**2021-The Way Forward…**

**Source: Dr.AlinaTulsiani, Psychologist &Child Counselor**

If 2020 was a year of changes, upheavals and becoming resilient; then 2021 is definitely seen as a year of hope and stability-both in our lives and in those of our children.

2021 is a year of sustainability of efforts at the government and individual levels to keep the pandemic at bay- and there is much yet needs to be done. Simple, holistic lifestyle changes can gradually have great positive impacts on our personalities, relationships and societal levels.

Here are the **Top Three Habits** that need to be sustained :

**Health Comes First:**

Be it physical or emotional health, the last year has literally forced us to get back in touch with ourselves and to those around us. All the things we suddenly took for granted such as finding time for hobbies, spending time with family , getting some ‘me’ time and much more, was all thrust upon us unexpectedly. But we sailed through the choppy waters-and now it’s time to learn from the ride! Make a schedule for yourself and your children to include some form of indoor/outdoor games, exercise, play and some ‘me’ time (yes for children as well). We need to sustain the habits of social distancing and maintaining hygiene, while being considerate rather than fearful (children pick cues based on fear easily and will learn to react to similar situations with fear-that’s not an emotion we’d like our children to grow with).

Since we’ve learned to reduce our dependence on outside food, let’s keep it that way and include more fresh fruits and food in our diet-and reap it’s health benefits in the long run-especially for our children. To nourish your family bonding; restart the little walks or short trips to come back stronger.

**Practise Innovative Thinking:**

We need to look at a lot of things differently now; and our solutions to current issues we may face cannot be fully met by the lens of our past experience. They need to be adapted to today’s times. For young children who cannot yet start school- home-schooling and nature based learning is the best way to start. For those on the transition from school to college , or from college to university, may consider a period of reflection and come up with educational or career pathways which are more individualised. For those spending too much time on the screen, they can have days of digital detox as a part of their daily schedule. The situations are endless and so are the solutions-only if one is willing to look for them.

**Practise Gratitude:**

One has learned much and lost much in the last year. But we’ve still transitioned from it-and we need to be grateful for that. Gratitude is a very strong positive emotion, and once truly experienced does have lasting benefits.A mounting body of research shows positive effects of gratitude such as being able to let go of negative or toxic emotions, better physical and psychological health, self esteem, increases empathy and reduces aggression.

So it’s time to get our little forgotten manners in place-all starting with a ‘Thank you’, ‘Sorry’ or ‘Please’! Simple acts like unconditional caring for animals or plants, appreciating each other’s efforts, and being content with what one has instead of comparing and vying (for “my friend’s new car” or the “latest phone”)- will go a long way in helping our children to move beyond attaching their efforts towards the mundane, instead channelizing them towards enriching, fulfilling pursuits.

So, let’s take the good stuff and set the tone towards happiness and prosperity.