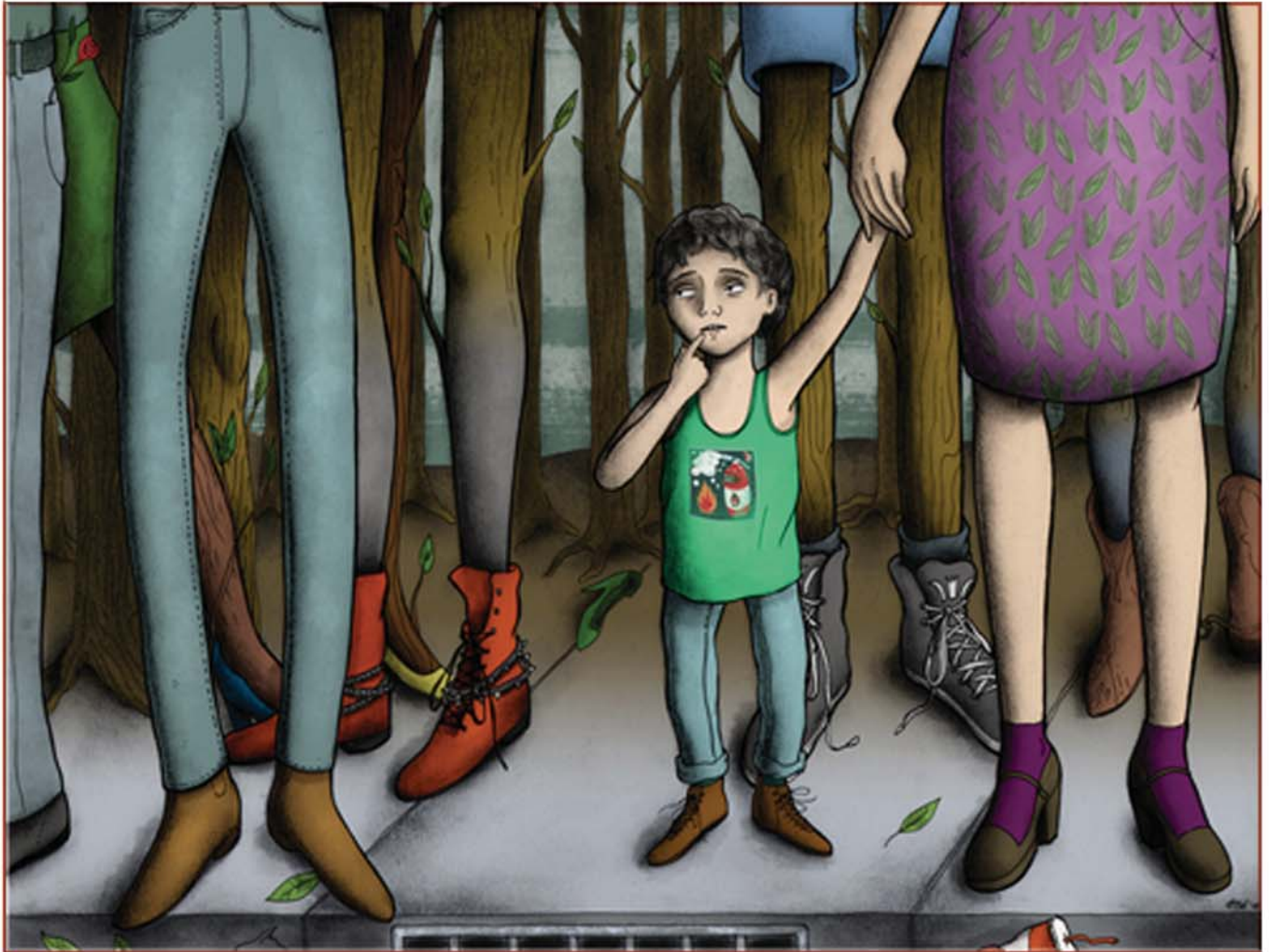


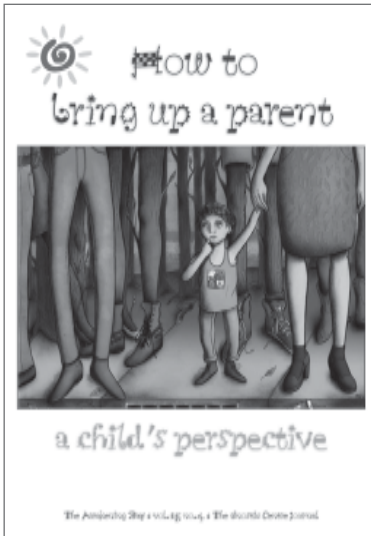


# How to bring up a parent



a child's perspective





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EDITOR  
Ameeta Mehra  
CO-EDITOR  
Anuradha  
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY  
Anuradha Agrawal  
OWNER  
Ameeta Mehra  
on behalf of The Gnostic Centre  
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# Editorial

Dear Reader,

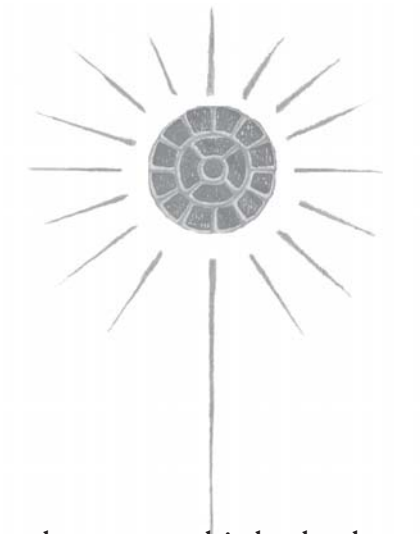
Parenting is one of the earliest and almost compulsory occupation all over the world. Traditionally the wisdom of generations guided the new parents. In recent times, many resources have been added to the world-knowledge on how to bring up the child.

Yet, often interacting with children, one wonders how they would like the parents to be. If only they could, how would they bring up the parents? The older one gets, the more this view gets informed by the adult mindset - so how does one tap into the younger ones' minds and hearts to draw out this secret?

Here is a first attempt... a little through adults reminiscing of their childhood and relationships with adults, a little through children's own conversations, opinions and interactions.

Enjoy.

*- Anuradha*



To bear a child and construct his body almost subconsciously is not enough. The work really commences when, by the power of thought and will, we conceive and create a character capable of manifesting an ideal.

The Mother

A minimum of rules.

A maximum of freedom.

All possibilities must have equal scope for manifestation, then humanity will progress more rapidly.

