

children



# 'Right' values

The parents' task becomes more difficult because children today have almost as many entertainment options as their counterparts in developed countries. Parents do not have the time to spend with the kids and if it means taking them to the beach or the lakeside. They'd rather spend on the video game that would keep the child busy and out of their hair

A wise parent made this observation about her teenage daughter. "She knows the price of everything but the value of nothing." We call this parent wise because she has woken up to the fact that somewhere along the way, her parenting skills had needed an update but she had been too busy to take note of it. With the result that her daughter had grown up to quantify everything in terms of money. It was only when she began equating her mother's love with the amount of pocket money being given to her that the parent realised that something was very wrong in the way that her daughter had been brought up.

As a child you may have longed for the fabulous set of pens your best friend's father has brought from Hong Kong, but your child doesn't have to

feel so deprived. You may not have set eyes on a foreign land, but check out with your closest dealer selling stationery, and chances are you'll find what your child is looking for right there, at probably a reasonable price too.

It would be naïve to imagine that by good values, one is only talking of monetary values. The right values would also mean taking care of the child's moral upbringing. If both work well in tandem, one can never overshoot the other. Aslam Jan

is a prosperous business man. He had shifted base to an industrial hub. He was totally taken aback at discovering how money-conscious his kids were. After touring the high-points of the city, his 10 year old son remarked, "All

this is fine dad, but where do the rich people live?

Though surprised, Aslam was secretly pleased that his son had already learnt to distinguish the haves from the have-nots, a trait that would hold him in good stead in business later in life. Unfortunately, it will take Aslam a long time to realise that his son

never solved any problems. Small things perhaps that are not taught with lectures but with examples of your own behaviour.

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The right values or 'good values' don't begin with valuing money. It begins with much smaller issues. Like teaching the child to share with others, so that he doesn't grow to be a self-centred prig. Or teaching the child it is important to be honest. Or teaching the child to face up responsibility when he has erred. Or teaching the child to stand on and face whatever life offers—that running away

never solved any problems. Small things perhaps that are not taught with lectures but with examples of your own behaviour.

From the age of three, most children are ready to learn about values. At this age, since children are at home for a large part of the day, they absorb the behaviour of parents.

✓ For instance, picture this: you may not tell a lie blatantly to your child but if the phone rings and your son picks up, it's a call for you. You don't want to speak and gesture to him to say you are not at home. From this situation, your son knows you are lying and he picks it up at a subconscious level. We must monitor our behaviour in front of kids. Even small things like telling them not to watch a particular programme on television and they form impressions. Instances like

bringing home (pinching) toys from the neighbour or friend should be explained to children. Don't shout but tell them why it is wrong. It is advisable to use a story also to reinforce the idea.

Good values include various things like not telling lies, not indulging in stealing, learning to share things, not hitting without any reason.

All that sounds easy. How are values imbibed in children? But just when is it that a child begins to imbibe all that you are teaching? Children are naturally curious. If a child asks a question for instance, where do babies come from, we must answer it reasonably. Too much information is not necessary and details should not be given as a child will not be able to handle it. The best thing to do is handle the question and the situation in a friendly manner. Most of the questions and situations arise at the nursery level, when children begin interacting with each other. At a creche it is the supervisor who plays an important role.

Says Saira, a counsellor working with children, "Children must be taught the value of money from an early age. With the influence of television and advertising, wrong impressions are formed and products are demanded by children. More so with the 'free with tag', you get a frisbee free, or a toy, or water-bottle and lots more. If you take the trouble to explain to your child that it is not essential to buy all the products advertised, he will begin to understand which is a bad ad and which is a good ad."

Says Amna, a mother of a

putting blinders to a horse. He only sees what you want him to see.

This will not only make him into someone with a tunnel vision and one-dimensional, seeing only one point of view, it will also make him totally dependant on the mother's vision of what is right or wrong. Even later, he will look towards her to make the decisions for him.

Agrees Rabia, a mother of a 7-year old, "I think some amount of censorship is needed, but I would tend to agree that certain decisions should be left to the child."

If curtailing of television is an issue to be thought about and weighed, so is the amount of pocket money to be given to the child. Most young children are not able to gauge the difference between the buying power of say Rs 50 as compared to Rs 100 or Rs 100 to Rs 500. It is for the parent to clearly show the difference. A child may want one ice-cream costing Rs 40 or 50 every time, but it's a wise parent who shows that the same pleasure can be had from an ice-cream costing Rs 20, which means he can buy one for himself and two others for friends or siblings at nearly the same price he would have paid for one.

As Sobia, the mother of three grown-up children says, "I have learnt that a child can take as much pleasure from playing in sand as he does playing with a video game. I tend to feel that parents do not have the time to spend with the kids if it means taking

bad ad and which is a good ad."

Says Amna, a mother of a five year old son, "Today my son is able to identify a bad ad and a good ad. From the time he began watching television, I explained which products are good for health like milk, fruits, essentials in school like colour pencils, gum, shoe polish and also the bad ads like aerated drinks, bubble gum, jams. Today when he watches, he tells us "Look this is a bad ad, they are telling us to drink coke, or buy jam." I also disagree with all the macho stuff they show on TV. I don't want.

Not every mother is able to screen the child's viewing habits as closely as Amna. Besides, another school of thought to television watching is that the child should see everything. Putting restrictions to what the child sees is like

feel that parents do not have the time to spend with the kids if it means taking them to the beach or the lakeside. They'd rather spend on the video game that would keep the child busy and out of their hair.

**The check-list for parents who wonder whether they are teaching their children the right values:**

Does your child know to share?

Does your child discriminate between rich friends and poor friends?

Does your child lie all the time?

Does your child always ask for expensive toys?

Does your child know that he cannot always get what he wants from you?

And finally, are you the kind of parent that your child deserves? ●