

# Miserable Saint or Happy Monster?

*Submitted by Nadine Michaelides*

Having children can be extremely stressful but also very rewarding. Until you've done it, you can't even begin to imagine what it's like. Especially if like me, you've only ever held a baby a few times and was surprised to find out that a nappy doesn't hold an infinite amount of wee and poo and actually needs changing quite frequently. Just when you think you've got the hang of parenthood and accepted the fact that you're never going to get a lie in again, your little angel turns into Chucky and scares you with her screams of rage. At this point, most parents who have barely had to say "No" to their pride and joys panic and begin teaching their child to be the kindest and most well-mannered child in town! You give yourself a pat on the back when the teacher tells you that she is very polite and always says her "Please" and "Thank you".

However, before long she comes home complaining that some girl has put mud on her skirt or some boy has pulled her hair, and the list goes on. Suddenly, you doubt yourself. Your child is unhappy as she has become the victim to the bullies that taunt her. By giving your child the tools to be well-mannered, kind and sensitive to other people's feelings, have you created someone who will always be the victim in relationships and at work? We are then faced with the ultimate decision: Do we toughen them up and mould them to be a happy monster or allow them to be this gentile polite child but miserable?

For most parents, the question is worth consideration as happiness is usually the top of any parent's wish for their child, but the answer is generally the same, to take the moral high ground. This is probably because the parents, who have the desire in the first place to teach their child sensitivity and manners, also have a firm belief in teaching right from wrong, whatever the outcomes may be. Still, what does that say about the society we live in that such a question be worth such serious consideration? If we can't protect our children from the degrading behavior from bullies, how do we ever have a chance of bringing up a generation more successful than our own?