sink."

She suggests it's best to pull the complaining child's focus away from what the sibling received and help him identify what he truly wants.

"Loving without Spoiling" is not a book that you must sit down and read cover to cover. It's one, however, that you'll want to shelve next to your favorite cookbook for quick reference. Open it when a specific parenting issue nags at your mind and emotions, or when you simply need a fresh approach to an old way of parenting that's not working for you or your children.

*Jan Faull, a specialist in child development and behavior, answers questions of general interest in her column. You can e-mail her at [janfaull@aol.com](mailto:janfaull@aol.com) or write to: Jan Faull, c/o Families, The Seattle Times, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111. More columns at [www.seattletimes.com/columnists](http://www.seattletimes.com/columnists)*