Nurture

Pakistan's Pioneer Publication on Early Childhood Development

Developing
Self-Esteem in Young Children

ECD Resources for Parents & Teachers

Nurture

Pakistan's Pioneer Publication on Early Childhood Development

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Editorial

T he current issue of Nurture deals with a subject vital to the overall development of children – self-esteem. This is one attribute that contributes immensely to the emotional, social and physical facets of an individual's personality. How important it is for children to have a healthy self-esteem and how to build and nurture that, are the areas we have focused on in this issue.

An effective definition of self-esteem is the level to which one respects and values oneself as a worthwhile person. Simply put, self-esteem entails taking charge of one's life. Taking charge breeds confidence and respect for oneself; it allows a person to take pride in what she/he accomplishes and inculcates a sense of responsibility that is necessary in order to take ownership of one's life and of all the decisions taken, irrespective of the outcome. Self-esteem needs to be built right from childhood in order for it to develop and integrate into the child's personality as she/he grows into an adult. Parents play the most crucial part in shaping a child's overall personality and hence their role becomes central in nurturing self-esteem in a child. Next to parents come the school and teachers who are also significant players in a child's development. This issue of 'Nurture' therefore becomes an important and handy tool for teachers and caregivers to acquaint themselves with the concept and significance of self-esteem and to make a conscious effort to build it up by engaging children in various activities.

Our magazine's contents emphasize how essential it is for a child's physical as well as emotional development to have a healthy self-image. As parents & teachers we should be aware that our own behaviour & attitude towards a child, determines for him/her in a subtle yet effective manner, the level of self-esteem. A little carelessness may have a hugely negative impact that may not be immediately visible but may manifest itself at a later stage. Our choice of words, the extent and manner of encouragement and appreciation and the way of reprimanding the child, need to be carefully weighed so as not to damage self-esteem in the various stages of a child's development ; together, all these aid in building self-esteem & creating a harmonious personality. One of our writers discusses in detail the significance of giving time in the various stages of a child's development and relates it to building self-esteem and creating a balanced personality.

The range of articles provides a detailed introduction to the concept and importance of self-esteem, key developmental stages of self-esteem from a child's birth through school years and practical ways to develop it in children. Also discussed are ways to identify low and high degrees of self-esteem and strengthening it in children where the degree is low. A perspective looks at self-esteem from a different angle and discusses how a very high degree of self-esteem could become self-destructive and counter-productive. The magazine also touches upon the issue of child abuse which has traditionally remained a taboo subject and has found little space in discussions and debates. Since it strongly affects self-esteem, it is imperative to understand abuse and learn how to deal with it. A dedicated article focuses on nurturing children to create a peaceful world, a notion that in the present turbulent times assumes a greater level of importance. Sibling rivalry, an area that often has a direct bearing on self-esteem and personality development, is discussed in detail and the concept of discipline as opposed to punishment has been laid out. The subject of behavioral problems and their management has also been touched upon along with the issue of conflict in classroom, which often has a negative influence on childhood self-esteem.

Nurture has tried to cover major factors that influence self-esteem at various stages of a child's development. Each of these facets is a complex subject in itself. However, our brief discussion will help somewhat, in understanding self-esteem and its role in shaping a child's personality. It may also encourage parents to reflect on the subject so as to better understand their child's needs and problems. We hope that we have succeeded in doing that, to however small an extent.

I wish you all worthwhile reading.

Nurture

03

08

12

17

Resources for ECD Practitioners

Reviews

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You can read the articles in this issue plus those that were featured previously in Nurture on **www.ecdpak.com**

Letters to the EDITOR

I read the new edition of 'Nurture' magazine and I liked it very much. All the published articles were very informational. I am a teacher and I would try to apply the provided information in the classroom. I must say this is an excellent effort to at least break the barriers of how people perceive 'play' and its importance in healthy development of children.

Neelam Salman – Teacher, Karachi

I believe that play helps children learn about the world in which they live. They can investigate and discover, test their theories, spatial relationships, explore cause and effect, societal roles and family values. The importance of play has been very well highlighted through the content and I will try and incorporate this element for enriching the learning environment for the children.

Naushaba Perveen – Principal, Rahim Yar Khan

Being an ECD teacher, I believe that play helps in language development. By observing my students during play, I have learnt that they use a vast number of words, and repeating those words enhances their language skills further. I think the topic of play has been explained artistically from different angles in the latest issue.

Ikhlasuddin – ECD Teacher, Chitral

The magazine is excellent. It's a good effort from Sindh Education Foundation towards Early Childhood Development. Play is a universal phenomenon and the importance of play to youngsters should not be underestimated. The fifth issue nicely emphasizes the importance of this activity.

Ronnie J. Daruwalla – Karachi

I received the fifth issue of Nurture and I think it's a good contribution for promoting healthy ECD practices in our country. Developing various skills in children through an activity they love most, i.e. play, is indeed an easy strategy. I would like to suggest that Nurture should be taken out more frequently.

Ateeq-ur-Rehman Anwer – CEO Coastals, Karachi

Parents and teachers don't always understand the importance of play and oftentimes the temptation for most of us is to stop the children from "wasting time playing" and instead spend time in what us adults believe is more constructive. It is good that your magazine has highlighted such a critical issue.

Commander Najeeb Anjum – Principal, Sir Adamjee Institute Karachi

What Is Self-Esteem?

By
Dr. Nilofar Vazir &
Syeda Imrana Raza

Introduction

Self-esteem is generally defined as 'good opinion of one's own character and abilities'. This refers to a positive characteristic about thinking that someone or something is important or valuing that person or thing. Sheslow breaks the two words, self and esteem further. By "self" he means how much value a person has of him/herself and, "esteem" he refers to how a person thinks about the importance he or she has of his/her own abilities. In other words, it may be a favorable opinion, a regard or a way to see oneself and how a particular individual feels about his/her own achievements. This may be influenced by one's nature, special qualities, personality, contextual realities, opportunities and challenges in a real life situation.

Self-esteem is greatly determined and influenced by development and growth. Each child has an individual pattern and timing of growth and development as well as an individual style of learning. Children begin to recognize themselves as early as eighteen months, in fact as soon as they see their face in the mirror; they begin to identify who they are, what they look like, being egocentric they also recognize their identity; that the whole world at home/school revolves around them. Hence, self-recognition lets young children think about their self-understanding and develop their self-recognition. They know that they are different physically but yet learn very early in life that others may have similar characteristics and abilities to themselves. For example, everyone has two eyes and hands.

> Young children's self-esteem is based largely on their perceptions of how important adults value their characteristics and judge them.

Children usually become stubborn during the second and third year due to increasing self-awareness. During the following years, they become less egocentric and learn to play with other children. It is during this time that they learn to recognize that others also have needs such as theirs and others' matter too besides themselves. Three to five year old children usually talk about their physical appearance, hobbies and possessions. Personal family experiences and cultural backgrounds help a child in understanding his or her own social identity. Young children develop different self-help and coping strategies, to become self-sufficient at dressing, feeding and shoe tying. They also learn to manage coping with difficult situations that arise in the classroom such as avoiding fights and winning friends. At five years, children acquire self-help skills and are ready to go to school. For acquiring these skills they need a longer attention span, memory for a complex series of hand movements and the skillfulness to perform them. They also begin to develop a morality. They learn values of honesty, truth, integrity, morals and a few ethical principles such as genuine, righteous ways and fair means for play or games. Therefore, when parents and teachers of young children talk about the need for good self-esteem, they usually mean that children should have "good feelings" about themselves. With young children, self-esteem refers to the extent to which they expect

to be accepted and valued by adults and peers who are important to them.

Our own experiences of working with children have proven that children with a healthy sense of self-esteem are those who are accepted, and cared for by their adults (teachers, parents, caregivers, grand-parents) whom they consider to be important. Their self-esteem further builds when they are assured that these adults have and would go out of their way to ensure their safety and well-being. They are aware that if anything happens to them (if they are hurt, sad, fearful or/and anxious), they would do anything to help them overcome these obstacles, rather than allow them to be upset and worried.

Children often tend to loose their self-esteem when friends, teachers and routines they are familiar with change. Often transition years from one school grade to another make the children disoriented. Hence, during this time their self-esteem is at the lowest ebb. Children with low self-esteem often feel that they are neglected; that important adults and peers in their lives do not accept them, or care enough about them, and would not ensure their safety and well-being.

Therefore, particularly during their early years, young

> **Children often tend to loose their self-esteem when friends, teachers and routines they are familiar with change.**

children's self-esteem is based largely on their perceptions of how important adults value their characteristics and judge them. For example, in families and communities, children who excel in athletics are likely to have a high level of self-esteem, whereas children who are less athletic or who are criticized as being physically inept or clumsy are likely to suffer from low self-esteem. Families, communities, and cultural groups vary in the criteria on which self-esteem is based. For example, some groups may emphasize physical appearance (color, looks, physique), and some may evaluate boys and girls differently. Particularly, in a Pakistani context, in most cases boys are considered to be superior mentally and physically than girls. Learning abilities sometimes are clearly defined as what boys can learn and what girls can learn. Hence, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are also some of the factors that may contribute to low self-esteem among children.

Importance of Self-Esteem

Good self-esteem is important for both children and adults. Self-esteem helps one to hold his/her head high and feel proud of oneself and what an individual can achieve. It gives courage to try new things out and the power to believe in oneself. It allows respecting oneself, even when an individual may make mistakes. When children learn to respect themselves, adults and other children usually respect them as well.

Developmental Stages of Self-Esteem

Human beings seek respect, approval and admiration from other human beings in their lives. Positive self-esteem includes excitement, enthusiasm, interest and confidence. On the other hand, shame, guilt and doubt are associated with low self-esteem. Self-esteem does not develop but is accomplished through mastery of different skills. Children develop their self-esteem when they feel competent; through the establishment of human relationships; and with the feeling of belongingness to the meaningful cultural groups. Our experiences reflect that children with high self-esteem make friends easily and interact socially with others in meaningful ways. They seldom fear or feel threatened by others. It is often

observed that children with a high self-esteem are better academic achievers, more sociable and generally care for and share with others. However, self-esteem of young

> **Children develop their self-esteem when they feel competent; through the establishment of human relationships; and with the feeling of belongingness to the meaningful cultural groups.**

children is affected through the internalisation of a positive image about themselves and their limitations.

There are three developmental stages of self-esteem from birth through the school years. At first stage when a child is born, he or she is passive and just receives the innate behaviour of parents and they provide him the appropriate needs and necessities of life. During the first year of life, the relationship between the infant and the caretaker is of extreme importance. The parents need to be tuned to build self-esteem by understanding the child's needs. A parent's attitude must be changed according to the manner in which the baby reacts and to understand the immediate needs of the child. At the end of the first year, a child begins to differentiate him or herself as a separate individual.

At second stage the toddler begins to differentiate him or herself from the parents. Children, in each new accomplishment, look at their parents for approval. The self-esteem of these children grows as they imitate their parents and siblings' behaviours and develop their language, motor skills and try to become independent.

It is also important that the child learns the limitations set for him or her by the parents. Setting up the appropriate limitations and expectations are helpful for a child to develop a solid self-esteem.

> **The parents need to be tuned to build self-esteem by understanding the child's needs.**

The third stage starts when a child enters school. Parental support is needed for the child to turn this into a positive state of self-esteem. At this stage, the child perceives him or herself according to the influence of peers and learns to face new challenges, frustrations and limitations. It is a socialization stage and children need the approval and praise of their parents, adults, teachers, siblings or friends. These relations are helpful in enhancement of their self-confidence and self-esteem and they continue to seek parental support. It is particularly important that a child stays in a supportive environment to maintain the level of his or her self-esteem.

Helping Children Develop a Healthy Sense of Self-Esteem

The foundations of self-esteem are laid early in life when infants develop attachments with adults like mothers or care-givers who are responsible for them. When adults readily respond to their cries and smiles, babies learn to feel loved and valued. Children come to feel secure and confident by being loved and accepted by people they look up to. As young children learn to trust their parents and others who care for them to satisfy their basic needs, they gradually feel wanted. Self-esteem is also related to children's feelings of belongingness to a group and being able to adequately function in their groups particularly at daycare centres or katchi classes. When toddlers become preschoolers, for example, they are expected to control their impulses and adopt the rules of family and community in which they are growing. Successfully adjusting to these groups helps to strengthen feelings of belongingness in them.

It is important to note that young children are unlikely to have their self-esteem strengthened from excessive praise or flattery. On the contrary, it may raise some doubts in children; many children can see through flattery and may even dismiss an adult who heaps on praise as a poor source of support-one who is not very believable.

Ways of Improving Children's Self-Esteem

Following are some important points that are considered to be helpful in strengthening and supporting a healthy sense of self-esteem in a child:

- Children become increasingly sensitive to the evaluations of their peers. Parents and teachers can help children learn to build healthy relationships with their peers.

- When children develop stronger ties with their siblings, friends or peers in school, they begin to evaluate themselves differently from the way they were taught at home. Adults can help children by being clear about their own values and experiences and teach them how to communicate the same outside their homes.

- Children interact with their peers or learn to function in school or some other place, they may feel accepted

and liked one moment and feel different the next. Adults can help in these instances by reassuring the child that they are well supported and accepted.

- A child's sense of self-worth is more firm when adults respond to the child's interests and efforts with appreciation rather than just praise. For example, if the child shows interest in participating in what you are doing, you may want to include the child in the activity. In this way, adults respond positively to the child's interest by treating it seriously.

- Praise and immediate rewards distract children from the activity they are interested in. Children may develop a habit of showing interest in a task just to receive an incentive.

- Young children are more likely to benefit from tasks and activities that offer a real challenge rather than

those that are merely for fun. For example, adults can involve the child in preparing meals or watering plants that enhance his or her abilities and give a sense of accomplishment.

- When children's self-esteem is raised by the adults who are important to them, it promotes confidence in them. Children should be treated respectfully, asked about views and opinions. Their views and opinions should be taken seriously and given meaningful and realistic feedback.