The Mother





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# What a parent must always remember

## *Dreams of Miracles*

When one is very young and as I say “well-born”, that is, born with a conscious psychic being within, there is always, in the dreams of the child, a kind of aspiration, which for its (child’s) consciousness is a sort of ambition, for something which would be beauty without ugliness, justice without injustice, goodness without limits, and a conscious, constant success, a perpetual miracle. One dreams of miracles when one is young, one wants all wickedness to disappear, everything to be always luminous, beautiful, happy, one likes stories which end happily. This is what one should rely on. When the



body feels its miseries, its limitations, one must establish this dream in it – of a strength which would have no limit, a beauty which would have no ugliness, and of marvellous capacities: one dreams of being able to rise into the air, of being wherever it is necessary to be, of setting things right when they go wrong, of healing the sick; indeed, one has all sorts of dreams when one is very young... Usually parents or teachers pass their time throwing cold water on it, telling you, “Oh! it’s a dream, it is not a reality.” They should do the very opposite! Children should be taught, “Yes, this is what you must try to realise and not only is it possible but it is certain if you come in contact with the part in you which is capable of doing this thing. This is what should guide your life, organise it, make you develop in the direction of the true reality which the ordinary world calls illusion.”

This is what it should be, instead of making children ordinary, with that dull, vulgar common sense which becomes an inveterate habit and, when something is going well, immediately brings up in the being the idea: “Oh, that won’t last!”, when somebody is kind, the impression, “Oh, he will change!”, when one is capable of doing something, “Oh, tomorrow I won’t be able to do it so well.” This is like an acid, a destructive acid in the being, which takes away hope, certitude, confidence in future possibilities.



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## *Perpetual Enthusiasm*

When a child is full of enthusiasm, never throw cold water on it, never tell him, “You know, life is not like that!” You should always encourage him, tell him, “Yes, at present things are not always like that, they seem ugly, but behind this there is a beauty that is trying to realise itself. This is what you should love and draw towards you, this is what you should make the object of your dreams, of your ambitions.”

And if you do this when you are very small, you have much less difficulty than if later on you have to undo, undo all the bad effects of a bad education, undo that kind of dull and



vulgar common sense which means that you expect nothing good from life, which makes it insipid, boring, and contradicts all the hopes, all the so-called illusions of beauty. On the contrary, you must tell a child – or yourself if you are no longer quite a baby – “Everything in me that seems unreal, impossible, illusory, that is what is true, that is

what I must cultivate.” When you have these aspirations: “Oh, not to be always limited by some incapacity, all the time held back by some bad will!”, you must cultivate within you this certitude that that is what is essentially true and that is what must be realised.

## *Everlasting Faith*

Then faith awakens in the cells of the body. And you will see that you find a response in your body itself. The body itself will feel that if its inner will helps, fortifies, directs, leads, well, all its limitations will gradually disappear.

- *The Mother*



*There are two lasting bequests we can give our children.*

*One is roots. The other is wings.*

Hodding Carter, Jr.



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# Looking at the world through a child's eyes



*I* find that children's questions often have a psychic quality – a knack of piercing the heart of the matter. The answers that they find to these questions through independent exploration are still more fascinating – and hold many valuable lessons for adults.

My 5 year old niece, Ruhani, has been one such teacher for me. Ruhani's first real encounter with the concept of death was when she realised that her grandmother – to whom she is very attached, would 'die' one day. She resolved this difficult situation by entering into a pact with her grandmother. Her grandmother would have to return back as her own daughter! 'God' was roped into the pact and had to ensure the smooth functioning of the deal.

Ruhani had another encounter with death when she went to see the horses with me at the Usha Stud farm. She saw a dead crow lying on the ground and was very distressed and tears filled her eyes. She then remembered her pact with her grandmother and asked – 'Massi, can this crow come back as a child-crow?' I told her that this indeed was a possibility. Her eyes brightened immediately and there was a skip in her step for the rest of our walk.

What was remarkable about Ruhani's two encounters with death was that she had found her own solutions to a difficult question through her own special logic. God – for her – was



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key link in the entire scheme of things – ensuring the smooth functioning of her deals and pacts. There was wise innocence in her questions and her solutions that moved me deeply from within.

I feel that the basic trust in a child – that the universe in which she lives can fulfil its fundamental needs – constantly needs to be nurtured. It is important to forge a living relationship with the Divine which can provide the child with a sense of faith that the world is not an arbitrary place – it is a fair and just place – where all sincere deals with the Divine ring out true in the final analysis. There needs to be a fundamental trust that despite the appearances to the contrary – life is meaningful. To know that we see only a part of the picture through the use of our external minds and many of the answers lie – on the other side of silence – open to creative explorations. The more we allow children to exercise their spontaneous intuitions and value their own genuine questions – the more they are likely to seek the *hidden plan* that lies beyond the external appearances.

The manner in which we engage with children deeply influences their initial relationship with the world. For instance, I found Ruhani very upset when I went to pick her up from school. When I asked her the reason for her mood she said that she found her class teacher a very puzzling creature. On further probing I found out that her teacher had on the previous day ‘promised’ the class that they would go out and play in the park. The next day she entered the class and started teaching the children without any explanation as to why she had not fulfilled her promise. This shook Ruhani’s faith in the concept of a ‘promise’ and the predictability of the adult world.

I feel that if children’s sense of security and faith in the adult’s words are affirmed in the beginning years of life, it forms a good base for dealing later with the ambiguities of life – for the child retains an initial sense of the world as a secure and a fair place. The touch of the psychic can help a growing child move beyond the mental interpretations of the chaotic experiences of life – and search for the larger meaning of life.

- Monica Gupta



*If parents could leave their children alone, they would not fall ill so often, perhaps not even once out of ten times. Yes, you have not said anything to the child, but how worried you were about its health. It appeared as if a catastrophe had happened or the child had suddenly developed cancer. It is your worry that spoils the whole atmosphere and increases the trouble.*

The Mother



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# How to bring up a Parent?

## *A conversation with 3 year olds*

- I            When do you feel angry?
- Child 1    When mummy scolds me.
- Child 2    I cry when mummy scolds me.
- Child 3    I feel afraid when mummy scolds me.
- Child 1    When mummy is scolding, we should take a rope and tie up her hands!

## *A 13-year old to me*

Didi I did a lot of wrong things when I was young. You remember? You saw me doing that but then why did you not stop me? (*reproachfully*) You should have.

**So what do children need from their parents,  
or teachers, or adults around them?**

## *Interactions with 3-year olds*

### Interaction 1

(with the child sitting atop a bamboo-ladder monkey bar at a height of 4.5 ft from the ground – the end point tied to a tree on which a bell is hung from a higher branch)

Child        Didi, I want to make my fear run away.

