



English 102
Final Examination
Fall 2000-2001
Reading Comprehension

Are You Giving Your Kids Too Much?

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by
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1. While traveling for various speaking engagements, I frequently stay overnight in the home of a family and am assigned to one of the children's bedrooms. In it, I often find so many playthings that there's almost no room—even on the bureau top—for my small toilet kit. And the closet is usually so tightly packed with clothes that I can barely squeeze in my jacket.
2. I'm not complaining, only making a point. I think that the tendency to give children an overabundance of toys and clothes is quite common in American families, and I think that in far too many families not only do children come to take their parents' generosity for granted, but the effects of this can actually be somewhat harmful to children.
3. Of course, I'm not only thinking of the material possessions children are given. Children can also be overindulged with too many privileges—for example, when parents send a child to an expensive summer camp that the parents can't really afford.
4. Why do parents give their children too much, or give things they can't afford? I believe there are several reasons.
5. One fairly common reason is that parents overindulge their children out of a sense of guilt. For instance, if a couple were unhappy about an unexpected pregnancy, they might feel guilty about these feelings long after the baby is born and try to compensate by showering the child with material possessions. Or parents who both hold down full-time jobs may feel guilty about the amount of time they spend away from their children and may attempt to compensate with gifts.
6. Other parents overindulge because they want their children to have everything *they* had while growing up, along with those things the parents yearned for but didn't get. Still others are afraid to say no to their children's endless requests for toys for fear that their children will feel unloved or will be ridiculed if they don't have the same playthings their friends have.
7. Overindulgence of a child also happens when parents are unable to stand up to their children's unreasonable demands. Such parents vacillate between saying no and giving in—but neither response seems satisfactory to them. If they refuse a



request, they immediately feel a wave of remorse for having been so strict or ungenerous. If they give in, they feel regret and resentment over having been a pushover. This kind of vacillation not only impairs the parents' ability to set limits, it sours the parent-child relationship to some degree, robbing parents and their children of some of the happiness and mutual respect that should be present in healthy families.

8. But overindulging children with material things does little to assuage parental guilt (since parents never feel that they've given enough), nor does it make children feel more loved (for what children really crave is parents' time and attention). Instead, the effects of overindulgence can be harmful. Children may, to some degree, become greedy, self-centered, ungrateful and insensitive to the needs and feelings of others, beginning with their parents. When children are given too much, it undermines their respect for their parents. In fact, the children begin to *sense* that a parent's unlimited generosity is not right. The paradoxical result may be that these children will push further, unconsciously hoping that, if they push *too* hard, they will force their parents into setting limits.
9. Overindulged children also are not as challenged as children with fewer playthings to be more creative in their play. They have fewer opportunities to learn the value of money, and have less experience in learning to deal with a delay in gratification, if every requested object is given on demand.
10. The real purpose of this discussion is not to tell parents how much or how little to give to their children. Rather, my intent is to help those parents who already sense that they might be overindulging their children but don't know how to stop.
11. Parents who are fortunate enough not to have a problem with feelings of guilt don't need to respond crossly to their children when denying a specific request which is thought to be unreasonable. They can explain, *cheerfully*, that it's too expensive—except perhaps as a birthday or holiday gift—or that the child will have to contribute to its purchase from an allowance or from the earnings of an outside job.
12. It's the cheerfulness and lack of hesitation that impress upon the child that parents mean what they say. A cross response signals that the parents are in inner conflict. In fact, I'll make a rash statement that I believe is true, by and large: Children will abide by what their parents sincerely believe is right. They only begin arguing and pestering when they detect uncertainty or guilt, and sense that their parents can be pushed to give them what they want, if they just keep at it. But the truth is that a child *really* wants parents to be in control—even if it means saying no to a request—and to act with conviction in a kind and loving fashion.
13. But, you may answer, I often *am* uncertain about whether to give in to many of my children's requests. That doesn't mean you can't change. First you should try to determine what makes you submissive or guilty. Then, even if you haven't

uncovered the reason, you should begin to make firm decisions and practice responding to your children's requests in a prompt, definite manner.

