



A SERIES ON PERSONAL SAFETY AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

PARENT'S MANUAL  
(Classes 1 and 2)

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ADVANCING  
**LEARNING**





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# INTRODUCTION

During our myriad sessions with over two lakh school and college students, whenever we asked students to name a trusted adult in their lives with whom they could share their feelings and troubles, they mention parents, along with grandparents and siblings, and teachers. As parents, you have an enormous influence on your children, the beliefs they form, and their attitudes and behaviour.

This manual will help you guide your child through their 'On Track®' workbook which can become an effective practical training programme with your active participation. The child may have questions, and doubts, and may want to discuss something they learnt or did in class. Your informed responses will help the child learn more about the topics mentioned in the On Track® workbook and use them in their day-to-day behaviour.

The aim of the workbook series is to help children understand themselves, learn to deal with their feelings, and develop a positive body image and high self-worth. We have used the World Health Organisation's Life skills concept as the foundation. Life skills are defined as "Abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO 1997). These skills have been broadly classified into five areas:

1. Self-awareness and empathy
2. Communication and interpersonal relationships
3. Decision making and problem-solving
4. Creative thinking and critical thinking
5. Coping with emotions and coping with stress

The workbook also aims to provide information on the care of the body, optimal nutrition and exercise. The last section in each workbook deals with personal safety.

This manual includes reading material and reflection exercises on different topics covered in the On Track® workbooks for students of classes 1 and 2. It is aimed at supporting adults in developing a deeper understanding of some aspects of child development, child safety, our responsibilities as per international conventions and national laws, as well as information on nutrition and the effect of television, screen time, and computer games on the brain.

The topics covered are:

1. Child Rights
2. Restorative practices and life skills
3. Development of self-esteem and a positive body image
4. Addressing feelings
5. Child sexual development and development of gender identity
6. Gender equity
7. Child safety and protection from sexual abuse

8. Nutrition
9. Effect of digital media on the brain

## **1. Child Rights**

### **What are Rights?**

Human rights are a concept, a belief that every human being has certain entitlements by virtue of being born human. These rights are available to all without any distinctions based on their identity. Human rights are universal—apply to all human beings and are interdependent and inalienable—one cannot lose these rights because these are not granted by any state/country.

Human Rights were first articulated and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948—in the aftermath of the Second World War—as The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**. This became the first legal document to define human rights to be universally protected. Article 1 of the UDHR states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” and that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” These rights, for example, freedom of expression, religion and equality are envisioned to form the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

### **Whose responsibility is it to ensure these rights?**

It is the responsibility of both—the nation State and individuals. The State must ensure that it respects individual's rights—that is, it does not interfere with or curtail these rights; that it protects these rights—that is, it protects groups and individuals from abuse of these rights, and lastly, it proactively takes steps to fulfil rights by formulating policies and laws and setting up systems to ensure that every individual can enjoy these rights. Individuals on the other hand have the duty to respect the rights of others, not infringe on anyone's rights, and stand up for the human rights of others. See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>

### **Why do children have special rights?**

The preamble of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth”. The UNCRC was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and came into force on 2 September 1990, after it was ratified by the required number of nations. The rights under the UNCRC can be categorised under four clusters:


1. the right to survival
2. the right to protection
3. the right to development, and
4. the right to participation

### **What can parents and teachers do regarding child rights?**

We can keep these rights in mind when we are interacting with children. We can work to ensure children's right to protection by providing them with personal safety education and letting them know that we are there to support and protect them and that they can come and tell us if anyone makes them feel unsafe or breaks their personal safety rules.


We can ensure their right to development by offering them various learning opportunities—keeping in mind the theory of multiple intelligence. We can appreciate when children demonstrate their various qualities and positive traits. This would motivate them to develop those traits further—leading to their holistic development.

We can ensure their right to participation by encouraging decision-making from a young age. Children as young as 6–7 years can participate in making minor decisions—like what to wear, and what to play by offering options to them and asking them to choose.



'Would you like to wear the red shirt or the blue one?'  
(encourages participation)

'Here, wear this red shirt!'  
(does not encourage participation in decision making)



Adult: 'What would you like to learn? Dance, karate, chess or swimming?' (Give options based on what is feasible for you—encourages participation)

Adult: 'We have decided that you should go for dance/chess classes.' (does not encourage participation in decision making)

Encouraging children to share their feelings and asking them what they think of different things and events also encourages participation in conversations. Giving reasons for why things happen, why something you promised could not be done, or for a change in plans also helps children develop cognitively. They begin to understand that things are not set or definite in life and we can learn to adapt. Acknowledging their feelings of being let down, sad, angry, or upset would help them move on and thereby they would develop the skill to manage their feelings. Parents and teachers and other adults can speak up if a child's rights are being infringed upon.

## 2. Restorative Practices and life skills

### What are life skills?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life."<sup>1</sup> UNICEF India defines life skills as "a set of abilities, attitudes and socio-emotional competencies that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions and exercise rights to lead a healthy and productive life and subsequently become agents of change."<sup>2</sup> UNICEF-India states that the framework is "primarily built on a strong Rights-based and Empowerment approach, supporting children and adolescents in India to address vulnerabilities, lead informed lives, take decisions, and be responsible citizens." They further emphasise that:

Young people must be provided the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop relevant values, attitudes, and skills that will enable them to participate fully in their society and to continue learning. Developing life skills amongst them is critical to addressing the Sustainable Development Goals."<sup>3</sup>

1 World Health Organization. Division of Mental Health. (1994). Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools. Pt.3, Training workshops for the development and implementation of life skills programmes, 1st rev. available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/59117>

2 UNICEF India, Comprehensive Life Skills Framework - Rights based and life cycle approach to building skills for empowerment, p. 7.

3 Ibid, p.3.



The World Health Organisation recognises the following 10 life skills and defines them in the following manner.<sup>4</sup>

1. **Decision making** helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.
2. **Problem solving** enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.
3. **Creative thinking** contributes to both decision-making and problem-solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.
4. **Critical thinking** is the ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognise and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.
5. **Effective communication** means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. It may also mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.
6. **Interpersonal relationship** skills help us to relate in positive ways—with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.
7. **Self-awareness** includes our recognition of ourselves, our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires, and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognise when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.
8. **Empathy** is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves, which can improve social interactions, for example, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatised and ostracised by the very people they depend upon for support.
9. **Coping with emotions** involves recognising emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour, and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow, can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.
10. **Coping with stress** is about recognising the sources of stress in our lives, recognising how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Or it may mean learning how to relax so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.

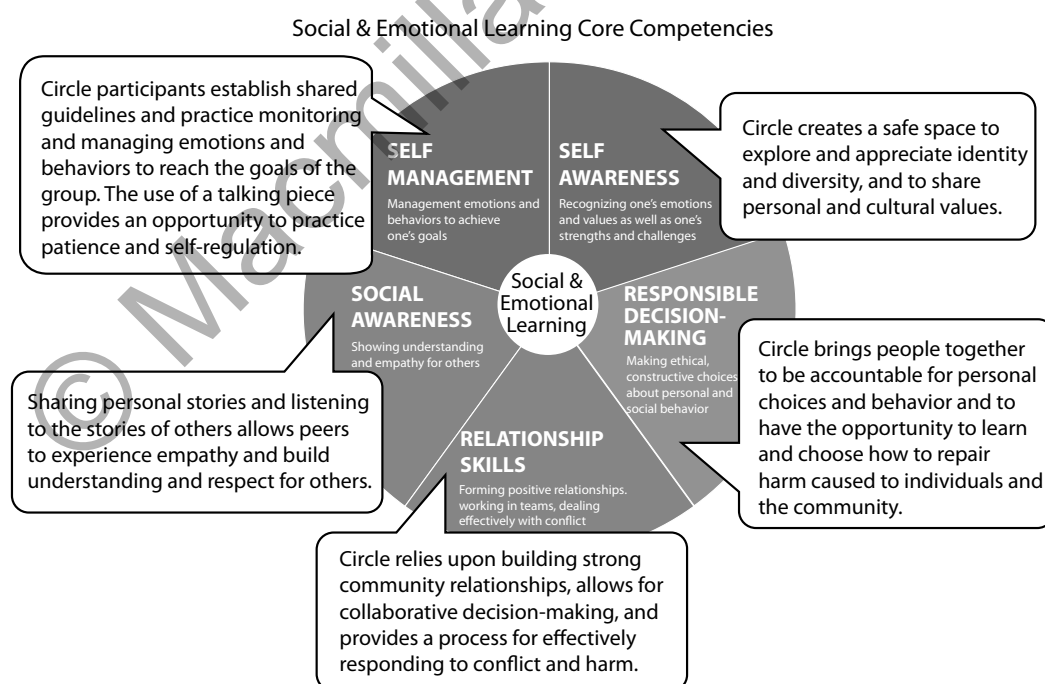
4 World Health Organization. Division of Mental Health. (1994). Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools. Pt.3, Training workshops for the development and implementation of life skills programmes, 1st rev. available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/59117>

Life skills overlap and intermingle with each other. Self-awareness would affect emotional management and communication, which would impact relationships. Creative and critical thinking along with empathy help resolve problems and conflicts and thereby affect our relationships and level of stress.

### The link between life skills and Restorative Practices

Restorative practices are a mechanism to build and strengthen community, impart social and emotional learning, address misbehaviour or harm, and repair relationships. Restorative processes can be used in different settings such as schools, educational institutions, families, workplaces, communities, and the Juvenile Justice system. Restorative Circle is a form of restorative practice that facilitates self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making, and helps foster positive relationship skills. It creates a safe space for everyone, adults and children, to share their values, stories, and reflections. Sitting together in a Circle, committed to values generated by the group, helps the participants' focus on respectful and authentic dialogue to build community and create a strong foundation of trust and mutual understanding. Participants may realise that this results in resolving, and many a time, preventing conflicts.

It is being applied in education—where it views misbehaviour by children as a social and emotional learning opportunity for children and presents positive alternatives to the usual disciplinary measures to foster change. Restorative Circles can be used to foster life skills, build the spirit of community and relatedness among students, staff, and management and create a restorative culture within the school. Harm Circles can be held to address specific instances of conflict and harm, involving the parties concerned—the person harmed, the person who did the harm, and the concerned and affected parties. Parties come together, share, discuss, and understand the harm caused, how it can be repaired, and values restored in a respectful and empathetic manner. Accountability and responsibility remain the cornerstone of this process. Harm Circles are to be held by people trained in the process, to maintain the safety of all concerned, and for the process to remain true to the spirit of Restorative Practices and Restorative Justice.



Source: Oakland Unified School District, Peer Restorative Justice Program Guide, 2nd edition, 2012, p.27.

development and implementation of life skills programmes, 2nd rev. Available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/63552>

Using restorative approaches to enhance socio-emotional learning would entail setting mutually agreed values as guiding principles rather than rules at home or at school, use of elements of Restorative Circles like establishing values, using a talking piece when having discussions, besides several other restorative practices, and using of restorative language in day to day interactions. Some of these approaches are described below.

