



# One Step at a Time

*A Handbook for Raising Happy and  
Compassionate Children*

# **MINDFUL PARENTING PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

This Handbook introduces parents to fostering Mindfulness and nurturing Character Strengths in themselves and in their children. It provides time-tested tips and techniques to raise happy, caring and responsible children.

**Compiled by:** A Group of Committed Parents

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## **FOREWORD**

The history of the world would have been very different if people had a higher capacity to remain calm under stress. How many wars would have been averted if leaders had not “flown off the handle” and allowed their run-away emotions and reactions to drive their decisions! While we cannot change the pages of history we have already written, ahead of us are blank sheets of paper on which humanity can write a new story of joy, peace and abundance for all.

Writing this new narrative will need major changes in the way we educate our children at school and at home. It is today’s children who will be the leaders shaping the future we will all grow into. Education today lays the foundation for the kind of world we will live in tomorrow. At a time when the world is going through major changes, including the rapid emergence of new technologies, we see huge challenges and opportunities before educators and parents. Our children need to be groomed with wisdom and grace and our education too needs to be deeply anchored in a space of joy, peace and ease.

This Handbook is an important step in this direction, taken by parents and educators of the Kaveri Group of Schools. I express my deepest appreciation to Malati Kalmadi and her team for taking this initiative. Having known and worked with the core team associated with this book (Malati Kalmadi, Vijayam Kartha, Zarin Virji, Jyoti Kumta, Sunder Iyer, and Arundhati Hattangadi) for almost 25 years as part of the process of Education Today, Society Tomorrow (ETST), I can say that deep compassion, practical care and love for children are the driving forces behind this noble project. We have all shared many moments of joy and serendipity at the ETST Workshops at Asia Plateau, Panchgani. One of the key tenets we all share is the practice of being silent and listening to inner guidance.

This project, backed by the Greater Good Science Centre, University of California, Berkeley, is well grounded in research. The format of the book is simple, straightforward, and extremely well structured. For parents who are looking for a handy reference manual for parenting with mindfulness and compassion, this book is an excellent source of valuable information and tips. After nearly 35 years in the field of developing Leaders and Educators in Corporations, NGOs, Government and also in Educational Institutions, I have come to the conclusion

that most problems arise from one fundamental root: we have forgotten the vast resources of Peace, Purity and Possibility that lie latent within each of us in each moment. We let our minds hijack us away from the creative intelligence and grace which abounds in the Now. The antidote is to cultivate presence and mindfulness. 'A Guide to Mindfulness', Chapter 1 of this Handbook, tells you precisely how to do this. Several tested meditation techniques have been shared.

I remember buying the book *What do you really want for your children?* by Dr Wayne W Dyer, when my two daughters Nitya and Pragnya were little. The first chapter of the book was about me; and so was the next ... and the next... till the very end of the book! At first, I felt cheated. On hindsight, parenting is more about us as adults rather than it is about our children. What behaviours are we modelling? What is the example we are setting? Values and character are caught, not taught. The Mindful Parenting Program (MPP) Handbook illustrates this beautifully in the section 'Ancient Wisdom for Today's Parents'.

What makes this Handbook unique is that the practical wisdom shared in it comes from the tested experiences of parents and dedicated teachers who are also parents. The contents therefore are not only practical, but also presented in an inspiring and simple format, with the added value of practices that can be readily applied.

This Handbook is a timely boon for parents and teachers. It will open up clear pathways and methods to be not only more peaceful themselves, but also to radiate more consciousness and compassion in their parenting and nurturing. Let us join hands with the growing community of mindful parents so that we can create a world which serves our children by enabling and empowering them to co-create a world of joy, peace and abundance.

May this Handbook be the harbinger of compassion for yourself, dear reader, and through your mindfulness and presence, for the children whom you will inspire and influence.

**Arun Wakhlu**

*Founder, Executive Director and Chief Mentor, Pragati Leadership, Pune, India*  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Matthieu Ricard, also known as ‘the world’s happiest man’, in his book, *Altruism*, provides an impressive 1,600 scientific references, to prove that genuine concern for the well-being of others can transform the world. Imagine a world where a majority of people are loving, compassionate, grateful and generous!

And what can be a better place to kindle and nurture these qualities than school, where children spend their most impressionable age? Moreover, it is the only place where a cross section of society - right from the lowest strata to the elite - converge with a common purpose: educating their children.

**The Mindful Parenting Program (MPP)** is an initiative with this **Vision**: “to help parents nurture mindfulness, generosity, gratitude, forgiveness, and related character strengths in themselves and their children and thereby foster a compassionate society.” The **Handbook** is an effort to fulfil this vision, by providing the modern-day parent, who is willing to go that extra mile, with time-tested tips and techniques to raise happy, caring and responsible children. <https://mindfulparentingindia.com/>

**MPP** is an initiative of **Kaveri Group of Institutions(KGI)** <https://kaveri.edu.in/> for its community of parents, in collaboration with the **Greater Good Science Centre, University of California, Berkeley** <https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/>

It is a two-year project for the period from **April 2018 to March 2020**, funded by the **John Templeton Foundation**. KGI has the proud privilege to be **ONE** of the only two international grantees (and the only one from India), out of over 200 applications received by GGSC.

Being a parent is a natural process and we often expect it to be stress-free and straight-forward. Perhaps it was, at one time, when a parent just had to follow prevalent and traditional child-rearing norms. The average parent had hardly any

access to the path-breaking ideas of early educationists and psychologists like Piaget, Bandura, Maria Montessori, Freud, Jung, and others.

Fast forward to the present, and today's parent is faced with a plethora of choices to tackle the innumerable challenges of parenting in a fast-changing world. Life is no longer as simple as it was in the past and it is a huge task to pick and choose from the limitless sources of parenting information! This Handbook, by the MPP group, provides a ready reckoner that parents can follow easily and use effectively, on a daily basis, more in the mode of preventive maintenance of the family fabric, rather than as a disaster management manual!

What makes this handbook unique is the fact that it has been carefully curated BY Parents FOR Parents. So you can be rest assured that a sincere attempt has been made to make it as simple and as practical as possible.

All the tips and activities mentioned in this handbook have been curated from authentic and reputed web resources, collated from the pearls of wisdom shared by experts during workshops, and are based on the challenges and solutions shared by parents themselves.

May this handbook add to your unique experiences and experiments with the joy and responsibility of being a parent.



## **HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK**

The contents page will give you an overview of this Handbook. The chapters have been arranged in a manner that takes you step by step: from Self-awareness through meditation and other techniques, to Assimilation through understanding character strengths and problem areas, and on to Action through practical solutions and activities.

In this Handbook, we have provided Mindfulness and Meditation practices. Mindfulness and meditation go hand-in-hand: mindfulness supports and enriches meditation, while meditation nurtures and expands mindfulness. Where mindfulness can be applied to any situation throughout the day, meditation is usually practiced for a specific amount of time. (For more information, [click here](#))

We have used the words ‘character strengths’ to denote pro-social skills like Gratitude, Generosity, Compassion, Forgiveness and others in sync with the terminology used by the Greater Good Science Centre.

**Throughout the Handbook, we encourage parents to lead by example. Once they themselves develop these strengths, skills, as well as the practices, their children can imbibe them better.**

Please don’t feel overwhelmed by the number of practices and parenting tips given in this Handbook. You may pick and choose the ones which you find appealing, easy and practical. The same practice or strategy may not suit every parent or every child. Observe your child’s temperament and pick what is best suited to him or her.

As you go through this Handbook, you will see that certain points/ideas/tips are repeated, like the following:

- Be a role model. Set an example.
- Meditate daily.
- Practice gratitude intentionally. Have an attitude of gratitude always.
- Love your child unconditionally.
- Listen to your child with full attention.
- Spend quality time with your child.
- Have regular family time.
- Limit gadget time/screen time for yourself and your family.

The Handbook keeps returning to and emphasizing these concepts and practices because they are the building blocks or cornerstones. Research points out that a happy and secure childhood with warm and supporting relationships helps the child to cope with life's challenges successfully.

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# CHAPTER I

## A GUIDE TO MINDFULNESS

*"If every 8-year-old in the world is taught meditation, we will eliminate violence from this world within one generation."*

*- Dalai Lama*



## **What is Mindfulness?**

The earliest records of meditation can be found in the Vedas, the oldest texts of Hinduism, dating from 1700-1100 BCE. Later, different forms of meditation began developing in Buddhism and Taoism, mainly in India and China.

In 1979, Professor Emeritus Jon Kabat Zinn, Founder and former Director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, introduced Meditation as a secular practice, in his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme. He helped to bring the practice of Mindfulness meditation into mainstream medicine and demonstrated that it can bring improvements in both physical and psychological symptoms as well as positive changes in attitudes and behaviour.

According to him, Mindfulness is “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally and it does not matter what we are paying attention to, as it is the attending that is of importance.” Since then, numerous studies have reported and proven the health benefits, both physical and mental, of practicing Mindfulness, and the practice has gained popularity, the world over.

Parents can begin with doing these Mindfulness exercises provided here themselves, and feel the benefits. Later, they can draw their children to do them too.

### **Benefits of Mindfulness:**

- Mindfulness impacts our bodies, not just our minds
- Treats anxiety and mood problems
- Reduces and helps cope with chronic pain
- Promotes emotional health and enhances self-awareness
- Lengthens attention span and is believed to reduce age-related memory loss
- Alters the brain and immune functions

- Brings about various positive psychological effects, including increased subjective well-being, reduced psychological symptoms and emotional reactivity, and improved behavioural regulation
- Promotes better thinking, focus, and interpersonal relationships at work
- Mindful breathing also helps people stay “present” in the moment, rather than being distracted and emotionally hijacked by regrets about the past or worries about the future
- Brain imaging research shows that a half an hour of mindfulness meditation a day increases the density of grey matter in those parts of our brain associated with memory, stress, and empathy

## Some Mindfulness Meditation Technique

### 1.1 Anapana Meditation

Anapana is the first step in the practice of Vipassana meditation. Anapana means observation of our natural, normal respiration, as it comes in and as it goes out. This form of meditation is an easy to learn, objective and scientific technique that helps develop concentration.

Observation of our own breath is the ideal focus for meditation. Our own breath is ever-present and always available to us. Moreover, practicing Anapana does not need any kind of special tools, and it is completely secular or non-sectarian, meaning it does not have anything to do with any religion. Because of its simplicity, the technique is easy to understand and practice on a daily basis, however busy our lives are.