I            Sure. You want  
              to crawl across  
              the monkey bar?  
              Try. I am here.

The child tries – crawls to the first rung, retreats back. Eyes have a pensive look combined with fear and he is struggling with himself. Tries 2-3 times and retreats each time.





I Shall I help you? (stretching out my hand) Hold it and I will help you in the beginning.

Child No didi, I will do it myself.

Tries again – with the same result; cries a little, on the verge of giving up, yet not happy about it. Still not willing to do it with my help. I engage him in stories, try out various things till I help him connect to becoming a butterfly – crawling along the ladder and at the end flying down (i.e I will hold his hands and help him jump down) like a butterfly. What colours would he like to be? What pattern on the wings? He keeps answering and crawling one rung further... and so he reaches the end. He does not want to stand up to ring the bell – stretches up while sitting only and rings it. His face still shows fear at the thought of standing up on the ladder (monkey bar). He turns to me and says, now I want to jump. Respecting the tremendous effort he has made in overcoming his fear on his own, I do not insist on his standing up, but just hold out my arms and let him become a butterfly. He is very happy. He has done it!

The story does not end here. Next morning, upon coming to school, the first thing he wants to do is try the monkey bar again. Mid-morning he wants to do it again. Before going back home, again he does it for a third time. Now he does not need the butterfly story any more. His own story is motivation enough for him and he keeps recalling and smiling and announcing to whoever is around, how he had thrown away his fear (into the nearby pond) and how he could do the monkey bar without being afraid!

Interaction 2 (On the same monkey bar – I have asked him to crawl across it.)

Child I will do it tomorrow.

I You said that yesterday also. Now tomorrow has come. You have to do it.

Child I will not do it.  
(mixture of fear,  
resistance, tears in his  
eyes)

I (trying to cajole him)  
Now you are big.  
You are no longer  
in the younger  
group. You must  
do it today. I will  
help you. Okay,  
just crawl up to a  
couple of rungs.

Child I am thirsty. I  
need to go and have water.

I I will get your water bottle here only. (I ask another child to bring it. I give it to him.)





---

Child I am not big yet. I am very small.

I Do you want to go into the younger group then?

No answer. Refuses to budge. I tell him – I am not letting you off till you do this. I am ready to help but you have to do this today. He is not happy.

I Oh, your father is a pilot? He flies? You want to be like papa?

Child Yes.

I So come, you be brave like him and cross this and then you will fly (like a butterfly).

I engage him in a conversation about his father and urge him on. He begins. I keep encouraging him – ‘Oh, you know how to do it! You were making a fool of me :) Oh, you really fooled me. I thought you did not know. But you know it so well! How well you are doing it!’ He manages to crawl the whole length. And then comes the butterfly jump! He is happy.

Sequel: Two days later, this child, by himself climbed up on an even higher monkey bar and called out to us to see the ‘*kamaal*’ (great and wondrous - a ‘wow’ act) he was going to do – and he crossed the entire length without fear !!

### **So, what do children need from their parents, or teachers, or adults around them?**

The classroom has been cleared up before the children (3-year olds) go back home. The floor is bare of cushions or any obstructions. While other children are busy taking their bottles, bags or rushing out to enjoy a few minutes of cycling before they go home, ... ..

she is blissfully dancing around in the empty space. No need of anyone. No need of any object. Fully engrossed and happy.

### **What do children need from their parents, or teachers, or adults around them?**

If one were to ask the older children who can verbalise their thoughts, perhaps one could ready a list. But it is interesting to glimpse these needs or intuit them before they are vocalized or before they even become conscious in the child. This opportunity one has when one works with the very young ones. And this is the window that has opened to me in the last few weeks.

Generally one associates ‘bringing up’ with children. But we see that a child too moulds the parents. Life changes in a major way. Habits change. Attitudes change. A lot of this is natural, spontaneous. But after the first flush of parental love has settled down, or has satisfied itself by looking after the physical-material needs of the child, very few engage in ‘bringing themselves up as a parent’ - a parent of that particular child.

An expectant mother may get a lot of care and attention – emotionally, physically, but once the parenting begins, it is a different story.



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## *How to bring up a parent?*

The Mother once said, in the context of teaching young children, “Little children are wonderful. It is quite enough to surround them with things and to let them be. Never interfere unless it is absolutely necessary. And let them be.”

Recently, when I started working with three-year olds after a gap of many years, this sentence kept coming back to me. So simple, but so difficult to put into practice. I tried it. Chaos. No structure, I was letting things just be, letting children be. Not only was it chaotic, with random moments of meaningfulness, it was not having a positive impact on the children. Those who had strong, rebellious, dynamic natures – became wilder, distracted, destructive. Those who were softer, felt lost or scared or bored, disinterested. It didn't work.

We brought in structures, planned, prepared, had our activities ready – the morning came, I connected to the children's moods and never once did what we had planned. But the day flowed smoothly, everyone was engaged, interested. What happened? That morning before coming to the school I had spent a few quiet moments at the shrine, and for a brief moment a sincere aspiration had risen in my being, for a beautiful morning with the children. That prayer got answered.

Since then there has been a shift – we plan, sometimes we go with that, many times we do not – though it remains as a broad framework, and also as something to fall back upon in case things are not working or we are not ‘with it’. The challenge is not to allow it to become a dictating factor. The greatest shift is the ‘connect’ with the children. I can see it in their eyes, their body language, their reaching out, their opening up – that they too have connected to me and the trust has developed.

In the case of a parent, all this is already there – the trust, the ‘connect’. Things are generally spontaneous within a broad framework of material-physical-emotional-intellectual needs. Still there is a scope for something more, something deeper, more comprehensive. I think it is the ‘letting them be’ part that is most difficult for the parent. For, there is always a goal, always an expectation, always a pressure to be a parent, to educate the child, to bring-up the child – and behind it all a distrust, the child does not know what is best for him/her. No matter what the age of one's child, this concern in parents is paramount – to guide the child in his/her growth, decisions, life.

Recently, at a parenting workshop, we asked the parents (of 3-year olds) to fill out a worksheet about their child. Here, the same is given, but this time, it is for children to fill out about their parents. Give it a try and you might discover something :) For the key to parenting is, I feel, remembering to be a child.



*The guys who fear becoming fathers don't understand that fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects the man.*

*The end product of child raising is not the child but the parent.*

Frank Pittman, Man Enough



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# A Worksheet

My parent - ..... Father / Mother (tick) My name - .....