### **Facilitating Life Skills through Restorative Circles**

We learn by observing, imitating, experiencing, and internal reflection. Learning life skills is no different. However, when a person makes a decision, we cannot tell what went through the person's mind, and what feelings arose in them in the process of making that decision. They have to tell us all of that for us to learn from the example of others. Restorative Circles create a safe space where people can speak their truth, speak from their hearts and others listen from their hearts. This enables authentic sharing and non-judgemental listening resulting in vastly expanding the listeners' horizons, attitudes, and beliefs. The listener has truly 'learned' from the life experience of the person sharing a part of their life. One experiences the importance and practical application of various life skills listed and defined above, in one's personal and professional life. Certain patterns of thinking prevent us from expressing our feelings, traits, and abilities—keep us from saying or doing what we, deep inside, wish to say or do. In such instances, we often experience sadness, low energy, or anger, and may feel regret later on. The idea is to make it easier for each one of us to express our feelings, strengths, vulnerabilities, and skills in daily interactions with others in a manner that is respectful of each other's rights; and encourages objective reflection on one's attitudes and behaviour. Restorative Circles can enable such experiences.

Parents could sit in Circles with children and discuss various topics—values, managing emotions, anger, hurt, empathy, friendship, teasing and taunting, needs, mistakes, conflicts, success, and failure among others. The children will be sitting in Circles in their classroom as part of the exercises in On Track. Participating in Circles at home will reinforce this method of listening, understanding each other, and problem-solving for the children.

Just as the entire school could adopt restorative practices, families too could adopt these practices. Restorative approaches build a healthy family environment by creating space for people to understand one another and strengthen relationships; when things go wrong, restorative approaches create space to address needs, repair relationships, and heal.<sup>5</sup>

### **Co-creating Restorative Spaces at home (and in school)**

The aim of using restorative approaches is to exercise power **with** rather than power **over**!

- Nurture self-discipline, and not control or monitor. Not reward and or punishment—which are examples of externally imposed discipline
- Everyone's viewpoint is heard and understood - one person's will is not imposed on all, even though they may be much older. A way forward is found through discussion, empathetic listening and creative thinking that is acceptable to all, meets everyone's needs and is respectful of each person's rights.

Each one of us—whatever be our age—has agency and power though its extent may vary. We can **use power together, not against** each other. Power together amplifies it, power over diminishes us as human beings, and interferes with positive creativity.

**The aim is** to find ways that address each member's concern

5 Whole-School Restorative Approach Resource Guide REPORT Submitted by Jon Kidde, Consultant, Vermont Agency of Education, December 8, 2017 [https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-integrated-educational-frameworks-whole-school-restorative-approach-resource-guide\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-integrated-educational-frameworks-whole-school-restorative-approach-resource-guide_0_0.pdf)

- consider conflicts as opportunities for creative, empathetic problem-solving. If you feel that there are only two solutions—look again!
- be ready to grow and learn together
- be open to change—ready to shift, change, alter one's opinions and beliefs
- hold on to humane values that respect everyone's right to dignity and safety

#### Create Restorative Respectful Spaces:

- participation is voluntary, respectful
- invite each member to identify two or three of their topmost values (ways of behaviour - like being kind, listening, no taunting, etc)
- put these up on a wall in the house/classroom
- set aside some time every week for participating in a Circle
- Invite family members to join in—to share highs and lows, celebratory and saddening things that have happened, share concerns, jointly find solutions if requested by a member
- Create a centre—decorate it with the values, objects that you and other members value, a plant, water, a candle or sacred items that are acceptable and respected by all present.
- Re-establish the values (behaviour) each person would like to hold themselves to and would want from others so that the Circle becomes a safe space to share feelings, experiences, and thoughts. Place these in the centre of the Circle.
- One person, called the Circle keeper, chooses a talking piece and 'opens' the Circle with a round of sharing on how people are feeling. To do this, the talking piece is passed from one person to the next in a particular direction.
- The person holding the talking piece has the opportunity to speak and share while others listen. Each person has an opportunity to share and express themselves, though it is not a must to do so.
- The Circle keeper then initiates the discussion with a question based on what the participants have decided beforehand. It is a space for authentic sharing and listening. Participants are invited to speak from the heart and listen from the heart.
- The Circle keeper is an equal participant and participates in sharing
- Depending on the time available, multiple rounds of sharing may happen.
- The Circle keeper closes the Circle with a round where everyone shares their takeaways from the Circle or how they are feeling.
- It is a space to build relationships, resolve conflicts, celebrate, laugh and cry together.

#### Invite child participation

- children may help in the preparation of the Centre
- invite children to suggest topics for circles
- invite children to bring their own talking pieces
- train children to become circle-keepers—age is no bar here
- use pinned-up charts to invite children to discuss values and needs

#### Using Restorative Language

*One of the most powerful ways that teachers can build relationships with students is by having restorative conversations. Restorative conversations allow the teacher to demonstrate empathy, teach children how to resolve conflict, and most importantly, allow students to have a voice. It is an opportunity for both the teacher*

*and student to express their feelings about what is going on in the classroom while setting high expectations. When we do so, we actually humanise ourselves in the eyes of students. They begin to see us beyond the “teacher standing in front of them”.*

#### —The Power of Restorative Conversations

A core tenet of Restorative practices is to acknowledge that everyone has power and agency and that it is respectful of each other to exercise power with, rather than power over each other. Power is not to be used to dominate, control, force, reward or punish or impose one's will or decision on others. The core value is to use power together - with and not against each other. Restorative practices are about discussing, sharing, brainstorming - and coming up with ways to move forward that are acceptable to all concerned and uphold each person's rights including the right to safety and dignity.

### **What?**

Restorative language is language that honours each human being as a person, born with human dignity with the right to be treated with respect. It is based on the values of equal respect, right against discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's age, or their parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status; right to dignity and the right to be heard.

Restorative conversations are typically quick and easy conversations when harm is caused that does not require a formal intervention. Restorative language helps shift the focus away from blame and shame to root cause and repair.<sup>6</sup>

### **Why?**

Restorative language is used with the awareness and intention that power can be experienced 'with' each other rather than 'over' one another. Power 'with' enhances power—as each person adds their power to the group; while power over may result in part of it being used to keep the other(s) suppressed.

### **How?**

By being mindful of words and avoiding those that

- denote power or force
- divide rather than unite us as human beings with equal dignity and rights
- direct rather than invite
- create hierarchy/compare rather than acknowledge each person/creation as unique

### **Use affective words and gestures**

1. Affective statements—
  - are central to all restorative processes.
  - are personal expressions of feeling in response to specific positive or negative behaviours of others.
  - provide feedback on the impact of intended or unintended harm resulting from negative behaviours.
  - provide information that can be used to support people in restoring dignity when harm has occurred between them.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://restorativeschoolstoolkit.org/practices/restorative-conversations-language>

- are humanising and allow for authentic communication and deep relationship building—these are non-punitive and non-judgemental 'I' statements.
- have a significant and cumulative impact on the wider school community/family/community members.

## 2. Constructing an affective statement—

When responding to behaviour either to reinforce positive behaviours or re-direct negative behaviours with a child or an adult, the following steps will assist in the construction of an affective statement.

- **Step 1** self-identify what you are feeling (this could be a range of emotions)
- **Step 2** self-identify how you are impacted by the other person's behaviour
- **Step 3** identify the specific action or behaviour that you are responding to (separate the doer from the deed)
- **Step 4** ring step 1, 2 and 3 together and share this respectfully, in an authentic expression of:
  1. your feeling and how you are impacted, using 'I' statements.
  2. clearly state specific behaviours or actions you are reinforcing or redirecting.
- **Step 5** close with a specific and earnest request

Adult: 'Anita, I get very distracted when you continuously rock your chair. It makes it difficult for me to concentrate. Could you please not do that?'

**\*\*Be mindful to always consider the needs of the students when addressing them. It is important to take responsibility for your own feelings and not impose your feelings on others. The purpose of affective statements is for people to learn how their specific behaviours impact those around them—it is not for the purpose of them having to carry the load of everyone's feelings.**

## **Restorative approaches to help resolve conflict and repair harm**

If a conflict arises, sit in a Circle or have a restorative conversation to discuss, talk, share, and find a way to move forward in a good way. The restorative approach requires restorative language and focuses on aspects that help build relationships. It does not judge people or punish them for past mistakes. It is forward-looking and enables those who have caused harm and been impacted by harm to come together and have an authentic conversation that helps to repair relationships and enable the person causing harm to demonstrate accountability.

**Key questions** that could be posed in such Circles or discussions are as follows:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What were you feeling at the time?
4. Who has been affected and how?
5. What needs to happen next to help set things right?

## How?

1. use affirming, affective statements
2. affirm the child
3. challenge behaviour using an 'affect' word
4. reaffirm the child
5. invite the child to respond

## Why?

- improves behaviour by improving relationships
- effective pedagogy for generating social-emotional skills
- dialogue and empathy are valued over retribution and 'quick fixes'
- interpersonal connectedness improves
- improved academic performance
- promotes accountability
- reduction in violence and bullying

Above section is based on information from International Institute for Restorative Practices, The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education, by Evans and Vaandering, 2016 and Hansberry, B. (2016), A Practical Introduction to Restorative Practice in Schools: Theory, Skills, and Guidance, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

## Feedback from school children and teachers on Restorative Circles

Life Skills Through Restorative Circles: A collaboration between Enfold Proactive Health Trust and Innisfree House School, Bangalore. Highlights of Feedback received on the Pilot Programme (May 2019–March 2020), 20 November 2020.

### Impact of Restorative Circles on Teacher's Relationships with Students

"I felt more close to my kids. Whatever we discussed, unconsciously stayed in the Circle."

—Teacher of class 6

"I got to know my students better, and they indeed know us better now as both of us open up during the Circles and they feel good when they get to know that their teachers have also gone through such things...that she has also faced these problems. So, they don't feel that I am the only one. And when they share their experiences with me, I feel that I am a part of their lives, it's both ways and that's beautiful... I have become a better person when it comes to remaining calm in any kind of tough situation, so it is helping me in my personal and professional life." —Teacher of primary and pre-school students

"It (the Restorative Circles) really does help the students as well as us, the facilitators. It actually makes us realise what we are doing, what is okay and what is going wrong and how do we correct ourselves."