*“This mind that wanders wherever it wishes, wherever it desires, wherever it sees pleasure, I will first make it steadfast. I will train it thoroughly like a mahout with a goad, trains a wild elephant.” - Dhammapada 326*

## The Practice

- Select a quiet place to meditate.
- Sit with a straight back, either cross-legged on a mat or on a chair. Gently close your eyes and mouth. Relax.
- Focus attention at the entrance of your nostrils. Be aware of every breath coming in and going out; natural and normal breath as it is. Just remain alert and attentive, constantly aware of your incoming and outgoing breath. Like a gatekeeper, pay attention to every breath entering and exiting your nostrils.
- Practice this meditation for a minimum of 10 minutes daily; increase it steadily to half an hour if you can.



### 1.2. Raisin Meditation

Raisin meditation is an exercise in mindfulness that needs you to use all your senses to focus on a raisin. The aim is to use the raisin to bring all your attention to the present and focus it in the moment. It is a way to gently stop your senses from being distracted by all the inputs from the world around you, and focus inwards. Raisin meditation is a good next step after you have learnt to practice Anapana.

*“The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you’ll see it.”*

**- Thich Nhat Hanh**

## The Practice

- Sit comfortably on a mat or a chair and take a few deep breaths.
- Take a raisin, place it on your palm and observe it carefully. Notice its shape, size, color, texture.
- Then pick it up between two fingers and notice the feeling. Bring it to your nose and smell it closely. How does it feel, smell?

- Place the raisin on your tongue and roll it around without biting it. Be aware of the sensations.
- Bite into it lightly and slowly chew it without swallowing it. Notice the sensations, flavours and textures and how these change from moment to moment.
- Now swallow it and sense what's left of the raisin moving down through your gullet, and into the stomach.

An eight-week training programme that includes raisin meditation, developed by Jon Kabat Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School has concluded that the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Programme effectively reduces stress, anxiety and chronic illness in daily life.

### 1.3 Loving Kindness Meditation

Loving kindness, or '*metta*', as it is called in the Pali language, is unconditional love for everyone in the universe. This form of meditation is one of the most popular techniques and research suggests that practicing loving kindness meditation regularly increases one's capacity for forgiveness, connection to others, self-acceptance, and reduces stress. It focuses on sending loving energy to ourselves and others, even those we do not agree or vibe with, and results in better social interactions and closer relationships.

*"The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers."*  
- **Thich Nhat Hanh**

#### The Practice

- Sit comfortably on a chair with your back straight and feet on the ground. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and relax.
- Receiving loving kindness: Keep your eyes closed and think of a person

who loves you very much. Imagine him/her sending you love and warm wishes for good health and happiness. Bask in that person's warmth and love.

- Sending loving kindness to loved ones: Now send your loving wishes to someone close to you and repeat the phrase silently: *'May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.'*
- Sending loving kindness to neutral people: Now think of someone towards whom you have no feelings and similarly send loving wishes for their health and welfare. Repeat the phrase silently: *'May you live with ease, happiness and good health.'*
- Sending loving kindness to all living beings: Now expand your awareness to the whole world and send loving wishes to all beings in the world. Repeat the phrase silently: *'May you all live with ease, happiness and good health.'*

Start with a 5-10 minute practice, which can be steadily increased to half an hour to an hour.

Research suggests that when people practice loving kindness meditation regularly, they automatically start reacting more positively to others. One particular study has shown that "people who practiced loving-kindness meditation daily for seven weeks reported a steady increase in their daily experience of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, contentment, hope, and love. They also reported greater life satisfaction and lower depressive symptoms following the intervention, compared to when they started. People who were on a waitlist to learn the practice didn't report these benefits."

## 1.4 Breathing Buddies

This is one of the easiest mindful breathing exercises that you can ask kids to do with you. Belly breathing helps them calm down, learn focusing skills and figure out that paying attention to their bodies relaxes them. Using a favourite stuffed



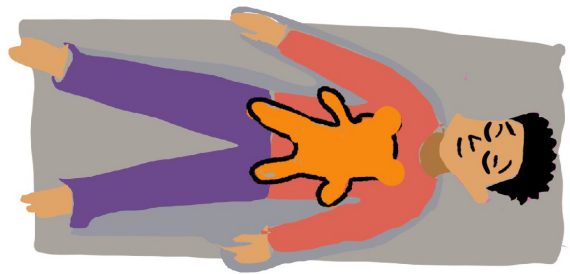
toy also makes it more enjoyable for them and they take to it instantly.

*“Be happy in the moment, that’s enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.”*  
**- Mother Teresa**

### The Practice

- Ask your child to lie down comfortably and place his hands on his belly; or he could place a stuffed animal on the top of his belly.
- Ask him to inhale deeply through his nose and count to three. Tell him to fill his belly with air as he inhales and feel it getting bigger and bigger as he counts to three. Tell him to feel his hands or the stuffed toy rise as his belly fills with air.
- Ask him to exhale to a slow count to four. Tell him he might see his toy fall as he feels his belly shrinking slowly through the count to four. He can place it back on his belly for the next round.
- Encourage him to do five to ten rounds of belly-breathing.

Once parents and children develop the habit of practicing these Mindfulness and Meditation techniques regularly or as often as they can, surprising and positive changes will be seen in your daily interactions within and outside the family.



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## Sources and Resources:

### For more on Anapana Meditation,

**visit:** [https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/mini\\_anapana](https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/mini_anapana)

### For more on Raisin Meditation,

**visit:** [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin\\_meditation](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin_meditation), or watch this video-  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5DfLKgJP8c>

Also: Praissman, S. (2008). Mindfulness-based stress reduction: a literature review and clinician's guide. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 20(4), 212-216.

### For more details and an audio recording of the guided loving kindness meditation, please visit:

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/loving\\_kindness\\_meditation](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/loving_kindness_meditation)

Also: Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1045-1062.

Ref: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18954193>

Psychologist Daniel Goleman, who has written extensively about Emotional Intelligence, is a firm believer in the efficacy of belly breathing. Here is what he says about the practice: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scqFHGI\\_nZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scqFHGI_nZE)

### You could also read more at:

<https://blissfulkids.com/mindfulness-exercises-for-kids-teddy-bear-belly-breathing/>

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful\\_breathing](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing)

## CHAPTER II

### NURTURING CHARACTER STRENGTHS

*“True education does not consist merely in the acquiring of a few facts of science, history, literature, or art, but in the development of character.”*

*- David O. McKay*



## **What are Character Strengths?**

Psychologists have identified two broad categories of strengths: talents and character. Talents are performance-based and observable, including abilities in sports, music, art, computers, problem solving, and other such areas. They are externally manifested or presented.

Character strengths are personality-based and internal, and include traits like gratitude, compassion, courage, love, and kindness. In 2004, Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson proposed a new model for the study of character as a 'constellation of character strengths'.

Studies show that actively helping children imbibe character strengths will help them to grow up as happy, caring, courageous, responsible and successful adults. Among all character strengths, the practice of Gratitude and Mindfulness is a remedy to many physical, mental and emotional problems, research across the world tells us. Mindfulness and Gratitude are also excellent practices to move on the spiritual path.

### **Benefits of Character Strengths:**

- The benefits of character strengths have been demonstrated in many fields – especially business and education – and in healthcare, coaching, psychotherapy and counselling, to name a few.
- Research has shown many positive benefits of developing character strengths, across physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual domains.
- Character strengths directly impact the important elements of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment.
- They help us amplify the positive in our life, such as self-acceptance, autonomy, goal progress, physical health, passion, and resilience.

The practices suggested in this Chapter to build Character Strengths can be taken up by the parent first, and the child can then be encouraged to do them too. It is that much more natural for a child to absorb them, once he or she sees these practices becoming part of the parents' way of life.

## 2.1 Gratitude

### What is Gratitude?

It is the quality of being thankful; it means that we are ready to show appreciation for kindness and also to return it. According to the ancient Roman philosopher Cicero, gratitude is more than “the greatest virtue,” it is also “the mother of all other remaining virtues”. This is because it encourages and fosters the development of virtues such as patience, humility, and wisdom. Meister Eckhart says, “If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough”.

*“Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.”*

**- Zig Ziglar**

### Benefits of practicing Gratitude:

- Gratitude brings us happiness
- It reduces anxiety and depression
- Reduces symptoms of illness and makes us less vulnerable to aches and pains
- Lowers blood pressure and strengthens the immune system
- Helps us sleep better as it shifts our focus away from the negative to the positive in our lives
- Makes us more resilient to the ups and downs of life
- Strengthens relationships

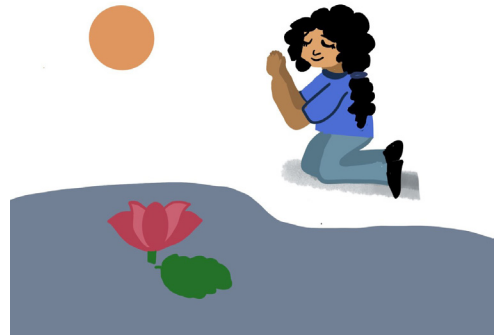
- Promotes forgiveness
- Inspires people to be more generous, kind, and helpful
- Helps us to work constructively with what we have, rather than being constantly unhappy with what we do not have
- Encourages us to exercise more and take better care of our health
- Compared with their less grateful peers, grateful youth are happier and more satisfied with their lives, friends, family, neighbourhood, and selves. They also report more hope, engagement with their hobbies, higher GPAs, and less envy, depression, and materialism.

### The Practice:

- **Count your blessings:** Write down five things for which you are grateful either daily or weekly. In many studies, people who kept a gratitude journal weekly for 10 weeks or daily for two weeks experienced more gratitude, positive moods, optimism about the future, and better sleep.
- **Three good things:** This activity involves writing down three things that went well in the week. Being grateful about just three good things has been associated with increased happiness immediately afterwards, as well as one week, one month, three months, and six months later.
- **Say 'Thank you':** Gratitude can be especially powerful when it is expressed to others. Small gestures of appreciation, such as thank you notes, or a detailed gratitude letter is a great way to increase your own feelings of gratitude and happiness while also making the other person feel appreciated and valued; it may also deepen your relationship with them.
- **Learn Prayers of Gratitude.** In many spiritual traditions, prayers of gratitude are the most powerful form of prayer, because through them



people recognize the ultimate source of all they are and all they will ever be. Recite them daily, as a family.



## The Lotus of Gratitude

### About the practice:

This gratitude practice is being popularized by Nithya Shanti, an internationally respected spiritual teacher committed to sharing practical wisdom teachings for happiness.