- Adults can help children to develop and maintain healthy self-esteem by assisting to cope with defeats, rather than emphasizing constant successes. During times of disappointment or crisis, children's self-esteem becomes weak. This can be strengthened when adults let children know that 'it's not about winning but the efforts and hard work you put in.

- Adults can help children reflect on the deed or on a challenging situation which may occur. Children are placed in a better position to deal or cope with any occurring situation if they have prior knowledge of overcoming difficulties.

Conclusion

Most adults and parents want their young children to have a healthy sense of self-esteem. That desire can also be seen in education--schools around the country include self-esteem improvement among their goals. Many observers believe that low self-esteem lies at the bottom of various societal problems. Even though self-esteem has been studied for more than 100 years, specialists and educators continue to debate its precise nature and development. Nevertheless, they generally agree that parents and other adults who are important to children play a major role in laying a solid foundation for a child's development. Parents and caregivers play an important role in strengthening children's self-esteem by treating them respectfully and expressing appreciation to them. Above all, they must keep in mind that self-esteem is an important part of every child's development.

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How can we Strengthen Children's Self-Esteem?

By Uzma Rauf

Why is self-esteem important?

The experiences a child goes through play a vital role in determining whether he or she develops a high or low self-esteem.

Self-esteem is the confidence in one's own worth and abilities. It's about having self-respect and faith in one's self and how we feel about ourselves and our behaviour clearly reflects those feelings. Understanding and accepting oneself helps in understanding and accepting others and the way children and adults feel about themselves affects the way they act. However, these feelings can change with time.

Children's ideas about themselves come from others around them, particularly from parents and their primary caregivers. The children's self-esteem is mostly impacted by the way people, who are important to them, treat them. A child who is happy with an achievement but does not feel loved may eventually experience low self-esteem. Likewise, a child who feels loved but is hesitant about his or her own abilities can also end up with low self-esteem.

Self-esteem fluctuates as a child grows. It is frequently changed and fine-tuned, because it is affected by a child's experiences and new perceptions.

Take the example of a child who is confident, has the ability to cope with his or her classmates, is in a familiar environment, has the support of her teacher and classmates, gets good grades in school work and is also able to help other children. Then this child is sent to a new school and he or she is not familiar with the new teacher and classmates, new environment, ways of teaching, is not supported by the adults in the environment, feels dejected and is embarrassed at times for not meeting others' standards. The child is taken to be a slow learner, difficult and uncooperative. This not only impacts the child's academic performance but also turns him/her away from going to school and affects the interactions at home. The experiences a child goes through play a vital role in determining whether he or she develops a high or low self-esteem. People who are important to children have a great effect on the development of the child's self-esteem.

Characteristics of Children with High and Low Self-Esteem

Children with high self-esteem are comfortable in social settings and enjoy group activities as well as independent pursuits.

Children with healthy self-esteem tend to enjoy interacting with others. They are comfortable in social settings and enjoy group activities as well as independent pursuits.

When challenges arise, they can work towards finding solutions and voice discontent without belittling themselves or others. For example, rather than saying to her/himself, "I can never ever do this, I'm dumb" a child with healthy self-esteem says, "I don't understand this." They know their strengths and weaknesses, and accept them. They take pride in their accomplishments and like to be creative and have their own set of ideas. They show more tolerance to frustration and are able to handle positive and negative emotions appropriately. A sense of optimism prevails.

On the other hand, children with low self-esteem may not want to try new things, and may frequently speak negatively about themselves: "I'm stupid," or "What's the point? Nobody cares about me anyway." They may feel unwanted or unloved and blame others for their own shortcomings. They may exhibit a low tolerance for frustration, giving up easily or waiting for somebody else to take over. They have a tendency to feel, or pretend to feel emotionally indifferent and tend to be overly critical of and easily disappointed in themselves. They doubt their abilities or are often heard saying things like, "I know I can't do it.", "I know that I will fail," or even extremities like, "I'm a loser." Children with low self-esteem see temporary setbacks as permanent, intolerable conditions, and a sense of pessimism dominates.

Helping Children Develop a High Self-Esteem

Remember to offer children encouragement not only for a job well done but also for their efforts.

The development of healthy self-esteem is extremely important to the happiness and success of children and adults both. The foundations of self-esteem are laid early in life when infants develop attachments with adults and care givers who are responsible for them. Children learn about love and acceptance by being loved and accepted by the people they look up to. As young children learn to trust their parents and others who care for them to satisfy their basic needs, they gradually feel wanted, valued and loved.

Self-esteem is associated to children's feelings of belongingness to a group and being able to adequately function in their group. When toddlers start going to school they are expected to control their impulses, to adapt to the rules and regulations of the family and community in which they are growing up. Successfully adjusting to these groups helps to strengthen their feelings of belongingness and as a result their self esteem.

In order to support children in developing a positive sense of self, adults need to watch what they say. Children are very sensitive to their caregivers' words. So you must remember to offer encouragement not only for a job well done but also for their efforts. A child's sense of self-worth is more likely to deepen when adults respond to the child's interests and efforts with appreciation. For example, if your child shows interest in something you are doing, you might include the child in the activity. Or if the child shows interest in an animal in the garden, you might help the child find more information about it. In this way, you respond positively to your child's interest by treating it seriously. Flattery and praise, on the other hand, distract children from the topics they are interested in. Children may develop a habit of showing interest in a topic just to receive flattery.

Help children become involved in constructive experiences. Activities that encourage cooperation rather than competition are especially helpful in fostering self-esteem. Young children are more likely to benefit from tasks and activities that offer a real challenge than from those that are merely frivolous or fun. For example, you can involve your child in chores around the house, such as preparing meals or caring for pets that stretch his/her abilities and give the child a sense of accomplishment.

Encourage children to see a situation in its true light. For example, a child struggling with math may say, "I can't do math. I'm a bad student." A helpful response might be: "You are a good student. You do a great job in school. Math is one subject that you need to spend more time on. Would you like us to work on this together?"

Give positive, accurate feedback. Comments like "You always work yourself up in frenzy!" will make children feel like they have no control over their outbursts. A better statement could be, "You were really mad at your brother. But I appreciate that you didn't yell at him or hit him." This acknowledges a child's feelings, rewards the choice made, and encourages making the right choice again next time. When a child misbehaves, separate the misbehaviour from the child.

Children with High and Low Self-Esteem

Children with high self-esteem are able to:	On the other hand, children with low self-esteem:
• act independently	• avoid trying new things
• assume responsibility	• feel unloved and unwanted
• take pride in his accomplishments	• blame others for his own shortcomings
• tolerate frustration	• feel, or pretend to feel, emotionally indifferent
• attempt new tasks and challenges	• be unable to tolerate a normal level of frustration
• handle positive and negative emotions	• put down his own talents and abilities
• offer assistance to others	• be easily influenced

Source: www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/parenting/self_esteem.shtml

Create a safe, nurturing home environment. Children who don't feel safe or are abused at home will suffer immensely from low self-esteem. A child who is exposed to parents who fight and argue repeatedly may become depressed and withdrawn.

Laugh with your children and encourage them to laugh at themselves. People who take themselves too seriously are undoubtedly decreasing their enjoyment in life. A good sense of humour and the ability to make light of life sometimes, are important ingredients for increasing one's overall enjoyment. Be a positive role model. If you're excessively harsh on yourself, pessimistic, or unrealistic about your abilities and limitations, your child may eventually mirror you. Nurture your own self-esteem, and your child will have a great role model.

Effects of Adults' Self-Esteem on Children

Nurture your own self-esteem, and your child will have a great role model.

We all know that adults and caregivers in a child's life act as 'models'. Children most often pick up not only on the feelings and attitudes of the important adults in their lives, but are also influenced by their language, mannerism and the things these adults do. What goes on inside is of equal importance as what is evident outside and what the adult or caregiver shows the child. Children are always looking up to parents or their primary caregivers for cues about how to behave. Even though adults may not verbally express their emotional reactions, children are nevertheless influenced by it.

Parents/caregivers with low self-esteem tend to live through their children. They expect their children to achieve goals, they themselves could not achieve and show disappointment when children don't. Children feel caught up between trying to please the adults in their lives and doing their own thing. Adults with low self-esteem are often anxious, which distorts communication. Such caregivers may feel threatened by children wanting to be independent and autonomous and tend to interpret such behaviour as rejection of themselves. This only frustrates children. As a result, children are stressed and low self-esteem issues arise.

Actions that may lower a Child's Self-Esteem

Expecting too much or too little from children can be detrimental for the development of healthy self-esteem in children. Criticizing children too often rather than showing appreciation and encouragement should be avoided. Especially scorning or embarrassing children in front of an audience would leave a negative impact on their minds and make them feel unworthy. Calling children clumsy, stupid, lazy, thoughtless, labelling them as failures because of their mistakes only enable children to belittle themselves in front of others. Not letting children fend for themselves, overprotection and even neglect can make children doubt their abilities. Children with low self-esteem are the ones who need our care, love and attention the most. Parents and caregivers are the most important people in a child's life and hence play an important role in developing their self-esteem.

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Understanding Child Abuse

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children -- Where does it hurt?

By Nida Alavi

In Pakistan, child abuse is perceived as an unshakeable taboo by mainstream society. Even if the taboo is realized, some feel they are not 'qualified' to discuss it responsibly or that they are not in a position to affect any kind of change. And then there are those who even deny it exists. The fact remains that there is no one way to approach the subject of abuse and there are certainly no one-stop solutions. But to remain in denial of possibly one of the most damaging and widespread forms of children's exploitation is dangerous. Furthermore, to be aware and not act upon it is simply inexcusable.

It stands to reason that for any kind of meaningful change to come about, there needs to be recognition that a problem exists and that problem needs to be addressed. We are looking to build a society that is sensitive to crimes of child abuse and condemns them. To be successful, we must educate communities to admit the existence of abuse, understand how it affects children and thereby empower them to actively reduce it.

Take a moment to revisit a child's world. 'Everything around you is larger than life'. 'A bruise from a simple fall grows into a gaping wound causing severe pain'. 'A pile of rubbish turns into a dark cave by night'. 'A shiny piece of foil found on the ground becomes a prized possession for its magical reflecting powers'. 'A strict remark becomes a devastating criticism for your entire life.'

Now step into the shoes of a child who has been abused. Imagine the grief, the bewilderment and the downright horror within, as this young soul struggles to make sense of this avalanche of feelings – all enlarged several times over.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse, simply put, is doing something or a failure to do something that causes harm to a child or puts the child in a potentially harmful situation. It can take several forms: physical, sexual, emotional and even neglect. A 2007 report published by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) revealed that the

Types of Abuse	Definitions	'Possible' Signs
Physical	Any kind of unexplained injury to the child's body.	• Any unexplained injuries like burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, black eyes, damage to internal organs • Fading bruises or other marks noticeable after being absent from school • Withdrawals if approached by adults
Sexual	Can take many forms including touching the child inappropriately, forcing the child to exhibit his or her private body parts or showing the child someone else's private body parts, engaging the child in any form of sexual intercourse and exposing the child to pornography.	• Any sexual behaviour or unusual sexual knowledge that seems inappropriate for the child's age • Fearful behaviour (nightmares, depression, unusual fears, unusual quietness, desired loneliness) • Sudden change in appetite • Abdominal pain, bedwetting (especially if the child has already been toilet trained), pain or bleeding in private parts • Presence of sexually transmitted disease • Seems reluctant to change clothes for or participate in physical activities

Types of Abuse	Definitions	'Possible' Signs
Emotional	Often closely linked to physical or sexual abuse but can also happen through verbal battering of the child. Could include intentionally frightening the child, threatening the child with any form of harm or even just putting the child on the receiving end of unusually harsh criticism.	• Sudden change in self-confidence • Headaches or stomachaches without medical cause • Unusual fears, increased nightmares • Shows extremes in behaviour e.g. excessive complaints, overly demanding or aggressive behaviour • Struggles in school
Neglect	Can include physical neglect (withholding food, clothing, shelter or other necessities), emotional neglect (withholding love, comfort, or affection), or medical neglect (withholding needed medical care).	• Frequent unexplained absences from school • Failure to gain weight • Desperately affectionate behaviour • Consistent poor hygiene • Lack of weather appropriate clothing • Unusually large appetite • Stealing

number of 'reported' cases of child abuse in Pakistan had increased from 4,386 to 5,268 in 2007 alone (as reported in August 2008 of The Daily Times). Yet more statistics reveal that almost 70 percent of all reported victims of abuse are 17 years or younger in age (as reported in 'Beyond Child Abuse' in October 2008 of The News International). The urgency of addressing child abuse lies in its frequent, widespread occurrence across different socioeconomic, ethnic and educational strata of Pakistani society. But do these numbers reveal the real story?

We must remember that talking about actual abuse is extremely difficult for its victims. With young children, this is further complicated by the likelihood that they probably won't have the comprehension or even language to describe what happened. The abuser may be blackmailing the child into keeping quiet. Furthermore, we live in a largely unforgiving society which still attaches a lot of stigma to the subject of abuse. Victims are often discriminated against by the people around them for

supposedly being 'contaminated' in some way. Social judgments of this kind are naïve, harsh and uncalled for. These attitudes either stem from limited awareness or are indicative of a social conscience that is dangerously ill.

The challenge of discussing abuse grows even more complex within families. Abuse within relatives is swept under the carpet for fear of being rejected by loved ones, blamed for making false accusations and bringing shame to the family as a whole – this multitude of reasons discourage many from rattling cages closest to home.

On a much larger scale, abuse of children continues without being reported also because there is no law which deals specifically with the punishment of those who perpetrate the abuse and the protection of those who are victims – a frightening reality for children who have suffered and particularly those who want to talk about it.

Sexual Abuse – what we "think" we know -

We live in the company of proverbial truths that caution us against the dangers of making judgments based on little knowledge. Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, is no exception. Our limited awareness of sexual abuse, especially of our youngest, has fostered a culture of insensitivity to their plight. Not only that, but it has also bred a seemingly endless spectrum of misconceptions regarding this form of mistreatment. It is imperative that we acknowledge what we have misunderstood. More importantly, it is our responsibility to deconstruct and correct these 'myths' in our and others' minds.

