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## Family Dynamics

# Entitlement Begins with Me

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### In this update:

- Many parents are frustrated when their children lack drive and ambition that is equivalent to their own. This article explains how this happens and offers help to remedy it.
- Being intentional about creating expectations for our children now can affect their perceived reality when they become adults. Each family should examine what their expectations are and adjust accordingly.

There is a trend in popular media today that labels the Millennial generation as entitled. It is not our intent to defend or refute the fact that some Millennials may come across that way; it is our intent to point out that entitlement is an attitude that develops gradually and can be avoided through creating clear expectations for children from an early age.

### How entitlement starts

If children feel entitled, it is generally because the parents have enabled them to think and behave that way. Parents of Millennials may pride themselves on being independent, loyal, full of grit, and self-made. They may celebrate their frugality or ingenuity and connect those attributes with their ability to accumulate wealth; however, some parents also make the decision that their children should not have to make similar sacrifices as they did.

For example, they may determine that working during high school will not be an expectation, as it could interfere with extracurricular activities and enjoyment parents believe a high school student should have. Their children are not expected to finance their own education, work menial jobs, or make other sacrifices necessary to pay their own way. Parents shelter their kids from experiencing the stress of earning their own money to pay for cell phones or gas, or even money to go on dates, etc. Years of hard work and success may lead parents to feel they deserve the right to afford their children the luxuries they didn't have access to as kids.

Making children's lives as easy as possible during adolescence may have unintended consequences, including not learning how to work and not truly grasping the economic reality of living a financially independent life. There are parents who may unintentionally create high lifestyle expectations for their children. Unfortunately, without support from parents, these children may not be monetarily capable of financing this lifestyle in adulthood.

## How to avoid raising entitled children

For parents who may be concerned about their children's entitled behavior, there are steps you can take to influence their future.

1. Consider the lifestyle expectations you are creating for your children and make necessary adjustments. Be thoughtful in how you provide for your children financially. If you create outsized expectations that can be maintained only with gifts from you, ask yourself whether you are comfortable creating those expectations.
2. Raise your children in gratitude. Model gratitude in how you talk and how you help others that are less fortunate than you. Where there is gratitude, entitlement cannot survive (they are incompatible roommates).
3. If you want to do nice things for your children, talk about it with them. Take the opportunity to be explicit with sharing your values and expectations. Beyond the money, share what success and happiness mean to you.

Consider what expectations you may be creating for your kids if they fly only first class. They may be unaware of the price that has been paid for that privilege. What expectations might you be setting them up for when they have to start paying their own airfare? Will they expect to fly first class every time, or will they simply be grateful to fly? The reality our children experience is not their choice; however, parents can create an environment that is not filled with impractical expectations.

## Model your values and expectations

If you can afford to fly in a private jet, should you feel guilty about that? Absolutely not, but be aware of the expectations and reality being created in the minds of your children. If you are intentional and thoughtful about the choices you make, you ultimately can avoid being caught off guard by the way your children turn out. Remember, entitlement begins with me. Model the values and expectations you hope your children will emulate as adults and be clear and open about the financial costs of the benefits they enjoy.

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