**Activity:** As soon as you wake up in the morning, sit up in bed and bring the five fingers of each hand together to form a bud. Close your eyes and start thinking of all that is beautiful and wonderful going on in your life.

Think of all that you are grateful for; as you think of each blessing in your life, open one finger like the petal of a lotus. Inwardly say that you are so very thankful for it. Then think of something else and open the next finger of the lotus and so on till you have thought of 10 things that you are blessed with. Finally, when all ten fingers are open, place both your hands on your heart and feel the most blessed, supported and loved person in the world.

## 2.2 Compassion

### What is Compassion?

Compassion is the ability to understand the emotional state of another person or oneself. It is often confused with empathy, but compassion has the added element of having a desire to alleviate or reduce the suffering of another.

## Benefits of practicing Compassion:

- Compassion motivates action
- Benefits our own psychological and physical health, making us happier and healthier
- Positively impacts the body's immune and stress response systems
- Makes us more caring parents, better spouses, better friends
- Makes us more positive, makes us feel less stressed and lonely
- Strengthens relationships and networks, resulting in more compassionate societies
- Makes us less afraid and able to deal with suffering better

*"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive."*

**- Dalai Lama**

## The Practice:

- Compassion begins with kindness to yourself. Make self-love a priority.
- Learn to disarm your internal critic by accepting who you are today. Be patient with your struggles, and don't dwell on past mistakes.
- Cultivate compassion toward a loved one, yourself, a neutral person, and even an enemy.
- To cultivate compassion in kids, start by modelling kindness – let them see you being kind and compassionate to people around you. Research suggests that compassion is contagious, so if you want to help compassion spread to the next generation, you must lead by example.
- Provide them opportunities to practice compassion. For instance, volunteering even a little time at an NGO with the old, or the underprivileged, or even spending quality time with an ageing or ill neighbour or relative, putting aside some of their many toys or books that they can spare, to give to an orphanage or to your domestic help's child... there are many avenues that you can lead them to, even in small ways.
- Teach your kids to genuinely appreciate and acknowledge people whom we generally take for granted, like the driver, the maid, the security guard and others. This practice will also help them to develop gratitude,



generosity and humility, and to understand the pressures on people around them.

- Give of yourself, your time. Your presence can be more powerful than you know. The action of physically being with someone when they are hurting can make all the difference in the world. Encourage children to spend even a little time with anyone who is ill, or incapacitated in some way, or to make them something, read to them – there are many ways of being present.



## 2.3 Forgiveness

### What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they deserve your forgiveness.

When you forgive, you do not deny the seriousness of an offense against you. It does not mean forgetting. Instead, it involves letting go of deeply held negative feelings. This brings the forgiver peace of mind and frees him or her from corrosive anger and long-held resentment.

*"To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return you will receive untold peace and happiness."*  
**- Robert Muller**

### Benefits of practicing Forgiveness:

- Practicing forgiveness strengthens relationships.
- Reduces toxic feelings of stress and anger and boosts happiness and optimism.

- Can have powerful health benefits, as you let go toxic build-up of thoughts and emotions.
- Is associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and hostility.
- Leads to higher self-esteem; and greater life satisfaction, as it frees up your mind and heart to focus on better things.

### The Practice:

- **Forgiving oneself:** Everyone makes mistakes. It is important to acknowledge mistakes, feel appropriate remorse, and learn from them so they don't happen again. But most people tend to be either overly self-critical or the opposite, which is being defensive and too afraid to accept that they made a mistake. Forgiving yourself serves to put your weaknesses and misdeeds in perspective, to highlight your many good qualities surrounding your lapses, to encourage you to keep getting back on the high road even if you've gone down the low one. Start by picking something relatively small that you're still being hard on yourself about and then go on to bigger issues, and visualize or hear yourself saying "It is ok – now that you know better, you will do better".
- **Forgiving others:** Almost everyone has experienced being wronged by someone. It could be a former co-worker, friend, or family member. But hanging on to those negative feelings can do great harm to your health. Forgiving a person who has wronged you is never easy but dwelling on those events and re-living them over and over can fill your mind with negative thoughts and suppressed anger. When you learn to forgive, you are no longer trapped by the past actions of others and can finally feel free. The relationship can then move forward – either becoming richer, or it can be ended but with no residual rancor that returns like acid reflux. You can either express your forgiveness in writing or



speaking to the person, or it can be an internal decision to let it go.

- **Asking for forgiveness:** To build relationships and create communities (work, family, politics, neighbours), we need to acknowledge personal mistakes and genuinely apologize in writing or by saying it out loud when needed, so that we can let go and move forward.

## 2.4 Generosity

### What is Generosity?

**Generosity** is the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly. Three parts stand out clearly. It is giving “good things”, giving “freely”, and giving “abundantly”. What exactly one gives can be varied: money, possessions, time, attention, aid, encouragement, emotional availability, and more.

Giving our full caring and attention to someone, without expecting anything in return, is an act of generosity. Real generosity requires that we open our hearts and allow ourselves to be curious and vulnerable and accepting. It is amazingly regenerative.

“Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.”

- *Dalai Lama*

### Benefits of practicing Generosity:

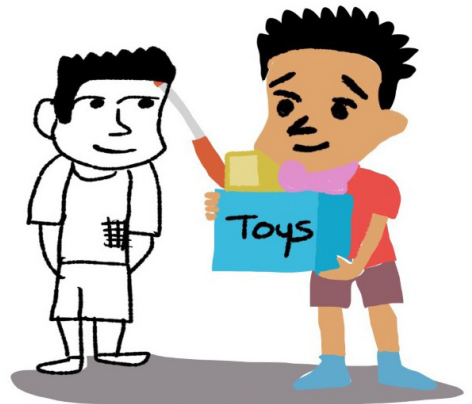
- Reduces stress, supports one’s physical health, enhances one’s sense of purpose, and naturally fights depression
- It is also shown to increase lifespan
- Leads to long lasting relationships
- Associated with benefits in the workplace
- Our communities thrive when we give freely and abundantly
- Practicing generosity is a mental health principle, and it could be the very

key to a happy and healthy life

- It can change someone's world
- Increases your life satisfaction
- Generosity is contagious

### The Practice:

- Box up leftovers for someone in need; better still, get your child to separately select a dish that can be parceled for someone in need, instead of just leftovers.
- Give a stranger a genuine compliment.
- Donate unused items to deserving people/organisations, or buy new things that they may need, like blankets or footwear or clothes or some useful appliance.
- Donate monthly to a good cause.
- Volunteer an hour a week with any NGO that does work that you appreciate.
- Commit to one 5-minute favour a day. Adam Rifkin, co-founder of Panda Whale, coined the phrase '*5 Minute Favor*'. The practice is simple – do someone a favour that won't cost you anything but five minutes of your time every day. It can be a life-changing interaction.
- Give a random gift: You don't have to wait only for special occasions. Once you are in the giving mode, useful gift ideas easily come to you, according to the person they are meant for. Give to someone who you know, or a passer-by you don't.
- Be kind and friendly to customer service employees at call centers, restaurants, the petrol pump, or any service industry. Use their name, be thankful for their help and empathetic to their situation.
- Give positive, public recognition. If you have a great experience with an individual, whether a colleague, a customer service rep, or peer, or a young person, be generous with the recognition that you give them, in public.



## 2.5 Humility

### What is Humility?

Humility is the quality or condition of being humble. It is also defined as freedom from pride or arrogance. It involves taking a mental step back and having the emotional strength and spiritual capacity to not showcase, brag or boast about your achievements.

### Benefits of being Humble:

- Humility is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- People with humility experience an inner peace.
- Writer Joshua Becker explains that humility offers its owner complete freedom from the desire to impress, be right or get ahead.
- Being humble results in contentment, patience, forgiveness and compassion.
- People who practice humility tend to reflect and focus their energy on others and in this way, bring out the best in themselves and in everyone who they touch.
- A humble person is quietly confident, is open to opportunities for change, improvement and growth, and is not hungry for constant praise and validation.

*“True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”*  
- C.S. Lewis

### The Practice:

- Express gratitude. Expressing gratitude can induce humility in us, and humble people have a greater capacity for conveying gratitude.
- Practice mindfulness and compassion, and humility will follow.
- Publicly recognize the efforts of others. Pay attention to the struggles and achievements of others.

- Spend more time listening than you do talking.
- Accept that you're not the best at everything. Recognize your flaws and work on them.
- Avoid bragging; learn the difference between having self-worth and plain boasting.
- Expose children to great people and their stories, both well-known in the past as well as those around you. Observe people who wear their achievements lightly.



## 2.6 Finding Purpose in Life

### What is Purpose?

According to William Damon, Professor of Education at Stanford University, purpose is “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self.”

Purpose is a sense of knowing that your life has meaning, value, and importance. Living with purpose means you know for a fact that your work, your contribution, and your life make a positive impact on the lives of others.

*“The secret of happiness:  
Find something more  
important than you  
are and dedicate your  
life to it.”*

**- Daniel C. Dennett**

Purpose can guide life decisions, influence behaviour, shape goals, offer a sense of direction, and create meaning. For some people, purpose is connected to vocation —meaningful, satisfying work. For others, their purpose lies in their responsibilities to their family or friends and community.

## Benefits of having Purpose:

A sense of meaning and purpose in life is associated with longer lifespans, better sleep and less stress. Research tells us that it protects against heart disease and Alzheimer's disease. Also, people with a life purpose handle pain and disappointments better.

- Purpose helps to focus more clearly on what matters most to you – your priorities
- Helps both individuals and the species to survive
- For many people, clarifying their life purpose becomes the key to unlocking their passion for life
- Can provide an unlimited supply of fulfillment
- Provides direction, guidance and comfort through hard times
- As people clarify their life purpose and begin to live true to it, many of them report a surprising increase in synchronicity and serendipity in their lives – things begin to fall beautifully in place.