Myths about Sexual Abuse

UNTRUE	TRUE
Children are usually abused by strangers	A large majority of children are abused by someone they know
Sexual abuse only happens in low-income, "poor" families	Sexual abuse happens across all socioeconomic communities
Sexual abuse only happens in uneducated, "illiterate" families	Sexual abuse happens in highly "literate" AND lesser educated families
Sexual abuse is tabooed – therefore, it doesn't happen	The taboo is against talking about sexual abuse, not the abuse happening in the first place
Only girls are at-risk for or victims of sexual abuse	Both young girls and boys are at-risk for and become victims of sexual abuse
Children "make up" sexual abuse	Children do not naturally have such knowledge, therefore they won't have the words to talk about it unless they have experienced it
Statistics about sexual abuse tell us what we need to know	Statistics about sexual abuse are based only on 'reported' cases. Most instances of sexual abuse go unreported, therefore, statistics offer an incomplete understanding of the entire picture
The abused child will always feel negatively towards the offender	The child may have confused feelings towards the offender, but rarely experiences negative feelings when the offender is a family member
Non-offending mothers in families where abuse is taking place do not know about the abuse	A majority of mothers know that abuse is taking place within the family, even if they don't talk about it

So what can we do?

Child abuse does not lend itself to a 'one size fits all' set of responses. The intricacies are much too complex and differ for every victim. Having said that each of us can educate ourselves on several fronts. Remembering that children are reluctant to talk about it, we should be aware of possible warning signs that may identify an instance of abuse. In the rare event that a child discloses such an experience, how you respond is critical.

Offering the child a safe, neutral context for conversation is most important to start a conversation. Simple behaviours like maintaining eye contact, listening to the child, believing the child and keeping the child's confidentiality are integral to maintaining the trust the child is investing in you. To the best of your ability, try and understand the nature and urgency of the situation without making the child feel like he/she is being interrogated or harassed into sharing information. Let the child tell his/her own story and leave out your own assumptions and judgments. There is no need to comment on the child's situation as being good or bad. While you may experience a tirade of feelings yourself, be they anger, worry, or confusion, it is imperative that you remain calm and in control of your own responses and emotions. As you listen, gently assess the safety needs of the child and what the child wants from you.

In your role as confidant, above all, the child will need your support and reassurance that he/she is not to blame for any part of what has happened. Furthermore, while respecting the child's need not to publicize this experience, you need to inform the child that you will have to share this information only with someone whose job is to help children who have had these kinds of experiences.

At this point, depending on the child's state, you may need to contact a clinical psychologist who will provide a treatment plan that can include medication, along with practical and emotional support. Secondly you may immediately contact a reliable individual or organization that is equipped to respond to the demands of the child's situation.

Several organizations in Pakistan are working towards improving prospects for victims of abuse. A few are listed below, along with their website addresses which should be visited for further information.

Madadgaar Helpline (111 – 911-922) - Responds to distress calls of children and women who have been victimized by abuse by offering immediate assistance and linking them to long-term rehabilitation.
www.madadgar.org

War Against Rape (WAR) – Provides free legal aid, psychological counseling and medical assistance to victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence.
www.war.org.pk

Sahil – Offers crisis intervention and free legal aid to children victimized by sexual abuse. Also engages in research, legal advocacy and provision of resources.
www.sahil.org

Aahung – Carries out research to build awareness, advocate and develop resources on sexual health and rights in Pakistan. Offers consultancy services to schools, hospitals and other community organizations.
www.aahung.org

Conclusion

Child abuse is the most unpardonable crime against humanity. It robs children of that basic element we all need in our lives – trust. It destroys their faith in the ability and sometimes, even willingness, of the world to protect them from harm. Immersing oneself in just a few moments of an abused child's life is a brutal experience. The fact that children will rarely share these moments is also worth our concern. We can talk to them about the difference between a 'good touch' and a 'bad touch' from another person, but the question remains, is that enough? No. We, as adults, have to take personal responsibility for understanding the many faces abuse could take and recognize that its young victims may be among us. There is no trauma more debilitating and no greater undoing of the moral fabric of our society – more than ever, the time to shake off the taboo of child abuse is now.

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About the Writer:
Nida Alavi has an M.Ed in Early Childhood Special Education from Peabody College, Vanderbilt University and a B.A from Ohio Wesleyan University, USA where she majored in Early Childhood Education and Psychology. Nida has worked extensively with young children in the US and Pakistan. She is now a full-time member of the TRC team and develops trainings in special education.

Nurturing Children *to* Create *a* Caring *and* Peaceful World

By Ellen Mays

'There is no time left for anything but to make peacework a dimension of our every waking activity'
(Elise Boulding)

Children today live in a time in which they are constantly bombarded with images of violence and conflict. The news is plagued with reports of wars being waged and fought on a daily basis, video games center around fighting enemies to death, children's cartoons depict characters hurting one another with the intent of making the viewer laugh at the violence, and television programs are laced with constant elements of hostility; even toys are equipped with the latest guns promoting aggressive play. Unfortunately for numerous children, violence is not an abstract concept seen on television, but rather a reality which is witnessed and lived everyday. It is seen in the streets in which they play, roads on which they travel to school, and in the areas their families shop.

What are the effects and consequences of regular exposure to violent images and experiences on children? A famous research study, by Albert Bandura, discovered that children who were exposed to regular systematic images and models of violence and aggression were more likely to act out physically in violent and aggressive ways than those that were not exposed to violent images. Bandura's findings illustrate the cyclical effects of viewing and experiencing violence firsthand and the overwhelming necessity to break this cycle of violence through peace education.

Establishing lasting peace is the work of education. It is imperative that educating children to understand violence and the peaceful alternatives to resolving conflicts begin in the earliest years, when children's initial concepts about their surrounding world and how it functions are being formed. The process of nurturing children to create a caring, peaceful world involves empowering children with skills, attitudes, and knowledge to create a safer non-violent world. These skills and attitudes include empathy, compassion, love, tolerance, caring, and understanding.

The key to creating a culture of peace in the classroom is to infuse concepts of peace into every aspect of the daily routine and curriculum.

Every teacher can infuse concepts of peace and justice in the lesson by using their imagination to tailor the content to meet the needs of the early childhood classroom. The most appropriate method to integrate and infuse peace education is to create a cooperative, affirmative environment in which children can appreciate who they are and what they are capable of. Teachers who display consistent treatment of all children and accept divergent thoughts or styles of life, can successfully plant seeds of cooperative living, the ability to love oneself, and the capacity to accept other people despite their differences. Children in the early years need to accept diversity by learning about different cultures and figuring out about their own backgrounds. They should discuss stereotyping and name-calling. Why people are different? Interacting with children from different backgrounds; religious, socioeconomic, and cultural, can teach them that people throughout the world have needs similar to theirs, and yet everyone is different and unique.

The key to creating a culture of peace in the classroom is to infuse concepts of peace into every aspect of the daily routine and curriculum.

An imperative component to peace education is the element of social activism which accompanies the acquisition of peace building skills. Children from a very young age can understand the concept that if something is wrong and unfair then something needs to be done to fix the situation. In fact, young children love to brainstorm possible solutions to problems. This group brainstorming is essential to empower children in recognizing their role and ability in making a difference in changing the world. One

Children in the early years need to accept diversity by learning about different cultures and figuring out about their own backgrounds.

project that I engaged in with my kindergarten students involved learning about chocolate and how the cocoa plant was harvested through child labor. My students were not only shocked, but were deeply angered by the fact that the children could not go to school and had to spend their days working under deplorable conditions. As a class, we wrote to the chocolate corporations discussing our anger, decided not to eat chocolate from certain companies, and then raised money by selling homemade chocolate to send to the children for school fee. And to think all of this, activism was being generated from a kindergarten class filled with four and five year olds. This invaluable experience allowed the children to identify the problem, build compassion for the children, and devise a plan to do their part to help "fix" the problem. It was an incredibly empowering experience for all those involved and an example of a project which fosters those peace building skills.

Nurturing and fostering a culture of peace in the classroom extends to the philosophy and methodology in which teachers approach classroom behavior management. Arguments and disagreements between children are common occurrences in the early childhood classroom. Children may argue about what to build in the block area, someone not being their friend, or a child that refuses to share. When faced with such situations, many teachers direct children on what to do and how to act: 'give back the toy', 'share', 'don't say that.' In this instance, the teacher does not allow children to work out their problems on their own and ignores a valuable teaching moment. One of the most important aspects when creating a culture of peace is to allow the children to be active agents in creating a peaceful space. One way to do this is to establish the Peace Table. The Peace Table is the place where children can take one another to discuss what is bothering them. At the Peace Table, children engage in conversation about what they disliked about the other's behavior and what they would like to have happen. What is absolutely amazing and inspiring is that children resolve the conflict on their own without the authoritarian demand of the teacher. Thus children take ownership of their actions and work together to create solutions. The Peace Table is designed as a safe and peaceful place to go to solve problems nonviolently with their peers. At first, children require a great deal of adult support and input in negotiating their problems, and often, it is the adult who guides the discussion.

The steps which can be followed to guide these conflict resolution discussions are:

● Initiate the mediation. It looks like there is a problem here. Or, what's happening here?

● Clarify each child's perspective. In this step, each child

Key Messages for Promoting Compassion in Children

- Violence and hate are never solutions to anger
- Groups of people should not be judged by the actions of a few
- We are strong because of our diversity
- All people deserve to be treated with fairness, respect and dignity
- We need to support each other and work together to help those most in need during difficult times.
- Vengeance and justice are not necessarily the same
- History shows us that intolerance only causes harm
- We need to work for peace in our communities and around the world
- Tolerance is a lifelong endeavor

Source: www.nasponline.org

One of the most important aspects when creating a culture of peace is to allow the children to be active agents in creating a peaceful space.

is given the opportunity to explain his/her perspective on the situation.

- **Summarize.** In this step, the teacher clearly articulates a summary of each child's perspective.

- **Generate alternative solutions.** What can we do about this problem? In this step, the teacher supports children's generation of alternative solutions.

- **Agree on a solution.** Here, both children agree on a solution to the problem. It is critical to allow sufficient time for children to arrive at a mutually satisfying solution.

- **Follow through.** The teacher checks with the children later to be sure that the solution actually satisfied everyone. You had a problem with that doll before. You two solved that problem. Did your solution work?

These discussions provide opportunities for everyone involved in a conflict to feel empowered through participating in the generation of solutions to the problems. This process is effective with many types of problems and conflicts that arise daily in an early childhood classroom. Some of these conflicts involve possessions (two children want the same truck at the same time), position (two children want to sit on the teacher's left side at the same time), exclusion (you can't

play at the texture table with us), and misunderstandings or accidents (I didn't mean to hurt you when I stepped on your finger). As time goes on and children gain more experiences with the problem-solving process, they are able to become more and more independent in clarifying misunderstandings and nonviolently solving their problems at the Peace Table. This method encourages children to accept diversity and to attempt to understand differing perspectives. This approach helps children to see all problems as solvable and supports children in their attempts to "solve the problem." In an environment where adults assist children to feel empowered to actively solve interpersonal problems, children will quickly become peacemakers.

Peace education is in essence empowerment education.

Peace education is in essence empowerment education. It has the ability to promote positive self-esteem by showing that ordinary people, especially children, have the power to do something effective about the problems that arise in the world. Through peace education, students learn alternatives to violence and how to resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively in order to create and nurture a culture of peace. Peace education empowers children by equipping them with a new set of peace building skills to apply and contribute positively to their various environments: classrooms, communities, and societies as a whole. With images of hope, children can develop the courage and skills needed to create a better society and become the peacemakers that will bring change to the world.

About the Writer:

Ms. Ellen Mays is a peace educationist who has experience in the field of early years teaching. She designs and undertakes projects with children on themes of peace, global citizenship, and moral responsibility for humanity that aim to ultimately empower children to find and value their own voice and role in creating a more peaceful world.

101
Ways to Praise a Child

Wow. You're special. Excellent. Good. Well done. I knew you could do it. Super Star. Looking good. You are catching on. How smart. That's incredible. Remarkable job. You are a winner. Hip Hip Hooray. Magnificent. Fantastic. You are on your way. You are spectacular. Super. Beautiful work. Nothing can stop you now. You are fantastic. You are precious. You have discovered the secret. Great discovery. You are exciting. You are a real trooper. Terrific. Outstanding performance. You figured it out. You are a treasure. You are a good friend. A big hug. You learned it right. Now you are flying. Beautiful. I respect you. Phenomenal. Way to go. Outstanding. Great. Neat. Remarkable. I'm proud of you. Nice work. You are on top of it. Now you have got it. Good Job. Hot dog. You are beautiful. You make me happy. You are important. Beautiful. You are on target. How nice. You are darling. Super job. Good for you. Dynamite. Awesome. Fantastic job. Bingo. You are responsible. You are fun. Marvelous. You are growing up. You tried hard. What a good listener. You mean a lot to me. That's correct. What an imagination. You are incredible. Bravo. I like you. You are sensational. A+ job. Beautiful sharing. You are important. You are a joy. You are A-OK-my buddy. You are perfect. A big kiss. You brighten my day. That's the best. I love you! You mean the world to me. You have got a friend. You make me laugh. I trust you. You are wonderful. Exceptional performance. p.s. Remember, a smile is worth thousand Words!

Interview with Ms. Rubina Feroz

Ms. Rubina Feroz has been associated with the University of Karachi for the last 22 years as an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology. She has established practice as a clinical psychologist with a clientele including families and children. She has conducted market researches with various multinationals. Ms. Feroz is a regular participant in a popular morning show on a private television channel where she gives expert advise on issues related to psychological needs of children and adverse effects on their health emanating from issues of broken families, child abuse, etc.

