# How to teach your children about climate change in small, but significant ways

**Source: Roopal Kewalya, Author & Screenwriter**

The way we parent our child is closely linked to our relationship with nature, too. By continuing the same patterns of parenting as our previous generations, what we do is control our child–enforcing discipline rather than inculcating it; toilet training them before they are ready; feeding them according to the external clock rather than an internal one; believing that we know best for our child when the truth is that children enter this world, knowing what is best for them.

And that is exactly how we deal with nature. We control it, to suit our purposes. While you may find many articles that help you teach the science of climate change to your children, not many will share that preserving anything requires love and care and only a sense of loss can instill a deep desire within the child to work towards saving something including our planet from the effects of climate change.

**Expose your child to the outside world**

Make the child fall in love with nature and you would never have to teach them about climate change because they would feel it. In an air-conditioned car, the child is cocooned from the outside world. When my son joined Nursery, we put him in a school bus despite reservations from people all around saying that he is too small to go on his own. On the very first day when he returned from school, I carried an umbrella to the bus stop because of the pricking Gurgaon heat. Happy to see his own umbrella, he twirled it around until he saw a group of children whose parents worked as domestic staff in our society, returning from their makeshift open school within the society premises. My son immediately pointed out, ‘Where are their umbrellas?’ So far he had travelled to his playschool in his car, shielded in the comfort of an air-conditioner, never once questioning a child on the road or the rising heat outside.

**Let children get dirty**

We put shoes on their feet before they learn to walk so they have never felt the tickling blades of grass. We never let them play in mud and rain. A child who has never felt drops of rain on their face would never appreciate the lack of it when it stops raining. At 18 months, I took my son to the neighbourhood market on a walk. Up until then, even for a small distance, the car was taken out for reasons of safety, saving time and other things. On returning, for the first time my son noticed the flower bed on the sidewalk and asked, ‘Why are flowers on top of leaves?’ If he was slightly older, I would have gone into the subject of pollination but at that age, for him to recognize this ‘obvious’ fact that gave him so much joy, was enough.

**Lead by example**

Nothing works better than leading by example. We can take our children to plant-a-tree workshops over weekends and share pictures on social media but to make children fall in love with trees and to encourage them to build a relationship with nature requires consistent effort at home as well as outside. Recycling, saving electricity and water, car-pooling are not just ideas to be shared on World Environment Day but to be practised every day. If we take care of nature outside, we won’t have to bring indoor plants to purify the air inside our homes.

Neither child, nor nature can be controlled. They will both react and the consequences of it will be seen and felt. It’s time to talk about the birds and the bees to our children or else soon, there won’t be any left, to talk about.