## The Practice:

- List your interests and passions. Revisit areas of enthusiasm which may have got forgotten in the daily demands of life. Ask questions to yourself
- Listen to your inner voice and let it guide you to clear your vision and set goals
- Ask friends what your strengths are
- Identify your unique gifts and talents and share them with others. Use them for common good

- Explore what you love to do and make the most of what you already have
- Practice and work hard to achieve perfection in doing what you love to do
- Meditate – it is likely to reveal your innermost purpose to you
- Cultivate awe, gratitude and altruism
- Find people who inspire you
- Find your joy; reach out to friends and family members
- Participate in community initiatives with your children

\*\*\*\*\*



## Sources and Resources:

### For more resources,

visit: <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/>

### For more on Benefits of Character Strengths,

visit: <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>

### For more on Gratitude,

visit: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_gratitude\\_is\\_good](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good)

A demonstration of the lotus of gratitude practice can be seen at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOdK2J8qgC0>

Evidence of the benefits of listing things to be grateful for are found in the following study:

Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-08033-003>

### For more on Compassion,

visit: <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion/definition#how-cultivate-compassion>

### For more on Forgiveness,

visit: [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/nine\\_steps\\_to\\_forgiveness](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/nine_steps_to_forgiveness)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/palomacanterogomez/2019/02/28/the-power-of-forgiveness-and-how-happy-people-manage-to-unleash-it/>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/the-power-of-forgiveness>

### For more on Generosity,

visit: [https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF\\_White\\_Paper-Generosity-FINAL.pdf](https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Generosity-FINAL.pdf)

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/21-simple-practices-that-will-make-you-want-to-be-more-generous/>

## CHAPTER III

### DEALING WITH COMMON PROBLEMS

*"Whatever be the problem, love is the answer."*  
- Wayne W Dyer



We face many challenges as parents. While dealing with some of these, we often forget that we too were children once upon a time. Remembering our own experiences during our growing years will help us to empathise with our children and be more reasonable with our expectations.

Many times, this means that we accept that our child or teen will need to experience natural consequences for her actions, which may include some disappointment and pain. This chapter throws light on some common challenges that we face and how to deal with them.

### 3.1 Addiction to Gadgets

Technology has crept into our lives in a big way. Kids as young as a few months old are also attracted to gadgets! While technology is a boon for mankind in many ways, it has also a huge negative impact on our lives, especially when it becomes an addiction for our children.

*“Your child will follow  
your example, not your  
advice.”*

**- Author Unknown**

#### **Negative effects of prolonged use of gadgets:**

- Recent research has shown that continuous exposure to bright screen light leads to strain on eyes which can cause headaches, irritation in eyes and lack of sleep. Reduced sleep leads to aggressive and irritable behaviour and mood swings in children.
- Children with uncontrolled and unmonitored screen time seem to be more stressed, anxious and aggressive than their peers. They become attention seekers on social media platforms, and harm themselves or others in the process.
- Creativity, attention span, ability to focus and critical thinking are drastically affected by too much usage of gadgets.
- Spending too much time in front of the screen takes away time from outside play and other physical activities which may lead to a sedentary lifestyle

resulting in health disorders such as loss of appetite or overeating and indulging in junk food. Studies point out that child obesity and diabetes rates have risen drastically over the past few decades.

- Interactions with family and friends come down to a minimum. Children tend to spend more time alone, lost in the virtual world which makes it more difficult for them to pick up on social cues and develop meaningful relationships with others. It may ultimately lead to depression and bipolar behaviour in some children.

### Tips to control gadget usage:

- **Lead by example** and focus on cultivating healthy habits for yourself such as limited screen time.
- **Avoid Using Gadgets as Crutches:** Handing over a gadget to a child just to keep him occupied is akin to encouraging an addiction. Instead, spend quality time with your child and engage the child in other activities.
- **Fun time/diversions:** Children resort to gadgets mostly because they are bored. Plan fun activities; engage your children in games; take them outdoors; exercise with them; provide them with books, board games, art supplies, sporting equipment etc. Enroll them in hobbies of their choice like music, dance or art; arrange play dates for them. Carry scribbling/drawing materials, books, puzzles etc when you know that your child needs to be occupied.
- **Moderation:** Allocate an appropriate amount of screen time for your child. Let her choose what time of the day she wants to use the gadgets and agree on a start by and end by time. This gives her a sense of freedom and responsibility.
- **Gadget Free Zone:** Keep certain areas gadget-free such as the dining area, the prayer room and the child's bedroom.



- **Clear Rules:** Make clear and strict rules with no re-negotiations or compromises allowed. Make tough decisions and put your foot down on limiting unhealthy habits. For example, make it a rule that children will be allowed to watch TV or play with gadgets, only after they complete their schoolwork. Don't give in to their tears and tantrums for a few days and children will learn to obey you.
- **Praise** your child's efforts when he makes the effort to prioritize other activities over screen time, on his own accord.
- **Monitor the Content:** Make sure the apps, videos and content are age-appropriate. Have conversations regarding the risks and dangers of the Web with them and how to be safe online. Children should be told equally about the boon and bane of screen time. Conversations such as these will help them to make wiser choices.
- **Online Protection Tools:** Online tools let you control your kids' access to adult material and help protect them from Internet predators. Many Internet service providers (ISPs) provide parent-control options. You can also get software that helps block access to sites and restricts personal information from being sent online.
- **Pet Love:** There is nothing like having a pet in the house. It keeps the whole family away from gadgets! If this is not possible, cultivate a small garden or a few pots or a dish garden, together as a family.

### 3.2 Addiction to Junk Food

Regular junk food intake leads to long-term health problems such as obesity, accompanying emotional and self-esteem problems, and chronic illnesses in later life. A single fast food meal could add 160 to 310 extra kilocalories to the daily caloric intake for teenagers and younger children, respectively. There is also the presence of hazardous food coloring agents and/or unhealthy trans fats in many fast food items, and issues with food preparation safety, that make

*"Let food be thy medicine  
and medicine be thy food."  
- Hippocrates*

matters worse. Parents must ensure that they themselves and their children consume healthy food for their physical growth and overall well-being.

### **Tips to inculcate healthy eating habits:**

Whether you have a toddler or a teen, here are some good strategies to improve nutrition and encourage smart eating habits:



- Lead by example. Be a role model by eating healthy yourself
- Have regular family meals
- Serve a variety of healthy foods and snacks
- Involve your child in meal planning and preparation occasionally
- Select food items with care. Let them help you select vegetables and fruits
- When shopping, teach children to check food labels to begin understanding what to look for
- Avoid battles over food. Keep meal-time calm and friendly; no lectures or arguing
- Kids should decide if they're hungry, what they will eat from the foods served, and when they are full
- Don't use food as a way of showing love. When you want to show love, give children a hug, some of your time, or praise.
- Allow children to invite a friend to lunch/ dinner occasionally
- Limit fast food and low-nutrient snacks, such as chips and candy. But don't completely ban favourite snacks from your home. Instead, make them "once-in-a-while" foods, so kids don't feel deprived
- As a family, go out for occasional lunch or dinner and allow your child to eat what she likes
- Watch videos and read books along with children, on how food works in the body

### 3.3 Adolescence and Teenage Issues

Adolescence and teenage is considered the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood—between ages 13 and 19. But the physical and psychological changes that take place in adolescence can start earlier, between ages 9 and 12.

*“The average teenager still has all the faults his parents outgrew.”*  
- **Author Unknown**

Adolescence can be a time of both disorientation and discovery. Audacity, insecurity, loneliness, psychological vulnerability, enormous mood swings and strong peer group need are some of the characteristics of this stage. Attraction to the opposite sex begins during this time. The transitional period can raise questions of independence and identity. As adolescents and teenagers cultivate their sense of self, they may face difficult choices about academics, friendship, sexuality, gender identity, drugs, and alcohol. It is a period of uncertainty and exploration. Some sail through it easily but some struggle.

The teenager is a budding adult and the teenage years bring many positive changes in them too:

- They develop the ability to think abstractly
- They are concerned with philosophy, politics, and social issues
- They start thinking long-term
- Start setting goals
- Start comparing themselves with their peers

Studies show that it is mainly the home environment that helps, supports and liberates the teenager to achieve self-knowledge, confidence and success; to know who she is and find her place in society. A loving and secure childhood ensures this and a close home-school partnership makes it easier for the teenager to blossom.

## How to handle Adolescents and Teenagers

- **Lead by example:** Ensure that you have all the qualities you expect your child to have. If not, work on it. Share your struggles with your child.
- **Empathize with them:** Remember your own growing years and some of the struggles that you faced, internal and external. Discuss with them about adolescence and tell them that the changes they are noticing in their body are normal. Help them understand what to expect.
- **Listen to them:** Listening is a powerful tool for communication. Parents often unintentionally gravitate toward directives and solutions, what teenagers refer to as 'lecturing'! But setting aside those tendencies and simply listening to the teen with utmost love can strengthen the relationship.
- **Give them a feeling** that they are important and their opinions count.
- **Do not compare** your children with other children.
- **Know your child's friends:** Invite them home. Spend some time with them, to get a sense of what your child's peer group is like.
- **Monitor what they watch** on Television, Internet and books
- **Help them cultivate some hobbies** right from childhood.
- **Meditation/mindfulness practices** can go a long way in dealing with their problems. Get them into the habit right from childhood.
- **Encourage them to exercise** as regular physical activity has been shown to improve mood and decrease feelings of depression, anxiety and stress. Set your own example.
- **Get them involved in community/voluntary work:** Research suggests that adolescents and teenagers thrive when they can make a meaningful difference in their communities.





- **Set rules of conduct** bilaterally, after discussing with the teenager for important issues like:
  - Academic performance
  - Decreasing screen time
  - Restricting phone use, especially after 10 pm unless urgent
  - Respecting one's own and other's opinions
  - Maintaining hygiene
  - Being courteous, kind and helpful
  - Being responsible for one's actions
  - Getting adequate sleep

### 3.4 Aggressive Behaviour and Temper Tantrums

As per reports, childhood aggression is escalating—and at younger ages. Studies point out that if not prevented/controlled during toddler and preschool years, it can be the single most important risk factor predictive of antisocial behaviour in adolescent boys and girls.

*"If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow."*

*- Chinese proverb*

Emerging research suggests that less parental warmth and more harshness in the home environment tend to create aggressive behaviour among children. (*Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.*)

#### **Handling temper tantrums in little children:**

Little children do not have much control over their lives, nor do they have the required vocabulary and maturity to express their feelings or communicate their desires and disappointments. Tantrums are a normal expression of frustration from a little person who wants his way.

