

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's No 1 parenting educator



Resisting kids' pester power

Kids have a way of getting under your skin when they really want something.

"Mum, can you buy me a treat?" "MUUUMMMM, can you get me some new clothes?" "It's not fair. You never let me have any fun."

Sound familiar?

Kids have a way of getting under your skin when they really want something. You can refuse their request for a treat, some extra time up out of bed or some new clothes and they can keep at you until you give in.

Some kids when they receive a knockback from one parent, will try the other parent. "Okay, mum said no to an ice cream, I'll just check to see what dad says" is the type of tactic I'm talking about here.

Sole parents can easily become worn down by pester power as there is no one to share the burden with.

There is no doubt that kids' pester power is alive and well and living in Australian homes right now. In these times of small families the voice of one child resisting can be the only voice a parent hears.

Currently, kids are seen as fair game by marketers and advertisers that use increasingly sophisticated tactics to stimulate consumerism in kids. This makes life increasingly difficult for parents.

Pester power hasn't always been a problem for parents. In the days of large families, when four or more children were common, not only was there less propensity to give kids what they wanted but siblings had their own way of dealing with rebellious or prima donna type behaviour.

If your kids don't take no for answer, particularly when they want you to buy, buy, buy consider these well-tested resistance strategies:



- 1. Avoid getting into too many negotiations with kids.** It's worth remembering that it's okay to say no...without always having to explain yourself.
- 2. Make yourself scarce, either physically or psychologically when they don't take no for an answer.** My wife was an expert at the latter method when my kids used to argue the point with her. She would ignore attempts to change her mind, going about her business as if they weren't there. They soon realised that arguing was futile.
- 3. Differentiate between a want and a need.** Kids want many things including the latest gadget, more free time and lots of treats. But they don't necessarily need these things. Understanding the difference between a need and a want helps you resist pester power.
- 4. Communicate with your partner.** Teenagers are adept at putting pressure on parents to acquiesce to their demands, particularly when it comes to going out. Get into the habit of bringing your partner into the picture. "I'm not sure about that. I'll check with your father and get back to you" is a handy response.
- 5. Draw strength from a friend.** It helps, particularly if you are on your own, to phone a friend to check if you are being reasonable. It's easy to doubt yourself, and your sanity, when you are on your own.
- 6. How can you make this happen?** Sometimes it's best to put the onus on to kids, particularly when they pester you to buy them things. "Sure, you can have a new mobile phone. Have you got enough money to buy it now or do you have to save for it?" is the type of response I suggest for kids who just love you to be their automatic teller machine.

Resisting kids pressure for parents to purchase items for them is a challenge that comes with living in more affluent times. But it's a challenge that's worth meeting, not just for our peace of mind, but to promote some restraint and self-discipline in kids.

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