

[Dear Amma & Appa: It Was Not "Alright"](#)

Category : [July 1998](#)

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MY TURN

Dear Amma & Appa: It Was Not "Alright"

One Hindu youth tells her story of life in the high-achieving Indian-American family

Anonymous

What did we do wrong?" It is a question frequently asked by Hindu parents faced with a child who is on the verge of falling apart. They put their kids through the best schools, lived in a safe area and hoped their children would be spitting images of themselves--that they would be successful, respected citizens of this not-so-foreign country of America. So what went wrong?

The biggest, most prominent problem, the most obvious one, is we are Indian children immersed in America. In school, we tried to blend in as much as possible. We wanted everyone to like us, so we would talk like them and act like them. We wanted to "fit in." At home, parents would push us and pressure us to do well. Often that meant tutorial sessions that ended in violence, or other tough forms of punishment when we didn't measure up. In our eyes and hearts, we slowly became their medals. Any accomplishment was just a tool to brandish to their friends--to prove how well they were raising us. Nothing we did could ever have been based on our own

merit; it was all their doing. In public we had to be the perfect little submissive toy robots. We were constantly being put down, told that we were not good enough, how incredibly stupid we were if we ever got a 'B', yet were expected to be the best.

You parents were never really affectionate toward us, and we could not find the affection anywhere else, so love became a foreign concept that we could only dream of. Some of us found secret ways to get around the problem. Some rebelled. Lying to you became second nature.

Look at yourself and ask if the way you think, act and speak about your friends and children is really what you feel to be right. Realize that you are in a completely different world from where you grew up. Times have changed, and you have to adjust.

To those of you with younger children, try to understand some of their fears and embarrassments and try to teach them pride. Instill in them a sense of humor. Let your kids know how much they mean to you, and show it. Pay attention to your child's health. Teach your children those aspects of language, culture and religion that you think they would enjoy and appreciate. Do not mock them when they do not understand certain things. Explain. The pressure you put on a child to act a certain way or to get that 'A' can be so detrimental. The most important thing is that we, as children, as humans and as young adults, need to grow. We need to be given choices in life and need to make those choices for ourselves. Your children are responsible, intelligent people, but not all can be

doctors, lawyers or engineers.

The key to life is happiness. If you take that away from your children, and they have no way of getting it back, it may be too late to do anything about it. If you take what we have said to heart and work things through with your children, they will want to forgive and forget.

We think ultimately we all want the same thing--respect. You parents want our respect for being the ones who raised us. We children know that and are grateful for it. But we also demand respect for our views, ideals and individuality. If we find some meeting ground, then maybe healthy relationships can be formed, love will blossom and happiness will allow our community to not just survive, but thrive.

This article was published on the Indolink web site, from an anonymous writer expressing frustration over the way she was raised.