## Seven Ways to Prevent Tantrums

- **Provide positive attention:** Many times, your child could be throwing tantrums to get your attention. Spend quality time with your child, talking to him and playing with him. Hug him often, talk to him lovingly and reinforce his good behaviour by praising him.
- **Mind the basics:** Is your child thirsty, hungry, overtired, or over-stimulated? These are common preconditions for tantrums. Carry snacks and water on outings, and avoid potential tantrum triggers — a shopping trip, for example — when you know your child is tired.
- **Routines rule:** Develop family routines — for example, regular meal and bedtimes — and stick to it. Young children's lives are full of change and constant stimulation. Plus, they're growing fast. Therefore, anything you can do to add stability will help them feel more secure.
- **Use feeling words:** Encourage your child to label and describe his feelings. You can help your child develop vocabulary to express himself by saying things like, "I can see that you are feeling upset because you really wanted a treat," or "Did it make you angry when Som yelled at you?"
- **Give (limited) choices:** Don't give your child free rein to state any whim. Instead, offer two or three viable options — whether it's a snack, an activity, or what to wear. For example, you can say, "You need to wear shoes to school because that is the rule. Would you rather wear your tennis shoes or your boots?"
- Pediatrician Laurel Schultz emphasizes that **matters of safety** should never be negotiated: a child must always use a seat belt, for example, whether he wants it or not, hold hands while crossing the street, etc.
- **Change the channel:** At this age, distraction works like a charm. If you see trouble ahead over an off-limits item, your best bet is to offer up something else. And if your child is becoming upset or overstimulated, suggest another activity or remove her from the situation.



- **Use the 5-minute warning:** No one likes to see a good thing end. Give your child a warning before you leave the playground or a friend's home, so it won't be a surprise. Setting expectations for yourself and communicating them clearly to your child can make a world of difference. "We're leaving in 10 minutes. In 5 minutes, I expect you to get your shoes and socks on and say good-byes."

### **How to deal with an angry adolescent or teenager:**

- **Lead by example.** Be calm and composed and treat the child the way you want him to treat you—with love and respect.
- **Keep your cool.** This might mean taking a couple of deep breaths and doing some positive self-talk. Of all the tips here, this can be the hardest. But the calmer we are, the calmer our children will be. Studies show that matching yelling and aggression do more harm than good.
- **Treat your child's feelings with respect:** Acknowledge the child's emotions whether you feel they are justified or not. Whatever your children are experiencing is '*real*' to them, and they need kindness and understanding.
- **Listen.** *Really* listen. Use eye contact and show empathy; really listening goes beyond just hearing what your child is saying. Try to make sense of their issue and show them that you care.
- **Let them know that anger is natural and should be expressed appropriately.** Talk to the child once she cools down and discuss various ways she can express her anger.
- **Teach your children different ways of calming** and soothing themselves like meditation and prayers, right from childhood.
- **There should be consequences** for aggression or violence, but not when it is appropriately expressed anger – if a child is able to say that something is angering her, and not just lash out, this should be encouraged.
- Teach children **practical problem-solving skills**, so that they can do something concrete about how they are feeling, instead of acting out their anger and frustration.
- **Don't isolate.** Some children need space to calm down, others need a big

bear hug. Some trial and error method will help you figure out what your child needs. However, if your child needs space, find a way to provide this without isolating him. This can be achieved by using a calm down area or sitting with the child with some activity or even quietly together.

- **Praise calm behaviour** whenever you notice that your child has opted not to have a melt-down, but to deal with the issue constructively.

### 3.5 Bullying

Bullying involves a person or group deliberately trying to make someone else feel upset, scared, or ashamed. People often bully others who are different to them in behaviour, appearance, culture, race, class, ability, or identity. Bullying is a form of aggression that deeply affects the person being bullied as well as the bully, and needs sensitive and firm handling.

*"We focus so much on our differences, and that is creating, I think, a lot of chaos and negativity and bullying in the world. If only everybody focused on what we all have in common—which is—we all want to be happy."*

**- Ellen DeGeneres**

#### Types of Bullying

- Physical – Harming or intimidating someone physically
- Verbal – Taunting or hurtful teasing
- Psychological – Leaving someone out or saying bad things so others will think less of them
- Cyber bullying – Using online and mobile technology to harm someone emotionally and socially

There are several reasons why someone may be bullied. Studies show that children who are introverted, anxious, or submissive are more likely to be bullied than kids who are extroverted and assertive.

There is plenty of research that establishes that warm, supportive parenting is a protective factor and negative parenting is a risk factor for children being bullied at school. A large study from the UK showed that having warm supportive family relationships also helps buffer children against the adverse emotional consequences of being bullied.

This means that when children feel supported by their parents, they are less likely to attract bullying. They also have someone to turn to at home when things are not going well at school, which helps them cope.

### **How to help a child handle bullying**

- Coaching children in social skills and supporting their friendships can make a positive difference to children's relationships with peers.
- Some researchers believe that kids who lack self-esteem may attract kids who are prone to bully. Therefore, nourish your child with unconditional love and positive attention right from childhood so that he grows up to be confident, with a healthy self-esteem.
- When children return from school, right from their toddler years, make it a habit to ask them daily about what happened in school. Listen to them attentively and make sure you hear what the child has to say and guide her gently. This will help the child to confide in you.
- If she is bullied, tell the child to separate herself from the bully as far as possible.
- Stop letting her play the victim; even if the child does not feel fully confident, help her find ways to show that she is unafraid. Help the child take a stand.
- If necessary, ask her to report the matter to her teacher/Principal, if the bully belongs to the same school.
- If required, speak to the teacher/ Principal or the bully's parents yourself in an amicable manner to solve the issue.
- If necessary, take help from the School Counsellor.

## What to do if your child is a bully?

- **Do not blindly defend** your child at all times. Ask for some time to talk to him or her, from the person who has complained about being bullied by your child. In case of any specific incident, talk to your child in a calm and firm voice to find out the details. Be a good listener and avoid blame. Kids need to understand that it's okay to admit they made a mistake.
- **Ask questions to help him** understand how his behaviour affects others: "Is what you did respectful? Did it hurt someone? Would you want someone to do that to you?" Emphasize fair treatment of all people by saying, "We don't behave that way in this family because we respect other people, and we don't want other people to treat us that way," suggests Walter Roberts, a professor of counselor education at Minnesota State University, and author of *Working With Parents of Bullies and Victims*.
- **Find out the root cause:** Find out the root cause of his behaviour. Is it because he wants to be popular or is it due to peer pressure or some other reason? This information will help you to take necessary steps to deter him from his behaviour. Engage him in loving conversations to find out what is going on in his daily life.
- **Talk about the consequences:** Make the child understand that he must accept responsibility for his actions and also bear the consequences. Depending on the circumstances, you can take away something your child is attached to, so the consequence will be significant, such as taking away your child's cell phone, reducing TV or video game time, or preventing participation in a social outing.
- You can also ask your child to write **an apology letter**. Writing down the incident and detailing a positive way to handle future situations might also help the child.



- **Parent-school partnership:** Support the school discipline plan. Let the child understand that the school and parents will always stand together in his interest.
- **Help him build social and emotional skills:** Inspire him to be empathetic by involving him in volunteering work. Involve him in extra curricular activities of his interests to engage him positively. Help your child to make good friends.

### 3.6 Peer Pressure

Peer pressure comes from the compulsion to do the same things, which otherwise you wouldn't do, as other people of your age and social group, in order to be liked or accepted by them.

*"Only surround yourself with people who will lift you higher."*  
- Oprah Winfrey

Peer pressure can be positive or negative. For example, peer pressure could influence a young person to become involved in sports. This involvement could be positive, leading to exposure to healthy lifestyles and role models, and eventually leading the young person to become a positive role model himself. It can be negative if he becomes addicted to sports and competition, to the detriment of his future.

Adolescents are more prone to be led astray by peer pressure. Teens with few boundaries or rules at home are far more susceptible to negative peer pressure than those with firm expectations and clear rules.

#### Impact of Peer Pressure:

As per studies, peer pressure can prompt kids to use drugs and override the fear of taking risks. They may experiment with drugs /alcohol which may result in addiction, accidents and so on. Some of them get into addiction of gadgets. Peer pressure can, at times, spoil the child's life.

## How to help your child handle peer pressure

The good news is that parents have a stronger influence on children than their peers, provided you have ensured them a very loving and emotionally secure childhood.

- **Create a positive, loving and supportive home environment**, free of addictive behaviours and without access to alcohol or other drugs.
- **Listen to your child** with full attention right from childhood so that he shares his fears and concerns with you freely, especially when he returns from school. This will also give you an idea of what his or her peers are currently talking about, or are what addictions and wrong social behaviour they may be vulnerable to.
- **Set appropriate boundaries for your child right from childhood.** Setting clear boundaries, with consequences, helps kids in a big way to acquire good habits and the confidence to say no to peers.
- **Help your child develop self-confidence and a high self-esteem** by involving him in hobbies, sports and other groups of his choice. It will offer a positive form of peer pressure on your child that respects achievement, cooperation and teamwork.
- **Help your child to practice introspection** by thinking before doing, by asking himself questions like: Could this harm me or someone else? Will this put my health or safety at risk? Is it legal? What are the long-term consequences for my health, family, education, future?
- Teach them to say 'no' when required and to stick to it, whatever the pressure tactics – they may be teased, mocked, cajoled to take part in something. It is important for them to not feel awkward or apologetic about saying no.





- **Help your child find friends** who exert a positive influence on her. Get to know them.

### 3.7 Sibling Rivalry

It is common for siblings to fight in their growing up years, and yet they manage to become the best of friends when they are older and wiser. It is also common for them to swing back and forth between adoring and detesting one another!

*“Siblings seem to bring out the best and the worst in one another.”*

*- Suzanne Degges  
White*

There is no fixed timeline for sibling rivalry to emerge and for it to quieten down! Often, sibling rivalry starts even before the second child is born and continues as the kids grow and compete for everything from toys to attention.

#### Why Kids Fight

Most brothers and sisters experience some degree of jealousy or competition. But other factors also might interfere in their relationship which include:

- **Evolving needs.** It is natural for children’s changing needs, anxieties, and identities to affect how they relate to one another.
- **Individual temperaments.** Each child’s individual personality, mood, disposition, and adaptability play a big role in how well he gets along.
- **Special needs/sick kids.** Sometimes, a child’s special needs due to illness or learning/emotional issues may require more parental time. Other kids may pick up on this disparity and act out to get attention or out of fear of what’s happening to the other child.

#### Some strategies to promote peace in your household:

- **Be role models.** The way that parents resolve problems and disagreements sets a strong example for kids.