—Teacher of classes 1–5

"Restorative processes for me is like empowering ourselves, and students feel more comfortable, more free. ...they are more free than ever... not just the students **but the parents who come for the parent-teacher meetings tell that there is a kind of a change that they see in the child and may be it is because of their age that they go back and share their experiences that happened in the Circles and parents also feel good. There was one parent who came back and she told me that maybe the Circle process is helping my child, could you please do it more often.**" —Teacher of class 7 & 8

### **Students' Reflections on the changes they noticed in themselves due to the Restorative Circles**

"I used to feel I am not special. After everyone spoke (in the Circle), I felt that each person is special."  
—*Student from class 4*

"I used to be selfish before. I have started sharing now." —*Student from class 4*

"It changed my attitude and ideas about certain topics. I have become more mature and accepting towards others' opinion likes and dislikes." —*Student from class 8*

"My behaviour has changed, I was very naughty before. There was a Circle done only with a few students from my class—which really helped me reflect on my actions." —*Student from class 8*

"Now I do not react to something without thinking. I think about how the other person in front of me will feel before I react." —*Student from class 8*

"I have stopped thinking that the grass is always greener on the other side... all of us have gotten our own difficulties." —*Student from class 9*

"I understood that all people are different in their own ways, in the way they think and the way in which they share their experiences." —*Student from class 9*

"Before I used to think very low of myself but the Circles changed the way I thought of myself. Now I feel much better and wish to have more of these (Circles). I could recognise the qualities in me which helped me to increase my self confidence." —*Student from class 9*

### **What the Restorative Circles mean to Students**

"I feel happy when I share my feelings with my friends. I don't feel happy when I don't share my feelings and I keep it inside myself." —*Student from class 3*

"[The Circle] is like a box of room freshener. When you open the box, the fragrance spreads everywhere. The Circle is like that. It has opened my mind to so many things." —*Student from class 4*

"We used to share only with our best friends. Circle is a time where everyone becomes your best friends—because you can share." —*Student from class 5*

"... it teaches you how to trust others. In the beginning of the year, I was [an] introvert and not sharing, keeping a lot of stuff for myself. But now I have learned how to trust." —*Student from class 6*

"It has made me understand that I am not the only one facing problems." —*Student from class 7*

"It makes you self aware, one can talk about emotions, share one's emotions and also learn how to manage them." —*Student from class 8*

"When we started, it gave me a different perspective for the same incident, promoted reflection and offered a different point of view..." —*Student from class 9*

### **Restorative Justice**

Restorative Justice—another form of restorative practice—is applicable in the context of harm and is aimed at setting things right and repairing relationships. "Restorative justice" refers to any process which enables **those harmed by crime, and those responsible for that harm**, if they **freely consent**, to **participate actively** in the **resolution of matters** arising from the offence, through the help of a trained and impartial third party (hereinafter the 'facilitator').

*Council of Europe's Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning Restorative Justice in Criminal Matters, 2018*



The Restorative Justice system differs in its essence from the Criminal Justice system. Laws are central to the criminal justice system. It tries to determine who broke the law and what punishment can be meted out to the offender and what they deserve. Punishment is enforced. The premise is that the offender will reflect on the price they paid and the consequences they suffered, and will, in this process, be reformed and not commit any more crimes. Fear of punishment will deter others from committing crimes. In the process in courts, the offender is often motivated to deny any wrongdoing in order to avoid punishment. Lawyers may be engaged to plead the offender's case and prove that they did not commit the offense. The community is not involved in the process. It may be the offender vs the State in many instances. The victim is reduced to the status of a witness who is then cross-examined by the lawyers. Lack of hard physical evidence is often used to get the offender acquitted. The judge pronounces the judgment which is then enforced.



Restorative Justice defines harm as a violation of people, not a law that was broken. It believes that violation and harm create obligations. The person(s) harmed are central to Restorative Justice. It tries to understand who has been harmed, what their needs are, and whose obligation it is to meet those needs. The person(s) who did the harm are held accountable and are required to fulfil the obligations and repair the harm done. Community participation is inherent and integral to the process. It offers opportunities to talk, get questions answered, get acknowledgment of the offense, and

explain the impact it had on the person and others. The person who caused the harm voluntarily participates in the process only if they are ready to take responsibility for their actions. They learn about the impact their actions had on people and are often ready to be held accountable. The process is voluntary, based on the principle of stakeholder participation and repairing harm. The process is deliberative, respectful, and equally partial, that is, it keeps equal concern for the needs and interests of all those involved. There is procedural fairness and confidentiality. Collective, consensus-based agreements are made. The focus is on reparation, reintegration, achieving mutual understanding, and avoiding domination.

"Restorative justice should not be designed or delivered to promote the interests of either the victim or offender ahead of the other. Rather, it provides a neutral space where all parties are encouraged and supported to express their needs and to have these satisfied as far as possible."

—COE, Recommendation on RJ in Criminal Matters

Restorative processes are respectful, value-based conversations, not therapy. Restorative justice is about holding people responsible and accountable and meeting the needs of those harmed. It is not forgiveness.



Restorative justice processes are being used in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Canada, USA and several European countries.

### 3. Development of self-esteem and a positive body image

#### The building blocks of self-esteem

There are various aspects of a child, such as behaviour, attitude, skills and intelligence, which we can highlight and appreciate to build self-esteem. By focusing on the positive attributes, we can encourage and motivate the child.

#### Our traits/Our qualities

We often complement children on their behaviour that is appropriate to the context. In most such situations the child is demonstrating a trait or a quality they have, such as being kind, friendly, caring, playing by the rules, being a team player, honest, etc. When the child behaves in an inappropriate manner, we call that out as well. It is important to do both—the first part—appreciation, motivates children to demonstrate more of that behaviour. The second, pointing out why the behaviour was not okay and what they could have done or said instead, helps them learn self-regulation and respect for other people's rights and boundaries.

Helping children become aware of their qualities and how to regulate their behaviour helps build their self-confidence and self-respect. This is because qualities, like intelligence, help us solve different problems, live together in a group and survive. Like intelligence, no quality is better than the other. In different situations, different qualities are useful, even the ones we consider to be 'bad'. For example, in a situation when there is the threat of violence, one may use manipulation to be safe and avoid injury. Children may tell a lie to avoid punishment. In such situations, it is important to differentiate the behaviour from the person.

Child has told the adult a lie:

Adult: You are a liar!

Child thinks of themselves as a liar.

Child has told the adult a lie:

Adult: I hate lies. Tell me what happened. We will see what needs to be done to handle the situation in a fair manner.

Child thinks: My parent/teacher wants to be told the truth. We can do something to move forward in a way that is fair.

We can support children in learning to use their qualities appropriately, with practice and patience! Though all qualities are necessary for our survival, context matters. Aggression, and being self-centred are not negative qualities, their use is very much required in certain situations, but using them to resolve issues with friends may not leave us with many friends! None of us—no child or adult—is 'this way only'. No person is 'set in their ways'. We can be kind to each other and support our children (as well as the adults in our lives) to be better versions of ourselves.

#### How many qualities do you have?

#### My Traits/Qualities Worksheet

Tick the qualities you think you have from the list below. Remember, being a cheerful person does not mean that you have to be cheerful all the time. If you feel that on the whole, you are a cheerful person, tick 'cheerful'. Same goes for all qualities listed below. There are hundreds of qualities—think of more adjectives

you use to describe the behaviour of people/yourself—add these to the list below.

cheerful	impulsive	honest
aggressive	self-centred	serious
shy	careful	punctual
confident	manipulative	thoughtful
submissive	brave	frank
competitive	dominating	determined
peaceful	energetic	cooperative
argumentative	playful	humorous
logical	kind	friendly
assertive		

How many qualities did you tick? Sometimes we are very strict with ourselves and do not want to tick a quality that we feel we are not exhibiting all the time. We cannot be showing all qualities all the time anyway, so it is okay to tick a quality even if you show it occasionally. Sometimes, we do not want to tick qualities that we consider to be 'negative'. As discussed above, it is the context that makes the difference. No quality is good or bad.

Sometimes, we are not aware of our own qualities and as these are demonstrated in our behaviour—others may be more aware of them. You could ask a close friend or a caring adult to point out your qualities.

**Are some qualities found only in one gender?** We often consider some qualities to be masculine, some to be feminine, and some to be neutral. This is not true! Check if you have ticked any quality which does not match your gender. Chances are that you have. To force people to show only some of their qualities and not others is unfair. It is restrictive and prevents the person from fully expressing their capacities.

**Do all of us have all the qualities?** We have the capacity to demonstrate and behave in all the ways mentioned in the worksheet and many more. If we think back, we have probably done this already at some point in our life!

### Identifying values

The qualities that we value a lot become the **Values** we live by. Values help us determine our goals and how we want to achieve them. Values guide how we speak, how we behave with people, what we perceive as unjust, and what makes us feel angry.

We also create what we value in our interactions. For instance, if I value freedom and independence, I will ensure that not only I, but those who interact with me also experience freedom. I will respect their right to think and act independently.

Children have a sense of fairness. They often come and describe a situation—say on the playground—and end it with: "But that's not fair!" They expect adults to take appropriate and just action. Similarly, we can speak about and demonstrate our values—integrity, gender equity, friendship, cooperation, etc. Children imbibe and imitate what they see and experience, not necessarily what they hear!

**Here are some common values—tick the ones that are important to you as an adult.**

friendship	freedom	love	truth	independence
competition	cooperation	relationships		
equality/equity	happiness	justice	integrity	
civility	responsibility	creativity	health	
teamwork	excellence	work	fun	

Write your own here if different from these:

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**Discuss with the children and establish values for your home. Put them up where the child and others in the family can see them. Children will be doing the same in their classroom as per the activities in On Track®.**

### **Skills and intelligences**

Just like our qualities, the scope of human creativity and skills are also limitless. For instance, 500 years ago no one could have imagined that humans could travel through space and land on the moon. Every child has a unique way of thinking and being. As adults we can help the child explore and realise their unique blend of strengths and skills. By focusing on these, one can help a child develop self-motivation and self-worth. We can nurture their imagination and creativity—and not straight jacket it into a set way of doing and thinking. Howard Gardner, a psychologist from Harvard, formulated a list of seven intelligences. Namely linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The first two are ones that have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the so called 'arts'; and the final two are what Howard Gardner called 'personal intelligences' (Gardner 1999). Gardner claimed that the seven intelligences rarely operate independently. They are used at the same time and tend to complement each other as people develop skills or solve problems. **People have a unique blend of intelligences.** Gardner argues that the big challenge facing the deployment of human resources is 'how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences'. These intelligences, according to Howard Gardner, are amoral—they can be put to constructive or destructive use. Naturalistic and spiritual intelligences have been added to the list of Multiple Intelligences.

**One can assess oneself on the following scale and determine one's unique combination of intelligences.**

#### **Linguistic Intelligence:**

- ☐ Books mean a lot to me.
- ☐ I enjoy word games like mastermind and crosswords.
- ☐ I enjoy puns, palindromes, homonyms, antonyms.
- ☐ I use unusual and difficult words in my writing/speech.
- ☐ I find history, social studies, English easier than maths or science.
- ☐ I write stories, essays or poems.
- ☐ I prefer to hear or read words describing an event rather than see pictures of the event (for example, I prefer to read the newspaper rather than watch the event on television).

- ☐ I can learn a new language easily.
- ☐ I like debating and extempore talks.

**Logical–Mathematical Intelligence:  $\Sigma$**

- ☐ Maths and Science are my favourite subjects.
- ☐ I enjoy mental mathematics.
- ☐ I am interested in scientific discoveries.
- ☐ I like to look for logical explanations for what I observe or read.
- ☐ I enjoy puzzles that require logical thinking.
- ☐ I like to look for sequences and patterns in things around me.
- ☐ I enjoy doing research and finding out information on topics.
- ☐ I prefer things around me to be organised, classified and in order.
- ☐ I like questions that have 'If...then, what...' patterns.

