
SENSITIZATION PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

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SENSITIZATION PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

Community

Objectives

- To give an overview of the philosophy and content of the program to the parents.
- To highlight the importance of conducive and harmonious environment in the family for the successful development of the child personality.
- To explain the duties and responsibilities of the parents for the spiritual and moral upliftment of the child.
- To facilitate the parents in establishing linkages of the program with day today life.

Instructors Guidelines

Discussion and participation in the following areas-

FAMILY

- Time spend together in the family
- Participation of children in the decision making process
- Weekly Visits for shopping's or entertainment
- Participation in the Religious Festivals
- Spiritual activities at home
- Joint Get Together of Indian

CHILDREN

- Attitude of the child towards academic activities
- Nature of friends
- Interaction with the brothers and sisters at home
- Attitude towards sharing knowledge and resources
- Time spend on watching TV
- Perception about India
- Mannerism and Etiquettes
- Involvement in parties and night life
- Books Read by them

1.1 Cultural Imperatives and Family , the changing time

Indian Scriptures and ancient traditions give specific guidelines for a healthy, happy and satavic life for a householder. For millennia, people have studied, married, raised children and lived a satisfied married life according to these guidelines

However in today's world, the migration to the West and the subsequent adoption of western mode of living and thinking have created struggle, conflict and strife among Indian families living abroad.

The solution to this problem is not to abandon the timeless, eternal wisdom of Indian traditions but to find a way of remaining true to these ideals. There is a need to find a balance between the East and the West, the old and the new.

1.2 Role of Spirituality in Married life

Gurudev Vichar

Marriage means not only a union of two bodies but also union of two souls. This is a spiritual endeavor. The basis of spiritual progress is love. A man is an ideal man in proportion to the deep and pure love in his heart. Devotion means sentimental love for God and a devotee means a lover of God. The spiritual endeavor of love for God is to make our life full of divine sentiments of love. Only love is God. The experience of God in man's heart is expressed as a surge of love. The practical experience of this spiritual grandeur of love learnt in childhood is possible only in the laboratory of married life. Unique inseparable belonging and dedication for each other, faith, goodwill and equality and faithfulness makes the life full of love and warmth. A sense of belongingness is a unique feeling. The one for whom this feeling develops becomes very dear to us. The husband and wife do have human weaknesses and faults, but if they understand the aim of life, there is mutual sense of belongingness, dedication, unity of effort and the householder's life progresses with joy.

Today the people have forgotten the high aims and ideals of marriage, which has now become the certificate for animalism of sex. People forge that the foundation for success in marriage is the mentality, culture and idealism of the life partner. The principal aim of marriage is spiritual and with it only the married life becomes happy.

One may buy a home, have children, embark on careers and progress together through life, but one must remember that the true goal of union is to help each other and walk the divine path towards God. Our main goal of life - is to be one with God, to serve Him and remain forever living in consciousness of Him.

1.3 Communication and Connection

The husband and wife must understand that they are partners in life not merely co passengers on a train. One must encourage each other, guide each other and lead each other towards spirituality.

One of the most important rules of a marriage life is that the argument must not persist for a long time. If one can't agree or resolve it then before bed, just go to sit at the temple. Hold hands and ask for divine guidance. Sit in meditation together for few minutes and then sleep. This will solve most problems. If not, then resume discussion the next day.

1.4 Responsibility Towards Children

Bringing forth new life into the planet is one of the greatest joys and greatest responsibility. Our scriptures say that a child is born into a family that will be most suited for its karmic evolution. Soul that is pure and pious and progressing quickly towards God realization will be born into a pious family, thereby assisting it in this task. Therefore parents who wish to have a

peaceful, calm, joyous child must exhibit these qualities themselves.

It is imperative for parents to understand that children are much more simply the product of their environment. They come into this world with their own karma and their own smakars from past lives. That is why we see two identical children, raised in the same home, in the same environment, who may live completely divergent lives. One is peaceful and calm, the other agitated and tense.

1.5 The Tone of Love

One should speak softly, gently and lovingly with children. Parents should not engage in gossip about others with children. In order to counteract the violence or superficial /realistic influence that children frequently receive in school an outside, it is important to make the home a place where piety, peace and devotion are actively taught.

Be calm. Be pure with children. One must express love and compassion to wards the child.

1.6 Violence in the Home

A child should never be physically injured in the name of discipline. Parents assuage their own consciousness by saying that the child "deserved it". Some parents are of the view that children require physical and emotional violence in order to be "well trained" or to be properly scolded for their bad behavior. This is a tragic falsehood, which leads to escalation of violence.

Parent's hope that by becoming aggressive, the children will become calm, repentant and defensive. In reality, when parents become angry a negative energy persist in the environment. This energy works as a toxic chemical in the home long after the actual fight is over. The children are at the most receptive time of their life and then they tend to become violent.

The parents should never act in anger or frustration with the children. One must wait until they calm down and then gently and tenderly explain things to children.

1.7 Gift for Children

Parents must realize that even though they have pressure to make the children competitive in the Western world, they must give then gift of sanskars to them.

The knowledge about Indian Culture, the heritage of the ancestors, the wisdom and thought of the Indian Tradition is the real gift. Parents must make them realize that it is to their roots, to their culture that the children will turn in times of trouble.

