



Moderation

A skill that children will benefit from learning is moderation. Caregivers can give a lot of opportunities for children to practice this critical life skill.

Is it Misbehavior or Too Much?

Too much of anything - toys, treats, activities - can be harmful to children. Rushing from one activity to another can be stressful. It robs children of downtime to re-energize themselves. Kids who are tired and overscheduled are more likely to misbehave.

Tips to Avoid Overindulgence

- Have conversations with children to help them determine the difference between a “want” and a “need.” Talk about your own wants and needs with them.
- Let children hear you talk about setting goals and saving for them.
- Before you go shopping, set the limit and stick to it.
- When children ask for something at the store have them add it to their wish list. When people ask for gift ideas you can pull out the list and use it to discuss how wants may have changed over time.
- Offer non-material incentives. Go to the park together, allow children to pick a free activity, or game to play as a reward.



Photo by Khanh Steven on Unsplash

Successful Children & Adults

Children need enriched environments, but too much is as bad as too little. Overindulgence prevents children from learning age-related tasks and life skills. Moderation helps develop basic skills, confidence, and self-esteem levels, as well as morals and emotions.



Image by Nathan Legakis from Pixabay

What Do Children Need?

Children need love, guidance, shelter, food, clothing, medical care, and experiences that help them learn.

Children need structure. It is helpful to have both flexible and non-flexible rules. For example, young children are not ready to cross the road by themselves, as they grow and learn the skills needed the rules change. (Examples of flexible rules could include the order in which your child gets ready for the day or bedtime.)

Children need opportunities to moderate themselves as they grow. Spending all the allowance on a toy, choosing swimming or playing at the park or two stories at bedtime instead of singing are all opportunities for choice within limits of time and money.

Children need adults who love them unconditionally.

Written by Amanda Dornfeld. Reviewed by Pam Wedig-Kirsch, Lori Zierl
Last reviewed March 2021

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.

Visit fyi.extension.wisc.edu/parentingthepreschooler for references.
For more information, contact your county office.