## The Physical

- Posture (while sitting, standing, walking, running) –
- Hygiene (nails, hair, teeth, hands, bath, cleanliness) –
- Food –
- Strength & stamina –
- Balance & grace –
- Energy levels –
- Tidiness, order, organization of material things, spaces –
- Response to pain, hurt, illness –
- Goals for the Physical (what will help my parent progress further)



## The Vital (Emotional)

- The five senses –
- Aesthetic sense (sense of beauty, harmony, proportion) –
- Response to music, painting, dance, etc. –
- Ability to express emotions –
- Response to one's own mistakes –
- Ability to engage with one's work in-depth, persevere till the end –
- Response to challenges, difficulties, danger –
- Response to conflicts –
- What the parent fears / is insecure about –



- 
- Traits of nature (character) – the high points
  - Traits of nature (character) – the low points
  - Need for self-assertion, independence –
  - Ability to listen to others –
  - Socialisation traits (how the parent relates to others) –
  - Goals for the Vital (what will help my parent progress further)

### The Mental

- Ability to concentrate on one thing / work –
- How does the parent learn –
- Ability to perceive patterns, relationships –
- Ability to deal with different ways of doing things –
- Reasoning, logical thinking –
- Memory, retention & recall –
- Observation –
- Openness to learning new things –
- Sorting, Pairing, Sequencing skills –
- Ability to innovate, think out of the box –
- Goals for the Mental (what will help my parent progress further)

### The Psychic (Inner being) (questions added later)

- Urge for progress –
- Certitude, Faith in Goodness, Victory of Life –
- Unease with anything that creates disharmony in the being –
- Ability to connect with a deeper, higher reality within or above or around –

- Anuradha



*It's not only children who grow. Parents do too.  
As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives,  
they are watching us to see what we do with ours.  
I can't tell my children to reach for the sun.  
All I can do is reach for it, myself.*

Joyce Maynard



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# What adults can learn from kids

## talk by a 12-yr old

*I* want to start with a question: When was the last time you were called childish? For kids like me, being called childish can be a frequent occurrence. Every time we make irrational demands, exhibit irresponsible behavior, or display any other signs of being normal American citizens, we are called childish, which really bothers me. After all, take a look at these events: Imperialism and colonization, world wars, George W. Bush. Ask yourself: Who's responsible? Adults.

Now, what have kids done? Well, Anne Frank touched millions with her powerful account of the Holocaust, Ruby Bridges helped end segregation in the United States, and, most recently, Charlie Simpson helped to raise 120,000 pounds for Haiti on his little bike. So, as you can see evidenced by such examples, age has absolutely nothing to do with it. The traits the word childish addresses are seen so often in adults that we should abolish this age-discriminatory word when it comes to criticizing behavior associated with irresponsibility and irrational thinking. *(Applause)*

Then again, who's to say that certain types of irrational thinking aren't exactly what the world needs? Maybe you've had grand plans before, but stopped yourself, thinking: that's impossible or that costs too much or that won't benefit me. For better or worse, we kids aren't hampered as much when it comes to thinking about reasons why not to do things. Kids can be full of inspiring aspirations and hopeful thinking, like my wish that no one went hungry or that everything were free kind of utopia. How many of you still dream like that and believe in the possibilities? Sometimes a knowledge of history and the past failures of utopian ideals can be a burden because you know that if everything were free, that the food stocks would become depleted, and scarce, and lead to chaos. On the other hand, we kids still dream about perfection. And that's a good thing because in order to make anything a reality, you have to dream about it first.





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In many ways, our audacity to imagine helps push the boundaries of possibility. For instance, the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington, has a program called Kids Design Glass, and kids draw their own ideas for glass art. Now, the resident artist said they got some of their best ideas through the program because kids don't think about the limitations of how hard it can be to blow glass into certain shapes. They just think of good ideas. Now, when you think of glass, you might think of colorful Chihuly designs or maybe Italian vases, but kids challenge glass artists to go beyond that into the realm of broken-hearted snakes and bacon boys, who you can see has meat vision. (*Laughter*)

Our inherent wisdom doesn't have to be insiders' knowledge. Kids already do a lot of learning from adults, and we have a lot to share. I think that adults should start learning from kids. I do most of my speaking in front of an education crowd, teachers and students, and I like this analogy. It shouldn't just be a teacher at the head of the classroom telling students do this, do that. The students should teach their teachers. Learning between grown-ups and kids should be reciprocal. The reality, unfortunately, is a little different, and it has a lot to do with trust, or a lack of it.

Now, if you don't trust someone, you place restrictions on them, right? If I doubt my older sister's ability to pay back the 10 percent interest I established on her last loan, I'm going to withhold her ability to get more money from me until she pays it back. (*Laughter*) True story, by the way. Now, adults seem to have a prevalently restrictive attitude towards kids from every "don't do that," "don't do this" in the school handbook, to restrictions on school internet use. As history points out, regimes become oppressive when they're fearful about keeping control. And, although adults may not be quite at the level of totalitarian regimes, kids have no, or very little, say in making the rules, when really the attitude should be reciprocal, meaning that the adult population should learn and take into account the wishes of the younger population.

Now, what's even worse than restriction is that adults often underestimate kids' abilities. We love challenges, but when expectations are low, trust me, we will sink to them. My own parents had anything but low expectations for me and my sister. Okay, so they didn't tell us to become doctors or lawyers or anything like that, but my dad did read to us about Aristotle and pioneer germ fighters when lots of other kids were hearing "The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round." Well, we heard that one too, but "Pioneer Germ Fighters" totally rules. (*Laughter*)

I loved to write from the age of four, and when I was six my mom bought me my own laptop equipped with Microsoft Word. Thank you Bill Gates and thank you Ma. I wrote over 300 short stories on that little laptop, and I wanted to get published. Instead of just scoffing at this heresy that a kid wanted to get published, or saying wait until you're older, my parents were really supportive. Many publishers were not quite so encouraging. One large children's publisher ironically saying that they didn't work with children. Children's publisher not working with children? I don't know, you're kind of alienating a large client there. (*Laughter*) Now, one publisher, Action Publishing, was willing to take that leap and trust me, and to listen to what I had to say. They published my first book, "Flying Fingers," — and from there on, it's gone to speaking at hundreds of schools, keynoting to thousands of educators, and finally, today, speaking to you.