Direct your children in the right direction. Show them the happiness and meaning in life. The parents must understand that the true gift of your children is not the newest car or the latest computer or the most sophisticated stereo system. The real gift parents can give their children is the gift of their heritage, the gift of their ancient, rich and timeless roots. The seeds of discipline, self control, restraint and fortitude must be planted in the children.

1.8 Transforming Self

If we want to reform our children, then first we have to bring revolution in our lives. We have to become a magnet ourselves and create some specialty in our lives. Only then is the upliftment of others possible. One enlightened lamp can light a million extinguished lamps, but a million snuffed lamps cannot light a single lamp. Similarly a great man with 'jeevan jyoti' (the light of life) can bring others on the good path and spread brightness in their lives.

Let us make our life profound by giving up laziness and neglect and adopt regularity in life. Let us make ourselves centers of attraction by making ourselves shining like a Sun by service, good conduct, courtesy and gentle manliness and thus become bright and influential.

Gurudev Vichar

Grishtha ashram considered to be the most important stage among the four stages of *ashram*.

In a family every member has to fulfill his duties and responsibilities taking into consideration the needs and aspirations of other members. Members feel happy to sacrifice for the welfare of others.

It is a self-imposed institution. One has no choice in terms of the selection of members. *Grihasthashram* is based on the concept of *tapa* and *tyag*. The foremost duty of the parents is to fulfill all the needs of the family members.

1.9 Pocket Money

Giving a child an allowance inculcates a sense of responsibility in your child.

Be logical about the amount of pocket money you are giving your kids. Let your children learn that they have to save up to buy something they really want.

Don't let them get into the habit of running to you every time they need more money. But in order for you to do this, you have to give them a reasonable allowance every week.

First of all, you have to decide if you want to give your child a monthly allowance or a weekly allowance. Usually weekly allowances work better with children.

1.9.1 MONEY MANAGEMENT

Giving your children an allowance teaches them how to manage money, and this will come in handy throughout their lives. Even if your kids make a bad decision, they will learn in a safe environment, as the sum involved is fairly little.

Schoolbooks and your child's lunch money should not be part of the allowance. But if he loses a schoolbook then he would have to use his allowance to buy it.

1.9.1 HOUSEHOLD CHORES

Encourage him to start working to increase his pocket money. However, don't pay him money for daily chores around the house like making his own bed. But if he does an additional which takes time and labour, like perhaps cleaning out YOUR cupboard, then you could give him some extra money to compensate. So your child will quickly learn that he would have to

'earn' a living - the world doesn't owe him anything and he's never going to get something for nothing.

1.10 Adolescence

Teenage years are like spring in one's life. When children enter their teens they go through certain biological and psychological changes, which is termed as adolescence.

Physical attraction towards the opposite sex is natural fallout of adolescence, which is the transition period to adulthood. Children in their early teens who live under the protective shelter of their families barely experience life in all its aspects and often take life to be one fairytale. Infatuation is quick to grip their tender hearts and they often mistake it to be undying love.

It is not their fault; it is their age that is responsible for such misadventures. This is the time when they should be concentrating on their education and career. Unfortunately, these issues take a backseat. It is the parent's prime duty and responsibility to guard their wards against such mishaps, to warn them about the pitfalls of infatuation and its disastrous effects on their future.

Here are some guidelines to help your child come out of the web of infatuation.

1.10.1 TELL THEM TO BE PATIENT

Tell them to buy time. Make it a deal. Ask them to wait till they become adults and secure their future. Then you can relent and consider their side

too. Warn them not to take any decisions in a hurry. Make them understand that they need to give time and space to each other. Let them judge for themselves, whether their relationship can stand the test of time.

1.10.2 POINT OUT DIFFERENCES IN LIFESTYLES

Social surroundings and one's lifestyle plays a vital role in the extent of commitment and adjustment one can make. Is your child ready to sacrifice some to adjust to the lifestyle of his or her partner? As a parent, you must point out the differences in the lifestyle of both families and explain the pros and cons of the situation. Your ward might not be able to cope up with drastic changes. It is possible that they may have overlooked such parameters.

1.10.3 STRESS ON IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL SECURITY

Let your children know how important it is to equate love with financial as well as social security, in order to get a healthy balance in life. Let them know gently, but firmly, that life seems hunky dory as long as the parents' are providing their lavish lifestyles. Let them know that they should first strive to achieve that financial stability before they can build castles in the air.

1.10.4 KEEP YOUR COMMUNICATION LINES OPEN

Doubts and misconceptions are two evils that can ruin one's life. Encourage your child to be open and clear on all issues however trivial they may seem in the face of the current problem. By keeping the communication lines open

you can win over your child's trust. Knowing that you are a friend and are always there for your child, no matter what, is very important. It will make him see you as a supporter and well-wisher and not an opponent.

1.10.5 ARM THEM TO TAKE DECISIONS

Talk to your teenagers as young adults and not as children. Parents cannot force their teenagers to behave in a certain manner but surely they can guide them, so they are not misled. Imbibe them with the knowledge to differentiate between reality and illusion. There is absolutely nothing wrong in falling in love; it can be the most beautiful experience of one's life provided decisions are taken with an open mind and clear head. Teach him the wisdom of "Love with thy heart; think with thy mind."

1.11 Drugs and alcohol

There are several reasons why a teenager may take drugs or alcohol. Some teenagers are just bored and like to experiment, while others do it to be accepted by their peers.

Teenagers who are shy, lonely and lack self-confidence often find that drugs and alcohol transform them into life of the party. For them, these vices are the key to social success. When they are 'high', teenagers find that they are more assertive and their troubles seem far away and unimportant.

