

Hari Datt Sharma

How to shape your Kids Better

**It is in parent's hands to mould
their children into perfection**



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How to Shape Your
Kids Better

Hari Datt Sharma



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Published by:



V&S PUBLISHERS

F-2/16, Ansari road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

☎ 23240026, 23240027 • Fax: 011-23240028

Email: info@vspublishers.com • Website: www.vspublishers.com

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Branch Office : Mumbai

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Preface

Raising well-balanced children is an art. The sincerity of parents in discharging their responsibility towards their children will reflect in the development of the latter. In other words, as parents sow, so shall they reap – in the form of well-balanced or maladjusted children. Proper upbringing demands active effort, concern, sensitivity, skills, understanding and empathy on the part of parents. Children are always dependent on their caretakers to look after their physical, mental and emotional needs. Which is why, a child is a reflection of the parents' behaviour.

It is impossible to write a perfect prescription to mould ourselves into caring and successful parents. However, there are some guidelines that parents may find quite useful. One must note that there are many variations in parents, as there are in children. Furthermore, when we talk of parents and couples, we are not dealing only with two people but also with the net result of their interaction with each other. Also, remember that there are some prerequisites for effective parenting, just as there are for most tasks.

Every child needs emotionally stable parents who are mature and love each other. In homes where there is only one parent, his/her task becomes very complex, as s/he must take on many additional tasks ordinarily handled by the other parent.

Parents need to demonstrate their love for their children not only by their actions but also by the kind of environment they create in their homes. A child develops a feeling of security and confidence when he knows that he is loved.

Parents need to develop some understanding of their child's personality, as his talents, interests and aspirations mature. With this understanding, they can assist the child

in aiming more accurately towards his goals, thus helping him fulfil his objectives.

Through discipline, guidance and encouragement, parents provide opportunities for the healthy exploration of natural surroundings by the child. They foster curiosity in their children to help them realise their full potential. Children who are deprived of such opportunities tend to fear the unknown and the future.

Parents must encourage children to express their true feelings. Successful parents imbue their family with a sense of belonging and provide opportunities for democratic planning and social action.

Consideration of and help for individual and family problems must be provided readily. The test of the genuineness of a problem lies more with the intensity of feeling about it, than with the nature of the problem itself. There are times when the father's needs must be, at least temporarily, relegated to second place because of the needs of his child. Successful parents constantly seek better ways to do what they have to do without affecting their attention towards their children.

A child's maladjustment with society often results from a poor parent-child relationship, which in turn often stems from lack of correct understanding by parents about their children. An adverse upbringing and the contemporary family situation are two powerful factors of maladjustment. Symptoms of emotional upheaval in a child point towards a disturbed parent-child relationship. When the child realises that being naughty is the only way to attract attention, he indulges in naughtiness.

Emotional problems in children do reflect through their misbehaviour like fighting, lying, stealing, destroying property or breaking rules.

These traits constitute the *acting out behaviour*. This is the misbehaviour that a child indulges in to express his emotional turmoil. In other words, this misbehaviour is an outward expression of a child's emotional disturbance. Through it, he signals his emotional insecurity, hostility

towards parents and feelings of inferiority. For example, lying results from the child's attempt to secure attention and gain esteem. Children who lie also consistently try to overcome insecurity through chronic stealing. Their attempts at stealing openly and getting caught in the process show their hostility towards parents. In some cases, the stolen items symbolise parental love, power or authority, which the child feels deprived of.

Depressive reactions and other emotional problems in childhood are often masked. Among young children, irritability, temper tantrums, low tolerance, hyperactivity and sleep disturbances are common reflections of depression. Among older children, disobedience, running away from home and delinquent behaviour may mask an underlying depression.

Masking of emotional problems is not restricted to children only. In adolescents too, depression may commonly be masked by their inability to sleep, gastrointestinal upsets and chronic fatigue.

This book provides useful tips to parents to help their children develop normally – physically, mentally, emotionally and academically. Ignorance by parents about their child's special emotional and other needs can spoil the whole life of a child.

The main purpose of this book is to provide you with the necessary information to make you successful parents. Morals are imbibed and not taught. As the parents sow, so shall their children reap.

—Hari Datt Sharma
Founder

Peace of Mind Mission
New Delhi



Ten Commandments for a Child's Behaviour Development

1. *When children live with encouragement, they develop CONFIDENCE.*
2. *When children live with tolerance, they learn to be PATIENT.*
3. *When children live with criticism, they learn to CONDEMN.*
4. *When children live with ridicule, they learn to be SHY.*
5. *When children live with hostility, they learn to FIGHT.*
6. *When children live with praise, they learn to APPRECIATE.*
7. *When children live with shame, they learn to feel GUILTY.*
8. *When children live with security, they learn to have FAITH.*
9. *When children live with approval, they learn to LIKE themselves.*
10. *When children live with acceptance, they learn to find LOVE.*

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Parental Behaviour that Plays Havoc with Children

Contemporary research findings in the biological and social sciences have greatly advanced our understanding of the causes of abnormal behaviour exhibited by humans. It is mainly due to faulty development, severe stress or a combination of both.