I appreciate your attention today, because to show that you truly care, you listen. But there's a problem with this rosy picture of kids being so much better than adults. Kids grow up and become adults just like you. *(Laughter)* Or just like you, really? The goal is not to turn kids into your kind of adult, but rather better adults than you have been, which may be a little challenging considering you guys' credentials, but the way progress happens is because new generations and new eras grow and develop and become better than the previous ones. It's the reason we're not in the Dark Ages anymore. No matter your position or place in life, it is imperative to create opportunities for children so that we can grow up to blow you away. *(Laughter)*

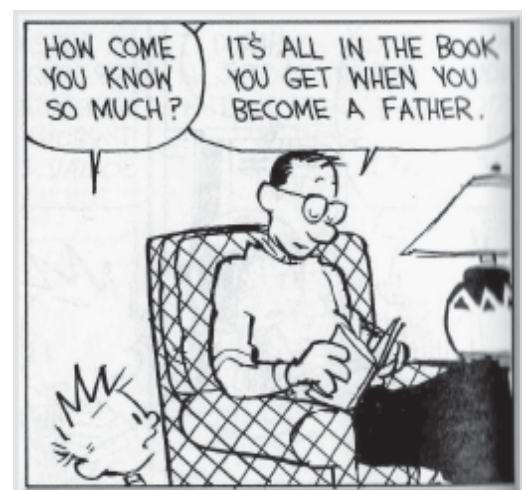
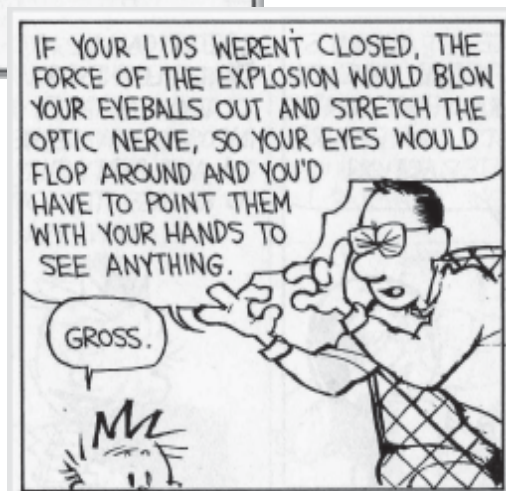
Adults and fellow TEDsters\*, you need to listen and learn from kids and trust us and expect more from us. You must lend an ear today, because we are the leaders of tomorrow, which means we're going to be taking care of you when you're old and senile. No, just kidding. No, really, we are going to be the next generation, the ones who will bring this world forward. And, in case you don't think that this really has meaning for you, remember that cloning is possible, and that involves going through childhood again, in which case, you'll want to be heard just like my generation. Now, the world needs opportunities for new leaders and new ideas. Kids need opportunities to lead and succeed. Are you ready to make the match? Because the world's problems shouldn't be the human family's heirloom.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

- Adora Svitak

A prolific short story writer and blogger since age seven, Adora Svitak (now aged 13) speaks around the United States to adults and children as an advocate for literacy.

\* Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) is a nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. This talk was given in February 2010 at a TED Conference (at Longbeach, California, USA).





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# To Be



*I* remember running forward,  
With a beautiful flower  
I only wanted it  
To be accepted on that hour.

I remember wanting  
To perform a dance,  
I only wanted to  
Be seen by chance.

I remember reading books  
Looking for stories of meanings I related to,  
I only wanted to  
Find myself there – somewhere.

I remember painting for hours,  
Mixing colors and feeling elated  
I only wanted to  
Express a feeling never before stated.

I remember writing  
Poems like this,  
I only wanted  
To be understood.

Now the memories are fading,  
Have they gone?  
I am here,  
Are they me?

With flashes of light  
They seem to subside.  
Yet haunt and delight,  
And live inside.

I think one of the first things as a child that I really wanted apart from unconditional love, was to be accepted and appreciated. I think many of us spend days anguishing because we feel we are not good enough – as good as a sibling, as good as another child or just good as we are. Being the youngest of three, I looked up to everyone in the family. My brother was the biggest role model for me. My sister I admired and for the longest time I wanted to have her free spirit and ‘give a damn’ attitude.



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Now, when I look back to my childhood, I feel it was perfect. I was brought up in Assam – an idyllic life. I think the break came when I went away to boarding at the tender age of 5 years. Then started the true struggle of identity, friendships that were very close to the heart and the constant ache in the heart for parents that were not there. I truly feel that 5 is too young an age to send your children away. There is a lot of love and nurturing that still needs to be shared before your child is ready to face the world without you. Unfortunately Assam did not have any good schools, so my parents had no choice.

From the beginning years, I attained a double personality – being the sweet, spoilt, loving and caring child at home, being the confident, strong, athletic child in school and with friends.

Now that I have two daughters of my own, I try to see them through my eyes. It is a totally different lifestyle – living in a big city as opposed to my idyllic country side upbringing. I think parents need to look back and keep the perspective that they had as a child always alive in their minds.

Parents play a pivotal role in any child's life. It is painful to see how some adults still carry the burden of not being accepted by a parent or not loved enough. Parents are like demi-gods and hold the most powerful position in a child's life. Knowing all this I take my role as a Mother very seriously. Still there are things I have done that I cannot forgive myself for at times. But this is all a process of growing and bonding together. A lot of things about myself become clear to me as I spend each day with my girls.

Now as I hold them in my arms I feel complete and whole, they seem to have made my life come full circle. I grow through my children and learn more from them each day. They are my inspiration and I have truly learnt the meaning of unconditional love through them.

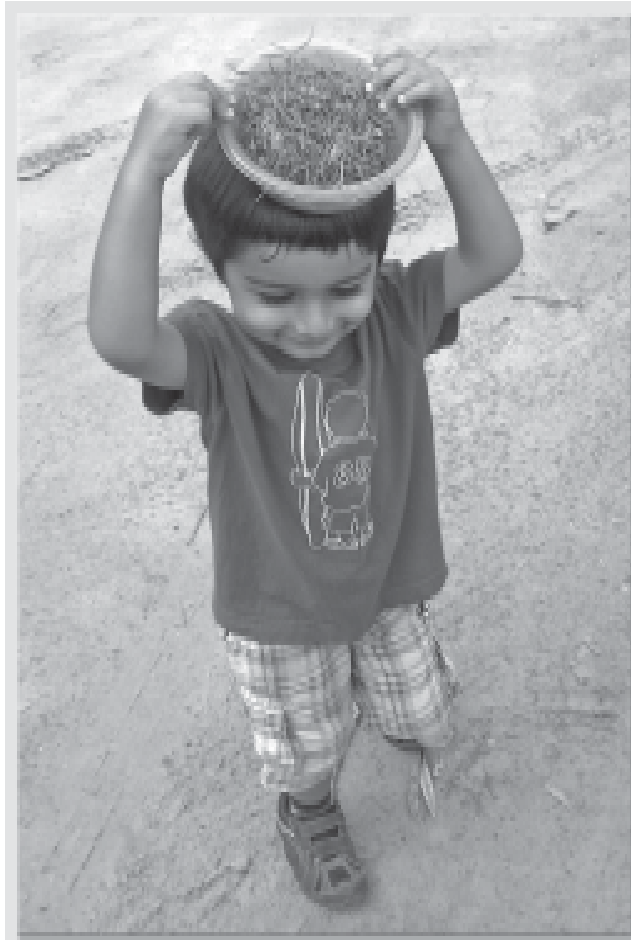
As I lie down by her side at night,  
I wonder,  
Did I do my best today  
To make the day truly lived for her?