They take drugs and alcohol to escape from family problems or to relieve the tension of performing well

academically and otherwise. In the ultimate analysis, it is the 'kick' or the 'buzz' that they get that makes them go back for more.

Steps

- The first thing that parents should do is to bring up their children with good values. If children are confident, feel that they can trust their own judgment and are taught that it's all right to do their own thing, it will make them more resistant to peer pressure. Parents should convey to their children that they shouldn't be afraid to say 'no.'
- Parents should set an example by not drinking excessively and cutting down on their smoking. They should serve non-alcoholic beverages at their parties in addition to alcohol. They should not encourage their children to take sips from their drinks.
- It may help to talk about drugs and alcohol in a general way to avoid putting your teenager on the defensive. You can talk about someone who has a drug problem or the time when your colleague misbehaved at the office party because he had too much to drink.
- If you suspect that your teenager is smoking or hitting the bottle, there's no point coming down on him like a sledgehammer. Get to the root of the problem. You need to talk to him about why he feels he needs to smoke and drink, despite being aware of the consequences.

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- When you adopt an open attitude, you are also keeping the lines of communication open. Thus, your teenager will not hesitate to come to you for advice or just to talk. Try not to be judgmental and disapproving.

1.12 Smoking

The best time to stop your teenager from smoking is before he or she starts it. Here is a story that shows how the shrewd advocates of smoking can influence young minds. And how you must protect your young one from such influences.

Many parents fear that their children would take to smoking in the future. They dread the possibility of catching their young ones smoking on the sly. However, mere fear does not solve the problem. Parents need to realize effective methods that will stop their children from getting into the smoking habit. Most importantly, they must make concerted efforts to keep the impressionable minds away from the influence of the strong advocates of smoking.

1.12.1 PROVIDE A ROLE MODEL

Parents should generally avoid smoking before their young ones. Many families do not recognize smoking as a taboo subject. However, constant smoking in the company of young ones might attract young minds to the lure of tobacco. Therefore, avoid smoking in family situations, and that will of course save your family from passive smoking.

1.13 Driving

Inculcate safe and responsible driving skills in your youngster.

1.13.1 DRIVING IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Much before parents handover the car keys to their adolescent sons or daughters, they need to teach safe driving to their young ones. Parents need to address themselves to the driving skills of their children, mainly because rash driving is not a habit one can overlook. Like smoking, drinking and other habits that worry parents, unsafe and rash driving also needs parental attention, that too before it is too late.

Unsafe driving by irresponsible teenagers is a menace in all countries of the world. It is found that four out of every ten teen deaths are due to driving accidents. Research shows that teens meet with accidents after they jam pack their vehicles with friends. The risk of an accident is reduced if the young one drives alone, that too in the daytime. Teens are pre-disposed to taking risks and exhibiting reckless driving. Statistics show that teens are the most likely to speed a vehicle. And the combination of loud music, friends and recklessness proves fatal while driving. Parents therefore must discourage their youngsters from late night driving.

1.13.2 LIMIT YOUR CHILD'S TIME BEHIND THE WHEEL

While a parent must discourage late night driving, even morning driving

must be fixed within parameters. For instance, never let the youngster drive after taking any intoxicating drink. Make it a rule, a value to be cherished all throughout life. Never ever listen to your teenager's heroic tales of driving in tricky situations.

1.13.3 BE A ROLE MODEL

Parents should also be responsible while driving. They should make sure they wear their seat belts, never drink while driving, never drive over the speed limit, never cut lanes and treat traffic rules lightly. If parents set the right precedent, children would be more prone to driving responsibly when they take to the wheel.

1.13.4 LICENSE SHOULD NEVER BE FAKE

Some parents even encourage their children to start driving early. They don't mind if their teenager fakes his or her date of birth on a driving license, in order to start driving a year before the legally permissible age. Never allow such irresponsible and illegal behavior. For it is the question of your teenager's life and of course many other lives he or she might play with.

1.14 Tips on how to Handle Dating

Dating rules

- The first thing you need to do is to set a curfew and adhere to the rule strictly. If your child is going to be late, he or she must phone and inform you and he or she better have a valid reason.

- They should inform you about where they're planning to go.
- Initially, suggest that they go out in a group rather than one-on-one.
- Money is another important issue that needs to be tackled. If your child feels that he or she is old enough to be dating, then he or she has to learn that he or she has to finance her own social life. You shouldn't be forking out money for these 'dates.' They should be budgeting for it in their allowance.

1.15 Relationship With Teachers

An ancient sanskrit phrase goes, "Acharya devo bhavo" or "Treat your teacher as you would treat God.

Your child's attitude reflects your own attitude towards teachers. So if you believe that teachers teach for the sole purpose of serving your child, your child will also feel the same, and will believe that he is doing the teacher a favour by sitting down to learn.

Unless you instill a respect for teachers in your child, he will never develop a desire to learn. And when and if he does, it may be too late, and he will look back at the wasted years with regret. Don't let this happen to your child. Put him on the path to success at the outset, by simply teaching him to respect his teachers.

1.16 Indiscipline

Indiscipline is a behavioral disorder that is classified as an act of

delinquency. Just like, lying, stealing and playing truant or running away from home. It is often the cause of a lot of mental, emotional and also physical damage. Such as damage to property in homes as well as in schools. An undisciplined child is an uncontrollable child and can do just about any damage when he or she does not get whatever he or she wants.

