

POWER COUPLE
ELISHA CUTHBERT & DION PHANEUF P.54

GOLDEN GIRL
DANIELLE MCGIMSIE TALKS OSCARS P.40

10 WAYS
TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE P.34

City Life

WORD TO THE WISE: DON'T CALL MARGARET ATWOOD AN ICON

CLAUDIO APRILE THE MAKING OF A MASTER CHEF

THE "SHARENTING" DILEMMA THE CONSEQUENCES OF POSTING YOUR CHILD'S PHOTO ONLINE

PLUS

**ALEXANDRE BILODEAU VS. MIKAËL KINGSBURY
THE CANADIAN SKIING PHENOMS SET THEIR SIGHTS ON GOLD**

Feb/Mar 2014 \$4.95
Display in Fashion/Lifestyle
until Apr 23





THE RIGHT DEGREE OF GOOD PARENTING

Written By Karen Skinulis

We all want to be good parents, but did you know that it's possible to be too good? That's right. It's easier than you think to overdo well-intentioned "good" parenting habits like helping, giving attention and making kids happy. In fact, this phenomenon is so common in our generation that we have been dubbed "helicopter" parents, much to our chagrin. Instead of trying to make life perfect for your children, these good things have to be dispensed within well-considered limits. Like Goldilocks trying to find the perfect bed, we must look for the just-right point of giving and doing for our kids.

To be happy, kids have to learn what to expect from life and not expect more than it will deliver. Pampered children are at a distinct disadvantage in this regard. Their expectations don't match reality — then when life doesn't measure up, they're left angry and unhappy. Pampered kids expect things to come easily. They aren't adequately prepared for the hard work and toughness that life demands. That's precisely why loving, effective parents will monitor their tendencies to give in to pampering. Here are some tips.

GIVE SERVICE ONLY WHEN NEEDED

Kids learn by doing. They also gain self-confidence and feelings of competence from mastering skills. Things like washing their own hair and putting their own laundry away are satisfying activities for a growing child. As your children learn a new skill, that's your cue to eliminate that help. At the dinner table, for example, you can praise their efforts: I see you are doing a very good job of buttering your bread. Even if they don't do it as well as you, they should be encouraged to do it themselves from now on. If you keep giving service, they may quickly give up and expect someone to do it for them. Then they won't be getting that nice feeling of accomplishment and independence.

GIVE ATTENTION WHEN IT'S APPROPRIATE

Attention is a good thing, right? Absolutely. But, it too can be overdone. Your children have to find their place in the group as equals to everyone else. That means being the centre of attention at times but also being out of the spotlight, too. Carve out that balance at home. Let the situation be your guide.

If your children demand attention and the timing is appropriate, by all means they should get it, but be sure not to let them demand it when your focus has to be elsewhere. For example, make sure dinner is at a time when everyone gets an opportunity to talk, insist on your right to make a phone call without interruption and encourage them to find toys to play with when you have your own work to do. Teach your kids to be comfortable without always being the centre of attention and they'll learn to think about the needs of others.

TAKE CARE IN GIVING THEM THEIR OWN WAY

In a co-operative family, we can't always get our own way. That's because everyone's needs and wants have to be considered. There are times when kids can have fun and do what they want, but they can't expect the household to work around their wishes and whims. Instead, create routines and rules that take into account when kids have time to play, watch TV and be taken to their activities or to their friends. Let them know, however, that the routines are there for a good reason, and they don't get to rule the roost. It's OK to say, "No, I can't read to you right now because it's time for me to make dinner. Storytime will be later."

Reality demands that kids learn how to get along with others, and the better we are at teaching them, the easier it will be for them to find true happiness and peace. When you succeed at being just the right degree of "good," your children will be willing to work hard to get what they want and find their place alongside others. When that happens, you will feel like a truly good parent.

KAREN SKINULIS GUEST PARENTING EDITOR

Karen Skinulis is a director at the Ontario Parenting Education Centre and a certified Montessori teacher. With an education in psychology, the mother of two is an expert at offering effective solutions to the most common parenting challenges, having co-authored

three widely read books studied by both parents and teachers. Over the last 25 years, Skinulis has taught parenting classes and held workshops for family-focused organizations and corporations across Ontario.
www.practicalparenting.ca

