# **How to help your child develop holistically**

Source: [www.indiastudychannel.com](http://www.indiastudychannel.com)

Home is the biggest learning arena for every child, and parents play the role of both referee and coach. A child is much like a sponge, absorbing and assimilating what he sees, hears and reads. A child's environment is the best teacher, and parents being part of this circle play an important part in shaping the child. Learn how you can influence your child holistically, into becoming a successful adult.

Parenting is the biggest responsibility adults take on in their lives, and yet the majority of us accept it willingly. While, it is, at most times rewarding and satisfying, it can also be the most difficult job that we do. Parenting is interesting. It can leave you ecstatic one day and have you pulling at your hair the next. It is a roller coaster ride, where you do not know what happens next. The good bit is that most adults, despite the odds, make a fairly successful job of it.

A panellist at a recent event that I attended mentioned that 'parenting' should be part of academic studies. Though his comment generated laughter among the crowd, his observation wasn't that off the mark. As parents, young and old, we do seek guidance on various aspects of child rearing. We learn from others experiences, we take the trial and error path, and we try to do a good job of parenting. Things would perhaps be simpler if there were a set curriculum and directives on the do's and don'ts of parenting. Many parents show regret at a later stage in their lives and wish they had done things differently.

Everyone I know subscribes to the fact that parenting is both a challenging yet gratifying experience. We take immense pride in our parenting skills and in the child we parent. In parenting, we form and mould our children. We give them experiences and help them create a blueprint that shapes their adult lives. As parents, we must ensure that their experiences are enriching. The question is how does a parent do that? My experience as a parent shows that it is the simple influences that matter.
Here is my approach to holistic development of your child -

## **Parent involvement through school life**

When a child begins school the parent's focus shifts to the academic part of the child's life. Parents start fretting over grades. The child's grades are no doubt important, but equally important is the connection between the child and the parent. Parents should remain involved in all aspects of the child's life. That includes knowing what is going on in the school front as well as what goes on in the child's life, outside the school.

Parents must show interest in the new things the child learns. Children love to share information only if the parents are willing to listen. A child who repeatedly hears the parents say, "don't disturb me, I'm busy", "go play outside", "go watch television" will eventually stop sharing bits of news with the parent. A distance gets set, the child 'understands' that what the parent is doing is more important than the child. The child becomes unimportant in his own eyes.

Young children, especially, are at a crucial age, where they hold their parents in high esteem, they look up to them for encouragement and appreciation, they want to please the parents and share what they have learnt, with them. Research shows that children whose parents involve themselves in their children's activities have better academic success and show significant progress in overall development.

Many would think that once a child begins school the most noteworthy communications between parent and child should be academics related. That, in fact, is a misnomer. Research shows that successful children have parents who have meaningful interactions with them.

Parent involvement can be divided into distinct areas where the child dwells the most –

* At home
* In school

The focus at home must be –

* Set achievable goals
* Appreciate, applaud and encourage
* Listen and answer questions
* Discuss problems and work at solutions together or guide the child to find them
* Inculcate good learning habits
* Doing activities together – reading, playing interactive games etc
* Talking about school and the child's work

Parents must contribute towards school activities by –

* Attending the PTA
* Staying in touch with the teachers to check on the child's progress
* Participating whenever the school calls for parent volunteers

All the above work together and create a positive approach to learning. Parents who stay connected with their children can be certain of academic achievements in the latter. Shift the focus from textbook knowledge and help your child amass life experiences. These simple tricks can make a big difference –

## **Cultivate the reading habit**

"If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be very intelligent, read them more fairy tales." These lines are attributed to Albert Einstein. There is much evidence to show that reading stimulates the brain. Reading develops a love for books in children; it helps them learn speech and ignites creativity and imagination in them. It is a way of holistically, shaping your child's personality.

Children emulate habits they observe in adults around them. If a parent is an avid reader the chances of the child taking to reading are high. Ensure that children have access to lots of reading material. Gift them books, subscribe to children's magazines, get your child a library membership - just let the child have access to a whole lot of reading material.

## **Encourage social & voluntary work**

Involve children in social causes. Let them learn to contribute to society in their own small way. Being part of something that gives, rather than receives, gives birth to positive values in the child. Children learn to be -

* Compassionate
* Generous
* Humble
* Grateful
* Sympathtic
* Merciful
* Kind
* Giving
* Supportive

Lead by example, do good things and your children will follow suit. Join social causes where you and your child can devote time and share your skills. NGOs with teaching programmes, communities that feed the poor, old age homes, orphanages, tree plantation and cleanliness drives etcetera are good ways to begin. It acts like a reality check for the child, who then learns of the vast divide that exists in society. Not only does this teach the child better values, but being part of a circle outside their comfort zone makes them considerate and cooperative. These are essential life skills that are best grasped through practice.

## **Assign chores**

Doing work never killed anyone. Assign chores to children – it makes them responsible, teaches them [time management](https://www.indiastudychannel.com/topics/time-management) and resourcefulness. They learn to finish what they have to do, efficiently and on time. Older kids may be encouraged to do more age appropriate work. Working part-time, for money, is a concept that hasn't caught up in India, but if you are the liberal kind, then let your child get that exposure.

## **Don't neglect entertainment**

Keep one day in the week to watch a movie. There is a list of some fascinating movies that I can recommend. Some of them are classics of their time and a must watch –

* Sound of Music
* Mary Poppins
* Wizard of Oz
* Finding Nemo
* Dory
* The Lion King

Watching movies that are captivating and absorbing is a fantastic way to bond. Remember, children also learn from movies. Little nuances can be picked up, unknowingly – such as the pronunciation and usage of a word or a phrase. Good manners and social etiquettes. Good movies are a great entertainment and also an excellent learning platform.

## **Teach respect and value**

When children are indulged all the time, they begin taking things for granted. They do not learn the value of things or respect for others. Don't hold back on the necessities of life, but the extras that you provide must sometimes be earned. Kids never stop demanding and while you may have the means to pay for everything they want, let them earn it. Create some kind of reward system where they get what they want if they do what is required of them. This teaches them that nothing comes easy in life. They have to work for things.

## **Develop character**

Parents play a crucial part in character building. The most important character building traits that need focus are –

* Humility
* Honesty
* Patience
* Deligence
* Sincerity
* Conduct

Character building begins at home. Children watch how you do things. Each little lie they hear you utter is a signal that it is fine to lie. Each time you belittle someone in their presence you send a signal that it is fine to be rude. Watch your words and actions, when you are around your kids. Correct them when you find them faltering; instead of chiding, explain why their behaviour is unacceptable. Learn to applaud good behaviour. Praise from the parent is a great morale booster.

## **Teach them to be responsible**

Taking responsibility and doing things independently are qualities common in successful individuals. Instil these values in your child. Do you do your child's schoolwork? If yes, then put an end it. By all means, guide your child, help with gathering information, give ideas, discuss, but let the child complete the task on their own. Apart from this, do the following -

* Set rules that must be followed
* Don't be a tyrant when setting rules, set them together with the child
* Once rules are made, the child and everyone at home must adhere to them
* The child becomes responsible for his actions and learns to work independently

Children are like soft clay, you can mould them into whatever you want.