1.16.1 INDISCIPLINE AT SCHOOL

Over the last decade, the standards of discipline are fast deteriorating in the school environment too. School is just not what it used to be anymore as very few schools are able to maintain the same standards of behavior.

Disciplining a child is comparable to walking a tightrope. Parents have to maintain a delicate balance between over-indulgence and authoritarianism. However, parents often do not perceive discipline as being such a delicate business.

Disciplining is not only about showing your child who's the boss. This is a very shortsighted approach. In general, people do not react favourably to criticism and children are no different. If a child is frequently criticized by a person whose opinion he values (in this case the parent), he may lose confidence in his judgment and actions. So parents have to realize that discipline is about more than getting your child to clean up his room or controlling a tantrum.

1.16.2 POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

The key to success is for parents to establish their authority over children without putting them on the offensive

and getting into a power struggle. Children, just like other people, do not react well to taking orders. The instinct is to rebel and the parents' automatic reaction is to exert further pressure and bend them to their will. This can degenerate into a losing battle with both sides feeling angry and humiliated.

There is no point laying down rules if parents do not enforce them. This means that children must be punished every time they break the rules laid down by their parents. However, punishment should not be used as a personal vendetta against the child for disappointing or disobeying the parents. It should also not be aimed at making the child feel guilty or bad. Punishment should be aimed at making children understand the consequences of their actions and to take responsibility for their actions.

1.17 Anger & Parenting

1.17.1 ANGER CAN BE DESTRUCTIVE

One of the most difficult emotions to deal with as a parent is anger. The modern parent has to deal with a great deal of stress considering that there are a million demands on his or her time. One of the offshoots of stress is that it makes a person quicker to anger. Most parents

When a parent's anger has cooled, he or she usually just forgets about the incident. A child, however, can perceive the situation quite differently. Children can feel unloved because sometimes in the heat of the moment the parent is often not specific about the

reason for his or her ire. They feel that nothing they do is right. They feel angry and humiliated.

1.17.2 DEFENSE MECHANISMS

If a parent has a hair-trigger temper, it usually makes a child quite anxious. The child then develops defense mechanisms to deal with this anxiety. One such defense is deceit. Many children lie just to prevent their parents from yelling at them. If your child sees you lose your temper frequently, she may adopt the defense of avoidance. She may take to tiptoeing around you because she is never sure what is going to set you off.

This curbs the spontaneity of her relationship with you and she may become guarded about expressing her thoughts and emotions. Other children try to fight fire with fire. They react to anger with aggression and 'attitude.'

They will either shout back at the parent or try to demonstrate that their anger does not affect them. Some children display their indifference by playing the clown and laughing and giggling. This is probably because they are nervous and to hide their pain and humiliation.

1.17.3 THE RIGHTWAY

Children always view their parents as their safety nets, the people who will always be there for them and support them. A parent's anger can often shake this belief. It is important that the parent re-establish the security and comfort of the relationship. This can be achieved by spending some quiet time with the child. This will quell the

feeling of rejection that the child may have and keep the lines of communication open.

The child needs to be reminded that a parent's anger is merely an incident in a relationship and does not diminish the love that the parent has for the child. There is no better way to communicate this than by displays of physical affection. A hug and a smile go a long way in mending fences.

1.18 Punishment

Need for Restraint Every child needs to be disciplined in order to behave in a manner acceptable to others and observe the defined limits of freedom. Sometimes punishment becomes unavoidable, when the child either breaks a rule or misbehaves. Parents can use the following guidelines to instill a sense of discipline in their child. It will also help them use punishment as a corrective method effectively as and when needed.

- Parents need to observe consistency in their behaviour with children. Practicing overindulgence & overprotection alternating with extreme strictness and punishment is to be avoided. Contradictory opinions expressed by parents and grandparents would confuse the child and he would not realize the reason for being punished.
- Try to give one reminder or warning to the child before the child is actually punished. Do not give threats if you don't intend to carry them out.

- Do not punish your child for behaviour that may be part of his normal development such as occasional bedwetting, thumb sucking or tantrums.
- Do not punish your child for accidental mishaps. If your child drops a soft drink on the carpet, do not scold him but tell him to be more careful next time. Such encouragement will help the child in his learned responses.
- Use of non-verbal communication such as good eye contact and firm denial is often all that is needed for minor misdeeds.
- Physical punishments such as spanking, hitting, etc. are one of the most undesirable forms of punishments. Parents who have no control over their tempers could injure their children. Physical punishment makes the child more defiant and aggressive, rather than offering any solution to the basic problem.
- Temporary 'time-out' punishment is one of the most effective disciplinary techniques. This involves isolating a child for a brief period of time. It provides a 'cool off' time, both for the parents and the child. He may be put in the corner of a room, or on a chair alone and the period should not last beyond 5 to 10 minutes.
- Withdrawing a child's privileges temporarily, such as not allowing him to watch his favorite serial on TV or delaying him for play

activities can help the child to understand the results of his action. However, never withhold food or water from the child.

- Never make the punishment severe or prolonged as it may lead to a feeling of insecurity, hostility and repression in your child. However, at the same time, the child must be made to realize that there would be some unpleasant consequences if he crosses acceptable limits of behaviour.

