**Let TV Be More Of A Teacher Than A Passive Babysitter**

**Source: Mansi Zaveri, Founder, Kidsstoppress**

As parents we often have separate rules for our children and for ourselves. As parents, we pick what we like to eat and wear, where we would like to go, what we want to watch. But, more often than not, the choices of our children are very restricted. It's more a ‘do-as-directed’ or ‘because-I-said-so’ approach. Agree?

In my parenting experience, I have seen that what the kids discover when they form a bond with something, is something we will never understand. To connect with a child is not easy, so if your child likes something or expresses his wish to see something, then don't dismiss it instantly. When we head out to the library, my daughter picks out the best books that I would have never chanced upon. At restaurants, she likes to go through the complete menu and pick a new dish every time. Her dress sense beats mine – she will pick out 2 completely different things and make them look great together. She likes her sense of freedom.

The independence to choose has made her decisive and, she has a point of view on what she actually likes to do. Something I believe we need to strongly inculcate at this age. Watching TV and asking for the remote control should be no different.

More often than not the TV remote comes with bitter words, time instructions and a manual on what they can and cannot watch. Ever wondered how they feel? Children today have a voice and an opinion and are willing to express it fearlessly. This opinion cannot and shouldn't be muted by constant yelling and child locks. Can we really believe these extremes work? Television is a powerful medium and I would like to believe in its goodness.

Several television programs today are extremely informative and entertaining and are becoming an audiovisual story-telling medium. Remember we all grew up watching popular programs like *“Ramayan”, “Mahabharat”, “Ek Minute”, “Dekh Bhai Dekh” or “Zabaan Sambhalke*”. And when cable television was launched, we were introduced to popular international shows like Crystal Maze, Doogie Houser MD, Small Wonder, Mickey Mouse, etc. and these shows became an integral part of our childhood.

Of course I am not propagating that kids can watch TV all day, but I think it is important for parents to take charge of not 'how much', but 'what’ the kids are watching. Not all screen time is bad. It is to propagate using the television not as a passive babysitter but watching shows that teach kids something new. Kids today understand technology way better than you and I do, and it’s natural because they are growing up in a digital era, with technology at the epicenter of all functioning. And television is an integral part of this era. Let’s learn to sieve the good from this fabulous interactive medium and encourage them to make their choice and express themselves. But of course, remember, it has to be in moderation.