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SELF-HELP / PARENTING

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EARN IT!

What to Do When Your Kid Needs an Entitlement Intervention

By Michael G. Wetter, PsyD, and Eileen Bailey



Does your family suffer from “affluenza” exhaustion? Are you confused by the “Me! ME! ME!!!” attitude of your child? Whether your child is six, sixteen, or thirty-six years old, it may be time for an entitlement intervention. Change yourself to change your children.

It’s easy to judge today’s younger generations—children, teens, and young adults who think they deserve to have their individuality celebrated and their happiness prioritized. So what happens when your kid—whom you don’t recall lavishing with excessive rewards or money—acts entitled, as though everything should be about his wants or her needs?

Good news: Michael G. Wetter, PsyD, and Eileen Bailey have written *Earn It! What to Do When Your Kid Needs an Entitlement Intervention*, giving you strategies and techniques to help change and shape your child’s character. By instilling a sense of responsibility, accountability, kindness, and caring, you will be giving your child the skills they need to lead a happy and productive life.

From any age, you can help your child evolve into a confident and motivated adult who understands that many of the best things in life are earned.

Starting with a ten-question quiz to determine “How Entitled Is My Kid?,” *Earn It!* will teach you how to create a family culture where responsibilities are honored, praise has meaning, decisions are made skillfully, and gratitude is second nature.

You’ll find practical tips on chores and allowances, friends and social media, co-parenting, and cultivating true resilience. With family exercises and parent challenges drawn from real-life family scenarios, this book provides an opportunity to reflect on how you can adjust your parenting style to create a family dynamic that nurtures your children into generous, balanced, and hard-working adults.

Michael G. Wetter, PsyD, and Eileen Bailey are also the authors of *What Went Right: Reframe Your Thinking for a Happier Now*. A nationally recognized behavioral health expert, Wetter is a diplomate and fellow of the American Psychotherapy Association and has served on the California State Licensing Board of Psychology. Bailey, a freelance writer specializing in behavioral health topics, is the coauthor of *Idiot’s Guides: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and The Essential Guide to Asperger’s Syndrome*.

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EXCERPT FROM *EARN IT!*

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Me-first attitudes can seep into every aspect of life. A child who believes he's is entitled to have everything go his way finds it hard to cope when things don't. As a young child, he might have frequent temper tantrums. Later, he might lash out at classmates for real or perceived slights. He might be difficult to live with, defiantly ignoring requests to do his chores or his homework because he wants to play his video game. He might whine, cry, or become belligerent when forced to share, or when his parents refuse to let him stay up a little later.

And this child often turns into an adult who feels entitled. College professors have noticed it: students demand to make up a test because they overslept, or they expect an A for showing up to class consistently, even when they didn't put forth much effort. The workplace isn't much different. When these young adults enter the workforce, they may expect to start with salaries higher than their experience or qualifications warrant. They want raises or promotions before they are deserved, and they blame those around them— their coworkers or their boss—when things don't go their way. They become selfish and demanding partners and friends and wonder why no one wants to be around them. Like entitled kids, entitled adults see only *their* needs as important.

Over time, entitlement can also play a role in substance use and addiction. Pampered kids develop a false sense of control, since they call the shots in their own families. And this kind of entitlement can also lead to a false sense of being able to "control" one's use of alcohol or drug. This false sense of control can lead to pervasive use. It's a similar mindset: the alcoholic believes she *deserves* a drink because she had a hard day or because she's celebrating a success. She doesn't see that her drinking affects others in her family. Beyond alcohol and drugs, we see this same attitude in behavioral addictions, such as pornography and gambling. The addict's needs become all-important and supersede other people's needs. Family members frequently end up rearranging their lives to meet the needs of the addict.

So the stakes are high, but so are the odds for meaningful change—if you take action as a parent. Whether you notice signs of entitlement in your toddler, your grade-schooler, your teen, or your adult child, there are steps you can take to change your thinking and your family dynamics. Your family life will have less tension and more consistency. You might find that family members have more room to actually enjoy each other's company!

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