1.19 Strategies to Control Anger

- **Set a Good example:** Show self-control and verbal problem solving yourself. Never hit your child for hitting someone else. Hitting your child only teaches that it is fine to hit if you are bigger.
- **Reward Your Child for Friendly Behavior:** Praise him for being nice to people, for playing with age mates in a friendly way, for sharing things and for helping other children who have gotten into a hitting pattern. If your child has a problem with hitting her brother, praise her for giving him a hug or pat.
- **Say it with words:** Teach him how to negotiate (ask for) what he wants, rather than taking it. This will be a lesson for life. Teach him how to take turns or how to trade one of his toys to gain use of another child's toy.

1.20 Shopping with your Child

Tips for shopping successfully with your child

- Whenever possible, let your child know what to expect. Tell him where you are going and what you are going to shop for. By keeping him informed, you are giving him a sense of involvement right from the start so that he does not feel that he has to hang around while you do your adult chores.
- Give him a task so that he feels responsible and will not be easily distracted. May be he can make sure that you have put the right number of things in the shopping basket; or he could help you choose the wrapping paper and so on.
- Give him something to look forward to. Tell him that if you finish shopping quickly, you'll have time to take him for an Icecream or drop him at a friend's house to play.
- When he has behaved well or been a help, do not forget to praise his good behaviour.
- If you have to take your child shopping, try to ensure that it is timed so that he is on a full stomach and well-rested.
- Do not overestimate your child's tolerance level. Do not cram in a hundred chores or try to do too much when you have your child with you. In such cases, your expectations are unreasonable and

you're just begging him to throw a tantrum.

1.21 Television

Make it a Family Decision

If you tell your child "No watching television after 9:30 at night," you can be sure that's one rule that's not going to be adhered to. You should involve your child in the decision as well.

Choices

Give your child the choice of programmes and timings. Sit with her while she makes a study plan and tell her that this plan will have to be adhered to. Let her choose for herself when she wants to study and when she wants to watch television. You will, however, have to hold her to it. The minute you slack off, so will your child.

Watching Trash

Children may be drawn towards programmes with violent or horror themes. You may find it unsuitable, but arguing will get you nowhere. You could, instead, sit with your children and discuss the programme after it is over.

Let Children Think for Themselves

Don't impose your opinions. Tease them into expressing their own. Ask them who they thought the 'bad guy' was, and why. There is an inbuilt moral lesson to be learnt from most programmes the bad guy never wins. Turn this to your advantage. Ask your children if they think it's fun to beat up someone, and what they thought was right and wrong.

A Critical Eye

While watching a movie you could pass comments on how unbelievable

and unrealistic certain aspects of the plot are and you'll find plenty such aspects when watching a Hindi movie! This will help your children develop a critical eye and spot an absurdity when they come across it.

Educational Programmes

Encourage your children to watch educational programmes on television. They would only be interested in watching Discovery Channel and the like if you inculcate an interest in such channels. If a programme on bees is coming up, you could give your children some fascinating facts, perhaps show them a book or article on bees. This will build their interest.

1.22 Relations With Grand Parents

Grandparents, whose life revolves around their grandchildren, are rarely given the love they deserve or crave. On the other hand, those grandparents who have a life of their own, who are involved human beings, who have a social life, a career or fulfilling hobbies, tend to be more respected by their grandchildren.

Teach your children to be polite to their grandparents. This does not mean that you should quash every argument at the outset. Let the children and their grandparents speak their mind, but at the same time make sure that your children are not rude. If they back-answer once and get away with it, they will do so again, so you need to make sure that you check them the very first time they back-answer.

It makes more sense for the grandparent to check the child when

the child is rude to him or her.

When you are sending your children to your grandparents home to spend the day, never give the children the feeling that they are doing their grandparents a favour by spending time with them.

You can allow your grandparents to spoil your children, but make sure your grandparents check the children if the children are ever rude to them.

Teach by example. Do not correct your parents in front of your children, as your children will tend to do the same. Similarly, never lose your temper with your parents, or raise your voice at them in front of your kids. Be as polite to your parents as possible in front of your children, and your children will follow your example.

1.23 Gift the Reading Habit

The habit of reading can be a lifetime gift for your child.

Impressionable minds can be nurtured and molded in ways more than one. But books and the printed word are among the best tools used for reaching out to a child. Despite the deep penetrating reach of the visual media, books have a definite edge over other mediums of communication and entertainment. Child psychologists and counselors have often stressed the importance of the reading habit in modern-day children.

However, it is quite obvious that the book culture is on the decline. Parents need to resurrect this habit as it adds

multiple dimensions to a child's growth.

- As books are good portable friends, which have the potential of engaging a child's mind, they can broaden the sphere of experience. A quick read of the adventures of Sindbad, or Alibaba or Robin Hood transports the child to different worlds. He or she can relate to new and thrilling experiences, quite different from everyday happenings. The variety in the book reading is bound to reflect in the child's knowledge.
- Reading sharpens the thought processes of a child. It increases his or her attention span. It gives him the faculty of thinking and understanding.
- Language is a gift for a child and books give this gift in abundance. Reading a book aloud can be a good exercise not just for memorization but also for improvement of speech and vocabulary. Books trigger a child's imagination.
- Bedtime reading is considered the best quality time spent with a kid. Psychiatrists feel that bedtime reading helps to build strong bonding with the child.

1.24 Tips to increase your child's attention span

If school examinations are round the corner, here are ways to increase your child's concentration.