When any child imbibes criminal values, he may become a criminal due to his faulty development. Faulty development is primarily responsible for the signs of abnormal behaviour in humans. The type of adjustment we are able to develop with people around us at any time is a function of both our personality development and the level of stress we face. Anything that leads to either faulty development or increased stress may create trouble.

If an individual is able to cope effectively with stressful situations, anxiety is eliminated. But if the anxiety and stress continue, the individual typically resorts to various ego-defence mechanisms, such as denial and rationalisation. This may result in lowered integration and maladaptive behaviour. The process of self-defence leads to incongruence between reality and the individual's competence. One should always bear in mind that *faulty learning is the main cause of faulty behaviour*.

Let us now understand the Ten Evils that play havoc with children.

Evil No. 1

Overprotection and Restrictiveness

Excessive maternal protection is called *momism*. It involves smothering the child's growth. Overprotective mothers watch over their children constantly, protect them from the slightest risk, and overly clothe and medicate them. They take decisions on their child's behalf at every opportunity, not allowing them to think for themselves. Different parental motivations may lead to overprotection.

Overprotection can decrease the urge to explore and take risks. And to the overprotected children, other children and adults may seem like awesome, frightful figures.

When the child's desire to seek independence are thwarted, he becomes frustrated. This sows the seeds of aggression and hostility in the child-parent relationship.

The mother's anxiety about the world is readily transmitted to the child. This provides a fertile ground for phobias, as well as for physical illness, which may be unconsciously encouraged by the mother if she has hidden motives to keep the child at home with her.

Overprotection may also cause excessive shyness and, as adults, these children might not be able to express themselves properly and be unable to take decisions independently. Ultimately, it may result in the following symptoms: temper tantrums, anger spasms, failure in school, school phobia and the like. All these end up in imparting an inadequate personality to the child. Such children often reach adolescence and early adulthood feeling inadequate and threatened by a "dangerous" world.

Closely related to overprotectiveness is restrictiveness. Here the parents rigidly enforce restrictive

rules and standards, giving the child little freedom for growing in his own way.

In a study, Becker (1964) concluded that while restrictiveness fosters well-controlled socialised behaviour, it also tends to nurture fear, dependency, submission, repressed hostility and some dulling of intellectual striving. Often, extreme behaviour on the part of an adolescent is a way of rebelling against severe restrictions.

Main Causes of Overprotection

1. When a boy is born after a succession of girls in a family.
2. When s/he is the only child.
3. When the death of a sibling occurs.
4. When the child is handicapped.
5. When the child happens to be adopted.
6. When the child is born after the parents are past their prime.
7. When there have been a series of miscarriages.
8. When either of the parents is no more.

Evil No. 2

Rejection – a Masked Deprivation

Parental rejection of the child, though unintentional, is shown in various ways. This could include physical neglect, denial of love and affection, lack of interest in the child's activities and achievements, harsh or inconsistent punishment, failure to spend time with the child, remaining busy in activities like kitty-parties and lack of respect for the child's rights and feelings as a person. It could also involve cruel and abusive treatment. Parental rejection may be partial or complete, passive or active, and subtle or overtly cruel. Keeping the child in a crèche can also be a form of rejection.

The effects of rejection manifest in the child in the form of excessive fear, shyness, aggressiveness, thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, depression, temper tantrums, lying, stealing, slow morality development, low self-esteem, a feeling of insecurity, loneliness and an inability to express and receive love. All these arise at the subconscious level and the child cannot prevent their manifestation in his behaviour or personality.

Parental rejection is a major reason why adolescents run away from home.

Causes of Rejection

It appears that a large number of parents who neglect their children have themselves been victims of parental rejection. Later, even children who face parental rejection don't accept their parents when the latter grow old. So, rejection is not a one-way behaviour. That is why lack of love has been referred to as a *communicable disease*.

A child may be neglected without being rejected. For instance, when parents are too busy with their work or career, they neglect children.

Evil No. 3

Over-permissiveness and Indulgence

Allowing too much freedom of behaviour to children is called *permissiveness*. And allowing a child to do or have whatever s/he wants is termed *indulgence*.

Sometimes one or both parents seem always ready to indulge their child's smallest whims. In doing so, they fail to inculcate a desirable standard of behaviour in him. When parents indulge their child too much, it is bad for the child's development.

Overindulged children are characteristically spoiled, selfish, inconsiderate and demanding.