By Sana Pervez & Sadaf Junaid Zuberi

Q What is self-esteem? How can it be different for a child and an adult? When does a child start to develop the sense of self-esteem?

Self-esteem can be defined as how you see and respect yourself and how you visualize your position in the world. There is no specific age from which the child starts to develop the sense of self-esteem. It might start to develop when a child starts going out in the world or when his or her sibling is born for example. It is then that a child starts to identify the concept of his own identity and realizes that there is something which exists beyond his or her physical being i.e. the emotional self. Undoubtedly a child's self-esteem is more fragile as compared to that of an adult and it may be a little later that a child is able to express the self-esteem need in words. Therefore parents parents have to be really careful in order to protect the self-esteem of their child as it can easily get hurt.

Q What role do parents play in enhancing self-esteem of their children?

Parents must know that building the child's sense of self esteem is very important. But equally important is the awareness of how to give the child a strong sense of self worth. Right from when a child is conceived, the environment starts affecting the fetus. If the mother experiences stress during her pregnancy, her reaction to stress is registered by the unborn baby and may hinder in the growth and development of the new born.

Researchers have linked stress experienced by pregnant women to higher incidences of mental and behavioural problems in their children. So I strongly recommend that both the expecting parents attend informational/educational sessions or workshops on child rearing and parenting. Unfortunately such programs are not very readily accessible to people here in Pakistan.

As for once the child is born, I will not say there is any simple, one-size-fit-all strategy. There are several effective techniques though which parents can use to help boost self esteem in their child. Communicating with children is the key as also letting them know how much you as a parent value them. The quality and quantity of time you spend with your child is important as well. Quality time is time that is enjoyable, interactive, and focused on your child. Children need some quality time with their parents every day. Also reinforcing children's good behaviours and empowering them to make decisions and pursuing independent hobbies can help build children's self esteem and help them lead a happier and more successful life.

I will add one more thing for parents here from my personal experience. You should observe your child while he/she plays. You will be surprised to see that the child mimics the parent(s) a lot of times. And this can be your best feedback mechanism for parents to reflect on their own behaviours towards the child and other people and improve them.

Q **The more you praise your child, the more self esteem your child will have. Do you agree with this statement or do you think lavish praise and constant complimenting result in negative reinforcement?**

Praise doesn't spoil a child. Infact, it is one of the most powerful tools that parents and caregivers can use to influence a child's actions. But let me add that neither skimping nor squandering praise is an effective strategy. To be effective, praise or positive reinforcement should be intermittent not overdone. Intermittent praise helps in strengthening the desired behaviour.

> *Misunderstandings are part of any relationship but the arguments must not take place in front of the kids.*

Children need encouragement and praise at all stages of their growth. In the early years, continuous praising is alright but as the child grows older you should phase out excessive use of compliments and make children truly earn your acclaim. This will make them strive to do things better the next time around. On the other hand, if you are squandering praise, children will know sooner that the compliments are unrealistic and may discount much of your praise as being ridiculous. So more praise may not necessarily lead to a higher self-esteem in a child at the end of the day.

Q **Often we find children getting irritated when parents define limits. What is your advice for parents who are trying to enforce rules to discipline children and do you think punishment can be effective sometimes in shaping a child's behavior?**

The hardest part of being a parent is that you must carry out discipline as you relay love and affection. Setting rules and regulations tell your children of your expectations of them. But rule setting works best when parents define limits that are realistic, consistent and communicated to the child well in advance. For example if you have discussed with your child that he/ she will go to bed at a particular time every evening then let there be no exceptions to the rule even if the child puts up resistance.

The earlier you define rules and limits the better and easier it is for children to understand your expectations of them. But you must lay down rules as per your child's age and level of responsibility. And it is important that you communicate the rules clearly and make the child understand things logically. Do not undermine your child's intelligence, talk to him or her and explain why he or she is not allowed to do something. Conversation and dialogue are key in making a child distinguish between right and wrong behaviour.

Punishment I would say is not a solution. Yelling or using harsh punishments such as spanking do stop bad behaviour but only temporarily. The best way to help the child understand that a certain behaviour is not acceptable is to take away, for example, a favourite toy from the child for a while. Discipline works best when it is immediate, mild, and brief.

Q **How can conflicts and arguments between parents affect a child's self-esteem? What are the effects of domestic violence?**

Conflict between adults can be distressing and harmful for children. It can stand in the way of two adults working together and supporting each other in the task of parenting. Misunderstandings are part of any relationship but the arguments must not take place in front of the children. If your child is witness to severe and frequent yelling, discord or unspoken hostility he or she is more likely to experience problems such as depression, aggression and disobedience, or poor performance at school.

Infancy is a critical developmental period. If there is tension between parents, it could adversely affect a child's self-esteem. It could develop inferiority complex in the child which might later take the shape of depression. These characteristics are likely to become more evident when the child grows up. Also children who grow up seeing physical violence are more likely to experience personal and social problems such as poor health, poor sleeping habits, excessive anger, disruptive attachment towards parents etc. And as I said earlier, children often imitate behavious they witness. Being witness to episodes of domestic violence might give a notion to the child that violence is an acceptable behaviour and they may turn out to be abusive adults.

> *Parents have to be really careful in order to protect the self-esteem of their child as it can easily get hurt.*

So managing conflicts is vital for the health and happiness of your children. Here I feel a strong role of pre-marriage counseling so the couples realize their roles and responsibilities as partners and later as parents and continuously work on their relationship for the sake of health and happiness of the entire family.

Q **What can be the impact of physical or psychological maltreatment of a child at home?**

Child maltreatment includes both the abuse and the neglect of a child and can affect his or her development physically, intellectually, and emotionally. As a practicing

clinical psychologist, I have been witness to many child victims who present with cases of low self-esteem, anxiety, emotional instability, antisocial behaviours, dependency, aggression or violence, low academic achievement, learning impairments, etc. And I always emphasize a simultaneous counseling for both the child and the couple.

Conversation is the key in making a child distinguish between right and wrong behavior.

Q How can sibling rivalry be a danger to the child's self-esteem? How would you suggest one deal with this?

When sibling rivalry prevails, each child in a family competes to define who he/she is as individual and wants to show that he/she is separate from the siblings. Children may feel they are getting unequal amounts of their parents' attention and responsiveness. Siblings who watch their parents fight are often more likely to fight among themselves as compared to children whose parents share a healthy relationship.

In order to deal with sibling rivalry, parents have to make sure that a friendly relationship develops between the siblings. If there is a fight, parents must not put too much focus upon which child is to blame but they should try to set up a win-win situation so that each child gains something. Such techniques would help the child in learning to value another person's perspective, to compromise and negotiate.

Q What are the indicators by which parents can identify feelings of low self-esteem in their child?

Parents can identify the feelings of low self-esteem in their child by observing the behaviour. Usually one of the first symptoms of a child suffering from low self-esteem is that he or she becomes quiet, shy and more reserved than before. Parents must discount this symptom if their child is shy by nature. Low self-esteem children often also avoid trying new things, show signs of fear, continuously stammer and stutter, are unable to tolerate a normal level of frustration, suffer from inferiority complex and eventually depression.

Q How can parents help a child in dealing with school pressures?

Firstly, parents must avoid putting too much pressure on the child for academic achievement. Parental pressure vis-à-vis academic performance has been seen to substantially contribute to stress in children. This stress often times manifests itself in disrupted sleeping patterns, fatigue, mood swings and affected appetite in children.

As a parent, it is important for you to understand that each child has his or her own interests and needs. Imposing your unrealistic expectations on your child or holding siblings or friends as shining examples of academic success and making comparisons will only lead to undue worries and cause bitter feelings. It may also result in low self-esteem issues in the child.

To deal with academic pressures, you can facilitate the child in developing time management skills and various studying techniques. Remember that your child's physical and mental well-being is most important and the rest comes later.

Q How can counseling with health professionals be helpful for a child in coping with low self-esteem?

Children are always scared to share their secrets with friends, cousins etc. that they might not remain confidential. Discussing things with a counselor can help children open up, understand their feelings and eventually change their behaviour. This is especially helpful for coping with a child's low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and stubborn behaviors. It is important for schools to have a counselor so that such issues can be discussed and dealt with at the right time.

Unfortunately it is a very common practice that only the victim (child suffering from low self-esteem) is brought for counseling when it is the parents who require simultaneous or at times greater therapy. As a practicing psychologist, I have had numerous cases where after meeting the child I have identified that the problem is due to the unhealthy relationship between parents. But when I ask them to take therapy, they step back.

If there is a fight, parents must not put too much focus upon which child is to blame but they should try to set up a win-win situation so that each child gains something.

So there is a need for sure to get expert help for the child but more importantly to realize if you as a parent need it equally. My only advice to all current and future parents is to love and respect each other first before you love your child.

Resources for Parents & Caregivers

- The Arguments against Saying 'Good Job!'
- To a Child, Love is Spelled T-I-M-E
- Dealing with Sibling Rivalry
- How to Prepare Siblings for Your New Arrival
- Discipline is better than Punishment

The Arguments against Saying 'Good Job!'

By Samreen Ahsan

I am not a psychologist. Neither am I a teacher. I am not even a mother. But I was at a time in my life, a child. And I still am an older sister to much younger siblings. Suffice it to say that I have had to face and deal with issue of self-esteem – up, close and personal.

As children we function in two universes. One at home, around caring and doting family members; and the other at school, a more competitive and challenging playing field with more objective members such as teachers. There is a rich repertoire of observations and research done by experts which relates to the issue of times when children are over-indulged by parents and subjected to endless acknowledgement and praise. At many of these times, parents are overly compensating children in an effort to not be the kind of 'removed' parents they had. Problem is, there is a fine line between praise that feeds the positive development in a child and that which may end up doing the opposite.

> **Parents must try to assure the kids that perfection is not expected of anyone at all.**

As parents and elders we tend to think that rewarding children with positive feedback on school work increases their interest in learning. But could we be damning them with the wrong kind of praise? Often times children, who are praised as smart, special and talented at home, end up stumbling at school when faced with challenges that do not immediately reinforce the mantras they hear at home. They are also more likely to avoid tasks at which they may fail than children who are praised instead of their hard work. And they are more apt to lie and cheat later in life as a result of this. Psychologist Polly Young-Eisendrath calls it the self-esteem trap.

Recent research indicates that congratulating kids for working hard (rather than complimenting their innate ability) is the best way to enhance their self-development and self-esteem. Praise focused on achievements and talent raises a child's own expectation of being exceptional and the pressure on oneself to be exceptional which creates restlessness and self-consciousness. And overly praised children do not outgrow these setbacks.

Furthermore, children's ability must not be decided upon their test scores, as a child with a high Intelligence Quotient (IQ) level might not be able to perform well in a given test at times due to various external factors. The focus must be upon the child's efforts i.e. the process rather than result must be kept in mind.

Psychologists blame the over–achievement syndrome faced by children today on the fact that the viewpoint of parenting has shifted from raising a citizen and a member of a family to being overly focused on the self. Certainly, this is an offshoot of the competitive, materialistic, and upwardly climbing society of today.

Adults need to be conscious of the words spoken to children and need to deliberately shun the notion of achievement versus the effort. They must try to ensure the kids that perfection is not expected of anyone at all. Labeling is something no child should either personally experience or be encouraged to do when referring to others. By labeling a child smart or talented, parents are in effect outsourcing his or her self-esteem. The more children are praised, the more they may be looking over their shoulder: 'Am I going to get praise?' Do people think this is good?' Worse still, it removes the activity from their own enjoyment and self-evaluation to someone else's.

Psychologists advise fostering in children a 'growth

Is a High Self-Esteem in Children Self Destructive?

What is wrong with helping a person feel good about him or herself? What is wrong with encouraging? Nothing is wrong, unless that praise and encouragement are done in excess to the point of insincerity. What happens when kids, or adults for that matter, receive feedback that contradicts their favorable view of themselves? What happens when people think so highly of themselves that they feel others are not giving them the respect or attention they deserve? If they've been told that they are wonderful and great and not to let anyone tell them differently, they may act out when someone clues them into their imperfections.

Studies of violent behaviour show that high self-esteem is more associated with violence than is low self-esteem. Too much emphasis on making kids feel great, no matter what, may lead to problems down the road. Kids deserve to know about their weaknesses, along with their strengths. They need to learn that they are loved, but that they, as well as everyone, have room to grow. Kids should be taught that not everyone will win, not everyone will get a prize. Yes, we need to stand up for ourselves when we are wronged, but we also need to be gracious losers and understand that sometimes, we will be the one who is wrong.

Source: Excerpted from an article by Afton Nelson www.associatedcontent.com

Praising a child's strategy and process is logical which will serve a child well as he or she gets on the road to independence. Especially important for parents is to set goals on what their child should be doing on his or her own by certain ages. For example, by age 11, children should be dealing with managing their grades on their own. By the same token, teenagers should do their own college and university applications. By stepping out of the way and letting children tackle problems on their own, will build true self-esteem. Getting children to that stage begins with praising effort and teaching them that success grows through hard work, this in turn leads them to bounce back from failures and excel despite challenges.

> Adults must avoid saying things such as 'you could have done better,' as it will only instill in a child that thrills are in winning and not in experience.

On the contrary, praising talent alone can cause students to conclude that intelligence is a fixed, ingrained quality, leading them to avoid obstacles and fail to achieve their full potential. Confidence allows for logical thinking and belief in one's ability to think for oneself. And confidence itself is borne of knowing that mistakes are admissible, and making a mistake does not make one less intelligent.

Psychologists encourage both parents and teachers to present intelligence as a changeable (not fixed) quality, in order how to foster a 'growth mindset' that values challenges and hard work as a way to build intelligence and success. The family has to start conveying that challenges are fun, as do teachers.