What your child should do

- Set a Routine : Routine is a must for everyone, more so for your child who is facing an exam. Your child must have a special routine tailored to the examination timings. If this routine habit is inculcated in the child right from the initial years, he or she will be able to effectively meet the challenges thrown up by life.
- Have a study table: People say that décor and furniture do not necessarily affect concentration. But children are certainly more attentive in a conducive ambience. If one sits at a desk, on a straight back chair, one is more likely to be able to concentrate than when lolling around on a sofa. A child lying down on the bed while reading will most probably fall asleep. So it is best to sit at a table or a small desk.
- Study for a minimum of one hour at a time : It takes the mind at least 8 10 minutes to clear out other distractions when anyone sits down to study. So once the child gets into the mood, let the child be there for the next 50 minutes or so. Let there be no disturbances in these sittings. Otherwise, the focus will be lost. Some children like to study in the morning, and some late in the night. Parents should leave this choice to the children.
- Set a goal : It is important that you decide how much your child should accomplish in one hour. Your child will only be too happy to

achieve these targets and brag about it.

- Reduce distractions : If you feel that your TV viewing is distracting your child, avoid late night TV or other forms of entertainment. You can even stop talking to a friend on the phone for a long time. While sacrificing your leisure, you must make the child aware of such decisions. The child should not take you for granted. Moreover, you have to clarify that exam time routine is not applicable to the adults.
- Eat light meals : Encourage your child to eat light food along with juices and milk shakes. Intake of heavy food is bound to make the child feel lethargic and lazy. Let the child eat at regular intervals, not at one go. Ask your doctor for a good brain tonic. Milk, fruits, cheese and similar energizers are always welcome.
- Be orderly : In order to avoid clutter at the last moment, make your child organize the study material well in advance. For example, sharpen the pencil and fill the ink pens much before the exam. The child should have a head bath regularly in order to have an alert mind. Let the clothes be ironed properly. These are small things that will matter in creating an ambience.
- Cultivate an intense desire to excel : You have to impart a drive to your child, a drive to excel and come out in flying colours. Therefore, as a parent, you have to make the child

focused. Teach your child to take keen interest in whatever he is studying, not just for the school exam but also for the exam of life.

- Faith in yourself : Never allow your child to indulge in self-doubt or worries. Let your child be confident of his or her abilities, especially avoid last minute exam-time preparation.

1.25 Studying the Right Way

Education has become a rat race. The trend is to make every child a superachiever. As a result, parents today are probably more involved in their children's education than ever before. Exam time is as stressful for parents as it is for children. Homework has become a family effort. If a child does not want to study, there is nothing that a parent can do. What parents can do is to develop good study habits in their children from an early age.

Time management

Help your child organize his time better so that he can get his work done and have enough free time to do non-academic activities. What you have to do is find out what tests and projects are due and when as well as how much homework he has to complete. Help him make a timetable and try to see that he sticks to it.

Creating a conducive environment

The first thing to do is to make a workspace for your child, even if it's just a particular chair and one half of a desk. As soon as the child sits down at his workspace, he knows that it's time

to work so he settles down faster. Make sure that it's not too comfortable a chair, the kind he can sink into and have a good nap.

Some tips

- If your child is learning something new, encourage him to read through the new material first to familiarize himself with it. It's better to adopt a holistic approach rather than learning information piecemeal. It makes for better learning.
- If your child comes across words that he doesn't know the meaning of while studying, get him into the habit of looking up the dictionary.
- Teach him to write synopses of chapters or make notes of the important facts to be remembered.
- Help him make up mnemonics like rhymes that will help him remember.
- Make him say out loud what he has learned. This makes it easy to pinpoint gaps in his knowledge.

1.26 De-Stress Your Child

As exams draw near, we know that the anxiety level of children rises, but what we may not know is that some parents too tend to get overtly anxious, and convey this to the child, who gets further stressed as a consequence. He not only has to perform well to satisfy himself, but also to satisfy his parents. The competitive spirit of the parents leads them to force the child to perform more than he may be able. Often we see

that such children perform poorly in their exams.

The best way to make the child perform at his optimum level is to encourage regular study habits and give him proper guidance if he is weak in any subject. Once he starts performing well in class tests, his self esteem rises, confidence builds up and the desire to do well motivates him to study hard and to perform even better the next time around. By the time the final exams approach, your child is a picture of confidence and gives his best.

Don't discourage extra-curricular activities

The key to getting a child to perform well is undoubtedly regularity and discipline. However, you should not just stress on the academics. Extra curricular activities too should be given due importance as they help in shaping a complete personality.

Stop comparisons

Talk about things other than school matters Parents could discuss other activities at the dining table like a musical competition, a movie or even politics, rather than focusing the topic of conversation on your child's performance at school or on homework all the time.

1.27 Parenting A Single Child

More and more couples are opting to have just one child. Keep some points in mind while raising your 'only child'

Bringing up an only child is not without its challenges:

Harmless exaggeration can quickly lead to a bad habit

Children even tend to indulge in white lies when they want to show-off in front of their peer group. They might give an exaggerated account of their own travels or of the gifts that they have received from their parents just so that they can seem one up on their friends. This kind of lying seems harmless to start with, but if not corrected it could become a bad habit and lead the child to lose trust not only in himself but in everyone else as well

Parental change in attitude is all that is required

Lying is one of the few behavioral disorders that can be completely avoided by the correct parental attitudes and the right upbringing of the child. So make sure that you bring up your little one without unnecessary pressures and with lots of love, understanding and compassion.