**Spatial Intelligence:  $\boxtimes$**

- ☐ I love jigsaw puzzles.
- ☐ I like to draw or doodle and make posters.
- ☐ I find it easy to read maps and find my way in a new place.
- ☐ I find it easy to read graphs and pictorial charts.
- ☐ I like books with plenty of illustrations.
- ☐ I can imagine clear pictures in my mind.
- ☐ I prefer geometry to algebra.
- ☐ I can visualise how things will look from different directions.
- ☐ I love making scrapbooks.

**Bodily–Kinaesthetic Intelligence:  $\text{手}$**

- ☐ I like to learn poems by using actions.
- ☐ I like to take part in dances and dramas.
- ☐ I use my hands and body while talking.
- ☐ I like activities where I work with my hands—model building, craft, knitting, sewing, cooking.
- ☐ I enjoy outdoor games.
- ☐ I learn more by doing and touching rather than by reading or observing.
- ☐ I get new ideas when I am physically active, like walking or jogging.
- ☐ I find it boring to sit still for long periods of time.
- ☐ I like to track the lines I am reading with my fingers.

**Musical Intelligence:  $\text{♪}$**

- ☐ I like learning poems by singing them.
- ☐ I play a musical instrument and/or I sing.
- ☐ I listen to music often.
- ☐ I can tell when a musical note is off key.
- ☐ I like to make my own music by tapping or humming.
- ☐ I often sing a little tune to myself while reading, studying, walking.

- ☐ I can pick up musical beats, tones or pitch in sounds made by equipment like a mixer grinder, vacuum cleaner, fan, vehicle motors.
- ☐ I turn to music to release my anger, stress or tension.
- ☐ I like creating songs and jingles to summarise concepts and ideas.

**Interpersonal Intelligence:** 🧑🏻‍🤝‍🧑🏻

- ☐ I enjoy being with friends.
- ☐ I enjoy group sports like cricket or basketball to solo sports like high jump or gymnastics.
- ☐ I prefer parties over spending an evening by myself.
- ☐ I actively participate in functions organised in school or in ceremonies held at home.
- ☐ I like to study, do projects in a group, discuss and debate concepts with friends.
- ☐ I talk about my problems with my close friends or family.
- ☐ I can easily make out when my friend is feeling very sad.
- ☐ I like to cheer up my friends.
- ☐ I enjoy teaching someone a skill or a topic.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence:** 🧠

- ☐ I like to study on my own.
- ☐ I like to sit alone and think about various ideas and concepts.
- ☐ I like to sort out my feelings and problems by myself.
- ☐ I have a favourite place in the house where I like to sit or read.
- ☐ I think I am independent and strong willed.
- ☐ I can motivate myself.
- ☐ I don't usually need to be told to do my work.
- ☐ I like to set my goals and work by myself to achieve them.
- ☐ I feel at peace with myself.

**Naturalist Intelligence:** 🦋

- ☐ I enjoy being outdoors.
- ☐ I can identify plants/birds/insects easily.
- ☐ I like to look after pets.
- ☐ I like to look after plants.
- ☐ I would like to work with animals—be a veterinarian, or a primatologist.
- ☐ I like to help animals that are hurt or sick.
- ☐ I like to visit places untouched by human activity like forests, mountains.
- ☐ I find natural surroundings very relaxing.
- ☐ I like camping, trekking, nature walks and eco-tourism.

**Spiritual Intelligence:** ✨

- ☐ I believe in the power (energy) of nature.
- ☐ I know that the Universe is infinite and its energy is immense.
- ☐ I believe that I am a part of the universe, and I have access to infinite energy.
- ☐ My mind and body have powers and capabilities that are unexplained by science.

- ☐ I have a strong sense of instinct.
- ☐ I find meditation easy.
- ☐ I act based on the belief that whatever you give to the universe will come back to you.
- ☐ I respect all living and non-living objects as a part of the Universe.
- ☐ I believe that all living and non-living things in this universe are interconnected.

Comparing one child's unique blend of intelligence with another is unfair. While some intelligences may be better developed naturally in some people, *all* intelligences are present to some extent in *all* people. Intelligences can be developed further with practice and effort. No one is good in *all* areas. Each one does better in some areas and not so well in other areas.

Appreciation of effort put in by the child and avoiding comparison with peers motivates children to be creative, express themselves and develop their unique skills.

Message: I can help children discover their qualities and talents.

### **Helping a child use Multiple Intelligences to learn**

A child who has certain strengths learns best by using those intelligences. For instance, a child who has strong bodily–kinaesthetic intelligence would learn best by miming, moving around, acting out the concepts. For instance, this is how children could use multiple intelligence to learn about the Sun.

1. Linguistic: Ask children to tell a story about the Sun
2. Logical-mathematical: What is the shape of the Sun? Why is the Sun hot?
3. Musical: Find and sing songs about the Sun.
4. Spatial: Make drawing of the Sun and the Moon and the Earth using materials found in the house
5. Bodily–kinaesthetic: Ask each child to show by their body movements how the Sun appears to move across the sky.
6. Interpersonal: Make a card with the Sun theme and give it to someone you like very much.
7. Intrapersonal: Ask the students to talk about how the Sun and presence of sunlight makes them feel.
8. Naturalistic: Ask students to notice, on their way home, which plants have flowers and which trees have changed their leaves in this season.
9. Spiritual: Ask children to close their eyes and breathe deeply. With each breath they imagine sunlight pouring through their body and making their body and mind healthy and happy.

### **Building blocks of a positive body image**

Body image is how we think of our body and what we feel about it. It is often based on looks—the more naturally symmetrical a body or face is, the more attractive or beautiful it looks to us. This is because symmetry is one of the markers of health. However, no one has any control over the structure and function of the body parts they were born with! So, basing one's self-worth and body image on the presence or absence or proportion or symmetry of parts of the body is not logical. One can take credit for or pride in only that over which one had some agency, where one did something to get that result.

We can develop a realistic, practical perspective about our body—its structure, the way it functions, heals

and grows by itself. We can cultivate respect for our body—all its parts and all its functions as it is. We can take pride in caring for our body, keeping it clean, doing activities that help it be fit, flexible and strong. Consuming nourishing foods and avoiding things that harm the body. Taking safety precautions like wearing a helmet or seat belt properly.

As adults we can focus on a child's behaviour, their qualities and skills, rather than their looks, height or weight or disabilities.

Adult: Your eyes are so big and beautiful!

Child takes pride in the size and shape of their eyes. (something beyond their control)



Adult: You are so observant/perceptive! You notice small details!

Child feels pride in being perceptive.



Child: Reeshi can't see very well. No one wants him on their team!

Adult: Oh, poor Reeshi. He underwent many operations but could not get his vision. Life is tough for some of us.

Child is sympathetic, but also thinks that the individual who has the disability has to learn to live with it and others have no responsibility to make the environment accessible and inclusive.

Child: Reeshi can't see very well. No one wants him on their team!

Adult: Oh, that's not fair! Games are about participating and being great team players! You could ask Reeshi how he would like to participate in the game, and what would make it easier for him to do so.

We can support children in understanding that our bodies are all very different and that each one of us is equally human and deserving of respect, safety and dignity. We can develop an independent positive regard for oneself, one's body, others and others' bodies.

### Building self-esteem in practice

Adults in a child's life play a crucial role in the development of the child's self-worth and confidence. There are certain simple principles of adult-child interactions (behaviour and communication) that help build a child's self-esteem.

- **Principle 1: Respect children (as well as older people)**

To respect someone is to consider them worthy—it is 'a feeling of admiration that you have for someone because of their personal qualities, their achievements, or their status, and that you show by treating them in a polite and kind way.'—Macmillan Dictionary

It is a powerful concept. Why restrict it to only elders? Why not extend it to peers? And to children? One may argue that children are not worthy of respect because they have not yet demonstrated their abilities or achievements. However, children do have ample qualities that are admirable! Like being open-minded, spontaneous, loving, friendly, quick to forgive and move on, playful and joyful, living in the moment, etc.

Are not all humans deserving of respect? Why restrict respect to just humans? What would the world



be like if we respected other living beings, trees, water, space and our environment? We do respect inanimate objects—like books, certain buildings, certain mountains and rivers too. Then why should we look for a reason to respect children? Or even debate about it?

Children who are respected, that is, their feelings, their ideas and thoughts are listened to, and acknowledged (not necessarily agreed with or acted upon) would grow up feeling that they are worthy and that they matter. People would not abuse them, call them names or hit them. They would be involved in values and rules-based conversations. They would not taunt or bully their peers, as they would not have been subjected to it, and would not have learnt to be violent to get one's way. This would do wonders to their sense of self, build a strong foundation of self-worth and self-confidence. They would develop empathy and know how to express themselves as well as listen to one another in a non-judgemental, open-minded and open-hearted manner. Here it is important to keep in mind that respect is not a constant or a given 'thing'. It is dynamic, constantly 'earned' or 'lost' by our behaviour. Behaviours that deny or take away others' rights should not be condoned or justified or labelled respectable, just because the person performing those actions is powerful or elderly. While all of us deserve respect, it has to be maintained through our actions and words and not by virtue of one's class, caste, gender, age, etc.



Adult: (in a hard, derogatory tone) You are so foolish!

Adult: (gentle tone)  
You have not done this well, may be you did not understand it. Would you like me to explain it to you?



- **Principle 2: Appreciate effort**

By appreciating children for the effort they put in, rather than focusing on the specific result, one can help them value themselves. It also fosters the feeling of agency in the child, helping them to do better subsequently.

Situation: Teacher looking at a student's handwriting

Appreciation: I can see that you put in a lot of effort while writing! The letters are clear and written so neatly.

Praise: Your handwriting is the most amazing I have ever seen.

Appreciation is different from praise. Appreciation is specific, authentic and the student finds it genuine. The child learns to look inwards for self-worth rather than seek external rewards to feel good about who they are, their skills and behaviour.

Praise is often an exaggeration. Children may feel that it is not true or that they do not deserve the praise. Praise is often generalised (How wonderful! It's great! It's the best!) and talks of no specific skill or behaviour that the child can repeat.

- **Principle 3: Avoid comparisons**

Focusing on the behaviour and skills of the child, and not comparing with other children helps them feel good about *themselves*. They try to do better and better each time, until they feel they are putting in their best effort. Children become aware of their own individual gifts and skills. They begin to think and express themselves in their own unique way. Creating something makes children feel good and builds self-motivation as well.

### *Comparison*

Situation: Adult with two children

Sunita you got full marks! You are the best student in the family!

Anita, you should learn from Sunita. If she can do so well, why can't you?

### *Avoiding Comparison*

Situation: Adult with two children

Sunita I am very happy with the way you are learning! I can see you have been studying and practising a lot.

Anita, your work was neat! There were a few mistakes. Would you like me to help you to learn this better?