Parents can swap tales of daily struggles at the dinner table and punctuate conversation with phrases such as 'What an interesting mistake! I'm learning from it, too.'

mindset' that they can develop their abilities through effort. Resilient kids do not think they are bad when they fail at something. The underlying message here is not to 'not praise', but to praise in a constructive manner that spurs confidence within a child. For example, a child taking part in a sporting event does not need to score a medal to warrant praise and encouragement. Even a child coming in last deserves to be praised for participating and to be told by parents 'we are so happy for you. It was wonderful to see you taking part in the race and enjoying yourself.' Parents must avoid saying things such as 'you could have done better,' as it will only instill in a child that thrills are in winning and not in experience. This will take away the essence of every experience the child goes through while growing up. For kids who do achieve a spectacular result such as a high finish in a race or a handful of goals in a football game, the praise does need to acknowledge this feat. It would appear strange to a child to not have something extraordinary mentioned and could also negatively affect self-esteem. This fine line must be identified by parents.

Praise: Then & Now

TRADITION	RECOMMENDATION
You're brilliant	I really like the way you tried all different ways and found one that worked.
You're a great cricket player	I'm really happy for you – you worked really hard on the ground today.
You're smart	I like the way you took on a hard task. I like the way you stuck to it.
You're so talented	You're stretching yourself. You're trying new things.
You're a good artist	That drawing makes me happy. Tell me about it.
You're a great painter	I like the way you use colors.

> **Praising talent alone can cause students to conclude that intelligence is a fixed, ingrained quality, leading them to avoid obstacles and fail to achieve their full potential.**

If a smart kid brings home a series of straight As, parents should not hesitate to praise the child's innate brilliance but should offer help to think of more challenging work.

Rather than intimidating children, teachers can also make tough lessons seem enjoyable by saying 'Boy, this is hard. This is what I call fun' and 'Let's do something hard that we can learn from, not something easy and boring.'

In order to avoid misrepresenting situations to children, and getting carried away with our own adult emotions, psychologists recommend evaluating regular commendations against more balanced ones to foster independence of thought and encourage creativity and drive in children.

Study after study has shown that those with a growth mindset focus on learning rather than grades and are ultimately more successful. Children, young adults and ultimately fully-grown adults enjoy the thrill of doing something more when they have growth mindsets. For them, it is not about crossing the finish line first, it is about running breathlessly with their peers, wind in their face, and pushing their bodies to the limit. For them, it is not about having their painting displayed on the classroom wall but about the joy of creating a picture and mixing colors to bring that picture to life.

Believing that intelligence is a fixed quality not only narrows the definition of success from learning to high grades but also leads students to believe that having to make an effort to achieve something is a sign of stupidity or lesser intelligence.

Parents, teachers and mentors therefore have to maintain the sanctity of effort for those in their guardianship. A child who can recount the seven times table in a minute is no more intelligent or important than one who takes three minutes to do the same. Take a second now to reflect on our adult world. Do we, as adults, count the friend who makes the most money as an Investment Banker among us as the truly successful peer? Or do we count the friend who creates beautiful birthday cakes as a baker but makes much less than the Banker's salary as successful? Truth is, both are successful if they are doing something that motivates them or something that they enjoy doing.

So teach your child to love the process of doing, to love learning from mistakes, and to love sharing those mistakes. For in essence, you are teaching that child to love him / her self.

The Arguments against Saying 'Good Job!'

Praise Technique to Shape Children's Behaviour

Praise is a valuable shaper; children want to please you and keep your approval. Yet, you can easily overdo it. Praise the behaviour, not the person. Praises like "good girl" or "good boy" risk misinterpretation and are best reserved for training pets. These labels are too heavy for some children. ("If I don't do well, does that mean I'm bad?") Better is: "You did a good job cleaning your room." "That's a good decision." "I like the way you used lots of color in this picture." The child will see that the praise is sincere since you made the effort to be specific; it shows that you're paying attention.

Change Ways to Praise
To keep your child's attention, change the delivery of your accolades. As you pass by the open door of the cleaner room, say: "Good job!" Show with body language a thumbs-up signal for the child who dresses herself. Written praises are a boon in large families. They show extra care. Private praises help, too. Leave little "nice work" notes on pillows, yellow "post-its" on homework, messages that convey that you noticed and that you are pleased. Children need praise, but don't overdo it. As an exercise in praise-giving, write down how many times you praised and how many times you criticized your child in the last 24 hours. We call these pull-ups and put-downs. If your pull-ups don't significantly outnumber your pull-downs, you are shaping your child in the wrong direction.

Praise genuinely
Praise loses its punch if you shower acclaim on usual and expected behaviour; yet when the child who habitually strikes out finally hits the ball, that's praiseworthy. Simply acknowledge expected behaviour, rather than gushing praise. Acknowledgment is dispassionate praise that shapes a child to please himself rather than perform for approval. Don't make up fake kudos. The child will see through them and begin to question even genuine praise.

Problems with praise
While appropriately-used praise can shape behaviour, it's not the only way to reinforce good behaviour. In some ways it's superficial. Praise is an external motivator. The ultimate goal of discipline is self-discipline i.e. inner motivation.

Expect Good Behaviour
Excessive praise will give children the message that obedience and good behaviour are optional. It's better to give your child the message that s(he) is doing exactly what you expect, not something out of the ordinary. Children are programmed to meet your expectations. Sometimes all that is needed for you to break a negative cycle is to expect good behaviour. When parents don't expect obedience, they generally don't get it.

Source: http://www.askdrsears.com/html/6/T061300.asp

About the Writer:

Samreen Ahsan is a former Business Strategy consultant based out of Dubai; with a career background in media including DAWN and CNBC. She has also serviced the Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan) across their Education, Health, Rural Support, Gender Development and NGO Enhancement portfolios.

To the world you may be just one person,
But to one person you may be the world
(Simple Truths, 2008)

To a Child,
Love is Spelled
T-I-M-E

By Shireen Husain

In my professional experience as a primary teacher and teacher educator, I would often hear from parents statements like My daughter has stopped talking to me; She appears lethargic and lazy; Can you please talk to my son? I cannot do this myself. At this point, I would wonder of the events which could lead to this extreme when the unifying connection between the parents and the child was broken? What leads to this feeling of powerlessness over one's own children at such a young age? At what stage did the rift start to take shape? Did the parents make an effort to establish a bond between them and their child? What efforts do they make to establish this connection and sustain it? And are the parents in general aware of this very necessary emotional connection between them and their child?

> **Secure attachment in the very early years is perceived to be a fundamental need of young children.**

In this context, some glimpses from my professional life are etched in my mind.

- It is the first day of a child at his Nursery school. She feels thirsty and goes to get her water bottle to find it absolutely empty.
- Repeatedly a child comes to school with milk marks on his upper lip. I make him wash his face in school till such time that parents are informed about it.
- A child has come to school with money. When asked what s(he) intends to do with this money the answer is that s(he) needs to buy few things on his way home. When contacted, the mother appears clueless about any details of this action.
- As I observe children during snack time in their classes I see a big majority with packet snacks like biscuits and chips.
- Daily there is a long line of students at school canteen which also includes very young children.
- A four year old girl shouts and screams when she parts with her mother in the morning. She is perpetually the last one to be picked up at home time.
- Coming to school I regularly notice a car break the signal light. The child is from the school I work in. When contacted the mother tells me that that was the reason why she sends the maid with the driver.
- At home time the child instantly approaches her mother on spotting her. The mother stops her at a distance as she appears very engrossed in talking to someone on her phone.

Observations like these add to my unease about the casual behaviour of young couples in their role as parents and in their relationships with their children. Mothers and fathers appear ill-equipped to balance work and family life; and socializing and time for the child. They are also uncertain and unaware of their young child's needs. It is ironic that while literature grows on this issue, the question on why children aren't given priority continues to remain unanswered.

My article does not intend to raise guilt amongst parents and primary caretakers. It is mainly for the purpose of asking and exploring a basic question: What are the fundamental needs of young children? And then taking it further to: How is it possible to meet these needs?

Secure attachment, by which I mean the close ties formed with the mother or the constant caregiver, in the very early years is perceived to be a fundamental need of young children. My own continuing interest in the theme of attachment and attachment related investigation enables me to support theories which propose that children come into the world physically pre-programmed to form attachments with others, because this will help them survive. So what is the exact basis of secured attachment in the early years of infanthood? Engaging in eye contact, touching, cuddling and carrying the baby, smiling, talking – extended conversations, attentiveness to the child, taking the child's leads and doing all this

again and again and again. Personal and intimate behavior of parents is needed by young children to develop attachment. To what degree is this responsiveness found in homes is a question which a parent needs to ask if they are conscious of fulfilling their child's needs. Does this attachment lead to anything? What are the offshoots of attachment? Do these fulfilled needs in an infant have any further impact on his/her life? Investigating it from a theoretical and a practical perspective indicates that when a young child cries under a need or stress, he/she makes a demand on the caregiver. If appropriate care giving is provided, the stress is released and the child relaxes. In this state, the child then uses the energy to engage in activities that promote development. Latitude is the term used for this state of ease in which a child actually has surplus capacity to engage in actions that will encourage development. Contrary to this is a child's continuous crying which is actually making him/her focus on the unfulfilled need. Imagine the state of such a child; constant frustration because the needs are not being met. On the same note, when a child experiences repeated acceptance of his/her demands; the consistency in the parents' action make him/her identify the adult as dependable and trusting. As an extension of this emotion, the infant starts to see the world with a similar perspective. The child learns to trust others in the environment and as a result grows in self confidence. The child then uses this confidence to explore the outside world.

> **In a state of latitude or ease, a child actually has surplus capacity to engage in actions that will encourage development.**

I tend to hypothesize that parental response of attentiveness, sensitivity, availability and cooperation with the infant is positively correlated with his/her sense of accomplishment, level of confidence and feelings of self-worth. If parents are interested in meeting the needs of young children and their own as parents, I strongly

propose that they enhance their links with their child in his/her very early stage of life. It is all about the intention to use time.

> **The scope of parental involvement which translates into time and effort is required equally but differently at each developmental stage of a child's life.**

Once the need to trust others is established and the foundation is laid to trust the world in general, the more pressing issues of the child's emotional needs now need to be answered. What the parent has done up till now, if at all, is to lay the basis for the child's emotional stability which will serve as groundwork for satisfying his / her other developmental needs. The scope of parental involvement which translates into time and effort is required equally but differently for many years to come. At the infant age, if the adult caregiver is sensitive towards the infant's needs and responds to his / her calls, the infant starts to believe in him / herself; an attitude which needs to be continually strengthened and nurtured for many years to come.

Now, as the infant grows a little older, his / her behaviour of confidence and competence take a different angle. An irresistible urge to 'decide and do' by self help becomes the defining drive which needs a different kind of parental acceptance and response. The toddlers are seen and heard wanting to do things on their own! Their need is to actively explore the world by feeding themselves, learning to walk, deciding when and how much to eat, demanding an adult to play with them etc. Generally

what does a well meaning but ill informed parent do at this stage of their child's life and more importantly why do they do this? On one side is this toddler who is urging to gain some control over his / her life and on the other side is this concerned adult who feeds the toddler according to set times and quantity. Why aren't clues taken from the child's behaviour of refusing food? The adult will indulge in different hideous antics to feed the child not thinking one bit of how he/ she is totally denying the toddler the small little freedom to decide what, how and when he / she wants to be fed. These innocent gestures of developing will in the child are denied by the parent. How often are the little ones allowed to wear what they choose to or have an activity they desire. Do the parents encourage or allow the toddler to do his / her own thing within safe boundaries? These choices are really theirs to make. And now the question is of why this is done. Lack of patience, which for me is actually lack of time, lack of knowledge in child rearing and messed up priorities, constitute the reasons for this attitude.

From my perspective which would be a shared one, parent is the key component in a child's environment. I fully acknowledge the stresses in parents' lives which impede them in this process of childrearing. However, the parents need to differentiate between the necessary and unnecessary demands on them so that they create time to facilitate their child's development. Sound child rearing practices don't necessarily assure a smooth life for the child but definitely helps in navigating the challenges. The significance that the parents enjoy their children's early life doesn't stay constant as the world expands for them. Therefore, it is necessary for parents to establish the links with their child in his / her early childhood.

About the Writer:

Ms. Shireen Husain is a professional in education with a wide range of experience in classroom teaching, teacher training, resource development and research at the pre-primary and primary levels. She is associated with the Beaconhouse School Systems Evaluation and Notre Dame Institute of Education as Academic Faculty and Research Mentor.

Educating for Change

- Model tolerance and compassion.
- Provide accurate information about people, events, reactions, and feelings.
- Avoid stereotyping people or countries.
- Stop any type of harassment or bullying immediately.
- Offer alternative methods for children to express their anger, confusion, or insecurity.
- Explain that the actions of a few individuals cannot be blamed on any racial or ethnic group.
- Discuss how it would feel to be blamed unfairly for something they did not do.
- Explore children's fears about people and events through use of activities, role-playing, and discussions.
- Emphasize positive, familiar images of diverse groups and discuss the many characteristics, values, and experiences the children have in common with these people.
- Identify "heroes" of varying backgrounds (eg. Teachers, firefighters, medical workers, police officers, etc.) involved in response to traumatic events.
- Undertake projects to help those in need with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Learn about the diverse communities and faiths represented in your area.
- Read books with your children or students that address prejudice, tolerance, and hate.

Dealing with Sibling Rivalry

By
Nashwa Pervez and Sana Irtiza

Sibling rivalry is the jealousy, competition and fighting between brothers and sisters. There are many factors which contribute to sibling rivalry including family dynamics, need for attention, and competition or threatened relationships with parents or other close family members. Sometimes the age gap between siblings in terms of number of years is so less that the individual needs of every child get affected. This is alarming because the early years of a child's life are very important and during that period, children require dedicated attention and focus of parents.

The natural environment presents some extreme cases of sibling rivalry and competition which are often a result of struggle for control over scarce resources. For example, as baby sharks develop within the mother shark's womb, the biggest baby shark devours all of his brothers and sisters, ensuring for himself all of the available food resources. In another example, the first baby eagle kills its siblings even before they have completely hatched so that all the food that the mother eagle brings for everyone is solely for him. Similarly competition exists between siblings in human families but the scarce resources in this case are time, attention, love and appreciation that the parents can give to each of their children.