- **If you are expecting a second baby,** talk to the elder one excitedly about the arrival of the baby and how his status is going to be elevated and so on. Help him to develop a bond for the unborn child through your conversations.
- **Do not get involved, whenever possible:** When children fight, step in only if there's a danger of physical harm. If you always intervene, you risk creating other problems. Let them learn to work out the problems on their own. There's also the risk that you — inadvertently — make it appear to one child that another is always being 'protected,' which could foster even more resentment. By the same token, 'rescued' kids may feel that they can get away with more because they are always being 'saved' by a parent.
- If you are concerned by the language used or name-calling, it is best to encourage kids to express their anger or frustration by using appropriate words. This will validate what they are feeling about the sibling, but will stop them from using hurtful and toxic language just to vent their emotions.
- If you do step in, try to resolve problems **with** your kids, not for them. When getting involved, here are some steps to consider:
  - Separate kids until they are calm
  - Ask the most upset child to describe the incident first
  - Pay equal attention to both the children and understand the feelings of both
  - Treat your children as the unique individuals they are. Set aside your assumptions about each child and listen to the particular details of this fight.
  - Come up with a list of basic rules for the siblings for conflict resolution
  - Outside of specific fights, foster love between siblings by



appreciating their strong points; encourage them to help each other with any weak areas rather than tease each other about them. Get each one to do something for the other and get them to talk about what they like doing together.

### 3.8 Positive Discipline

That much-used word, 'Punishment', is something that we must find a way to work around. It is a proven fact that harsh and humiliating punishment, however badly the child has behaved, is not going to work, and is today seen around the world as a crime against children. But in every parent's day, or week or month, comes a time when a child has to be asked to accept that they have done something wrong, and a way has to be found for the child to apologize or make amends for the behaviour. This is where Positive Discipline can be a much more appropriate tool.

*"Parents and teachers can no longer function as bosses, but they must acquire the skill of being democratic leaders."*  
- Rudolf Dreikurs

#### What is Positive Discipline?

Positive Discipline is based on the work of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs and designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. Dreikurs and Adler refer to the kind and firm approach to teaching and parenting as "democratic."

It focuses on the positive behaviours, based on the idea that there are no bad children, just good and bad behaviours. You can teach and reinforce the good behaviours while weaning the bad behaviours without hurting the child verbally or physically. People engaging in positive discipline are not ignoring problem behaviour. Rather, they are actively involved in helping their child learn how to handle situations more appropriately while remaining calm, friendly and

respectful to the child, however badly he or she is behaving. Positive Discipline is based on the understanding that discipline must be taught and that discipline teaches.

## **Why Positive Discipline?**

Recent research tells us that children are hardwired from birth to connect with others, and that children who feel a sense of connection to their community, family, and school are less likely to misbehave. To be successful, contributing members of their community, children must learn necessary social and life skills.

### **Positive Discipline:**

- Is not based on fear and punishment or humiliation, and focuses on the way forward
- Helps children feel a sense of connection (Belonging and significance)
- Is mutually respectful and encouraging (Kind and firm at the same time)
- Is effective long-term (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or to thrive.)
- Teaches important social and life skills (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation; it provides the scope for a child to accept that he or she has erred and provides ways to change unacceptable behaviour.)
- Invites children to discover how capable they are (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.)

### **How to practice Positive Discipline:**

- **Pay positive attention to your child** by being with her fully, whenever you can. Listen to her attentively. Appreciate her good behaviour, thereby reinforcing the desired behaviour. Involve her in age appropriate tasks at home which will make her feel significant and responsible.

- **Teach them to count their blessings:** Children who grow up with an attitude of gratitude for all the good things in life tend to be more disciplined.
- **Find out the root cause:** If your child is misbehaving, find out the root cause by asking her relevant questions and try to address the issue. Effective discipline recognizes the reasons kids do what they do and works to change those beliefs, rather than merely attempting to change behaviour.
- **Respond to misbehaviour with empathy,** not anger or an irritated lecture. Listen to the child's side of the story empathetically and try to reason with her; help her to see the impact her misbehaviour has on herself and others.

**Set limits and boundaries:** Taking away privileges and imposing small 'penalties' can be considered, to discipline your child for things like forgetting to put that towel out to dry and dumping it damp on the bed, leaving things strewn around, or brushing teeth in a hurry, being rude or thoughtless, etc. Penalties can be in accordance with the misbehaviour/ undesirable behaviour committed. For example, taking away the mobile phone or taking away TV watching time for a certain period, if the child is glued to the screen or demands to watch it for long hours.



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## CHAPTER IV

### FOSTERING ALL-ROUND GROWTH

*“You were born with potential. You were born with goodness and trust. You were born with ideals and dreams. You were born with greatness. You were born with wings. You are not meant for crawling, so don’t. You have wings. Learn to use them and fly.” - Rumi*





Every parent dreams of the holistic growth of his/her child. Schools too strive to foster the all-round development of their children. This chapter deals with some fundamentals which will help you in this direction.

## 4.1 Academic Excellence

### What is Academic Excellence?

It is the ability to achieve high marks and excellence in scholastic activities.

*“Successful people are simply those with successful habits.”*

*- Brian Tracy*

At the core of academic excellence is the ability of individuals to think critically, to synthesize and integrate new information in novel ways and to ‘learn to learn’.

When a child gets interested in learning and spends time, of his own accord, trying to find meaning and interest in his studies, he is on the right path. As a result, awareness, maturity and confidence become part of his personality organically. He trains himself, with determination and perseverance, to do that which will be good for him and enjoys the effort that goes into it as well.

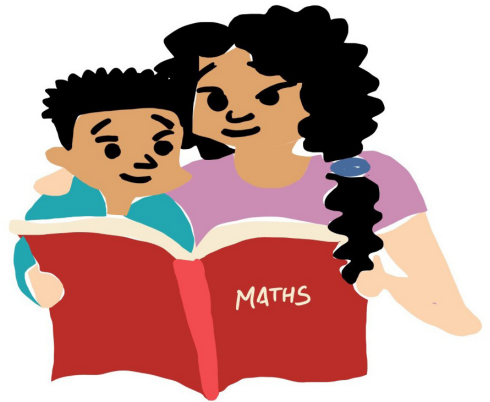
Research indicates that the home or family structure has a great influence on students’ academic achievement. It is generally reported that an un-conducive home environment reduces the possibilities of children’s learning capabilities. Consistent academic achievement of elementary school students and interest in studies can be attributed to a good home environment.

### How to help your child develop an interest in academics:

- **Lead by example** by enjoying and excelling in your own work and interests, and doing them to the best of your abilities. Let children watch and learn how you strive to learn new things too.
- **Help her cultivate a love for reading** as many studies point out that

reading can boost your brain power.

- **Be genuinely curious** to know what studies and subjects she is working with in her classroom. Ask her about it and listen to her with full attention and interest. Be aware of your child's curriculum, take a look at the text books through the year.
- **Do not miss any parent-teacher meetings** so that you are aware of your child's progress and your child's teachers know you and your child personally. Show genuine respect and build a good rapport with them. In case of disagreements, sort it out respectfully.
- **Understand and accept** your child's abilities and help her to strengthen and build on them.
- **Identify** areas of weakness and underperformance, if any, in your child and find out the reasons. Talk to the child and her teachers to find ways to improve. Find ways to dismantle fear or dislike about any particular school subject.
- **Tell them** that the best way to crack subjects is to grow to enjoy them. When the child starts loving what he/she is learning, it will no longer look like work. Everything will fall in place after that. So, help your child to fall in love with every subject. Let them say 'I love you' to every subject.
- **Encourage your child** to pay attention in the class and ask relevant questions to her teachers, or ask for more explanations, till she understands the concepts.
- **Inspire her** to do extra reading on the topic.
- **Give her** a fixed place to study at home.
- **Help her** prepare a schedule for study (at home) and inspire her to follow it. One to two hours of study daily, depending on her class, is enough.
- **Ensure** that she revises the day's textbook portion 3 to 5 times. This will help her to understand the lesson, learn spellings and grammar to a great



extent. Written homework should be done after this, preferably without referring to the textbook.

- **Tuitions** should be avoided as the child may stop paying attention in the school. She will not get time to relax and she may become angry and frustrated. It is a drain on the parents' pocket too.
- Ensure that your child gets enough time for **free play**.
- **Help her** develop at least one hobby, which she enjoys.
- **Do not compare** your child with others; do not burden her with your ambitions; instead encourage her to exceed her own performance.
- **Don't worry too much** if your child is not getting very good marks. Worry about her attitude—whether she is a loving and compassionate person with a great attitude of gratitude.

## 4.2. Appreciation

When it comes to building relationships, appreciation is an important key.

### Why Appreciation?

- It boosts our spirit, passion, and purpose
- It builds our self-confidence, self-esteem and our entire self-image
- It gives us energy and motivation to work harder and do more

*"Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary."*

**- Margaret Cousins**

### Benefits of Appreciating Children:

- Children will feel valued
- It will reinforce good/ acceptable behaviour. They will feel good about what they do, and it will boost their desire to do more good work.
- Children will likely live up to what they feel we believe them to be.
- It makes them feel better about themselves, urging them to go on with new vigour

## How to appreciate children without spoiling them?

- **Compliment their character:** We live in a world where integrity is neither consistently taught nor widely expected. When our children demonstrate honesty, kindness, trustworthiness, and reliability, that's a great time to offer a sincere compliment.
- **Praise their work, the process they use** to reach goals, and traits like perseverance and dedication. (Be very specific with your words.). Compliment the effort, even when the result is not the best. Research shows that these are the most motivating compliments for them.
- **Give other compliments too:** you must tell your children how beautiful and handsome they are (all children are beautiful or handsome in their mother's eyes!), how strong and kind they are and how amazing they are, in many ways. Be genuine about your praise.
- **Compliment their friends:** But only do this when you can do it honestly. "Your friends are wonderful company!" "That Raj is such a good kid." "You know, it gives me a lot of confidence to know you choose your friends well and that you are a good friend to them," and other such specific good feedback.



### 4.3 Communicating with Children

Good communication with children involves listening well and talking in ways that encourage your child to listen to you. It's like any other skill – you get better with practice.

Children learn how to communicate by watching their parents. If parents

communicate openly and effectively, their children will, too. Good communication skills will benefit children for their entire lives. Relationships between parents and their children are greatly improved when there is effective communication. By helping develop good communication skills in children, you are equipping them with the skills to build a successful future.

*"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."*

**- Peter Drucker**

### Some general tips to communicate with children:

- **Be a good role model.** Your child learns how to communicate by watching you carefully. When you talk with your child (and others) in a respectful way, this gives them a powerful message about positive communication.
- Set aside time for talking and listening to each other. Family meals can be a great time for this.
- Keep an open mind, be non-judgmental – this facilitates conversation.
- Talk about everyday things as you go through your day. If you and your child are used to having lots of conversations, it can make it easier for both of you to talk when big or tricky issues come up.
- Try not to jump in, cut your child off, or put words in his mouth – even when he says something that sounds ridiculous or wrong or is having trouble finding the words.
- Be open to talking about all kinds of feelings, including anger, joy, frustration, fear and anxiety. This helps your child develop a 'feelings vocabulary'. Talking about feeling angry is different from getting angry. Learning the difference is an important step for a child learning to communicate.
- Watch facial expressions and body language and try to respond to



non-verbal messages too. For example, “You’re very quiet this afternoon. Did something happen at school?”

