

# Nanny Wars: Parents Ask, Whose Child Is It Anyway?

## With Today's Caregivers, Even a Spoonful of Sugar Won't Make the Attitude Go Away

By SUSAN DONALDSON JAMES

May 2, 2007



Varda Steinhardt's nanny never showed up for work one recent Monday, leaving the mother of twins in a frantic last-minute search for a new -- and less hostile -- nanny.



"I felt violated," said Steinhardt, who paid her nanny generously and gave her a two-week vacation just before the haughty employee threw the baby towel in.

"She was a good nanny, but she drove me crazy," said Steinhardt, who has twin boys. "I put up with her because she was really good with my autistic son."

But the nanny -- with a master's degree in social work -- refused to vacuum or pitch in with housework, feeling it was beneath her.

"She was a bright person and a professional in her own country, but she thought being a nanny was a subservient position," Steinhardt said.

In cities like New York, where high-income professionals juggle the fast track with parenthood, nannies are the seemingly perfect solution. And they now can command annual salaries of \$40,000 to \$50,000 with perks such as luxury vacations and million-dollar housing.

But in an escalating nanny war, mothers and their caregivers are jockeying for control of the family.

The way some mothers see it, today's nannies are giving Mary Poppins a bad name. But nannies -- many of whom spend more time with the children than the mothers -- say today's overachieving parents have superhuman expectations.