As she shares each dream with me,  
I wonder,  
What can I do to make  
The journey more worthwhile for her?

As I watch her grow,  
I wonder,  
Will her reality and perception  
Be anything like mine?

And to wonder is not a bad thing,  
It helps us reach –  
The inner depths of our soul  
To confront the truth that lies within.

- Roohi Kapur



I call this interaction

## the homophonic tête à tête

*I* would like to share something I found humorous and pleasantly surprising in my daily interactions with my 2-year old son, Vihaan. I drop Vihaan to school and that's one of the many instances we get to chat. The journey to the school gives you ample opportunities to discover the flora and fauna and so...

- 'Vihaan, see that's a crane,' said I. Vihaan looks out of the car and says, 'Where papa?' and I reply, 'See that bird, it's called a crane.' Vihaan promptly - 'That's not a crane, a crane picks up mud and that's no crane, that's a bird.'
- 'Vihaan, see those horses. There's a tall horse and there's a short horse.' Vihaan is a bit confused with the word 'short' and reverts, 'Papa - that's not a 'shot', a shot is something you hit with a bat... like in cricket.'

Thanks!.....

- Vipul Malhotra



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# How does repetition help?

**E**very parent has experienced the phenomena of their child begging for their favourite story to be read, their favourite song to be played or their favourite movie to be watched for the 100th time.

Even though we adults might be tempted to hide the favourite book or introduce a new book, CD, or DVD, we must stop ourselves because our children are actually teaching us a huge lesson about how they want and need to be parented.

**When our children repeat a request for their favourite story to be read, it is because they have an innate interest in ‘mastery’.** Of course they love to explore new toys, corners, books and movies, but once the all-important excitement of discovery has occurred, children set out to ‘master’ the things that interest them the most.

Mastery occurs through repetition. Young children are driven to discover and then master all aspects of their world.

**Discipline is another area in which children innately crave mastery.** Children test their parents because they are trying to figure out how their world works and what is acceptable behaviour. While they do their research they do things consciously and unconsciously to investigate their world and its limits so that they are able to ‘master’ it.

**The best thing parents can do is to learn a simple methodology for discipline, get trained to use it and then apply it consistently.** This will decrease the number of times their child needs to test and will diminish the intensity of the testing. Children whose parents often use different strategies, use bribes or threats, become very confused and unsure of themselves. It is for this reason that many parenting experts say that discipline makes children feel safe and secure.

**One can liken children’s feelings to the experience of hiking down a trail with very few trail signs or markers.** It’s confusing! Without clear signals to keep one on course, one is more likely to make wrong turns and get into trouble. This is what it’s like for children as they try to learn the path of acceptable behaviour. When limits are unclear or inconsistent, children often steer off course and get into trouble, thus making mastery of acceptable behaviour very difficult and unsettling.

So, as you spend time with your child, remember what it is that they crave the most...mastery. Let’s be conscious of this and then make a decision to help them master their world with confidence and ease.

- Erin Kurt

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/what-children-can-teach-their-parents.html>



# Safety rules !



- ☺ There is no such thing as child-proofing your house.
- ☺ A 4 year-old's voice is louder than 200 adults in a crowded restaurant.
- ☺ A ceiling fan can hit a baseball a long way.
  - ☺ When you hear the toilet flush and the words, "Uh-oh," it's already too late.
  - ☺ A six year old can start a fire with a flint rock even though a 36 year old man says they can only do it in the movies.
  - ☺ LEGOS will pass through the digestive tract of a four year old.
- ☺ Play Dough and Microwave should never be used in the same sentence.
- ☺ The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earth worms dizzy.
- ☺ Marbles in gas tanks make lots of noise when driving.
  - ☺ Quiet does not necessarily mean don't worry.
  - ☺ A good sense of humor will get you through most problems in life (unfortunately, mostly in retrospect).
  - ☺ You never want to hear, "Watch me fly!" coming from the roof.
- ☺ Nor do you want to hear, "Your new cell phone doesn't work underwater."
- ☺ Bugs are not a dietary supplement.
- ☺ If you hear the words, "Guess what's in my hands," you don't want to know.
  - ☺ Most toilets can not consume an entire roll of toilet paper without choking.
  - ☺ Any sentence beginning with, "How much do you love me?" means 'prepare for bad news'.

- Internet



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# Parenting a Parent

a requiem for my mother



*P*arents come with a life time guarantee – they don't age, or fall sick or become infirm and die. Those things happen to other mortals. Or so I used to think. Until one day my illusions were shattered when, during one of my annual visits, I saw my father bent, shriveled and shaking with Parkinson's disease. My father, who was one of the smartest men I had known, with a joyful grin always on his face, who walked around with his characteristic long strides! Death came to him as a blessing in more ways than one. Slowly I realized that my parents are also mortals and one day death will certainly take them away. All the ads that claim popping a particular pill would relieve us of all age-related problems while this financial plan will take us into a safe and secure old age are only selling false hopes of mobility and freedom against the certainty of bodily decay. I realized there is no such thing as 'walking into silver haired twilights'.

Armed with this new-found wisdom I came 'home' to live with my mother after a gap of 40 odd years. It also gave me an opportunity to re-bond with my siblings. Worried as we were about our mother's health and other related issues we used to feel the full weight of distance, worrying if mother would be alive on our next visit. We were living a guilt-ridden life, coping by remote control – telephone, dependence on friends, relatives and servants.

But when I assumed the role of the 'frontline soldier', my sisters and brothers heaved a sigh of relief and were only too happy to extend support in whatever form possible – physical,



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financial and (not to speak of) emotional. It became a team work – a joint effort that made things rather smooth for me. I also had to ensure the support of my own family – my husband and children – because unless they shared my enthusiasm and were able to see ‘the shining star at the distant horizon’, it would not have been easy for me. My husband was, of course, game for anything. My children were quite amused at this new ‘*avataar*’ of their mother, from a jet-setting executive to a domesticated woman. “So what did you do today, other than cooking and eating?” they would often poke me.

