**Here’s How You Create A Better World For Your Kids**

**Source : Priyanka Bakhru**

A new year, a new beginning. Are we raising our kids right in this fierce world, wonders a mom.

One of the Dalai Lama’s most famous words are **“If every 8-year-old in the world is taught meditation, we will eliminate violence from the world within one generation.”**

As parents, it is really critical for us to be aware that we are shaping the world of tomorrow. If we disagree with the wars, racism, rapes, violence, corruption, hatred and religious fanaticism that surround us today; then we must ensure that the seeds of acceptance, tolerance, kindness and fairness are planted today. By us. Across history, it was always that one man, that one woman that made the difference, either way. The inventors, the pacifists, the warriors were children being shaped just as the violators and rapists and controllers were. This is what The Dalai Lama means.

I read a heartwarming account recently of a primary school teacher’s response to some chatter amongst the kids on white vs. black. She pointed out a white wall and a blackboard. She then asked each one of them to compare their skin tones to the two and describe the colour. The answer was of course, various shades of brown! This is such a lovely example of how we absolutely must wipe out any conditioning of intolerance and non-acceptance in our children. And the only way to do this is to actively demonstrate the opposite qualities so that there is no bias created in the first place:

**Make anything physical a non-issue, a non-subject.**

Great features, fair complexion, good clothes, more money, a bigger house, a better car, better gender, better class etc. These are some of the material things we take pride in and talk about with our near and dear ones. Our kids pick up this stuff from us and that is how they learn comparison and develop complexes. Avoid these conversations, especially around them. Especially avoid the hiding or covering up of perceived flaws or weaknesses…darker skin, an unattractive feature, financial difficulties, a smaller house, delayed development. When we try to hide or project an image, our children learn to feel shame. So many of the therapies I conduct have uncovered wounds and hurt from comparison by mothers…I was not pretty enough, smart enough, rich enough…just not enough!

Focus your efforts on instilling a sense of pride in them, in their roots and in their life. Keep the conversations positive and healthy, about yourselves and about others.

**Make kindness and giving a part of their natural instincts.**

Adults with empathy are born of children who were brought up in a thoughtful, caring environment. Involve your kids in the planning of special occasions, excite them about thoughtful gestures and surprises for people, give them disproportionate credit for every small act of giving or kindness or sharing. Most importantly, learn to apologize and admit your mistakes. We often feel guilt and remorse at our reactions to our children, but rarely do we share those feelings with them. It is really quite critical to their emotional development to see us make mistakes and be candid about them. The belief that creates empathy is simply this …”When I am not scared to be wrong or make an error, I am more understanding of others’ mistakes and flaws”.

 **Consciously build gender neutrality.**

A ridiculous amount of the world’s problems are created by the gender wars. And it shocks me regularly to see signs of bias at zero degrees of separation. A mom from an affluent background recently recounted her feedback to her son when another kid hit him…” you are a boy, you can’t come home crying because you were hit, you must fight back”. A four-year-old girl is chastised for sitting cross-legged while wearing a skirt…by all means, be uncomfortable and self-conscious because you are a girl! A tough, corporate woman has developed that manner because she has a husband who strays, while a man who quits his job to write or recharge has lost his ambition and manhood. Do you see how much freedom and natural inclination is curtailed or judged in the name of gender?

Try your best to take away any intonations of superiority associated with either gender. Make things about individuality rather than sex. Tell your kids that mommy cooks because she really enjoys it, while Papa doesn’t like to. Do not say ‘because boys don’t cook’. Let the kids be who they want to be, and deal with your own prejudices. Else you will be creating suppressed, conditioned adults who will propagate this nonsense for another generation yet.

**Celebrate differences**.

Most anger and judgment starts with comparison. Caste differences, gender difference, religion, nationality, class, comparing relationships, friendships, careers, wealth and opinions. Socialized humans have a visceral fear of anyone who is different from us. We feel compelled to put them down, openly or behind their backs. And our impressionable children pick up all these cues and absorb them into their personality. Never marry a person from a different religion. All mothers-in-law are the enemy. Foreigners have loose morals. She is never home, am sure her kids suffer. You are much prettier. But your father has more money. It goes on and on and on…and it breeds prejudice and a fear of anything different. It breeds unkindness and borders and wars.

Instead, let’s try to celebrate differences.

**Change the tonality of your responses**.

How cool that we celebrate Diwali like this, while Christmas is celebrated like that. How wonderful to notice the different ways food is cooked in your friend’s house. Isn’t it interesting to meet people from a different country and learn about them? I’m so glad you have realized you don’t like playing cricket, it shows you know your mind. If you like the way your friend did this, why don’t we ask her to help you learn? It’s alright that you are shorter than him; let’s practice jumping higher then. Do you see what happens then? You take away the emotional charge of negativity and instead, bring alive? A spirit of curiosity and acceptance of the world in all its multi-faceted glory.

Just close your eyes and imagine a world where there is the freedom to love, to live, to be; where there is compassion and kindness and laughter; charity and help and courtesy, a world of exploration and discovery and invention; a world of peace. Now open your eyes and recognize that it is only by being a mindful parent right now, can such a world be made possible, be made real. It’s all up to you.