Sibling rivalry affects a family in many different ways and, in its worse form, can have serious implications on children's growth and development. It is therefore important for parents to understand the causes behind sibling rivalry and learn the ways to keep sibling rivalry to a minimum.

CAUSES OF SIBLING RIVALRY

Sibling rivalry perpetuates as each child competes to prove his or her individuality. Some of the factors that may cause strife are mentioned below presence of which is likely to result in conflicts amongst the siblings.

- Children feel that their parents are giving unequal amounts of attention to them or their siblings;
- Parents make comparisons between children in matters of studies, capabilities and capacities;
- Younger children feel that older siblings are getting more privileges or older siblings feel that the younger ones are always unduly favored;
- Hungry, bored or tired children tend to start fights easily;
- Fights between any two siblings can affect any other siblings even if they are not directly involved in the rivalry;

- Lack of open communication between brothers and sisters and with parents leads to conflict and misunderstandings. Families that do not have enjoyable times together are likely to have more conflicts;
- Stress in the relationship between parents tends to decrease the amount of attention they give to their children and often results in conflict between siblings.
- When children witness that their parents fight instead of having healthy discussions for settling matters, they will adopt it as a way to deal with conflicts.
- Domestic violence can adversely affect a child's relationships with family or friends. The child may also start blaming himself or herself for the violence leading to adverse effects on the self-esteem.

TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HANDLE SIBLING RIVALRY

Sibling rivalry is normal to take place between brothers and sisters but it needs to be dealt with constructively. It is not possible for parents and caregivers to treat each child in exactly the same way but none of the children must be completely ignored as it can badly hurt their self-esteem. As the key players in tackling this problem, parents should strive towards creating an atmosphere conducive to love and cooperation especially by modeling the desired behavior themselves. And while doing so they ought to ensure that the self-esteem and self-worth of each child remains intact. How parents treat their kids and react to conflict can make a big difference in how well siblings get along. Below are some practical suggestions that can help parents in maintaining peace in the house and minimizing sibling rivalry.

- Provide an open and friendly environment for children to discuss things so that they learn more about the interests and needs of each other. This would help them in getting along. Happy hours and fun times help in increasing communication between the family members.

- Treat children individually rather than equally. Giving children attention, individually as well as collectively, helps in defining who they are as a person, shaping their identity and discovering their likes and dislikes.

- Try to spend some alone time with each of your children every week. Whether it is just talking, reading, or another activity you enjoy doing together. Individual attention shows your child that they are special to you in their own way.

- Praise children when they work problems out by themselves. However, don't praise by focusing on the performer but the performance and always emphasize upon the process rather than results.

- Avoid making comparisons as each child has different mental capabilities and capacities. Statements that are judgmental tend to lower the self-esteem of targeted child and can often lead to jealousy amongst siblings.

- Let siblings express their feelings about each other. Making them take out their frustration and anger is a healthy step for keeping the self-esteem intact.

- Maintain the timetable for food, nap etc. Practicing a routine which everyone is familiar and comfortable with can be helpful for avoiding conflict situations.

- Make each child feel special by allowing them to do special things, such as choosing the program for TV time or picking the restaurant for the night.

- When the siblings are becoming verbally abusive to each other, discipline them but privately and not in front of each other.

- Support each of your child's interests. Just because one of your kids likes cricket, does not mean they all will. Encourage them to try things that interest them as individuals. Also encourage the siblings to support each other's activities.

- It is not necessary to intervene every time the children enter into a conflict. At times you should let the children settle the problem on their own as well.

- As expecting parents discuss the arrival of a new baby before his/her birth so that the children do not feel any kind of threat to their relationship between them and the parents when the child is born. Also it is advisable to allow sufficient time between the births of each of the children in order.

Keeping sibling rivalry between kids to a minimum level is a relatively simple task to understand, although it can often be much more difficult to carry out. By being persistent in the aforementioned principles, however, you should be able to keep sibling rivalry to a minimum.

About the Writers:

Ms. Nashwa Pervez is a student of Media Sciences at Iqra University and has participated in various contests including an essay competition held at GoI Peace Foundation, Tokyo and poetry competition for Human Rights Education Programme.

Ms. Sana Pervez is currently working as an Advocacy & Publications Associate at the Sindh Education Foundation. She is an MBA from the Institute of Business Management and carries experience of writing for various campus publications and newsletters.

How to Prepare Siblings for Your New Arrival

For older children, the arrival of a baby brother or sister means they will have to learn to share their toys, other belongings and their parents. This is not always easy for them, but there are things parents can do right from the start to ease the transition and set the stage for positive sibling relations. Here are some developmental factors to keep in mind:

- Two- to 3-year-olds can be quite self-absorbed and into the "mine" stage. They have a tendency to be inflexible, domineering and resistant to change.
- Four-year-olds are more social and verbal. They aren't as clingy, since they're making friends and there are more diversions.
- Five- and 6-year-olds are more independent of their parents.
- Pre-adolescents may have a difficult time with a new baby because they are going through so much change in their own development.

No matter what the age, parents need to acknowledge beforehand that kids have conflicting feelings about the prospect of a new sibling and that those feelings are normal.

Preparing for Change

- Tell your older child about the events leading up to his or her birth and how excited you were. Look at the child's baby photos or videos.
- Take your child to some of your prenatal doctor appointments. Let him listen to the baby's heartbeat.
- Make any necessary changes in family or home life before the baby arrives, including having your child spend more time with the father and changing bedrooms if necessary. Tell an older child that she's moving out of her crib because she's growing up, not because the baby is coming and you need the crib.
- Let your child decide where to put the crib and which toys she wants to lend to the baby. If there's something she wants to hold on to, let her.
- Don't oversell the baby before it arrives. Be realistic. Explain that the baby will cry a lot, sleep a lot, eat and poop.

Source: www.Parenthood.com

Discipline is better than Punishment !

So what's the difference?

By Danish Jalbani

When guiding children towards positive behaviour and learning, parents wish to promote a healthy attitude that encourages children to think before they act as well as learn self-control. Disciplining allows a child to understand what he or she did wrong, gives ownership of the problem, provides solutions to address it and leaves the child's dignity intact. Punishment on the other hand is not the ideal solution for controlling unacceptable behaviour because it is only a temporary solution and fails to achieve the long-term goal of inculcating self-control in children. Most importantly any strong penalization can hurt a child's self-esteem. Discipline is not only believed but has also proven to bring about a positive change in individuals. However there is need for greater understanding of the concepts of discipline and punishment.

Disciplining is usually considered positive in our culture and can be used in many ways to address different situations. For example, teachers in school are expected

> Discipline is a positive force that operates in an atmosphere of love, mutual respect and individual responsibility.

> Punishment refers to administering a negative stimulus (such as spanking a child) in order to contain undesired behaviour.

to maintain discipline in the classrooms since that is also a major expectation of parents sending their children to school. When used in the context of self-discipline, the word refers to the ability of focusing all of the energy,

attention and abilities towards achieving one's desired goals. Children may at times require adult assistance in organizing time and materials and developing certain skills and techniques for accomplishing personal goals. Disciplining in this way gives a feeling of self-achievement and satisfaction to the child.

Punishment refers to administering a negative stimulus (such as spanking a child) in order to contain undesired behaviour. Many parents believe that punishing kids never lets them forget their mistake, and they often try to curb undesired behaviours in children through administering punishment. In many cases this holds true and children do tend to remember their behaviours for which they have been punished. Such severe measures have however proven to be psychologically detrimental for children's growth and development and can lead to any extreme reaction such as a very low self-esteem, lack of confidence or rebellious attitudes. In one of its worse forms, children end up being resentful about their own selves, against controlling adults or against other people in general.

Moreover, punishment creates regret in children. They

hate the experience of the incident in which they were punished and start hating the authority of their parents, teachers or peers. In many cases a child who has been punished too much grows with a high dependency on other individuals and no faith in his or her own abilities.

Discipline is not based on any kind of force or coercion but it can be positive or negative. However, negative discipline cannot be taken as punishment as its goal is the same as positive discipline - both kinds deal with training the child. For example, a child crosses the road himself and the father asks him to cross the road with an

Discipline is not based on any kind of force or coercion but it can be positive or negative.

When responding to undesirable behaviours it is advised that parents deliberate beforehand about what to say to the child in order to achieve effective results. Disciplining in anger is not effective, as the child in this situation only focuses upon the strong emotion of the parent. For very young children, distraction is the best way of making them move away from an unacceptable behaviour. Reasoning can come into the picture when they are slightly older i.e. about 6 years. Also when the child is not misbehaving, positive attention plays the role of a strong

adult next time. If the child repeats the same act, the father scolds him. This is an example of negative discipline when the child is being taught about road safety so that he is safe from accidents. This type of disciplining clearly differs from punishment, because through punishing children learn conformity by force and not by their free choice. The great American physicist Albert Einstein once said "If people are good only because they fear

reinforcer. Those who are ignored by their parents often turn to misconduct in order to seek attention of their busy parents.

Moreover it is important to note that children imitate parents' behaviour since they are very good observers. Parents can therefore constructively model the kind of behaviour which is appropriate and not exhibiting something which they don't want their children to do. Discipline is a positive force that operates in an atmosphere of love, mutual respect and

Strong penalization has a high probability of hurting a child's self-esteem.

punishment and hope for rewards then we are a sorry lot indeed". It is important for parents and caregivers to understand that as a result of harsh treatment even if children do agree to comply with their wishes the effect is not going to be long lasting.

Moreover parents usually find punishment and negative discipline to be quick and easy but they cannot be as effective as positive discipline. Teaching and training while providing logic and benefit for a particular behaviour has more lasting results and can only be achieved through positive discipline.

individual responsibility. Understanding the difference between discipline and punishment will help you raise healthy children.

About the Writer:
Danish Jalbani is a student of Computer Science at Iqra University. He enjoys writing on subjects of education, social issues and science and has also worked for The Youth Magazine as Media Coordinator.

Discipline vs. Punishment

These commonly misunderstood words are often used interchangeably. Below is a break down defining the important differences of each word.

Discipline is:

- Giving children positive alternatives
- Acknowledging or rewarding efforts and good behaviour
- When children follow rules because they are discussed and agreed upon
- Consistent, firm guidance
- Positive, respectful and physically and verbally non-violent
- Logical consequences that are directly related to the misbehaviour
- When children must make restitution when their behaviour negatively affects someone else
- "Time-outs" that are open-ended and governed by the child's readiness to gain self-control
- Understanding individual abilities, needs, circumstances and developmental stages
- Teaching children to internalize self-discipline
- Re-directing and selectively "ignoring" minor misbehaviour
- Reflection and verbal give-and-take communication
- Listening and modeling
- Using mistakes as learning opportunities
- Teaching empathy and healthy remorse by showing it
- Directed at the child's behaviour, never the child

Punishment is:

- Being told only what NOT to do
- Reacting to rather than responding to misbehaviour
- When children follow rules because they are threatened or bribed
- Controlling, shaming
- Sarcasm
- Negative and disrespectful behaviour towards the child
- Physically and verbally violent and aggressive
- Consequences that are unrelated and illogical to the misbehaviour
- Children are punished for hurting others, rather than shown how to make restitution
- "Time-outs" that banish a child for a set amount of time governed by the adult
- Inappropriate to the child's developmental stage of life
- Individual circumstances, abilities and needs not taken into consideration
- Teaching children to be controlled by a source outside of themselves
- Teaching children to behave only when they will get caught doing otherwise
- Constantly reprimanding children for minor infractions causing them to tune-out
- Forcing children to comply with illogical rules "just because you said so"
- Criticizing the child, rather than the child's behaviour.

Source: http://www.childadvocate.org/2c.htm

A strong today for a strong tomorrow

By Veerta Ali Ujan

The first prerequisite for any individual's environment is safety. Safe air, water and food; and for a child, a safe environment to explore the world. A child's environment should provide stimulus and growth opportunity to his/her physical gross and fine motor abilities, mental agility, spiritual understanding, emotional security and well being, and psychological stability.

Every day should be a celebration of life. Emotional depth and stability underline this. Children from a very young age are able to empathize with and identify with their parents and peers. Their ability to express themselves is limited to gestures and a few sounds until their vocabulary expands to accommodate a complex situation.

A key ingredient to a healthy and facilitative environment for any child is a receptive environment where others around them try to understand what the child is trying to express. This cuts down on frustration and allows him/her to get on with the business of learning what they can at that time. Mothers are famous for understanding their child's first mumbled words, but teachers and those involved in child care also need to make an attempt at understanding that looks beyond spoken language to the physical gestures of the child.

The ability to learn different things in terms of fine and gross movements and mental acrobatics develops in stages. These are well defined maximum age limits for this, but every child is an individual and therefore varies. The home should have safe supervised areas for crawling, walking, jumping, climbing and running

Frequent interaction with nature is essential to help them develop an understanding of their world and therefore outdoor play should form a part of their everyday schedule.

Toys should include both soft and hard objects of various sizes, shapes and colors, with containers for putting things in and taking out, toys that illustrate physical principles, drawing and coloring materials, musical instruments, books and posters, toys with a mathematical and logical component and options for collaborative and parallel play. These need not be very expensive, but should be brightly colored and interesting to look at. Toys and books that engage the interest of a child will encourage future interest in learning activities and this applies to adults as well. Some disciplined structure is important so that this gets internalized by him/her – this would encourage organized thought process as well as help in later social integration. Over regulation and discipline should be avoided however, as there is no way for another individual to know which mental or psychological leaps another person is due for on which day. Some flexibility should always be available so that a child can choose the way in which he/she wants to approach the subject or task at hand. A young person has decided likes and dislikes which change as he/she grows. Respect for these phases enables him/her to form a strong personality. Asking a child to be different from who he/she is, or to fit into an ideal mould, will always undermine his confidence. case in point: the effect of fashion magazines on young girls.