1.28 Argumentative Children

Some useful tips

- Argumentative children can really try your patience. However, try not to lash out and avoid scolding them and punishing them. This will only worsen things.
- Using phrases like "don't ask questions," "just do as I say," "because I said so," will put you and your children in an adversarial position. These are negative statements that will only

serve to put their backs up and reinforce their belief that they are misunderstood and that they are being victimized.

- Try to make them see things from your angle. Ask them how they would feel if you spoke to them rudely and disrespectfully, the way they speak to you. Try to open their eyes to the fact that it takes two to make an argument.
- Admonish them if they are disrespectful, but try to do it in a constructive manner. Tell them that you are willing to listen to their point of view, but only if they lower their voices and speak calmly and in a polite manner.
- Take the trouble to explain your disciplinary stand to your children.
- Don't be inflexible and rigid. Bend the rules on certain occasions if your children state their case convincingly and without becoming hostile and aggressive.

1.28 Are you raising a chatterbox

Make your child realize the impact of silence.

The father of one-year old Manju once worried and brooded over his daughter's inability to speak in full sentences. A year later the man was seen annoyed over his daughter's constant and meaningless chatter. After three years, he was desperately finding ways to inculcate the habit of maintaining silence.

- The child is the center of the parent's universe and hence their expectations are high. The pressure on the child to be a "super child" is immense. Learn to tone down your expectations and instead concentrate on making your child a good human being rather than a super human being!
- Resist the temptation to overindulge your child as this gives him the mentality that "I always get what I want", which can cause serious problems as he grows up.
- Create opportunities for your child to interact with a peer group either by taking him to play areas where he interacts with other kids or enrolling him as a member of a club, where he can make friends.
- The only child tends to have a strong bond with his parent's, which can soon turn into dependence for everything from homework to entertainment.
- Remember: It is not necessary to keep your child happy all the time by finding things to keep him occupied. Reduce your child's dependence on you and let him find things to do and how to do them without your involvement.
- Encourage your child to share things with friends, cousins and show your appreciation by rewarding him with words of encouragement.

1.28 Lying

Of all the various behavioral disorders that can affect a child, the worst are the delinquency acts. Acts like lying, stealing truancy and sexual offences. They are the most difficult to accept or to deal with and require extremely sensitive handling.

Prevention is definitely better than cure : The way out is not to set down extremely rigid rules or standards that your child may or may not be able to live up to so that he can have a happy, healthy childhood without any high pressures or expectations. In this way he will automatically respect the law and truth and not find it necessary to find a way out by lying. If the parents dominant attitude does not undergo a radical change the child might grow in to a liar who is ostracized and avoided by all. His future too would be ruined as no one would trust him or be able to do business or keep up friendships in good faith.

Parents start with White Lies

Some parents unknowingly encourage their children to indulge in white lies for their own convenience. Let us take the example of Mr. Sampat who was trying to avoid a client by staying at home and calling in sick. He asked his wife to call the office for him. And of course his little daughter was there, quietly observing the whole situation. But it got worse when the telephone rang and Mr. Sampat asked his daughter to pick up the phone and say that her daddy was sleeping. Naturally the child would grow up to think that it is not absolutely necessary to be honest all the time and lies seem perfectly harmless.

Very often, we hear children talking nineteen-to-a-dozen. Each trying to speak louder and make one heard over the din. Screaming and shouting is a very normal way to attract attention, not just for children for adults too. Teachers scream themselves hoarse to a keep a class in order. Housewives nag their children while getting the homework done. Collegians shout at each other as a matter of fashion. Therefore, every individual creates excessive noise to be heard and registered.

The practice of shouting is indeed unhealthy. Children need to be told the importance of keeping quiet and talking at a low-decibel volume. Otherwise, these highly talkative children grow into garrulous adults, which certainly do not make a civilized society.

It starts at the very beginning. Parents expose their children to an environment constantly bombarded by words and sounds. Even before children understand or speak a language, they are encouraged to baby talk. Or worse still, children are left alone before a blaring television set, from where they internalize noise and din. Therefore, children tend to give excessive importance to the spoken word at a very early age. They don't ever realize the power of silence, the language of the unspoken word.

Start them young

1. When your baby is just born, play some quiet soothing music in the background while feeding. Don't keep the television or music system blaring.

2. Talk to your little one in a very soft, gentle and soothing manner. Do not allow anyone in your house to talk very loudly, or to argue in the presence of your child.
3. Both parents should never incessantly talk gibberish to the child. Talking sweetly to the child does not necessarily mean loud babbling.
4. Whenever you entrust the child with a maidservant or a watchman, try to check their language, intonation and volume. If possible, try to control their speech *visa vis* the child.
5. As your child grows older, do not set a bad example by talking incessantly on the phone or talking aloud in a public place.

Tips for an older child

- Get Mahatma Gandhiji's three monkeys as a decoration piece for your child's bedroom. This will be a constant reminder of SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL, and SPEAK NO EVIL. It is a value to be inculcated from the initial years.
- Teach your child to speak only when spoken to in public. Let the child express feelings freely at home, but change the rules for public places.
- Tell your child to speak only when it is TRUE, KIND AND NECESSARY.
- Show the ways to conserve energy by focusing on reading or the creative arts that help in shaping a human being.