Comparison adds to the inherent competitive nature of children and builds up high levels of stress which ultimately results in either poor performance or emotional trauma or both. Children are competitive and have a natural desire to do their best. They perform best when they set their own targets or goals and work towards them with interest and energy (self-motivation). Encouragement, appreciation and support from significant adults in their lives helps them reach their goals. However, criticism, comparisons, constant pressure to perform creates fear of failure and often results in poor performance. The child's sense of self-worth gets eroded. Now they enter a vicious cycle where poor performance results in poor self-worth, which reduces self-motivation, resulting in an even worse performance.

- **Principle 4: Avoid labels**

Create opportunities for children to explore different behaviours. Labelling children makes them feel that they are expected to always behave in a particular way. A child who is routinely considered to be smart and intelligent, may feel extremely stressed out of fear of not meeting the expectations of the teacher. A child who is called 'lazy' may not feel motivated to do any work since no one expects anything from the child! So called 'good' labels can be as constraining to a child's development as 'bad' labels.

### *Avoiding labels*

Situation: Teacher handing out labels to students. Some students are already standing with labels round their necks:

Labels are: lazy, disorganised, disruptive, naughty, smart, forgetful, intelligent, charming, grumpy, untidy, friendly, rude, polite

- **Principle 5: Avoid criticism, set boundaries**

Criticism makes children feel rejected or dejected and does not motivate them to do better. Giving negative inputs is not helpful to the child. This does not mean that adults should not express their unhappiness when children's behaviour is unacceptable. The correction in behaviour can be done in a non-judgemental and affirming way, rather than with criticism.

### **Maintaining Discipline: by setting boundaries for behaviour**

When a child's behaviour is found to be unacceptable, you can discuss the errant behaviour of the child and also explain why it is unacceptable. The child's character is not denigrated or labelled. The behaviour or action is objected to, the child is accepted and respected.

"You are careless. Look at your sloppy handwriting"

"You can take care when writing. This will improve your handwriting."

"You never complete anything properly! Even your bag is not zipped properly!"

"Zip your bag! Things might fall out of it."

"Why are you wasting time play cricket? You are not in the school team anyway."

"I can see you are interested in sports. But it's time to go and complete your homework."

- **Principle 6: Build self-discipline the restorative way**

Encourage **taking responsibility** and understanding that one needs to set things right.

*'You can't teach children to behave better by making them feel worse. When children feel better, they behave better.'* —Pam Leo

Children have a sense of fairness. They often come and tell adults something that happened between two or three children where one child did something unacceptable but did not own up or refused to apologise. They expect the adult to intervene and tell the child that their behaviour was unacceptable and should not be repeated. Children can be supported in learning this skill for themselves.

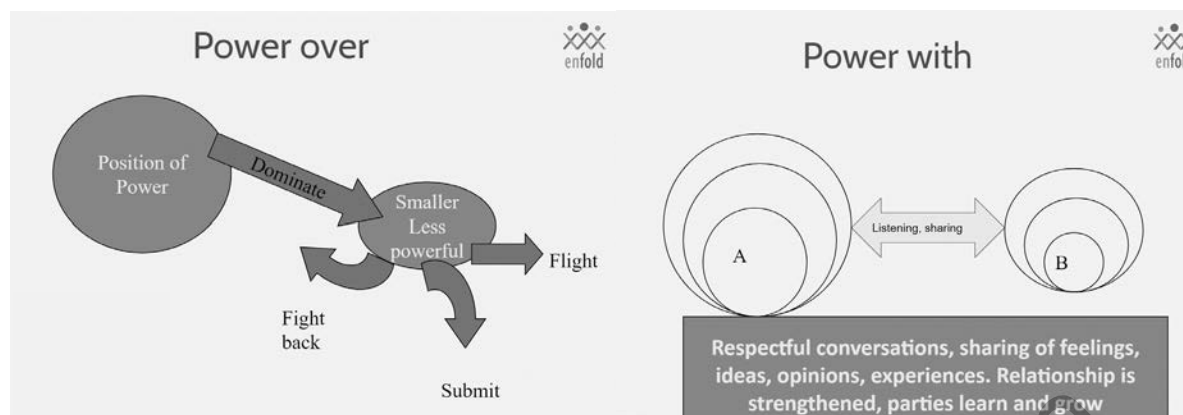
1. The adult can help children take turns to explain what happened from their perspective and how it made them feel.
2. They can be asked to say what they would like to see happen so that they all feel that the situation has been handled in a fair manner.
3. The child/person who behaved in the unacceptable manner can be asked to do things to set them right.
4. The child/children can be asked if they would like support so as not to repeat unacceptable behaviour.

Such restorative conversations do not blame or shame anyone. Instead, they build a sense of responsibility and accountability. Children develop socio-emotional skills and strengthen their relationships. They begin to distinguish the person from their behaviour and realise that a person can change one's behaviour.

- **Principle 7: Avoid punishment: listen, discuss, find a way forward**

Punishing someone is a demonstration of power over that person. A huge power difference exists between adults and children. Instead of using this power over a child—to dominate over the child, punish or humiliate the child—adults can exercise power with the child. That is, invite the child to exercise their agency—their power—to move forward in a way that is acceptable to all, the child as well as the adult.

This happens through conversations, sharing of feelings, expectations, intentions, and goals. Such discussions are empowering, as the child feels heard, that their emotions and ideas are being listened to and acknowledged. The child feels that they belong, their opinion and feelings matter. The adult also expresses their feelings and expectations and a way that works for both parties often emerges in such respectful conversations. Different possibilities are discussed and the most suitable one acted upon.



- **Principle 8: Avoid rewards: instead, celebrate!**

Promising rewards for positive behaviours or outcomes is in a way an exercise of power over a person. It does not build self-motivation or self-discipline. The child may put in the effort to get the reward—not because they are interested in that activity or because they themselves feel they need to do that/learn that for their own benefit. They may become so dependent on working only to get rewards that they may not put in any effort unless there is a reward.

These external rewards take away the sense of accomplishment, fulfilment and joy when a person learns something new, thinks or does something that is original. These feelings are the body's internal reward system. We can nurture this sense by appreciating effort (see above) and by celebrating! Celebrate once the task/job/work/event is completed, irrespective of the result (who came first/what rank you got/who got the prize). This is how celebration differs from rewards. Rewards are promised beforehand and are dependent on a certain kind of result. Celebration is after the event, and independent of any kind of result. One can just celebrate the completion of exams, competition, event, etc.

*Situation: Promising a reward*

Adult: If you get all questions right in the test, I will buy you your favourite toy.

*Situation: Celebration*

Adult: Hey! Your test is over, and you put in a lot of effort! It's a weekend! Let's go on a picnic! Where would you like to go?

- **Principle 9: Encourage mutual collaboration, and competition/comparison with self**

We know that no two individuals are alike. What comes easily to one child may be tough to grasp for another child. Children can support each other in learning. Watching each other succeed in the classroom or in the play field can be motivating, rather than disheartening or a reason to be jealous. The only person we can compare ourselves with is our own self. We can encourage children to put in their best effort, see how they can improve on their previous performance, and not keep thinking of how to do better than another person. That benchmark will not lead a person to do their best! They would only do better than others!

Adult: You must be *the* best in your class! Were you selected for the competition?

Adult: Do *your* best. You may not be the best at this in your class. You may not be selected for every event. It's okay. Your job is to learn and ask for help when you need it.

- **Principle 10: Learning from mistakes**

Children can be taught from an early age that mistakes are a part of the learning process. It is almost impossible to do something perfectly on the first attempt. It is not something to be embarrassed about!

We learn by trial and error. It is good to investigate why the mistake occurred. Did we understand the question? Were we too quick to answer? Did we think enough? Did we take the time to do it well? Do we need to learn more about it? Practice makes us do things better, faster and more easily. We can learn from our mistake, that is, learn the correct answer or learn more about the subject and move forward.

Adult: You have made so many mistakes here! What's the matter with you?

(Child upset, doesn't say anything)

Adult: I spent so much time teaching you! You don't pay attention!

(Child thinks, I can't learn. I can't pay attention)

Adult: How come you make so many mistakes?

Child: I was sleepy

Adult: Ah! So how about getting enough sleep so you are fresh when you go to school?

(Child thinks, I know what to do to be a good learner!)

- **Principle 11. Encourage independent thinking, questioning**

Encourage children to ask questions, to understand something better or clear their doubts. Similarly, encourage children to state their opinion, what they think and their explanation for why they think something happens, before taking the lead and answering their questions. This helps them figure things out by themselves and fill the gaps in their logic. Asking for their opinion makes them feel that they matter, their self-worth increases.

Asking questions or expressing a contrary opinion is not to be construed as being rude or 'talking back'. It is a mark of self-confidence.

#### **4. Addressing Feelings**

Feelings and thoughts are inseparable parts of our life. They affect our actions, our personality, our behaviour, our attitudes, and how and where we utilise the skills that we have developed. Intelligence is amoral—but our feelings and values guide us in deciding which path we tread, how we use our multiple intelligences and what we create in this world.

Feelings often arise naturally in us, in response to what we sense, perceive and experience in the world, as well as in response to what is happening within our bodies. Our perception and experience of events is often coloured by our thoughts, beliefs and social norms. Hence thoughts influence our feelings, and feelings influence our thoughts!

Supporting children in managing their feelings and thoughts would go a long way as they navigate their life

in this world. Most parents would aim to equip children with skills that can support them in living a creative, fulfilling, socially contributory life. Here are a few suggestions.

Scenario: Child is crying, shouting and throwing a tantrum in a shop.

Parent: Enough is enough! I am taking you home now!

Scenario: Child is crying, shouting and throwing a tantrum in a shop.

Parent: You are feeling upset and want something. Let's step out in a quiet corner and we can discuss what you want.

This is not a promise to buy whatever the child wants. The discussion could be on what the child wants, what the parent is willing to purchase or not purchase and why. An alternative could be found. The purchase could be delayed, something more suitable could be bought or the parent could explain why something can't be bought at all. Sticking to values can help here.

Children sometimes find it difficult to verbalise their feelings. They often express their feelings of confusion, anxiety, sadness, worry, or fear by behaving in a manner which may not be in accordance with the feeling. Adults can help children become aware of their feelings. This is the first step in managing feelings and resolving underlying issues.

Following 5 steps describe the stages we need to go through in managing our feelings.

## **Managing Feelings**

Spirals of feelings:

1. Awareness of feelings
2. Accepting the feeling
3. Understanding why you have that feeling
4. Considering whether you want to take any action based on the feeling – weigh pros and cons, values and beliefs
5. Getting over the feeling

### **1. Awareness of feelings**

Feelings often arise naturally in us. Many a time the child can't help feeling a particular way. Accept all feelings and help the child find a word to describe it. This improves their expression and communication skills. The feeling may not be what we call 'positive' but that does not mean that it should not arise or that we should not experience it. All feelings are natural and normal -they are our body's way of communicating with the brain. Suppressing or ignoring a feeling may not be the best for us in the long run.

Scenario: Child telling the adult: I am feeling angry with Rehana.

Adult: You should not feel angry. She is your friend.

(Child learns not to trust their feelings)

Scenario: Child telling the adult: I am feeling angry with Rehana.

