

When kids outgrow their toys

Sometimes they need a little help letting go.



How many times has your mom or mother-in-law uttered the words, “We didn’t have half this amount of gear when I had my babies!” It certainly does seem that babies come with lots of stuff.

Fast forward a few years and you’re in the thick of the toy-acquiring phase of your child’s life. Rarely does an event go by that isn’t accompanied by a new toy or trinket.

But what comes in eventually must – or should – go out. As with their clothing, children outgrow toys. It might, however, seem easier to get your child to part with a too-small T-shirt than a toy that might still hold some allure.

Jill Pollack is an organizational expert and host of HGTV’s decluttering show *Consumed* (jillpollack.net). She says for children under two, mom or dad can handle purging single-handedly. Beyond that age, it’s good to include children.

“Be tender and conscious when involving your kids,” says Jill.

She believes it’s easier for kids to give away their stuff if they know exactly where it’s going.

“Instead of getting rid of stuff, you can give old items to a firefighter fund, a kids’ shelter or even your doctor’s office,” says Jill. Children are literal and knowing the toy will find a home with perhaps a less fortunate child can really resonate and make the purging process much easier.

Some need a little nudge in deciding what to give away. As with adults who are having a tough time parting with some items, Jill suggests a “purgatory box.” Fill a box with the toys you want out of the house, label it with a date several months in the future and stash in a basement or attic. If the box hasn’t been touched by the time the date rolls around, guess what? The toys inside were not missed and are fair game to drop off at the

second-hand store.

Another strategy is to simply allow less into your home in the first place. Some tips from Jill on limiting the volume of toys you’ll eventually have to deal with:

- Host giftless birthday parties.
- Encourage donations in your child’s name to a charity they help select.
- Ask guests to contribute to a single group gift for a birthday.
- Ask grandparents to contribute to your child’s RESP in lieu of gifts.
- Grandparents and other relatives can also contribute to music, sports or arts lessons for your child.

As with much else when it comes to parenting, beware your own behaviour! Kids imitate what we do. So if you have trouble parting with your things, they might, too. Says Jill, it might actually be the parents who are sentimental about getting rid of toys, more than the kids!

PURGING 101

Here are some tips from Jill Pollack of HGTV’s *Consumed*:

► GIVE AN EXPERIENCE

rather than stuff. Take a trip with the child to the zoo, museum or park. The memory lasts longer than any “thing.”

► LEARN TO SHARE

beyond the play date. Share books, toys, costumes and so on among friends.

► RESIST RETAIL THERAPY

and think about whether your child really needs that item. Regularly go through their toys and bring forgotten ones out while stashing others so all get played with equally. This makes old ones feel new.



Moms Andrea and Lianne cofounded WhereParentsTalk.com and co-host Parents Talk on Rogers TV. Together they have produced several award-winning parenting DVDs and web videos.

Want to see more?
To watch Jill in action, go to ParentsCanada.com/momsense.

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