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The UK's Top Teen Coach

By Sarah Newton

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Pester Power - Are we raising `wanting machines'?

Ok so it's coming up to Christmas and despite our every effort to the darling teenagers in our lives, this time of year has turned into nothing more than a shop front.

I have to say, I was shopping the other day with my 7-year-old and we saw a Bratz House. We looked at it and I was astonished at a price tag of £189. I could not believe it, for a plastic house! This was great as it allowed for us to have a conversation about money, however my heart went out as I know that many Parents will be pestered and pestered for that house and Parents all over the country will give in to make their children happy. The power of advertising!

What has happened, we appear to have created a group of Parents who cannot say no. Parents seem unwilling to set limits or draw the line anywhere. Is it that they feel more guilty as so many of them are working such long hours, is it that our kids have just got better at asking, or is it that the advertising is just so good that we just cannot say no?

Whatever the reason, I have to say that I am concerned that we are raising a generation who are `wanting machines', who respond to the marketing aimed right at them. They are growing up with a distorted sense of entitlement and we risk the next generation becoming self-centred and self-absorbed and growing up into adults that simply do not care.

And the figures are staggering.

According to market research, Families of 3-12 year olds now spend \$53.8 Billion annually on entertainment, personal care items and reading material, \$17.6 billion more than 1997.

And there is another worrying thought, does over-indulgence have a bad effect on school performance and relationships? Kids who get their own way most of the time are very demanding and much less likely to be able to form long-lasting, sustainable relationships with people.

So what do we do?

1. Get clear what you want as a Parent

Most of us are so clear about trying to please our children and give them what they want that we forget about what we want. And I don't mean material things, I mean what you want out of life - what do you want as a Parent, what is your purpose for being a Parent. Now it may be that your purpose is to give your children absolutely everything they want and if that is the case, you are on course. If however, like me, your purpose is to raise a responsible and independent young adult who is caring and compassionate, what you are doing may be against where you really want to be.

So next time they say, "Mum can I have.....?" check in with what you want as a Parent and see if it fits.

2. Set a limit

I know it may seem obvious, but most Parents don't do it. Set a limit you are willing to spend on your child and let them know. Tell them that you want to feel good about Christmas too and that you are only willing to spend this much because Christmas is about so much more. Be very clear that no matter what, you will not go over that limit.

3. What do they really think it will give them?

If they still continue to pester and pester, ask this question, "What do you think having that will give you?" I know you may stump them, but they will answer and if they don't know, then why do they want it in the first place? When they tell you what they think having that thing will give them, ask them how they can get more of that into their lives now. When we do this we realise that actually we did not want the thing, but only the quality we thought the thing would give us.

4. Encourage entrepreneurship

Now this one will really stop them, if they continue to ask, say that you are not prepared to pay for it and ask how you can support them in getting it. Now first they may turn to all the illegal things and they may need some prompting. You may need to ask how they can get the money; encourage their creativity. Maybe they will sell things on E-bay, train others how to use Excel or build websites for others.

5. Giving vs. receiving

I play this game all the time with my 7-year-old. I teach her about giving and receiving and how they fit together. How, if you want to let something into your life, you need to let go of something in return. So when she asks for something, I ask what she wants to give in return. Now I don't do this to be mean or have her think about lack, I have it to open her up to the fact that money moves – it is not stagnant. I want her to understand the concept of giving and not just that of receiving. I can tell you, it has an amazing effect, She often changes her mind, she realises that she does not want it that much so she

leaves it. When she wrote her Christmas list this year, the first thing that she asked for was something for someone else. So use this concept, start a system of giving versus receiving. They may not respond at first. but keep trying it. Use it yourself first, start showing your child how you yourself incorporate it.

So this Christmas make a stand, decide that you are going to raise a responsible independent young adult who cares about others and is not just a 'wanting machine'.

Sarah Newton the UK's Top Teen Coach and a strong advocate for Teen empowerment, personal leadership and development. An ex-police officer, Sarah's life changed when the 15-year-old boy she led to a cell committed suicide because his life wasn't worth living. She dedicated the next nine years of her life working with Teens to discover how to make a difference in the lives of young people who seemed unreachable.

I've Learned To Love Teen Art

By Martin Stoleman

I have loved art for as long as I can remember. As a child I spent hour after hour doing art projects of all kinds with my mother and my siblings. We would paint, practice sewing or create things out of clay for hours on end. I never knew that the amount of art projects we worked on was abnormal until I got a bit older and heard all of my friends and school talking about their years of playing with trucks and action figures or being outside building forts. I guess our mother wanted us to be well rounded individuals so she started us on all things art from the start. I don't remember exactly what kind of teen art I created during my formative years, but I do know that it wasn't until recently that I learned to appreciate teen art.

To the surprise of no one that I knew, I decided to become an art teacher when I went to college. I loved art so much that I couldn't think of a better way to spend my days than on teaching children and teens more about the things I loved. I enjoyed my elementary aged students immensely from the beginning. I loved their curiosity and I enjoyed the way they saw art. It was the teen art that my junior high aged students were creating that took me a while to adjust to.

The thing about teen art is that it is less than traditional and often it needs to be classified outside of any established genres of art. The teens in my art classes saw art in a much different way than I expected, and hence their work was much different as well. I would give them an assignment and they would create work so unlike what I had asked for and yet so creative that I couldn't complain.

I have realized that teen art needs to be a genre of art all by itself. Why? I've determined that teen art is so unique because of the time of life that it represents. Teens are going through the ultimate time of transition, so it makes sense that their art would have a particular perspective and slant. And as different as teen art can often be, I have learned to appreciate it. I have learned to see it through the eyes of a teenager exploring the world and trying to make sense of their place in the world.

If you have a teenager who likes to play around with any art form, then you probably know exactly what

I'm talking about with teen art. In fact, you've probably had similar issues in trying to recognize, define or categorize the art work that seems to make your teen come alive. My advice to you is this: teen art is something entirely of its own kind. Stop trying to make teen art into something else, and instead just enjoy it for what it is.

Martin Stoleman is an elementary and junior high school art teacher. He loves working with students and seeing what kinds of teen art they will come up with next. See

for more

details.



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