Teacher: You really look very upset with your friend.

(Child learns to trust their feelings. Thinks that it is okay to feel any feeling)

Scenario: Child has hit their friend and is now telling the adult: I am angry with Rehana.

Adult: You should not feel angry. She is your friend. Now go and say sorry and make up with her.

(Child learns not to trust their feelings. Does not learn that anger can be expressed non-violently)

Scenario: Child has hit their friend and is now telling the adult: I am angry with Rehana.

Adult: You really look very upset with your friend. Looks like you had a fight with her. By hitting her did she understand why you were angry? You could have told her why you are so angry with her without hitting her.

(Child learns to trust their feelings. Thinks that it is okay to feel any feeling, but all actions are not acceptable.)

**Accepting all feelings does not mean that one has to condone all behaviours of the child.** By expressing one's displeasure over an unacceptable behaviour, one can help the child gain values.

## 2. Accepting the feeling

Many a time, feelings may fester and remain suppressed because the person feels ashamed of having such feelings—this is especially true of the so-called negative feelings—like jealousy, guilt, shame, humiliation, fear, anxiety, etc. An adult, by accepting such feelings, lets the child know that it is natural to feel different feelings, whether labelled positive or negative.

How can one acknowledge and accept a child's feelings?

Paraphrasing: Give a name to the emotions expressed by the child in words or body language.

I can see you are feeling hurt and angry with your friend. You are really upset with them.

Listening without interrupting to the words and the body language

Example of teasing

They are always calling me fatso! They are always troubling me. I hate them! Change my seat Ma'am!

When children realise that trusted adults whom they look up to also experience negative feelings, they find it easier to accept their own emotions. Parents who share their own childhood experiences help children accept and cope with their feelings better.

Example of teasing: A child is complaining to the parent about teasing and taunting by a classmate called Raj.

Letting the child choose a course of action.

Parent: What would you like to do?

Child: I don't want to sit next to Raj.

Parent: You could ask your teacher to change your seat. Is there anything else you could do?

Child: I could tell Raj to not trouble me. Maybe you can come and complain to my teacher about Raj. Teacher will punish him!

Parent: I like the way you are thinking of so many different ways! But I do not like complaining about people or getting them punished. That may only change their actions when an adult is around!"

Child: Okay. I will tell Raj not to trouble me. If they do it one more time, then you come and talk with my teacher!"

Parent: Okay.

Ask the child to think of various options available, suggest any other which the child may not have thought of. Discuss the pros and cons of the options. Invite the child to think over and choose an option. Avoid forcing your opinion on the child, even if you feel it is the best option. This helps children develop the skill of thinking about things from different angles, become aware of each other's rights, develop empathy and values.

Scenario: Parent sharing with the family. The children are listening wide eyed-interested, nodding.

Parent: My family used to clap and praise me whenever I sang a song at home. I wanted to take part in the inter-house singing competition in school. But the first day I went for practice, my music teacher said that my singing was hopeless, and I could not take part in the competition. Can you imagine how I felt?

Scenario: Parent sharing with the family. The children are listening wide eyed-interested, nodding.

My class was going for a picnic to a zoo. My parents were very strict and though I pleaded with them, and told them that it was safe, they refused to let me go. I felt very sad. All my friends went and had such a good time. I was upset with my parents for a long time and would always complain that they never let me go for the picnic.

### **3. Understanding why you have that feeling**

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the underlying cause for a feeling. A child may say, "I feel bad because my parents shout at each other a lot." But another child may not be able to understand that the arrival of a new baby in the house is making them feel neglected.

As adults we can analyse the situation and understand why we are feeling in a particular way though a child may not be able to do so. We can be careful and not jump to conclusions about the possible reason behind a child's behaviour or feelings.



Child has hit their friend and is now telling the parent: I am angry with Rehana.

Parent: You are feeling angry with her because she teases you? I will tell her not to tease you.

Child does not learn to analyse their feelings.

Child has hit their friend and is now telling the parent: I am angry with Rehana.

Parent: You really look very upset with your friend. What happened? How come you are feeling so angry?

Child: She keeps taking my things without asking me! I have told her not to do that! But she doesn't listen.

Parent: I see. You want Rehana to listen and you want her to ask your permission before using your things.

Child: Yes!

(Child learns to analyse their feelings.)

#### **4. Considering whether you want to take any action based on the feeling—weigh pros and cons, values and beliefs**

Acknowledging feelings helps the child feel understood and accepted and sometimes, this is all that the child wants—to be understood—even though the underlying issue may remain unresolved. Acceptance and support from an adult often help the child find a way that works. It is important to realise that feelings are feelings. They may be a call to action, but they are not a call to a particular type of action!

Scenario: Child has complained to the adult about teasing and taunting by a classmate.

Adult: Why do you get angry? Just ignore her. That is the best way to handle teasing.

(Child thinks, How can I ignore them? They are my best friends!)

The child does not learn that there are various possible ways of responding and that it is not necessary to act in accordance with every feeling. Empathy and values do not develop.

Child has hit her friend and is now telling the parent: I am angry with Rehana.

Parent: You really look very upset with your friend. What happened? How come you are feeling so angry?

Child: She keeps taking my things without asking me! I have told her not to do that! But she doesn't listen.

Parent: I see. You want Rehana to listen and you want her to ask your permission before using your things.

Child: Yes!

Parent: How about we set aside some time tomorrow evening and invite Rehana to join in. That way both of you can talk about this. You say how you feel and what you want, and she talks about how feels and what she can do. Would that be okay with you?

Child: Yes!

The children learn to analyse their feelings, give words to the feelings and express themselves clearly. They learn to move forward in a respectful, peaceful way. It helps them regulate their feelings and behaviour and at the same time, strengthens their friendship.

## 5. Getting over the feeling

Sometimes, it may not be possible to involve all people and have a conversation about an upsetting incident. Children can also learn how to get over a feeling—this is especially true for feelings that make us feel low or disturbed. Such feelings may come in the way of concentration, learning, creativity and relationships. In such instances the adult can help the child get over the feeling by various activities/thoughts, some of which are given below.

These activities create energy in us and bring about positive thinking.

Singing, dancing, joking, gardening, music, reading, sleeping, deep breathing, talking about the feeling/something else, crying, painting.

The second part of each workbook deals with how children can manage their feelings.

### Managing Anger

Anger is a strong emotion. It usually arises from incomplete communication, opposition to ideas or opinions, loss of or damage to something valuable, unfulfilled expectations or a sense of injustice done.

Anger can be destructive, both for the person and the target. But anger can also be used effectively and constructively to address the underlying cause.

How do you express anger? Fill in the worksheet below.

Situations when I feel angry	How I express my anger	Its effect on the other person	Does the underlying issue/situation become better or worse or remain the same?	Is this the best way to deal with the situation/issue?
1. With my boss				
2. With my colleagues				
3. With child in the family who is a good student				
4. With a child in the family who usually has poor academic performance				
5. With my spouse				
6. With a close friend				

Do you express your anger differently with different people? \_\_\_\_\_

On which group/s of people is your anger likely to have a long lasting, emotionally traumatic effect?

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## Expressing Anger Effectively

When angry, do not hold back or act calm only to reach a boiling point. The idea is to release anger in short bursts before it reaches an exploding point. You may be angry with an adult or with a child. The first response to anger in most cases is use of harsh words. Words cut like knives. Some can leave permanent scars – on relationships and on a child's self-esteem. That is why expressing anger without insulting the other person, adult or child, remains the only civilised way to vent our anger. Other methods dehumanise.

### When angry, avoid

1. Tit for Tat—Calling someone a rat doesn't make them a rat. Use of insulting words shows the personality of the person using the words - not the person for whom the words are being said!
2. Vengeance—Scheming, sabotaging, plotting take away time and are likely to backfire.
3. Sounding phoney—"I will break every bone in your body" – not possible.
4. Labelling or Judging—"You are stupid. You are wrong"—aren't we all, sometimes?
5. Blaming the other person—"It is your fault." Makes the person less cooperative.
6. Exaggerating what has happened—"Now we are ruined."—Really?
7. Becoming confrontational—"Let me see what you can do."—may aggravate the situation.
8. Excessive response—Hopping mad—you may burst a blood vessel in your brain!
9. Irrelevant response—Throwing dishes, breaking objects—adds to the cost of conflict.
10. Physical abuse—Beating children never solves the problem and often creates new ones.
11. Verbal abuse—Insults can aggravate the problem.

### When angry do:

1. Express your feelings clearly—"I hate lies" (not "I hate you").
2. Value the other person's point of view, even if you disagree with it—"I see you have a different plan. In my experience, it may not work."
3. State a rule—"We keep people at home informed about where we are going."
4. Describe the problem—"The work you took on has not been done. This is not acceptable."
5. Offer a solution/ give choices—"Would you like to complete it now or early tomorrow morning?"
6. Write a note.
7. Allow the person to face the consequences—"You have repeatedly overspent—your birthday present is going to be small!"
8. Assert your values—"We tell the truth and own up when we are in the wrong."

## 5. Child sexual development and development of gender identity

### Terms and definitions

Here are some terms used to talk about gender, and one's gender identity:

**Gender:** refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates with a particular sex. However, these attributes are not uniform across all cultures. Behaviours that are compatible with cultural expectations are referred to as gender-normative; behaviours that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

**Gender Roles:** refers to the tasks and responsibilities one is expected to hold or assume based on the gender that one is assigned. For example, a person assigned the feminine gender at birth (based on their female sex) is expected to be a caregiver of the family, cook and clean for them and play the more nurturing role while a person assigned male at birth is expected to be the breadwinner, to protect the family and to be the one who does all the rough and tough work around the house.

**Gender Identity:** this is the internal perception of one's gender and how one may choose to label themselves. Gender identity need not be the same as the gender one is assigned at birth. For example, one may identify as trans, non-binary, queer, woman, man, gender nonconforming, etc.

**Gender Expression:** the way one chooses to present their gender, often done through one's clothing, behaviour or demeanour, etc. in accordance with the sociocultural expectations of that gender. Gender expression may be aligned with one's assigned sex and gender or may differ from it.

**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC):** an adjective used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender expression or gender identity differs from gender norms associated with their assigned sex or is outside the gender binary.

**Gender stereotypes:** Stereotypes are set, fixed, unvarying beliefs about groups of people.

**Gender bias:** An act of discrimination against a person, because of their gender. It reinforces gender stereotypes, to the disadvantage of the target of discrimination.

**Gender based violence:** Physical, emotional or sexual violence against a person because they may not conform to the assigned gender/gender expression/gender role.

**Cisgender:** a cisgender (or cis) person is someone whose gender identity (their own sense of their gender) aligns with the gender assigned to them at birth. For example, someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man. A cisgender person enjoys cisgender privilege in a society which upholds the gender binary (which a trans\* person does not).

**Trans\*:** an inclusive term to refer to all persons whose own sense of their gender does not match the gender assigned to them at birth. Spelt with an asterisk in this way, trans\* is an umbrella term coined within gender studies to refer to all non-cisgender gender identities.