14. Once you turn over a new leaf, you can't expect to change completely right away. You are bound to vacillate at times. The key is to be satisfied with gradual improvement, expecting and accepting the occasional slips that come with any change. And even after you are handling these decisions in a firmer and more confident manner, you can't expect your children to respond immediately. For a while they'll keep on applying the old pressures that used to work so well. But they'll eventually come to respect your decisions once they learn that nagging and arguing no longer work. In the end, both you and your children will be happier for it.

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Name: _____

Instructor: _____

I. Circle the letter of the correct answer. (25 points, 5 pts. each)

1. Overindulgence affects children in the following manner:
 - A. It helps them become more creative.
 - B. It gives them tangible evidence of their parents' love.
 - C. They may become egotistic and more demanding.
 - D. They become more sensitive to their parents' needs.

2. Which of the following is **not** recommended in solving the overindulgence of children?
 - A. cheerfulness
 - B. promptness
 - C. hesitation
 - D. firmness

3. In this article, the author gives parents many useful tips that will help them maintain a healthy family environment. Which one of the following does he **not** propose?
Parents must
 - A. impress on their children the value of money.
 - B. say "no" without feeling bad about it.
 - C. voice their disapproval in a pleasant manner.
 - D. discuss their guilt feelings with their children.

4. From the information in this passage, we can infer that Dr. Spock believes that, in general, parents tend to be too
 - A. demanding
 - B. lenient
 - C. irresponsible
 - D. confident

5. According to Dr. Spock, overindulged children
 - A. can detect the real motives of their parents
 - B. respect the needs and problems of their parents
 - C. submit easily to the demands of their parents
 - D. feel guilty when pressuring their parents

II. Answer the following questions in the blank spaces provided. (58 points)

1. a) Name two causes for overindulgence (4 pts)

i. _____

ii. _____

b) Name two effects of overindulgence (4 pts)

i. _____

ii. _____

2. Despite their endless demands on parents, what children really want from their parents is

(6 pts)

3. Dr. Spock presents a problem and suggests a solution. Which paragraph links the two main sections?

_____ (5 pts.)

4. Who is the expected audience of this article?

_____ (3 pts.)

Give concrete evidence from the text.

_____ (3 pts.)

5. What does Dr. Spock propose as a solution for overindulgence? (6 pts.)

6. What advantages, according to Dr. Spock, do unspoiled children have over the overindulged children? (6 pts.)

7. In your own words, explain the last sentence of paragraph 8. (6 pts.)

8. Write a suitable thesis statement for the passage that sums up the author's main ideas. (7 pts.)

9. Paraphrase the last sentence of paragraph 7. (8 pts.)

III. Words and Expressions (17 points)

1. a) Find a word in paragraph 5 similar in meaning to "make up for"
_____ (3 pts)

b) Find a word in paragraph 7 similar in meaning to "regret"
_____ (3 pts)

2. Explain what the author means by the following

a) "delay in gratification" (parag.9)
_____ (4 pts.)

b) "the old pressures" (parag. 14)
_____ (4 pts.)

3. Circle the correct answer (3 pts.)

yearned for (parag.6) means

- a. worked for
- b. pushed for
- c. paid for
- d. longed for

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Essay Topics

Directions: Choose **one** of the following topics and write a well-organized essay of 4-5 paragraphs. Do not choose a topic you have already done in class. Be sure to give a title and underline your thesis.

1. It is always better for a parent to be his/her child's friend. Discuss this issue using illustrations/ examples.
2. Select one of the following descriptions of parents and discuss its major effects on children:
 - A) working parents
 - B) single parents
 - C) strict parents
 - D) illiterate parents
 - E) divorced parents
3. Identify two or three specific ways in which Lebanese parents overindulge their children and discuss the reasons which you believe are responsible for this overindulgence.
4. Compare and contrast family relationships in the West to family relationships in the East.
5. Compare and/or contrast the ways in which young men and women cope with stress in our society.

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