But nothing had prepared me for this total reversal of roles – that of parenting a parent who had lived almost all her life on her terms. There was this neat package of surprises waiting for me to unravel – a package which offered few comforts but many challenges.

Did I say challenges? Having lived apart for 40 odd years, I realized soon that both my mother and I had grown much apart. We were living in two worlds under the same roof, like an apple and orange sitting in the same basket. Talk of the generation gap (cliché, cliché)! Mother hated mobile phones and computers. The only time she gave a half nod of approval to the computer was when her great grandchildren would come on the web-cam. My favourite TV programmes were anathema for her. “Oh, these North Indian women are so loud and argumentative.” (Barkha Dutt, please make a note!). Having lived in a city where relationships are mostly impersonal, I had become a very private person and I jealously guarded my personal space. In this small town everyone wants to know everything about everyone. Added to this was my mother’s exuberance which attracted a large circle of friends. I could not relate to them. Mother could not understand my mood swings or long spells of silence. The only place where peace prevailed was the dining room. I loved cooking and she relished eating.

But there were times when my energy would ooze out completely. At such vulnerable moments some bad childhood memories and resentments would crop up in my mind. But as days passed by I learnt to absorb things. Both my mother and I mellowed down considerably and became more accepting. I could see that aging involves untold sadness and indignity, a time of physical and mental deterioration, of pain and loss, of fear and loneliness. My angularities smoothed to a large extent. Looking back, I feel that the strength that formed the foundation of this new relationship was the unfathomable love binding the parent and the child – no matter how much you have fought, argued, had disagreements with each other, this bonding defies all reason and logic.

And then there were nights when I watched my mother sleeping under her favourite red blanket. Blurry eyed I would bend down to kiss her forehead chanting silently:

*Aastaamtaavaddeyamprasoothisamaye.....*

After a brief illness my mother passed away on Nov.20<sup>th</sup> 2010, leaving this world which she loved so much.

Good bye, mom! Be with the angels and enjoy the peace which eluded you during the last few days of your life.

We miss you!

- *Jyothi Unniraman*



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## Sage advice from children

When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?" don't answer him.

Heather, Age 16

Never tell your mom her diet's not working.

Michael, Age 14

When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she's on the phone.

Alyesha, Age 13

Never ask for anything that costs more than five dollars when your parents are doing taxes.

Carrol, Age 9

## and from parents

The quickest way for a parent to get a child's attention  
is to sit down and look comfortable.

Lane Olinghouse

Insanity is hereditary - you get it from your kids.

Sam Levenson

The hardest part of raising a child is teaching them to ride bicycles.  
A shaky child on a bicycle for the first time needs both support and freedom.  
The realization that this is what the child will always need can hit hard.

Sloan Wilson

- Internet





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# An angel called Renu

On this sultry rainy afternoon I wait for the woman in the saree to come out. This woman is my aunt. The woman who has played the role of being my grandparent, who stepped in whenever my mother had to go on her many rendezvous, who taught me plenty by just being there.

My mother speaks highly of Renu Bhabhi each time, sometimes tears brim up in her eyes nowadays when she remembers the lady who was her guide and mentor. Big families come with big problems. There is no integral binding left after the generation that initiates the family. All brothers become Uncles, all sisters become Aunts. They marry into different families and hence begins the process of breaking into systems.

My mother has always had much more than deep respect for her Bhabhi, more than affection, she has been dependent in various ways. But enter my mother's 'other camp' relatives and mother does not have the courage to speak to her Bhabhi. She does sneak a view, it's not difficult when families live in the same compound but maintain an uncomfortable, distressing silence. She sometimes gives blank calls just to listen to her voice and then she cries for hours. "Why, why Mummy, you don't speak to her?", is my question, repeated several times. My mother chooses not to answer, gradually I begin to understand the pain she feels everytime I ask her this. My father always bows to Renu Mami, his respect for her was never shaken, only wrapped due to my family tribulations. I never blamed my mother or anyone for shrugging her off the family, she must have had her own share of faults as does everyone but when you are a child affection is the only bonding. Adult world is guided by motives beyond affection. I never quite understood the reason, only saw my mother always looking at that side of the house where Renu mami lived.

Years go by. Sometimes Renu mami hands me an apple or *mithai* or just anything but speaks nothing. It is not just anything, it a token that reiterates that I am her child. She has three children of her own, I grew up with them. She lost her son, I lost an invaluable piece of my childhood. Wordlessly I pray for her to be strong. Her daughters got married, I was the child who was not a part of the rituals but I was a soul that was a part of the celebration. Her husband loses his mental balance, she simply seems to become stronger. The family chooses to be meek about his state. Yet once again as they say blood is thicker than water, the family comes together. The mystery of keeping silence and distance still remains; I am still intrigued by how easily she accepts everyone back.

I get married and have children of my own. Memories come back to me. I tell them stories of an angel called Renu.

On many a sultry rainy afternoons my mother meets her. Renu Mami has no questions, no complaints, only open arms for the girl she brought up as her own. My mother calls me and answers my question, "I never had the courage to go against family but I always had the belief in my reverence for my Bhabhi." I know my mother has relieved herself of her burden. We meet at family occasions, I visit her many times on my own. My childhood returned. She does not wear sarees anymore but her essence is undamaged.

- N Radha Arora

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# A child's perspective



*F*ifteen years ago, Karen was born with a debilitating condition. At the age of one year, because of surgical complications, she suffered a heart attack and was clinically dead for one hour, resulting in harm to her brain. However, with all of these challenges in her life she has grown to be a very beautiful and inspirational young lady, with a clarity that usually humbles and brings a smile to those around her.

Regardless of her condition, her greatest fear in her life has been Santa Claus, solely because of the lyric in a particular Christmas song that says, “He sees you when you’re sleeping....” She has always imagined this big, red-clad, hairy-faced man watching her as she is sleeping, and it has scared her so much throughout her life that in recent years her mother has thought that she should really tell her the truth about Santa Clause, but was concerned about the disappointment that might bring.



Karen recently began having these dreams again in quite a severe manner and became so anxious and irrational about the whole thing that her mother decided, in a panic, to tell her the dreaded news. Holding Karen close and looking straight into her eyes, her mother said, “Karen, listen to me, calm down and listen to me.... THERE IS NO SANTA CLAUS! MOMMY IS SANTA CLAUS, MOMMY HAS ALWAYS BEEN SANTA CLAUS! You don’t have to be scared anymore.” Karen looked at her mother with a blank expression and went off to sleep.