**Intersex:** an umbrella term for people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

(Office of the High Commission, Human Rights, United Nations <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/intersex-people>)

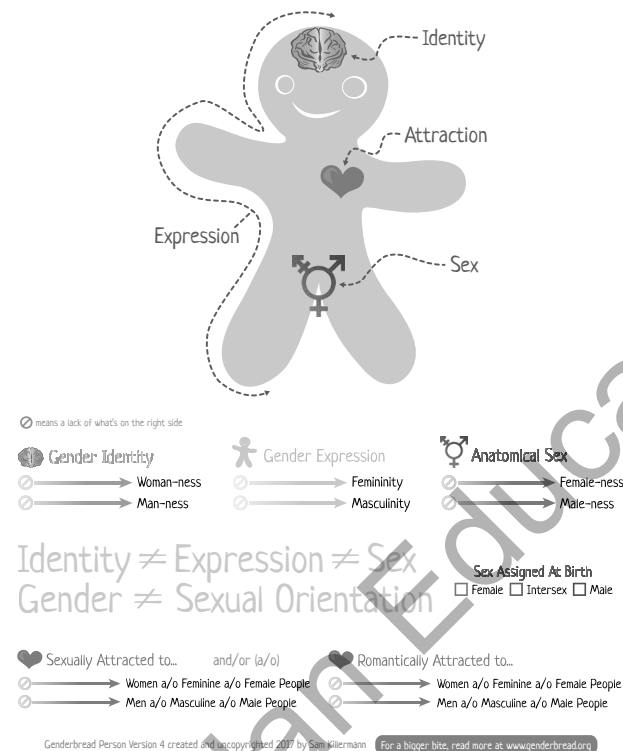
**Sex:** has two distinct meanings. One refers to sexual activity. The other refers to the physical and biological characteristics that are used to classify people into female, male or intersex. Internal and external genitalia, gonads, hormones, chromosomes and other biological markers are used to assign a child to a particular sex category at birth. A person may, later in their life, undergo medical or surgical procedures to affirm their sex if they so desire.

**Sexuality:** '...a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.' (WHO, 2006a)

**Sexual Orientation:** is defined in terms the gender and sex of the person(s) one is sexually, romantically and emotionally attracted to. One's sexual orientation may be heterosexual (drawn towards someone whose sex/gender is different from one's own) or homosexual (drawn towards someone whose sex/gender is the same as one's own) or bisexual (drawn towards people whose sex/gender is either different or the same as one's own) or pansexual (drawn towards people of any sex/gender) or asexual (not drawn sexually towards anyone). There are further nuances in sexual orientation, for example, one may be only romantically or emotionally or intellectually attracted towards a person but not sexually. Also, one of these attractions, say emotional attachment, may be a prerequisite before one feels sexual attraction as in demisexual people.

Biological sex characteristics, gender identity and sexual orientation develop at different times from foetal life onwards, under different factors and influences. These cannot be inferred from the biological sex characteristics.

## The Genderbread Person v4 by its pronounced METROsexual



## Sexual development from birth to 7 years

Many people cannot imagine that everyone—babies, children, teens, adults, and the elderly—are sexual beings. Some believe that sexual activity is reserved for early and middle adulthood. Teens often feel that adults are too old for sexual intercourse. Sexuality, though, is much more than sexual intercourse and humans are sexual beings throughout life.

**In utero:** The foundation of an individual's sexuality is said to be laid at conception. Within a few weeks the gonads have differentiated and started secreting hormones which, along with several other biological factors play a role in the sexual development of the foetus, affecting the brain and the body alike.

The reproductive anatomy differentiation and development begins by 7–8 weeks. By 12 weeks it is completely formed in exquisite detail—small but it is all there!

The gender identity and sexual orientation are believed to begin developing in utero as well and extend well into later months of pregnancy and postnatal life.

Reflex physiological activity is often seen in the uterus, for example, male foetuses have been seen to have erections.

## Birth

A female child while in the uterus, is under the influence of maternal hormones. Thus, at birth the child may have a small amount of functioning breast tissue, the lining of the uterus may have developed and the

ovaries may even show small cysts. In a few days, as the maternal hormones are eliminated by the baby's body, the child may show breast milk secretion and a miniscule vaginal bleed for a day or so. Male babies continue to have erections throughout their childhood.

In all sexes, the reproductive organs go into a dormant phase, until they are awakened by an inbuilt biological clock to begin functioning.

### **Early childhood birth to toddler**

Initial oral phase—child explores through the mouth which lasts till around 18 months. Everything is 'tasted'. Thereafter, the genital phase begins. Touching genitals is pleasurable for children as all the nerves are in place and active. This pleasure is not said to be linked with sexual thoughts or imagery. Male children may have erections, especially when the urinary bladder is full.

Children have no sense of 'shame' or 'dirtiness' in respect to their genitals. There is a curiosity regarding the passage of urine and stools. This sense of exploration is further intensified because of the way adults treat the excretory functions.

They realise that males and females urinate differently.

Sexual maps to help children navigate their sexual life, get laid in early childhood. This helps navigate their sexual life later in life.

### **Preschool: 3–5 years**

Children continue exploration of their own genital areas and are curious about other bodies. They often question their parents and siblings regarding the differences in the bodies especially the genitals, breast and pregnancy (See Bal Suraksha App - Prevention tab - Answering Children's Questions). Rubbing and touching of genitals is common, once again, without sexual thoughts or fantasy.

By 5–6 years of age children become more modest and prefer to bathe and dress in private. Their wishes should be respected and not disregarded or made fun of!

Child: Go away. I want to change my dress.

Adult: Oh! Suddenly you have become so big? I used to change your nappy!

(Child feels ridiculed, embarrassed. Feels that adults do not respect children's privacy or boundaries.)

Child: Go away. I want to change my dress.

Adult: Oh, I see! Sure. Call me if you need any help.

(Child feels respected. Feels that people will respect their privacy and boundaries.)

**Socio-sexual play:** Children of 3–7 years of age enjoy 'you show me yours (genitals), I'll show you mine' and 'doctor-doctor' games. This is normal curiosity. It helps in the formation of the sexual map in their brain. These games are spontaneous (not planned), played with giggles and laughter in a relatively private place. They do not hurt each other. It is best not to shame children for playing such games or put a stop to them. Since parents usually do not use the correct names while speaking about the *genital* organs, children of this age invariably pick up a lot of slang words which they often do not understand. Allusions to passing stool and other 'susu-potty' jokes fill them with mirth!

*Scenario 1: Adult has 'found' children playing you show me yours (genitals), I'll show you mine.*

Adult: What is all this you all are doing! Shameless! Stop this right away!

(Children feel ashamed, think that this was a bad thing to do.)

*Scenario 2: Adult has 'found' children playing you show me yours (genitals), I'll show you mine.*

Adult ignores and goes away.

Later speaks with their child/children

Adult: When we are young, we often play with each other and show our private parts. It's okay. But no one older should join the game. Also, if a child does not want to play it, no one should force them to.

(Children feel that it is okay to play such games and have learnt about personal safety and consent.)

They have numerous questions especially if they see a pregnant woman, a relative or in the media. They ask about how the child came to be in the womb and how it comes out. They usually accept whatever answers they get as they are pretty ignorant about this area! If adults try to ignore the question or brush them off with fanciful stories or half-truths, children are quick to realise that parents are uncomfortable or embarrassed. They feel that these questions are unwelcome and so they should not ask their parents these questions anymore.

Preschool children may be found imitating adult social and sexual behaviour like holding hands, kissing and sometimes 'lying on top of each other'. This is part of their learning by observation and imitation of real-life situations or on TV.

Curious to know how babies 'enter' the stomach and how they are born—just as they are interested in how a rainbow forms. Maybe satisfied by whatever answer is provided by adults.

In the absence of an acceptable vocabulary, child develops slang words for genital.



Living in a 'clothed' society, child's natural curiosity leads them to play 'doctor-doctor' games. Mutual exploration is common—driven by curiosity than sexual need.

Sexualised by watching songs and dance in movies, may make sexual gestures while dancing—without having sexual feelings. Masturbation common.

Has been socialised not to talk about genital area. Keep it covered—associates it with a secrecy and shame. Hence *susu* potty jokes fill them with mirth!

Bed wetting may continue. May have 'accidents' in their classroom or bus.

Three-year-old girl telling her father, "My teddy bear also has a tail, but it is at its back!" Father stopped bathing with his daughter!

Girls and boy plays together.

Imitates adult social and sexual behaviour. Kindergarten children may be found kissing, holding hands, lying on top of each other according to exposure in real or reel life (movies seen inadvertently).

May accept being bathed by either parent but may ask questions about parents' body.

Toilet training is a major milestone of this age. Good bladder control means that the child feels the sensation of a full bladder and can control it voluntarily for sufficient time till they can ask somebody if they can use the bathroom. This involves a shift from the reflex neurological activity to the voluntary control of urination involving higher brain functions. While most children develop this control by 3–5 years some children may develop bladder control during sleep later i.e., 6–12 years of age.

*Note: As children are curious about the genitals there is a possibility that an abuser may pretend to answer their questions while abusing them. They use the secrecy and shame around sexuality to force the child to keep quiet. Speaking about the genitals and personal boundaries can help children identify unsafe touch or behaviour and tell their safe adults about it.*

## 5–7 years

As the body and brain grow, social messages are picked up and behaviour modified accordingly.

'Modesty'/self-consciousness increases. May insist on privacy while bathing/changing clothes even from a same sex parent or sibling.

Boys and girls still play together. Some mutual exploration may happen, though less due to increasing feelings.



Gender roles are practised and reinforced by day-to-day interactions—example identifying with and imitating same sex parent.

Imitates and plays imaginary games of 'house-house', marriage, being a parent!

As children are curious about the genitals there is a possibility that an abuser may pretend to answer their questions while actually abusing them. They use the secrecy and shame around sexuality to force the child to keep quiet.

Parents who speak about the genitals and personal boundaries can keep their kids safe from abuse.

Touching genitals continues, though more privately. But is still devoid of sexual fantasy.

Children spend a lot of time in a fantasy world of their own creation.

May declare that he/she will marry a favourite aunt, cousin or parent when he/she grows up!

## Development of gender identity

Humans have evolved to live in groups. We have the tendency to identify ourselves with a group. We think of who we are and then look outward to find similar people and 'join' them - a person may identify as an Indian, Buddhist, gynaecologist, Kannada speaker, educated, city-dweller, vegetarian, married, man. Here man is a gender identity. It is the gender that one associates oneself most closely with or the self-conception one has of one's own gender.

Researchers believe that gender identity develops under the influence of prenatal hormones, genetic factors, socialisation and other environmental factors. No one factor can be said to determine one's gender identity.



By two years of age children become conscious of the physical differences between different sexes.

By 2–3 years of age children begin to identify themselves with a gender they see around them (usually binary) and verbalise it once they begin to talk. They begin to dress, adopt the hair style, behaviour and choose toys according to gender they feel they belong to and the gender stereotypes prevalent in their social-cultural environment. They may announce themselves to be ‘a boy’, ‘a girl’ and at times, as neither or as both. They observe and imitate gender roles they see around. They play ‘house-house’, go to ‘work’ and play act getting married and parenting.

