

# 3 Super Simple Ways to Teach your Kids About Delayed Gratification

Delayed gratification seems to be the parenting buzz word of the moment. In every in-depth conversation I've had with fellow moms in the last year, this has come up as one of those "important things" we need to teach our kids. In an age of abundance, how do we teach children to value their belongings? How do we teach them about delayed gratification when there is no need to delay?

This is a distinctly modern problem. My grandfather was born in the Netherlands in 1921. He left his family a notebook in which he wrote down his childhood memories. He vividly recounts how each year at Christmas, he received a book from his Sunday school. Decades later as an old man, he still remembered the titles, illustrations and plots of each book. No one had to teach him to delay gratification. Books were a rare luxury. He got one at Christmas and that was that.

My own children, ages 3 and 1, have a large collection of beautiful books. I'm thankful for that. But I wonder if any of their books will feature so prominently in their future memories.

There is plenty of advice out there on how to teach kids about delayed gratification. But much of it is very complicated. The tip I've run across most frequently is: get them to start saving their money. Yeah, that's great. But my kids are 3 and 1. And the idea of encouraging them to engage in money-making ventures when they're older is terrifying. Inevitably, most of the work will fall on my shoulders. Modern parenting is hard enough without having to also write a business plan for my kids' lemonade stand.

If you feel the same way, here's three easy ways to teach your kids about delayed gratification. They are super simple and work with kids of almost any age.

### **1. Say Grace Before Meals**

There are various important reasons why we should thank God before our meals. But it's undeniable this is a great way to teach children about delayed gratification. The food is on the table. It's warm and delicious. But they can't just dig in. First, they have to stop and join with the other people at the table in giving thanks. My one-year-old already knows that before he can eat he needs to fold his hands. He even says "Amen." The younger the kid, the shorter the prayer will probably need to be. But your kid might be able to handle more than you think.

### **2. Bake**

Baking is pretty much the definition of delayed gratification. You have to carefully and methodically mix your ingredients, and then you're barred from consuming your treat until it's baked and cooled. Why not pick a regular weekly slot to bake and make it a family tradition? We like to bake a cake on Saturday night to consume on Sunday. Besides delayed gratification, baking teaches kids math and chemistry. Oh and did I mention you get a delicious treat out of it? There really is no downside.

### **3. Run Out of Stuff Once in Awhile**

We live in an era where you can get anything you want delivered overnight – if not within a matter of hours. So it is important to teach kids that it is perfectly OK to run out of something once in awhile. In our family, we try to do our grocery shopping at regular times each week and not in between. If we run out of something the kids want, I tell them they have to wait till the next scheduled shopping trip. It's not like they're going to starve. Like most families in the developed world, we have enough food in our pantry to feed us

through a zombie apocalypse. Modern life is hectic enough without constant trips to the store. Do yourself and your kids a favor. When something's run out, it's run out.

So here are 3 tips that are simple, cost little to nothing, and work for kids of nearly any age. What other advice do you have for teaching kids about delaying gratification?

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