A frequently underestimated component of mental development is social skills. These develop best with healthy interaction within the family group and in the social strata. A child's self esteem and the way he learns to value his self is based on the value he sees society placing on his mother. In other words, the child's ego depends on the mother's social status, within the home and in various social environments. This does not necessarily correspond with the amount of money a mother or family has. Social status is gauged by the confidence of the mother in various situations, the hierarchy within the family and the respect given to her by people surrounding her.

Conflicts are present in every home. These should be kept to a minimum around the children, and if present, should be controlled to avoid physical or verbal violence. Both of the above can leave indelible marks on a developing ego. Constructive conflict resolution not only teaches by example, but also prevents damage to the child's psyche. Studies in dysfunctional homes have found that the abusive relationship of parents is often copied by their children so that one fits into the abusive role and another into the victim role. This does not remain confined to childhood role-playing, but goes on to manifest itself in their adult lives as dysfunctional relationships that span generations.

Children exposed to violence in the home, whether directed at themselves or others, perform worse than expected in academic environments and are less likely to find successful careers in later life. This relationship links violence in the home to poverty. It is not poverty that causes violence in the home; it is violence in the home that shapes an emotionally, physically and psychologically deprived environment for the future of the family as a whole.

What can we do to alter this equation? Challenge the status quo. A young mother is often the weakest and socially inferior member of the family. This needs to be changed. Women often stay in abusive relationships because of a perception that they are saving the family for the sake of the child. This assumption needs to be challenged. The best environment for a child to grow in is a safe and happy environment where the child and his loved ones are appreciated and valued.

This applies equally to the school and playground. A school and play area should be free of violence, both verbal and physical, references to violence, intimidation and bullying, exploitation and abuse. Similarly, an emphasis on competition with siblings or classmates is not the best strategy to get excellence from a child. A child naturally grows when competing with him/herself for excellence, as when attempting to learn or improve a skill; and leadership skills develop naturally when interacting collaboratively with peers, as when coming together to perform a task.

Perhaps trying to make a better world for our children can be the focus for us to come together as well.

Resources for ECD Practitioners

- **Ensuring Desired Behaviour in Young Children**
- **Managing Conflict in the Classroom**
- **Ways to Prevent Bullying in School**

Ensuring Desired Behaviour in Young Children

By Mansoora Tufeyl

As parents you must help your children solve their behavioural problems by assisting them in working through emotions

Scientific research proves that a child's brain grows at its fastest in the first five years of life. It is during these early years that a child's behavioural development is at the most critical stage. Developmental challenges identified and treated during this important time have the best hope of not being carried throughout a child's life. Research also shows that although behavioural problems may be evident in early childhood, they can go untreated for years, leading to potentially greater crises later that may even require intensive and expensive treatments. Lack of early identification and intervention can lead to failure in school, drug dependency, criminal behaviour and suicide. But if addressed early, children have a greater chance to lead happy and healthy lives.

Emotional and behavioural health problems are a significant barrier to not just academic success but also the child's role as a healthy member of society. Children and adolescents with emotional and/or behavioural disorders tend to score below average on achievement tests, are more likely to fail one or more courses at school, and have high absenteeism rates. Many children are not getting the treatment they need because of several significant barriers. First, there is the acceptance factor; most families display an often indifferent attitude towards recognizing and acknowledging the fact that their child has some kind of a behavioural problem. Second, access to screenings and assessments of young children's social and emotional needs is limited because primary care providers, child care centres, and many of the other places parents take their young children to, are not equipped with the facilities to identify such needs. Second, the cost can be prohibitive for many families. Third, there is a shortage of mental health consultants for young children.

Common behavioural problems in children

Children often behave inappropriately in a number of ways. Common behavioural problems include biting, screaming, whining, kicking, hitting, throwing objects, head banging, tantrums, crying, unusual risk taking, swearing, stealing, lying, eating disorders, sleeplessness and so on. Taken in isolation, many of these symptoms seem like a typical part of growing up. But together they may represent an early indication of more severe developmental problems as children get older. In addition, when the behaviours are exhibited in a centre or school-based setting, they may lead to disruption, social remoteness and long-term inability to learn.

Whether it is yelling for hours, throwing favourite toys or even becoming abusive to siblings, children's behavioural problems can cause endless unhappiness within a family. Most behavioural problems, sometimes called 'acting out' or 'acting up,' are the result of disappointment, frustration or anger in a child who does not understand how to deal with his/her emotions productively. Children with social and emotional issues also are more likely to be victims of, witnesses to, or initiators of more acts of violence than children without mental illness.

As parents, caregivers and teachers you must help your children solve their behavioural problems by assisting them in working through emotions and re-setting the behavioural patterns they have developed and deal with the change.

Identifying Behavioural Problems in Children
If you suspect that your child's behaviour has become a problem, identifying the behaviours that are causing trouble is the first step towards solution. It can be done by:

- Keeping a behaviour log of what you consider inappropriate behaviour
- Tracking the situations in which behavioural problems are displayed
- Observing the causes and results of the behaviour, in question
- Analysing the behavioural patterns such as
  - When do the behaviours tend to occur (time/day)?
  - What is the frequency of recurrence?
  - What are some of the common and atypical actions that signify such demeanours?
  - Who is around when the behaviours occur?
  - What are the causes of the behaviours?
  - What are the results of the behaviours?

Preventing Behavioural Problems in the Classroom

The children are in particular need of a classroom that is structured and not chaotic. They need to feel secure within the parameters of their classroom knowing precisely what is expected of them academically and behaviourally. Behavioural problems often occur when the students are undirected. Planning well and communicating instructions promptly and clearly are generally good deterrents to behaviour problems. Also teacher's or facilitator's disposition towards children to make them comfortable is an impetus for precluding and managing such issues.

> The onus of addressing children's behavioural problems within classrooms lies with the teachers. By planning well and communicating instructions to children promptly and clearly are techniques teachers can use to deter behaviour problems

The following behaviour management practices and techniques can be used by the teachers in order to prevent behavioural problems in classrooms:

A pleasant welcome to student

Teacher should greet students at the door as they arrive in class. Offer directions as needed before they enter the room. A smile and 'hello' is a nice way to start a day. Handing the students a brief assignment to work on as they enter the room is also a deterrent to behaviour problems. The same applies for claiming students after recess, lunch, art, or music. Be there on time. A well prepared and alert teacher during these transitional times will be able to manage the behavioural problems effectively. Also paying individual attention to these children during group activities or play time and making extra efforts to keep them happily engaged helps.

Prepare, practice, model and review behavioural expectations and rules

A teacher needs to do every thing as a whole group for the first two weeks or so of the school year while she sets her standards and teaches all expectations and rules. S/he needs to model and teach every behaviour over and over such as how and where to line up, how to stand in line, how to move in groups, how to get the teachers' attention, how to sit on a rug or at a table, what to do in new

situations etc. It needs to be practiced so that students understand teachers' expectations. Teacher needs to share few, clear and comprehensive rules with the students. It would be a good idea if the rules are discussed, decided on and written in the classroom to give more ownership to the students.

Examples of rules are:

- Come prepared to work
- Follow directions and stay on task
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourselves
- Be kind and courteous to others
- Follow directions
- Pay attention
- Work silently during quiet time
- Do your best work

Teacher should explain the rationale of her/his rules to children. Any time spent on teaching the rules and modeling all behavioural expectations is time worth spending. Rules, either written or graphically presented, need to be pasted on at least one visible spot. Teacher should explain rules with examples demonstrating them in action and let students practice it. These rules need to be frequently reviewed and practiced throughout the school year; they need to be communicated with parents as well.

Structured classroom and well planned routine

Well structured classroom and well planned daily routine is another way of avoiding behavioural problems in the classroom. Well developed lesson plans with prepared and accessible teaching and learning resources for all levels of students in the classroom will make the teaching interesting and task focused, as a result of which there will be less chance of children distractions and behavioural problems. Children need the predictability of knowing what group they are in, where it works, what it does, and so on. It is therefore imperative to establish a predictable sequence of routine and schedule.

> Teacher should explain rules with examples demonstrating them in action and let students practice it.

It is also imperative to keep children's specific interests in focus while planning lessons and administering classroom activities. Flexibility in routines should also be exercised to accommodate children's changing moods and interest levels towards a certain object of learning.

Noise level

The noise level in the classroom needs to be moderate, neither excessive and nor chaotic. Classroom activities are fun and exciting; however the climate in the classroom needs to be calm with moderate noise level. The best strategy to control students' noise level is to introduce different sound levels for different times. Students can

o   Earning free time
o   Earning breakfast or lunch with the teacher
o   Reading or looking at special interest magazines
o   Listening to music with tape recorder and earphones
o   Working with clay, special pens/paper, whiteboards
o   Leading a game, perhaps as captain of team

Classroom incentives are great motivators. For example, a teacher can place marbles in a jar by the teacher when students are found to behave appropriately. When the jar is filled, the class earns a special treat or field trip of some kind.

Assertive Discipline

Teacher should clearly communicate the consequences for following and not following the rules. S/he should use warnings when students do not follow the rules. Different strategies can be applied to manage behaviour in the classroom, such as:

- **Colour coded cards**
  This is a graphic system of monitoring behaviour. All students start the day with one colour card (e.g. pink card) in their envelope. When there is an infraction of rules – after warning – the colour changes to yellow resulting in a consequence such as five minutes of time-out. With the next infraction, the card changes (e.g. blue) resulting in a stronger consequence. After another infraction, the red card appears, resulting in a more severe consequence. With this system, students start each day with a clean slate. For greater effectiveness, teachers can allow the class to devise the consequences associated with each change of colour.

- **Number cards**
  Behavioural monitoring of students involves that children go home each day with a number card, such as:
  5 – Very well behaved. Great day!
  4 – Good day.
  3 – So-so day.
  2 – We had some trouble today.
  1 – We had a very difficult day.

use 'indoor voices' during the free choice time, whereas for work time when students are doing focused tasks, they need to be taught and practiced to speak in soft voices so as not to disturb the other students' concentration.

Behaviour enhancement and behaviour reduction technique

Teacher should explain and replicate the acceptable behaviour in the classroom/school through behaviour enhancement technique rather than behaviour reduction technique. Behaviour enhancement technique attempts to strengthen, maintain and increase the frequency of appropriate behaviours whereas in behaviour reduction technique, punishments are used to eliminate the frequency of inappropriate behaviour.

In the behaviour enhancement technique, teacher catches the student/s doing what s/he has asked them to do, recognize and praise the child's specific instances. For example "I like the way Zahra remembers to raise her hand and waits to be called on, Thank you, Zahra." Or "Saqib, I appreciate how quietly you are lined up." In contrast, the behaviour reduction technique is considered as an ineffective intervention, it results in short term suppression of undesirable behaviour but not complete elimination as it fails to provide any instruction to children about alternate behaviour patterns. Punishments for mistakes may make things worse by inducing fear and anxiety.

Positive reinforcement and classroom incentives

There is no substitute for positive reinforcement in the classroom. It is the best behavioural management strategy and the one that builds self-esteem and respect. Legitimate praise and acknowledgement must be used and students must be rewarded with privileges like classroom jobs and responsibilities. It's generally a good idea not to use major incentives and rewards unless they are needed in the classroom. Start with easy and small rewards and incentives. Many students are motivated to work for tangible rewards such as food, stickers, etc.

Other suggested reinforces include:
o   Choosing a game to play with a friend

misbehaviour such as home work not done, off-task behaviour, etc. Every week students' total points are calculated and they are rewarded against the total points. Rewards can include for example selecting and reading a favourite book from the class library, pasting child's work on the class display board, appreciating child's work by calling a child on the stage during assembly.

Time outs and Time in

At times, children cannot handle all of the stimulation in the classroom and become worked up and sometimes out of control. Time away from the group is often needed to calm them down and help them regain self-control. A child could be just sent to any table or chair or area away from the group for a time being. The important element of time out is that time out is brief and a child is welcomed back to the group when s/he is ready to behave and participate. A teacher needs to use 'time outs' and 'time away' as needed; library corner or play area or any other designated spot can be used as a 'cool down' area.

Heading off trouble with diversionary tactics

Teachers can use a key management technique of redirecting a child and heading him/her off at the path before the need for correction. A perceptive, aware teacher who is watching his/her students for signs of 'losing it' can effectively redirect his/her students.

Signals and cues

Teachers can use different signals and cues to get their students' attention and to focus their concentration. For example a teacher can ring a bell and students are taught to quickly hug themselves and look up at her. Another signal can be 'stop, look and listen', at this cue, the children stop, put their hands behind their backs and look at the teacher. The non-verbal signals teacher can use are 'stop sign' by raising hands, 'pointing to ears' means listen, 'pointing to and tapping chin' means look at me and so on. Teachers can physically cue their students by touching a hand, shoulder or arm.

- ### Home/school communication
  Teachers should send some type of notification to parents as to how their child behaved that day or week. Teachers using coloured card system can send home the final colour card at the end of the day with all the students so as not to isolate those students who are in need of close home/school monitoring and hurting their self-esteem in the process.

- ### Response points
  Teachers can use a system of response points with students. For example teacher award points to the four colours of the links such as yellow = 1, red = 2, green = 5 and blue = 10. The students will get some points for good behaviour. On the other hand, students will get negative points for

The critical starting point for an ECD teacher is the awareness of children's behavioural and self-esteem issues and then adopting strategies that make them feel good about themselves.

Conclusion

In the ECD classrooms, every behavioural expectation and social skill need to be taught. Teacher needs to explain and model each desired behaviour and practice until all the students know precisely what is expected of them. The classroom environment should be nurturing with hugs, smiles, appreciation and affection. The provision of music and movement, hands-on activities with many choices and close parental contact and their involvement in school initiatives will definitely help in managing behavioural problems. But the critical starting point for an ECD teacher is the awareness of children's behavioural and self-esteem issues and then adopting strategies that make them feel good about themselves.

About the Writer:

Ms. Mansoora Tufeyl is currently working as a National Coordinator for RCC - ECD Programme at Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan. A Masters in Education (M.Ed.) and Masters in Arts (M.A.), Mansoora has been associated with the field of education specifically with Pre Primary / ECD children for more than nineteen years. She has also undertaken qualitative and quantitative research studies focusing on children's behavioural issues and its causes.