- Cross check and confirm that you have understood what your child is saying by rephrasing when necessary – this demonstrates to the child that you care, and are trying to understand him or her fully.
- Build on what your child is telling you and show your interest by saying things like “Tell me more about ...”, “Really!” and “Go on ...” This sends your child the message that what he has to say is important to you.
- Emphasize the importance of honesty by encouraging and supporting your child to tell the truth – and praising him when he does. And by being honest yourself!
- Speak to your child not down at him – this is a confidence booster and encourages more open communication.
- Keep comparisons to nil – if a child feels that he is not measuring up to some standard in your head, he will shut down communication.
- Maintain eye contact when you are having a conversation with your child, no matter how brief. However, sometimes, it helps a child to sit by your side and not be face-to-face while talking about something difficult.

## **How to talk to children:**

### ***When you are Angry:***

- Accept the fact that children will make us angry at some point or another. We are entitled to our feelings of anger without feeling guilty at each instance.
- We can express our anger provided we do not attack the child’s personality or character.
- When communicating with a child when he has angered you, keep the tone of voice firm, not angry or livid.
- Stick to facts, not emotions (for instance: “You played ball indoors and now the glass is broken”).
- Set clear limits (“No playing ball indoors”).

### ***During an Argument or Conflict:***

- Consciously avoid negative words and comments that create hate and resentment, such as insults, name calling, threats.
- State feelings and thoughts without attacking.
- Listen to all sides objectively.

### ***When you are Busy:***

- Be patient with your child's demands on your time.
- Allay his concern before directing him to another activity.
- Try as far as possible to have some activity ready for the child when you are likely to be tied up with other work.
- Promise to get back to the issue at hand, once your work is done, and remember to do this, so a child knows that you will make time for him later.

## **4.4 Nurturing Good Habits**

A healthy habit is any behaviour that benefits your physical, mental, and emotional health. These habits improve your overall well-being and make you feel good. Healthy habits are sometimes hard to develop and often require changing your mindset.

*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."*

**- Aristotle**

### **Benefits of Cultivating Good Habits**

- Habits define an individual
- By developing good habits early in life, it becomes easy for the child to make the right choices later
- Practice makes perfect; so starting young gives the child a lot of time to learn and practice good habits
- Once a good habit is learnt it stays with the child forever

## How to Develop Good Habits

- **Lead by example:** “Your actions speak so loudly; I cannot hear what you are saying” - Ralph Waldo Emerson. Good habits don’t happen automatically. Live the habits you want the child to develop consistently and sincerely. Be a role model. For example, simple habits like leaving footwear properly in the stand when entering the house, offering a glass of water to a visitor, and other such little actions.
- **Good manners:** Encourage your child to use phrases like Thank you, You’re Welcome and Excuse Me right from an early age. Teach them to be kind and considerate to people around.
- **Physical activities:** Encourage your child to stay physically active by letting them choose the activities they enjoy. This could be swimming, biking or just running outdoors. Staying physically active as a child will eventually become a part of their routine as they grow older.
- **Set strong ground rules:** As a parent, it is extremely important for you to set down rules for your children right from an early age, particularly about what is simply not going to be tolerated, for example, yelling or throwing things, or littering, or any of the behaviours that are a no-no in the house or in public. It is important to set some kind of routine when it comes to personal habits. Make a flexible routine with slots for play, homework and screen time. Keep adequate time for free play as it helps in both physical and mental development.
- **Encourage reading books:** Reading out stories to your child makes a significant difference. Good literature has an effective way of inspiring children to behave in a correct manner, to follow a code of discipline, and to maintain a positive outlook in life. A habit of reading will be great in the long run for your child’s intellect as well.
- **Be realistic with your expectations:** Encourage children to learn from their mistakes. Setting realistic goals and limits are key to adopting any new behaviour.





- **Be generous with your praise:** Children do not like to hear what they cannot do, so tell them what they can do instead – focus on those good habits that they are managing to successfully acquire. Keep it fun and positive. Everyone likes to be praised for a job well done. Celebrate successes and help children and teens develop a positive self-image in the process.

## 4.5 Nurturing the Reading Habit

Reading helps to reduce stress, expand vocabulary, develop stronger analytical and thinking skills, improve focus and memory, enhance writing skills and expands a child's emotional and intellectual world. It has a very significant effect on the academic performance of children regardless of their family backgrounds.

*"Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary."*

*- Jim Rohn*

Reading is more than a mere hobby. Books fuel the reader's imagination, keep their brain active and make children more creative. Books have the power to transport the reader into many different worlds.

There is no right age to pick up the first book, but the sooner we begin, the better it is. "There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all." – Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

### Tips to Raise a Reader:

- **Lead by example.** Children observe their parents and often follow their example. When kids see their parents reading books or the morning paper daily, they are more likely to develop the same habits.
- **All good habits should begin from an early age,** reading is no different. The early years are crucial for a child's development and hence an ideal time to inculcate the reading habit in them. Children get to experience the world through the books and stories they read.

- **Start reading early to them.** They will start looking forward to this daily routine. Read to them before bedtime. Dramatic and fun sound effects, hand motions, facial expressions, and changes in tone help sustain their attention. Your child will adore seeing your silly side.
- **Use books to trigger conversation:** Books with rich illustrations are ideal as this kindles the child's curiosity. Use illustrations to point out colours, shapes, and counting. Relate the content to real life. Ask open-ended questions (who, what, where, and why) to children of age 3 and older. A word of caution: do not turn it into a 'lecture' and a 'quiz' too often, and keep the enjoyment element in mind.
- It will be ideal if you could set apart a **reading time for the whole family.** Read together for 15 to 20 minutes every day.
- **Surround children with books.** Encourage them to exchange books with their friends. Enroll in the local library and take them there regularly.
- **Taking kids to bookshops** and allowing them to explore and pick-up books of their liking is another easy and fun way to develop kids into voracious readers.
- **Let your children see** you enjoying a book or an article or the newspaper; if you have dropped the habit, pick it up again!

## 4.6. Nurturing Patience

Patience is the ability to wait, or to continue doing something despite difficulties, or to go through something without complaining or becoming irritable.

*"Patience is not the ability to wait, but the ability to keep a good attitude while waiting." - Anonymous*

Children are not naturally inclined to be patient.

But with consistent practice, they can learn to be patient. It is important to teach your kids the importance of patience and help them practice it.

## Benefits of Being Patient

- Studies point out that patient people enjoy better mental health and tend to experience less depression and negative emotions.
- They also rate themselves as more mindful and grateful; they experience more connection to mankind and to the universe, and a greater sense of abundance.
- Patient people are better friends and neighbours – research suggests that patient people tend to be more cooperative, more empathic, more equitable, and more forgiving.
- Patience helps us achieve our goals, as it teaches us not to give up easily.



## Cultivating Patience in Children

- **The silent game:** Silence is golden, and it is an extremely important part of patience. Start the timer and ask the kids to sit still and be silent for as long as possible. Whoever does it for the longest time is the winner.
- **Get creative:** In situations where you need to wait for a while, in queues, or waiting rooms or at the train station or airport, get creative with the little ones by asking them to come up with a story, but one where they must take turns and say only one sentence at a time. It should be a fun game for all kids.
- **Work on a puzzle:** Get a big enough puzzle to keep your child entertained for a while. Having to work on something for a while before getting to see the results really builds patience in a child.
- **Grow a plant:** Even after it is planted, a seed will take some time to grow into a plant, and your child will experience her hard work bearing fruits slowly.
- **Bake:** Measuring the ingredients and waiting for the baked goods to cook through and cool requires patience from your child; of course, it comes with some scrumptious rewards at the end of it.

- **Passing the parcel:** Wrap a present in many layers and hand it over to the kids. Ask them to take turns opening the layers. This will teach them patience in a fun way.
- **Acknowledge their boredom:** When your child complains that she would rather be playing or doing something other than waiting, first accept and acknowledge that the child is bored or impatient. Then work with your child to come up with some way to go through the time, creatively. This way, you help her accept that the wait is inevitable, but the time can be used well.

## 4.7. Nurturing Resilience

Emotional resilience is the ability of the mind to process and accept difficulties and upsets in life with patience, equanimity, grace and maturity.

*“Resilient people are the ones who bend without breaking and who eventually bounce back from even the most difficult life challenges. Instinctually, they can see some form of light in the darkness they face.”*

**—Barbara Fredrickson**

*“A good half of the art of living is resilience.”*  
**- Alain de Botton**

We all face adversity in life. Sometimes it's something small like a misunderstanding among friends. Sometimes it's big like the death of a loved one. Some of these can be quite difficult to navigate, let alone recover from.

Thanks to neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to grow and change in response to experience—we can rewire our brains for better resilience. By practicing more positive human connection, body-oriented therapies, and various types of relaxation training, among other techniques, we can change the wiring in our brains so that we become less reactive and more open to healthy processing of emotional stress.

A child/adult can be trained or train himself to be resilient. The purpose of practicing a resilience skill is to increase emotional well-being in the face of events that can lead to physical and emotional upset.

Since resilience is a sign of maturity, it has direct correlation to societies. It makes for better adjusted people and therefore more civil and caring societies.

### **How to Foster Resilience:**

- **Practice Mindfulness:** There is mounting evidence that Mindfulness breeds resilience.
- **Practice Self-Compassion:** This practice helps one to accept one's fears and shortcomings while also learning to change. It has three steps
  - Be mindful and self-aware. Without judging say to yourself – “this hurts” “this makes me unhappy”. In the case of a child, help him articulate and pinpoint the feeling.
  - Remind the child he/she is not alone; help the child share his/her fears with you. Lend the child your ear, offer solutions or options without being judgmental.
  - Teach the child to be kind to himself – after he has expressed himself about what is bothering him, you can encourage him with words like: “these things happen to everyone. We just have to learn to accept them, learn from our mistakes and move on”.
  - Help him look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Although your child may be too young to consider a long-term look on his own, help him see that there is a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be good.
- **Nurture a positive self-view:** Help your child remember ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past and then help him understand that these past challenges help him build the strength to handle future challenges. Help him see how whatever he is facing can teach him “what he is made of.”
- **Change the narrative:** The practice of Expressive Writing can move us

forward by helping us gain new insights on the challenges in our lives. It involves free writing continuously for 20 minutes about an issue, our feelings and thoughts around it. It is important to be sincere and factual in your writing. For a younger child it would be helpful if an adult does the writing as the child narrates.