The next day when Karen went to school she looked disturbed, so much so that her teacher made a point of asking her what the problem was. Karen answered in a very serious and concerned voice, “I am *very* worried about my mom.” When the teacher asked her why, she answered in an equally serious voice, “She thinks she’s Santa Claus!”

- Brian Locke



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# Monsters

## under the bed

My husband and I faced each other across the pristine sheets of the hospital bed. Four-year-old Kate was still happily cranking the foot of it up and down. This was an adventure to her, the first of Daddy's overnights in the hospital. "When is Daddy coming home?" she had asked me that morning. "In a week," I told her, though it wasn't the whole truth. Serge would need to be hospitalized for one week in every three for eight months. A lot of overnights. A lot of "When is Daddy coming homes?"

Nervously I smoothed the already smooth pillow. Serge fingered his beard. *How long*, I wondered, *before the chemotherapy stripped it away?* My husband had worn a full beard for more than twenty years; I had never seen him without it. The bogeyman of cancer was literally going to change the face of our lives.

We both studiously avoided looking at the IV drip. The thought of the strong chemicals that would soon flow through Serge's body was as frightening as the lymphoma they would attack. We were setting a monster to catch a monster, and it was a scary prospect.

We faced each other across the bed in silence. All the words had already been said: the complex medical ones, the philosophical supportive ones, the loving, comforting ones. Still, fear persisted.

When I was a child and afraid to go to sleep in the dark, I always trusted my father to chase away the dragons under my bed. I wished life was still that simple. I wished I could slay Serge's dragon.

A nurse popped her head in the door. "Time to go," she said. "Visiting hours are over."

Kate stopped cranking the bed. She took a quick peek under it as though she were checking for something, then picked up her backpack from the chair and carefully unzipped it. She carried that pink and purple backpack with her everywhere. Usually it contained crayons, paper, a couple of picture books, "stuff to do" as Kate called it, for whenever she got bored in the car or in a waiting room. Today she carefully lifted out a stuffed bear named Mishka. Mishka had sat at the foot of Serge's bed while he was growing up and had been spruced up and awarded a new red bow when Kate was born. Kate believed Mishka had special powers. "He's a guard bear," she said, and he always slept at the foot of her bed. Kate whispered something in Mishka's ear, hugged him tightly for a minute and then put him in her father's arms. "He'll protect you in the night, Daddy," she said, "whenever monsters come."

It was impossible not to cry. All the technical jargon I'd been reading about coping with illness, the support groups, the struggle to find the right words to say were swept away in a moment by the innocent compassion of a four-year-old. She believed that Mishka would stand guard for Serge through all the hospital overnights to come. Her belief was magic. My daughter had given her father more than a stuffed bear, she had given him a talisman against fear.

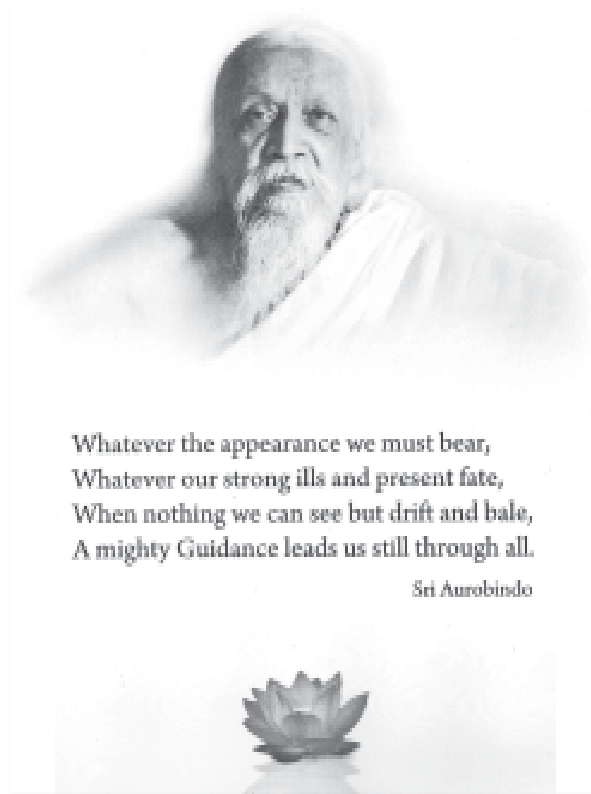
- Anne Metikosh



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# Events

## June-August 2011



Whatever the appearance we must bear,  
Whatever our strong ills and present fate,  
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,  
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.

Sri Aurobindo

*August 15*

**Darshan Day Meditation (Sri Aurobindo's Birthday)**  
at The Gnostic Centre

*August 25*

**Self-development session for Teacher Students of Gargi College, 2nd year**  
at The Gnostic Centre  
*Facilitator - Anuradha*

*July 17*

**Parenting Session for L'avenir Parents at The Gnostic Centre**  
*Facilitator - Anuradha*

*June 24*

**Teacher Education session at Gyan Bharati School**  
*Facilitator - Anuradha*

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#### PICTURE CREDITS

- p.7: Monica Gupta, Noida, India
- pp.15,19,26: from internet
- All other images: The Gnostic Centre archives, New Delhi, India
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- The Gnostic Centre bird: artist: Neera Goyal, New Delhi, India
- Back cover (The Gnostic Centre photo): Franz Fassbender, Auroville, India



For some, commitment comes from pride.  
For us, our commitment is our pride.



*A* Vatika Group, our aim is not just to live up to our commitments. It is to exceed them. What we promise, we promise with our heart and soul. And our satisfaction lies in seeing it fulfilled to the fullest. Which is why, we believe in building relationships that last a lifetime. We believe in bringing great things to life. And sharing your pleasure in enjoying them. In a short span of 18 years, the group has diversified into real estate and hospitality.

From country living to international knowledge the Vatika City in Gurgaon and Vatika Embassy City in Jaipur, corporate complexes like First India Place and Vatika Triangle to restaurants like Columbus Land and the Fox, to spreading four star hotels such as The Vatika, the group has diversified interests with a market value of over Rs. 80000 crores, and has set benchmarks with each project. Today, our commitment is being you the best always strong. And our embrace stays constant. To reach home and to always live up to our word.

Corporate Office: 10th Floor, Vatika Triangle, Sector 13, Phase 2,  
Mahindra Group, Gurgaon, Haryana, India  
Tel: +91-124-4117777, +91 902000000, +91 902000000  
Email: info@vatikagroup.com www.vatikagroup.com

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