Managing Conflict
in the Classroom

By Saima Khalid & Imrana Raza

Handling conflicts in classrooms in a productive and healthy manner can serve the purpose of building bridges for greater cohesiveness and improved relationships.

The major focus of early year classrooms is the holistic development of young children which includes all developmental domains i.e. physical, cognitive, social, moral and emotional. A child who develops holistically well during the early years is more likely to be a happy and productive member of society than one who does not. Thus their contribution to the society and culture will be effective as well. Research indicates that during the first eight years of life, children are highly influenced by the social values, expectations, attitudes, traditions and cultural norms and values that are transmitted from their environment. Therefore, in order to develop peacemaking behaviours and the skills to resolve conflicts, the children are required to be supported and provided ample opportunities to deal with conflict since very beginning.

The National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education (2007) also emphasizes the holistic development of children and highlights that it is crucial that emotional intelligence be developed in the early years. This includes the development of "confidence, curiosity, purposefulness, self-control, connectedness, and capacity to communicate and cooperate." In the ECE classrooms, this area of development can only be enhanced if the teachers are ready to accept differences and intelligently manage conflict situation in their classrooms. Moreover, the head teachers or school administrators need to shun the notion that 'a good classroom has no conflict' because this attitude often leads to extreme disciplinary regulations which can only stall disagreements.

Katz and Lawyer (1993) state that conflict is the state which develops when there is a difference in the opinion, notions and perceptions among individuals. It's an internal state of a person and at times depends upon the assumptions of others. Depending on how they are dealt with, conflicts may end up in the form of depressing feelings and behaviours or on the contrary result in improved efficiency and strengthening the relationship among individuals. So the strategies one utilizes in order to deal or cope with any conflict situation are critical.

What's so Good or Bad about Conflicts?

Behaviour management is a key issue for all teachers and education support staff. It has been observed quite often in the current practice, that if any conflict situation occurs in classrooms, the usual response of teachers is to intervene by either snubbing children to stop the conflict or separating the two students to sit in different groups. Perhaps this is a convenient strategy to avoid conflicts in the class setting. However by evading conflicts in this manner teachers are unable to realize conflict situations in classrooms as potential opportunities for developing self control, cooperation and patience amongst children.

Handling conflicts seems difficult and challenging but if handled in a productive and healthy manner, conflict actually serves the purpose of building bridges for greater cohesiveness and improved relationships. Conflicting situations provide opportunities for creativity, transformed energy, production, development and growth to individuals, groups and organizations and results in increased cohesion and trust among individuals. It can lead to effective personal and organizational performance. Teachers ought to realize that conflicts between children can neither be resolved by sweeping them under the carpet nor by force. Subsequently, speaking about managing conflicts, teachers might want to take up measures in the classroom like maintaining a specific and unambiguous environment to keep conflicts at a minimum level; retaining limits and expectations for developmentally appropriate behaviour; providing plenty of choices for children's play; setting up and following consistent respectful ways of interacting and model them daily; and using effective plans for transition in order to have peaceful calm environment.

Responding to Conflicts amongst Young Children

Conflicts between children can be controlled or managed productively through teaching conflict management skills. These include compassion, caring for others, accepting and accommodating others' opinion, compromising according to the situation, valuing own and others self, sharpening sense of identity and solidarity, communicating and interacting, clarifying the real problem by having open dialogue and peaceful discussion for resolving the issue of the problem.

If the conflicts are not resolved then it results in the development of negative emotions which can eventually

lead to decreased productivity and / or cooperation. Teachers can face similar situations in the classroom if conflicts among children are not settled or resolved for long durations. A child or group of children may not like to work with other classmate(s) they are in conflict with. Since children are highly egocentric especially as they try to develop their sense of self in the early years, the situation can become worse to the extent where teachers are unable to manage a participatory and cooperative learning environment.

There are many ways and strategies for resolving conflicts. Some researchers have identified six major steps to resolve any conflict among children:

1. Approach the situation calmly: Observe what is happening. Place yourself at the child's level and use a calm voice; gentle touch with welcoming gesture. Stop any upsetting actions.
2. Acknowledge children's feelings: Identify and describe the children's feelings you observe and avoid asking questions until children are calm. Share the details of what you have seen.
3. Gather Information: With infants and toddlers or children with language delays; observe children's actions and describe the problem, with older toddlers and preschoolers, ask open-ended questions try to ask questions from one child at a time.

4. Restate the problem: Repeat the information again that you have observed to clarify the problem and check your statement with the children based on what the children have told.
5. Ask for ideas and choose one together: Encourage children to talk to each other. Describe the choices or give suggestions that can work out for the simple misunderstandings. Ask simple 'yes and no' questions and inquire feasible ideas and probable agreements from them.
6. Be prepared to give follow up support: Try to stay near the children and provide your support to encourage the solution and tell them, "You solved the problem!"

Teaching students how to resolve conflicts will be more effective if the teachers also facilitate development of following traits / skills in children:

- Co-operation: Helping children learn to work together and trust, help, and share with each other.
- Communication: Helping children learn to observe carefully, communicate well, and listen to each other.
- Respect: Helping children learn to respect and enjoy people's differences and to understand prejudice and why it is wrong.
- Expressing themselves positively: Helping children learn to express feelings, particularly anger, in ways that are not destructive, and learn self-control.
- Conflict resolution: Helping children learn how to resolve a conflict by talking it through.

Myths of Conflict

By Randy Fujishin

Myth 1: Avoid conflict at all costs

One of the most common ways to deal with conflict is to avoid it. Sometimes, conflict or possible conflicts, can and should be avoided. But in your small group, don't avoid conflicts at all costs. Conflict can often benefit the task and social dimensions of the group. In fact, conflict can be an opportunity to listen to differences, discover new common ground, and uncover more effective ways to interact together as a group.

Myth 2: Conflict is always someone else's fault

Frequently, our first response when conflict occurs is to find someone to blame. Many times we fail to explore the various factors of a disagreement or dispute. Whenever such differences surface, instead of finding someone to blame, you may want to first explore and examine the various factors of a disagreement or dispute.

Myth 3: All conflicts can be resolved

There is general belief that if we try hard enough, talk long enough and compromise, we will eventually resolve whatever conflict is before us. However not all conflict can be resolved. Despite all effort some conflicts may never be resolved. And that is okay. That's life.

Source: Discovering the Leader Within

Five Styles of Handling Children's Conflicts

Styles of Handling Conflict	Uses	Limitations
DIRECTION When you say, in effect, "Do this," you are directing. Direction is a non-negotiating approach. An adult authority decides what needs to be done and gives the direction that it be done. It's important to recognize that directing need not be unkind or authoritarian. Children can be told nicely, but clearly, what they need to do.	When safety is at stake; when children are out of control and need help getting back into control; when there is no time to discuss or negotiate; when the problem is not important enough to spend much time or energy.	Doesn't build children's independence in problem solving; may cause resentment on the part of children; may not really solve problems.
MEDIATION A third party--either a staff person or any trained person--sits with children and helps them work out their conflict by creating an environment where problem solving can take place. This is done by strictly enforcing ground rules: be honest, no interrupting, and no name calling or put downs. The mediator helps the disputants define their problem, develop solutions, and choose a workable solution.	Because the disputants are solving the problem themselves, they are invested in the solution. Also, it helps get to the root of some persistent problems.	Takes time! The conflict may not be worth the time and effort compared to the learning that comes from it.
ARBITRATION Also involves a third party who hears both (or all) sides, then tells the disputants how they should handle the conflict. This may be done with some input from the disputants, or by simply saying, "This is what you're going to do."	Efficient. Gives the disputants a chance to state their point of view, but doesn't spend a lot of time on problem solving.	May not get to the root of the problem. The disputants may not learn anything about solving conflicts.
JUDGMENT Sometimes the emphasis needs to be not on problem solving, but on determining who was right and who was wrong. Children depend on the adult to act as a judge, to listen and weigh the evidence, and then to pass a fair judgment.	When there has been clear wrongdoing and the parties involved want justice; when there is a need for consequences to be decided upon for actions.	Doesn't build independent problem-solving skills; keeps children dependent upon adults; is by nature a win-lose solution rather than a win-win solution.

Conclusion

Constructive conflict management strategies are important in maintaining a positive classroom environment since unresolved conflict does not always go away and can grow into a bigger issue. Teachers have a critical role in both containing and / or resolving conflicts through dealing with the situation systematically and not taking sides.

Moreover experts agree that learning to manage conflict as a child is an essential element for developing into caring adults who respect the needs, feelings, and emotions of others while meeting their own. Therefore, teaching children to manage conflict in an assertive yet non-confrontational manner now, will serve them well throughout their lives.

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Ways to Prevent Bullying in School

Angry. Helpless. Afraid. Guilty. All these words describe how teachers feel when they realize that their student is being bullied. Bullying is a serious issue. Bullying can cause both physical and emotional damage to a student. Prolonged bullying also can set up a cycle of harassment. Sadly, if a bully is popular, other kids may join in with the teasing to gain the bully's approval. In these cases, bullying a particular student can become a "cool" thing to do in a school or neighborhood.

School management and staff should try to prevent bullying of their students, work with students to help diminish the effects of bullying. Bullying can damage a student's self-esteem, willingness to trust peers, and ability to make friends with other students. Help curb these profoundly negative effects by trying some of the following options:

1 Provide your student with a place to interact with peers completely separate from the place/social setting of the bullying. Give your student a chance to interact with other students who are not aware of the bullying situation. Positive peer encounters in the new setting will not only boost your student's self-esteem and social network, but will provide a welcome fresh start on friendships with peers.

2 Involve the student in peer interactions based on his/her interests. If he/she likes music, encourage him/her to regularly attend the music lessons. If your student enjoys games, ensure that he/she participates in sports activities. Provide a place where his/her interest is shared by others. Involvement with peers who share the same interests can provide a network of friends and can jump-start self-esteem.

3 Give students a journal and encourage them to write openly and honestly about how they are feeling. Bottling up the emotions caused by bullying can cause lasting damage to self-esteem. Because many victims of bullying are embarrassed by their situation (they feel they somehow "deserve" the treatment), they are quite unlikely to talk about their plight, or their feelings, with other friends, siblings, or parents. A journal can provide a safe outlet for their emotions.

4 Provide your student with chances to excel. Whether in academics, music, sports, or debate and other competitions, help your student find something they enjoy doing and have the potential to do very well with a little practice. Developing authentic self-confidence about a skill or talent can go a long way toward silencing the negative internal voice that says 'I'm not valuable'—the voice activated in a victim's mind by too much bullying.

5 Find an older friend/hero/role model for your student. Because if a child is older, it is likely that your student listens to their counsel. The combination of credibility and identification provided by a slightly older friend can offer the child support, advice, and hope for better days to come.

Source: www.nationalsave.org

Book Review

'Self-Esteem for a Lifetime'
Raising a Successful Child from the Inside Out
by Dr. Ingrid Schweiger

Reviewed by Sana Irtiza

In Self-Esteem For A Lifetime, you will learn how building your child's self-esteem influences what your child achieves, how your child socializes, how your child loves, and how your child will make decisions throughout his or her lifetime. There is conflict in every family but the ways to deal with it differ. It should be kept in mind that the child is observing and learning from how the parents are acting and behaving. If the child experiences anger often and he is not taught anger management or the parents fail to respond to the child's anger in the appropriate manner then it can result in low self-esteem. Similarly, if the child experiences stress and is not helped out to deal with it, then it can also hurt his or her self-esteem.

The USA based author, Dr. Schweiger, who is known for her innovative family education programs with communities throughout the world, shares her very seasoned professional and personal experience and expertise in the book. Without judgment, and with a great deal of compassion, she provides parents with a blueprint for nurturing their children's self-esteem, the foundation for all happiness and well-being. It is an essential book that can benefit all. The author also emphasizes that the structure of family system plays an important role in building a child's self-esteem and therefore it is important to shape it in a way that would promote healthy sense of self-worth in a child. Dr. Schweiger writes about the importance of listening which can be the first step in helping a child develop self-esteem. This book also contains tips on responding to issues raised by the children.

The book has been written in a user-friendly language and aims to provide a restorative experience to the parents by affirming parents as the experts on their children's lives. Dr. Schweiger' approach 'There are no perfect parents!' aims to empower parents and offer a helping hand through the process of raising a successful child. These include tips on building parents own self-esteem, preventing common childhood problems, creating a home environment based on mutual respect and open communication, etc. After reading Self-Esteem for a Lifetime, it is hoped that both parents and children feel more confident and competent.

'Self-Esteem Online'
Websites Reviewed by SJZ

These websites are specially selected to provide you with additional information on self-esteem. The information contained in the links highlights topics of children and self-esteem; characteristics of low self-esteem; how parents and educators can help children build positive self-esteem and advice for adults vis-à-vis strengthening their own self-esteem.

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org

The Kids Health website explains what self-esteem is and why it is important for children. Articles feature information on how children get self-esteem, signs of healthy and unhealthy self-esteem, why some kids may have low self-worth and tips to address children's esteem needs. The site is highly interactive and provides families the perspective, advice, and comfort about a wide range of other physical, emotional, and behavioural issues that affect children and teens.

Consistent Parenting Advice
www.consistent-parenting-advice.com

Consistent Parenting places particular emphasis on parents' emotional growth and maturity, focusing on enabling personal growth through addressing self esteem issues, feelings, habits, routines, relationship issues, responsibilities and more. This is a site for parents by parents, where you will find recommended books for and about your baby as well as many other resources needed in the early years.

Kids Source
www.kidsource.com

KidSource provides knowledge and advice to help parents and caregivers better raise and educate their children. The information on the website is organized in contents and discussion forums. The content in parenting section provides information on raising and educating children to allow caregivers to take greater responsibility for their children's health and education. Forums are for parents and educators to meet, to share advice and to talk about the children and their issues.