

With wall-to-wall TV ads parading the latest must-haves and shops bursting with Christmas goodies from October, there's little wonder kids start nagging their parents for toys and trinkets. And once you factor in playground peer pressure, the heat is really ramped up. *Jump* asked a group of parents, experts and psychologists for their tips and ideas on combatting the "gimme gimme gimme" brigade

How to survive... pester power



S imply saying no and sticking to it sounds obvious, but unfortunately it rarely works, - certainly not in the long term. Without explaining why the answer is no and validating the child's perfectly natural frustration at not being allowed to have something they want, you're in danger of getting into power struggles and storing up trouble for the future.

Break the mould: "If you always give in when you're badgered for long enough, you confirm that keep on pestering and you get what you want; don't, and you get nothing. Instead, try surprising them occasionally with unexpected treats and stand firm in the face of pester power." *Dr Joan Harvey, chartered psychologist from Newcastle University*

Manage expectations: "Before you go to the shops, ask your child what you need to buy, then praise them for guessing that you're going to buy bread, washing powder, etc. If they then ask for toys or sweets, respond to their requests with sympathy and understanding, asking them to supply the explanation (which they do already know) as to why you're not buying them today, then praise them when they get it right." *Miriam Chachamu, family therapist, mum of three and author of How To Calm A Challenging Child, £9.99, Foulsham.*

Saving grace: "I often tell my children that we're saving up to go on holiday. They need to know that there is no shame in this. So it's no eating out, no takeaways and being more frugal than usual at the supermarket. When we eventually go on holiday, they will see the value of my savings - that the financial cushion I made over the last few months has positive benefits." *Julie Hedge, mum of three and author of The Pocket Money Plan, £9.95, Ovolo.*

Offer an alternative: "With younger children who don't yet understand the value of money, distraction often works. Try suggesting an alternative treat, such as a trip to the swings or the library, instead. Giving your children time and attention really does cut demands for 'things'." *Simone Castello, mum, writer and positive parenting blogger at fromrattopositiveparent.blogspot.com*

Whinge control: "One of the hardest things to deal with is the whiny voice that so often accompanies pestering. I tell my daughter that, like dogs, people hear different sound frequencies and I just can't hear her if she uses that whiny voice. Pestering is a lot less annoying - and easier to withstand - if delivered in a normal voice." *Sally Whittle, mum and author of the Tots100 index of British parenting blogs and her own blog, whosthemummy.co.uk*

Fair trading: "One of the most difficult things to explain to children is why other parents let their kids have something we're saying no to. If we're going out with another family, I try to have a conversation beforehand about what we're going to do about the gift shop and agree a strategy for everyone - either we avoid the gift shop altogether, or we limit the children to a budget of a couple of pounds each. If they then see something they really, really want, I suggest they write it down on their Christmas or birthday list. That way, no one comes home feeling hard done by." *Jane McCarthy, mum of two.*

Dream on: "Try channeling their desire for something they can't buy into a fun fantasy. Suppose they're longing to go to McDonalds, I'd say, 'Wouldn't it be lovely if we had a vanload of money and we could go to a McDonalds in America, then a McDonald's in Mexico, then all round the world eating as many Big Macs as we like...' And it works. The children start building up the fantasy themselves and it turns the desire into something fun." *Rita, mum of three.*

Lead by example: "If your children see you treating yourself to things on a whim when you're out shopping, you can't really expect them not to follow suit. Try instead to teach them the value of looking forward to something. This way, they will probably value it more, too." *Dr Joan Harvey ●*

