

[Children Are Divine, Treat Them Thus](#)

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Children Are Divine, Treat Them Thus

As kids experience growing pains, remember that parents set the example by their actions

Swami Tejomayananda

Before we start our journey of inquiry into the topic of parenting, let me tell you that I am not going to give you some kind of magical formula that will provide you with immediate relief. We need to think together to discover how we can arrive at the best solutions to this situation. There are no black-and-white rules that apply all of the time. A man confessed, "Before marriage, I had six theories on raising children. Now, after marriage, I have six children and no theories!"

The first thing that is required when you face any problem is that you should keep cool. Calm down and relax. Remember that the problems you face as a parent are not unique. They are common to all parents. Also, if you look at your situation more closely, you will find that your worries are not because all children are misbehaving, but because your child is misbehaving. This is possessiveness in relation to "my child." Still subtler is the fact that the action of "my child" has a direct

repercussion on me--on my image. If my child misbehaves, people will ask, "Whose child is that?" and I will be embarrassed. So it is the "I" and "my" that is the cause of all this worry.

We think that our children belong to us. But remember, we ourselves belong to the Lord. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, "All jivas are my parts." In reality, everyone belongs to God. We all come together for some time, like co-passengers on a train or airplane, then depart, each to go his or her own way. Let us be objective about our children. To quote Kahil Gibran: "Your children come through you; but not from you, and though they are with you, they belong not to you." Each of us is an instrument in the hands of the Lord. He is the real doer. Swami Chinmayananda used to say that a parent's role is like that of a gardener or a farmer. The farmer does not create the seed or the soil. He only provides a conducive environment for the seeds to grow. Similarly, we should do our very best for our children and leave the rest to God.

Imparting culture to our children is most important, but we must begin with ourselves. If we want our children to be pleasant, intelligent, well-behaved and cultured, we have to develop these qualities in ourselves first. In the Bhagavad Gita it is clearly stated, "Whatever a great man does, others follow the same." Another shastra implores, "In houses where women are honored and respected, the Gods dwell there. Where the women are not respected and honored, whatever one does is futile....The husband must see that the wife is happy and the wife must see that the husband is happy. When both are making each other happy, there will be auspiciousness and

welfare for all in that house." If this ideal is not held by both husband and wife, there will only be fighting between them; and when the children see this repeatedly, they will also fight. Such a household will be filled with violence.

It is important to seek the root cause of problems. Our bodies show many symptoms of illness before the onset of disease. These early signs are a blessing because they draw our attention to the source of irritation. We become more alert and sensitive. In the same way, you should become sensitive to your children's reactions. Observe whether they are indicative of a serious problem or just a normal part of growing up. Avoid sermons--nobody likes to hear sermons. That is why whenever sermons are given, people tend to fall asleep!

Learn to become a facilitator. Dealing with our children in a friendly manner is as important as what we convey verbally. Method and approach will differ from child to child. Take genuine interest in your children's interests. By showing concern and interest in their activities and hobbies, you will find that they will be more responsive to your guidance.

Establish a rapport with your child. The best way to do this is by letting your child know that he or she has your full confidence and love. Then alone will your child confide in you. There is a Sanskrit verse that says that you should fondle your child until he is five, educate and discipline him until his fifteenth year, and, when he reaches sixteen, look upon him as a friend.

In and through the process of parenting, always remember that you and your child belong to God--we are all His children. Invoke His blessings on yourself, your child and everyone. Since He is the "inner controller," He will succeed where your direct control fails. Don't look for magical solutions. Always strive for a broader vision of looking at things. I wish all the best to you and your children.

Youth, Please Just Give This a Thought

There are always two sides to every story. so while I'm talking to your parents, I might as well have a word with you. You revolt against parental pressure, but you succumb easily to peer pressure. Are you aware of this? You talk of independent thinking. How come that independent spirit doesn't arise in front of your friend? How come you easily become one among the herd? So, please be careful. Think and act. Self-control and discipline will help you achieve your goals.

Swami Tejomayananda, 48, was designated head of Chinmaya Mission in 1993. Based in Mumbai, India, he frequently tours the globe elaborating on the Upanishads and other Vedantic texts.