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## Rushing kids into adulthood

March 18, 2013, 6:18 pm | Pippa Gardner | Today Tonight

**Parents believe childhood ends at 12-years-old and blame pressure from friends, celebrity culture and social media for rushing kids into adulthood.**

### STORIES

These days children are bombarded with sexual messaging in everything from cartoons, magazines, games, advertising and music videos.

Nicky Swan, mum of four, is having none of it.

She feels the pressure of modern life is robbing her children of their childhood, forcing them to grow up far too fast.

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"I'm most concerned about the images like even the boys now, my 13-year-old and all his friends are talking about going to the gym and getting more buff. They're really concerned about how they look too," Swan said.

Swan's twin daughters, Eliza and Matilda are just 11-years-old and are already conscious of their appearance.

"Even though my kids don't watch a lot of TV, their friends will talk about it at school, they'll know who the celebrities are, so it's a lot of pressure," Swan said.

A recent survey by British parenting website, Netmums, found:

- 89 per cent of mums and dads feel children are growing up too quickly

- 65 per cent believe childhood now ends at 12-years-old

- 50 per cent blame celebrity culture and sexualised stars

- 54 per cent are angry with retailers for making tween fashion too sexy

- 45 per cent say their daughters are under pressure to be thin

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Child psychologist, Andrew Greenfield believes kids today are under more pressure than ever before.

"Parenting is always going to be hard, it always has been and it always will be. It's one of the hardest jobs that we have. There is a lot of pressure on kids to have the best fashion sense, to be able to be aware of the programmes coming out and be up there with the issues on Facebook in that school environment," Greenfield said.

Melinda Tankard Reist is the co-founder of the Collective Shout movement, which campaigns against the sexual exploitation of women and girls.

In 2011, she was instrumental in getting Kmart to withdraw an underwear line for girls, which had slogans such as "call me" and "I love rich boys" written on them.

Reist wants tougher regulations for advertisers saying, "there is no doubt children these days are growing up in an over-sexualised culture - but trying to control these images is near impossible. Experts say what parents can do to protect their kids - is to become more involved in their lives, monitor their online activity and help them make good life decisions."

Greenfield believes it's important for parents to be able to step in when they need to, "it's about moderation, there is nothing wrong with Facebook, Twitter - there is nothing wrong with technology, that's the way it is. But it's got to be about moderation and that's the most important part."

This reporter is on Twitter at [@PippaGardner7](#)

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