- Stress outdoor activities during evening time. Let the child take interest in Nature, not television or video games etc. A fieldtrip into the wilderness can teach the child to appreciate the magic of silence and the sounds of Nature.
- Whenever a child achieves a small goal or assignment or target, do not encourage the habit of bragging. Children who constantly talk about themselves do not make good company in the future.

Introduce the child to a course on yoga and meditation to move towards a fulfilling life. It will also help in removing distractions and increasing the concentration level. The child will grow up to be a more focused

1.29 Building Self-confidence

What it means to be confident

Rahul Sheth, father of 5-year-old Ankush : “My son is a real chatterbox. He's always up to something singing, dancing, acting...you'd think he's a born performer. But this is only at home. In school, they say he is a mouse and he keeps quiet in front of guests.”

In all likelihood, Ankush's problem is a lack of confidence. When a person is confident, it means that he has faith in his own abilities and competence; he trusts his own judgement and is not worried about handling new situations; and he is aware of the fact that others value his abilities. This, in turn, makes him more open and outgoing, straightforward, trusting, trustworthy and reliable and determined and able to stick at things.

Tips for building confidence in your child

The Dos

- A little thing like establishing routine and making the home environment as predictable as possible goes a long way towards making your child feel secure.
- Gradually expose them to social situations. First, you could just play with them when others are around. Then encourage them to play with family, friends and other children his age. You could ask your child to recite the nursery rhyme he learnt in school that day or tell a story. He's bound to get a lot of encouragement and appreciation both from you and your friends. This will develop his social skills and he will not shy away from public situations.
- Remember to keep activities like watching television and playing computer games down to a minimum, as these activities do not foster the development of social behaviour like conversation, sharing and compromise.
- Make a list of the things your child is good at and of the things he likes to do. Ask your child to make a list too. Compare both the lists and if your child has left out something you have included, let him know that that's something else he's good at. You can ask him to help you carry groceries from the car.
- If he is working on something new, give him plenty of support and make him feel that you're confident that he will succeed.

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- Last, but not least, give him plenty of encouragement.

1.30 Building Self-Esteem in Children

The dos:

- The first thing to do is to love your children. While this may seem obvious, you have to love your children in a way so that they can feel it. You need to demonstrate your love in a way that they can understand. The fact that you love your children may be obvious to you, but it isn't always to them.
- It is important to make them feel that they are lovable, likeable and that they are worth caring about.
- Parents are human so it's not going to be possible for you to always give your child positive reinforcement and be kind and patient. However, we often don't realize it but sometimes when we snap impatiently at our children, we often say things that leave an impression long after we've forgotten. Try to keep the 'put downs' to a minimum.
- When you praise them, don't be ambiguous and just say that they have been 'good.' Specify exactly what aspect of their behaviour has earned your praise.
- Listen carefully to what they have to say. Be sympathetic when they have a problem. Don't brush them off.
- Encourage them to think for themselves and to do the things that they're good at.

- Reward them with your time and attention, not with presents.

- Spend time alone with them on their terms, not just at your convenience.

- Give them age-appropriate responsibilities like putting dirty clothes in laundry basket or putting toys back after they've played with them.

- Allow them to exercise their judgement on things like how to make up with a friend or what they want to wear, etc.

- When they're trying out something new, don't hover over them anxiously and offer to help. Let them do things for themselves.

1.31 Building Self-reliance

The dos:

- Parents can encourage their children to be self-reliant in baby steps. Children can start by taking care of their daily routine like brushing their teeth, feeding themselves, tying their own laces, etc. as soon as they get the hang of it.

- Children should spend more time in free play when they can explore their own ideas and think for themselves.

- When they are a little older, they can help with the chores like laying the table, watering the plants, etc.

- If all goes well, they should be left to manage their own time when it

comes to their academics and social life. Parents should only interfere if they feel their children are wandering off track.

- Children should be given responsibilities and held accountable if they do not fulfill their duties. This will give children a sense of importance and they will feel that their parents trust them to do the job.
- Physical fitness and strength is an essential part of being competent and self-reliant. Children must be encouraged to do sport and other outdoor activity.
- Allow children to set their own goals, unless you feel they are taking the easy way out and you know they are capable of much more.
- Leave them alone for short periods of time so that they learn to entertain themselves.
- Last, but not least, remember that you're not going to be around forever to hold your children's hands and protect them from all the pitfalls they might encounter in life. It is in their best interest to be self-reliant.

1.32 Children and Chores

Faced with a young child who is refusing to do a task assigned to him, parents have a tendency to get exasperated and tell him that he is excused this time. However, when parents do this, they defeat the whole purpose of trying to inculcate a sense of

responsibility in their child as they are giving him the message that it is all right not to do his chores if he doesn't feel like.

How to make your child pitch in

- Make a list of all the chores your child can do and let her pick the ones she would like to do. Then make a weekly chart showing what chores she must do on each day of the week.
- Do not assume that your child knows how to do what is expected. Take a little time out to teach her.
- Abandon any perfectionist tendencies. Compliment her on her efforts and rectify any mistakes in her absence.
- Check to see that each task has been properly performed.
- The schedule of chores should not be rigid. Take time out to play with the child, show your appreciation and affection. The chores will not seem like drudgery then. In addition, allow the child a little flexibility in his routine.
- Do not bribe or pay your child for doing routine chores.

Your child will start by being a “perfect little helper” to an able and responsible adult. Who would have thought that just teaching children to help you is actually helping them in the long run.