- **Move toward your goals:** Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. Moving toward that goal – even if it’s a tiny step – and receiving praise for doing so will focus your child on what he has accomplished rather than on what hasn’t been accomplished, and can help build the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges.
- **Face your fear:** We can help our children to face everyday fears that get in the way of life, such as the fear of animals, heights, or flying, by exposing them to it in small doses. The first step is to slowly, and repeatedly, expose yourself to the thing that scares you — in small doses. For example, children with a fear of animals can be gradually introduced to gentle pets of friends and taught to care and play with the pet, and in this way, slowly and steadily face and overcome the fear.
- **Make connections:** Build a strong family network and encourage your child to build a network of friends to support through his inevitable disappointments and hurt.
- **Accept that change is part of living:** Change can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable.

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### **For more on nurturing patience,**

**visit:** [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four\\_reasons\\_to\\_cultivate\\_patience](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_reasons_to_cultivate_patience)  
<https://parenting.firstcry.com/articles/ways-and-activities-to-teach-children-patience/>

**For more on positive discipline,**

**visit:** <https://www.positivediscipline.com/>

<https://www.workingmother.com/10-ways-to-practice-positive-discipline-for-better-behaved-kids>



## CHAPTER V

### RAISING THEM RIGHT – A READY RECKONER

*“Don’t worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.”*

*- Robert Fulghum*



We all want our children to grow up as happy, successful, compassionate and socially responsible citizens. Here are some practices and tips which may help you to achieve this.

- **Lead by example:** “One of the most important things we adults can do for young children is to model the kind of person we would like them to be”- Carol Hillman, educationist and author. Parents themselves must be happy, compassionate and courageous, if they wish their children to be so. Practices like yoga, meditation, mindful breathing techniques like pranayam, chanting, walking, running, cycling, swimming etc. will assist us in this direction. These practices will help a parent to be not only physically fit but also mentally and spiritually strong.
- **Practice Mindfulness and Gratitude:** Mindfulness and Gratitude practices have great health benefits – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Make these a part of your daily life and become better role models for your children.
- **Reflect on your own childhood.** How was it? How different are your child’s attitudes and behaviour from yours? This reflection will help you to understand and empathize with your child. This way, you will build on the good things that you experienced as a child, and avoid some of the errors and oversights that the adults in your life made in your upbringing. A word of caution: do not be led purely by “when I was young, my parents were very strict, so now I will be just the opposite with my child.” Understand your growing years, do not be defined by them as a parent yourself.
- **Identify and write down the character strengths which you wish your child to have.** Reflect on whether you have those character strengths yourself and whether they are part of your everyday interactions. If you need to, make efforts to imbibe them and practice them first so that your children are inspired to follow your example. It is not easy; but do try, so that your children see your own genuine efforts in this direction; talk to them about how you are trying to become more patient or more compassionate or more forgiving – whichever character strengths you specifically think are important for your child to imbibe.

- **Importance of touch:** Touch is essential for babies' physical, emotional and eventually social health. Studies show infants who experience more physical contact with caregivers demonstrate increased mental development in the first six months of life compared to young children who receive limited physical interaction. Infants who receive above-average levels of affection from their mothers are shown to be less likely to be hostile, anxious, or emotionally distressed as adults. The need for touch is there throughout our lives. So, hug your child more often, whether he is a child or a teenager. If adolescents and teenagers are at times awkward about one-on-one hugs, try a regular family group hug!
- **Listen to your child with full attention and empathy** so that your child feels confident to share her greatest fears and problems with you. Also, let your kids talk about their dreams, what they want to do, what things they want, without squashing them to be "realistic" all the time. From this kind of freedom to share their fears as well as their little victories as well as their plans, however young they are, comes the ability to express and feel heard.
- **Love your child unconditionally.** Your child should feel that you love him unconditionally; your love is not dependent on his achievements. You can get angry at his mistakes and not at him. This will make him emotionally secure and help him to have high self-esteem.
- **Give your child ample praise and appreciation.** Ensure that you mention what aspect of her behaviour you're appreciating, as it will help to reinforce that behaviour. For example, instead of saying, "You are the best" say, "I loved the way you spoke to the maid. You were so kind and loving." Or praise your son when he shares and enjoys sharing. Too often, parents fall into the old trap of only pointing out what a child did wrong, and taking good behaviour for granted. Make sure that you appreciate your child, genuinely, and not just as a 'strategy'.



- **Identify her interests and talents right from an early age** and help her to develop them. This will help your child to be engaged and have some direction in life. This means that you would need to take or arrange to take a child to learn a hobby, an art, a craft, a sport, a musical pursuit, etc. Again, when a child sees his parents enjoying their own hobbies and interests, even in a small way, over and above work, this goes a long way.
- **Play with your child.** Bring yourself to your child's level and partake in his wonders and joys – whether it is with a game that they are discovering, or a cartoon that they watch or a book that they like or a puzzle, etc. Children simply love to have their parents take part in their games. It is a win-win situation – your child will feel loved, and you, a little stress-free!
- **Involve your child in household chores:** Involving children in age-appropriate chores at home will go a long way in developing a sense of responsibility in them. Inspire children to save water, paper, and electricity and keep their surroundings clean. Get them to help in the kitchen in small ways, lay the table, and other such work, even if you have domestic help.
- **Tell your child plenty of stories.** The famous Nobel Laureate Physicist Albert Einstein once said, “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be very intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” Historically, tribal communities have used storytelling to share language, traditions, and beliefs from one generation to another. Tell your children a lot of stories from our scriptures and traditions, the classics, as well as modern-day favourites. Instead of asking them the moral of the story, ask them questions like:
  - What did you like the most and the least about the story and why?
  - Which character did you like the best and the least and why?
  - Would you like to have a different ending to the story? If yes, how?
  - What did you learn from the story?



Such questions will help children to enhance their creativity, thinking skills and help them to be empathetic. And you will get a good sense of how your children think, how they feel. It is refreshing for you too, to listen to their perspective, their way of looking at things.

- **Spend quality time** with your child. Ensure that you spend some quality time with your child, by being with him fully, not getting distracted by your phone or work. Be in the moment with your child so that he knows that you respect and care about him. This will help your child to be emotionally secure and help you develop stronger bonds. A distracted half-listening parent, which is what many kids experience, is a lose-lose situation for both, parent and child, however long that time is.
- **Create family rituals:** Family rituals help in better bonding, developing good habits in children, and creating good memories. Adopt one or more of these practices:
  - Gratitude and Mindfulness practices every day for at least 5 to 10 minutes; dinner time is ideal for this
  - Evening prayers/bedtime prayers for universal well-being and prosperity, in whatever form your family/ community prays
  - Bedtime hugs
  - Having at least one meal together
  - Have a family hour (daily or weekly) where all the members sit together and chat and have fun. Play some board games, antakshari, dumb charades, etc.
  - A good exercise is for everyone to share how their day went. Some talking points are:
    - What are you grateful for today?
    - What kind act did you perform today? How did you feel?
    - Was anyone kind to you today? How did you feel?
    - Did you commit any mistake today? How do you feel about it?
    - What do you want to do about it?



Questions can be changed creatively, to suit whatever is currently going on in your and their lives.

- **Make friends with your child's friends and their parents:** Research indicates the importance of siblings and friends in children's emotional well-being—even for children as young as 15 months. When you make friends with your child's friends and their parents, you can support and groom your children together. Invite your child's friends, who can be a good influence, to your home, take them for outings, play games with them and chat with them part of the time that they are together. The famous adage 'It takes a village to raise a child' still stands good, especially in the context of today's nuclear families and safety issues.
- **Provide kids with real life experiences:** Besides vacations and other enjoyable activities, find other enriching things to do. Get involved with local NGOs as part of 'giving back to the community'. Take your child with you and engage in different service projects. This will help your child see other lives from close quarters. It will also kindle gratitude in them for what they have and compassion for those who have to make do with very little.

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## Sources and Resources

Book: *How to Talk so that Kids Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk*. By Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

## **PARTING THOUGHT**

### **ANCIENT WISDOM FOR TODAY'S PARENTS**

Thiruvalluvar, commonly known as Valluvar, was a renowned Tamil poet and philosopher. His famous poem 'Thirukkural' written around 5,000 years ago remains relevant to this day! Here are some Parenting Tips gleaned from this thought-provoking poem.

- If your children lie to you often, it is because you are harsh, or you overreact to their inappropriate behavior.
- If your children are not taught to confide in you about their mistakes, you've lost them.
- If your children have poor self-esteem, it is because you advise them more than you encourage them.
- If your children do not stand up for themselves, it is because you have disciplined them in public, from a young age.
- If your children take things that do not belong to them, it is because when you buy them things, you don't let them choose what they want.
- If your children are cowardly, it is because you help them too quickly.
- If your children do not respect other people's feelings, it is because instead of speaking, you order and command them.
- If your children are too quick to anger, it is because you give too much attention to misbehavior and too little attention to good behavior.
- If your children are excessively jealous, it is because you congratulate them only when they successfully complete something and not when they improve at something even if they don't successfully complete it.
- If your children intentionally disturb you, it is because you are not physically affectionate enough.
- If your children are openly defiant, it is because you openly threaten to do something, but don't follow through.

- If your children are secretive, it is because they are sure that you would blow things out of proportion.
- If your children answer back, it is because they watch you do it to others and think it is normal behaviour.
- If your children don't listen to you but listen to others, it is because you are too quick to jump to conclusions.
- If your children rebel, it is because they know you care more about what others think than what is right.



## SOME USEFUL WEBSITES FOR PARENTS



<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>



<https://kindspring.org>



<https://mindfulparentingindia.com>



<https://ggia.berkeley.edu>

- <http://www.attachmentparenting.org>
- <https://www.ahaparenting.com>
- <https://www.apa.org>
- <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com>
- <https://www.edutopia.org>
- <https://www.greatschools.org>
- <https://www.handinhandparenting.org>
- <https://www.imom.com>
- <https://kidshealth.org>
- <https://www.kidpower.org>
- <http://www.littlethingsmatter.com>
- <https://www.mindbodygreen.com>
- <https://www.mindful.org>
- <https://parenting.firstcry.com>
- <http://parenting-ed.org>
- <https://psycnet.apa.org>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com>
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au>
- <https://www.rootsofaction.com>
- <https://thriveglobal.com>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com>
- <https://www.viacharacter.org>

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