By four years of age, they have a fairly stable sense of their gender identity.

Six-year-olds behave in ways that are consistent with their gender identity. This may or may not conform with the sex characteristics and the gender they were assigned at birth.

### **Appreciating and supporting diversity**

As parents and teachers, we often begin to enforce cis-gender norms—ways of dressing, choosing accessories and hairstyle, kind of toys or activities and even behaviour on children.

In fact, gender enculturation starts from birth, with the colours, clothes, accessories and toys with which children are surrounded. **The first question asked at the birth of a child is: ‘Is it a boy or girl?’ though it is impossible to guess the gender of a child.** The language used by adults to describe the baby itself creates stereotypes. We end up assigning a gender to the child at birth itself.

A child who does not conform may be scolded, ridiculed or even punished. This can cause anguish, anxiety and confusion in the child. The child may withdraw emotionally and socially.

We can be sensitive, accepting and respectful of a child’s gender identity and expression as it develops. This may mean that we have to answer questions from people in our society about why we are letting a child behave in a non-conforming manner. We can answer all such questions once we begin to acknowledge and appreciate that diversity is the norm in nature.

#### *Scenario 1: Assigning gender and stereotyping*

People commenting on the female baby: She is so cute! Look at those big eyes!

People commenting on a male baby: He is a big boy! So active!

#### *Scenario 2:*

People commenting on the baby: The baby is so cute! So active! What a loud cry!

(No reference is made to the gender or sex of the child.)

#### *Scenario 3: People asking the parent of a child born with intersex variation*

Person: What’s the sex of the baby?

Parent: My baby has intersex variation.

Person: Oh. Are you calling it a girl or a boy? Are you doing any operation?

Parent: No. There is no need to operate. My baby will tell us the gender as the baby grows up.

Diversity exists in all aspects of nature and human life and its many dimensions are no exception. We need not limit human potential and the meaning of human life to a certain way of dressing or being or to

reproduction. In a sexually reproducing species like humans, heterosexual orientation will always exist. This does not mean that other orientations should not exist. Just as we do not choose the body we will be born with we have little control over the gender identity or the sexual orientation we will experience.

It is not okay for people born with cis gender identity and heterosexual orientation to enforce their will on others. Such discrimination and gender-based violence is a violation of human rights and an offence. Each person is unique, equally human and has a right to safety and dignity.

*Did you know?* How pink and blue colours chosen for children is entirely a social construct? How pink was for boys earlier?

Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America

Jo B. Paoletti: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gh7c4> has excerpts from this book. Also <https://www.popmatters.com/is-that-a-boy-or-a-girl-jo-b-paolettis-pink-and-blue-2495865869.html>

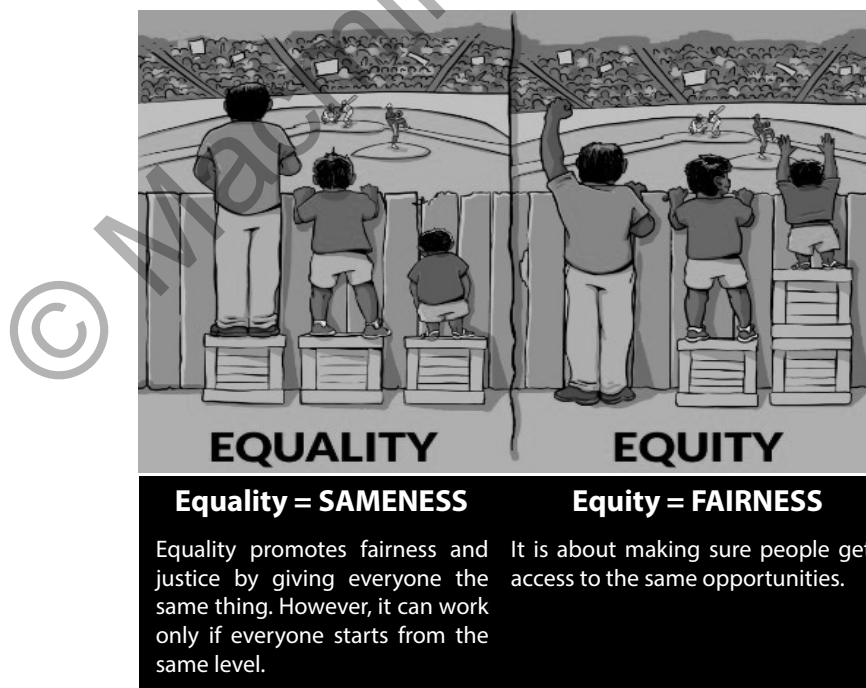
## 6. Gender Equity

### How is equity different from equality?

Equality is looking at everyone through the same lens, applying the same criteria and treating everyone in the same manner to be 'fair' to everyone. It is about sameness. It assumes that there are no differences between people. It does not make space for diversity or for historic- entrenched biases that have left many people far behind. It does not make space for the difference in the needs of different people. It is about creating equal opportunities.

Equity acknowledges diversity and historic-entrenched biases that have created a huge power and other imbalances between different people. It demands that people, social structures and systems and our laws provide for what is required by each person according to their *need* to promote fairness. It is about creating equal outcomes.

The illustration below shows the difference:



## **Breaking free from gender bias, gender roles, stereotypes**

We can look at people as human beings and consider each person as an equal human being. Aside from certain biological roles, people of all genders can do anything they wish to. We can avoid assigning roles and stereotyping people according to their gender or sex. Gender equity would reflect in our language, behaviour, policies and social structures (including families).

Stereotyping and gendering non-biological roles straightjackets children and adults. It interferes with the development and self-expression of individuals. It leads to discrimination and bias—one gender favoured over others and gender-based violence against those who do not conform to stereotypes. Gender stereotyping is not beneficial to any gender in the long run.

Stereotypes currently extends to but is not limited to:

- names, games, toys, dresses, objects, cosmetics, kind of pet (!), kind of musical instrument played, vehicles driven, roles at home and outside, jobs and professions
- standards for physical structure of the body—men should have six packs and girls should be delicate (weak)
- qualities, intelligence, skills
- expression of feelings and emotions
- behaviours, for example, asking for and providing support—protector and the protected
- concept of shame and respect as residing in the body parts of a particular sex and gender

How many of these are we gendering?

- name of the child, pronouns used
- type of dresses bought
- colour of dresses, objects, decorations
- toys bought, games and sports played
- type of storybooks, posters, subjects studied, hobbies pursued
- social/public spaces accessed
- work—in the house, outside the house
- job and professions...and so many more

We do a disservice to our children when we gender qualities, intelligences and skills, professions and force them to develop only some of these human qualities and traits and not all the unique mix that they have. It is like telling a male child that they should grow to be only 5.8 inches tall and not an inch more or less because that is the average height for a male in the society they live in! Continuing to genderise our society, our language, the objects we use is a huge mistake—especially when we do not consider all genders equally worthy and deserving of respect. We use gender identity as a tool to oppress rather than accept, appreciate and celebrate.

Being gender sensitive, and equitable would lead to greater creativity, thanks to the freedom of expression and choice. Each child and adult would be encouraged to enhance their insights and interests. Your child can be truly who they are, regardless of any restriction. There would be increased self-awareness and high self-esteem. Children and adults would be likely to have high self-confidence. They would be more likely to grow up with the ability to identify biases and break stereotypes. They would in turn be agents of gender equality, both in school and in their social circles.

Gender equity and gender neutrality is not about being gender blind. It is not about having all humans behave and express themselves in the same way. No. It is about celebrating diversity, making space for all forms of experiences and expressions as long as these are respectful of each other's rights.

We can create safe spaces for our children to express themselves and be creative, where each person experiences being equally human.

#### *Reflection*

When did you become aware of your gender identity?

Have you experienced gender bias?

How can you be more gender equitable?

## **7. Child safety and protection from sexual abuse**

What can we do to prevent sexual abuse of children? We can adopt a multi-pronged approach that is aimed at:

### **Holding perpetrators accountable and responsible**

#### **Empowering safe adults in**

- a) understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse, identifying behaviours in children that could be due to sexual abuse.
- b) **gaining Basic knowledge of the POCSO Act, 2012**
- c) managing the **alleged abuser**
- d) **responding to the child**

#### **Supporting children in**

- a) developing a positive attitude towards their body
- b) understanding and respecting personal space
- c) learning personal safety rules and personal safety guide, identifying safe and unsafe behaviours, developing safe behaviours

In the section below, we will discuss how we can work towards each of these aims.

### **Holding perpetrators accountable and responsible**

Why do we have to discuss something that is so obvious? It stands to reason that the person committing the crime is responsible for their behaviour and needs to be held accountable. However, sexual abuse, stigmatising the victim rather than the perpetrator, is linked to silence and shame around sexuality. This has its origin in the establishment of oppressive patriarchy and its bias against females in many societies across the world. Humans have always survived and lived in groups made up of all sexes, genders and ages. As forest dwellers, and gatherer-hunters, females could gather and hunt their food. This was mostly a group activity. They were not dependent on males for their food. Their sexuality was not controlled. The link between sex and babies was not clear cut as humans have no specific breeding season. However, males had extra height and muscle mass as a percentage of their body weight than females as they had to fight with other males to establish dominance and gain a reproductive advantage by mating with more females. There was no individual ownership of land. The entire tribe protected their foraging and hunting area in the forest. About 10,000 years ago, humans began agriculture on land. Over time, in many regions across the world, they stopped dwelling in forests. Instead, they occupied fertile lands near rivers and lakes and settled down in villages. Food was no longer being gathered or hunted. It was being grown on land. Ownership of land soon arose. The strongest man took the largest chunk of the most fertile land and the remaining was divided among other men according to their power and strength. The weakest man got no land and was made to

work as landless labourers. The females got no land. To survive they were now dependent on men. For the first time in human history, a woman's food was growing on a man's land. They now had to be 'married' to a man, live in his house, work on his land, produce food and eat it. Her sexuality was controlled, as the land was to be inherited by the man's sons. So, the 'wife' was not allowed to step out of the boundary of the man's land. Virginity became a girl's virtue as men wanted to marry virgins. The father and the brothers were tasked with the job of ensuring that their daughters/sisters remained virgins until married off. Girls were not to be interested in sex. They were not provided with any education on sex or sexuality and such knowledge was labelled as dirty, shameful and corrupting. As silence around sexuality began, honour was attached to sexual parts of the female body. She was also made responsible for maintaining her 'honour'. A common way to punish a girl or her family was to sexually abuse the girl. If a child was sexually abused by a family member, usually a male, the family thought it best to not speak about it, because if it became public, then no one would come forth to marry the girl. Victim blaming and stigmatising was the next step, and it continues till today. The perpetrators were not held responsible or accountable especially for the sexual abuse they committed.

*Situation: Adults commenting on a news report of sexual assault*

Adult 1: Why was that girl out at 9 p.m. in that locality? I wonder what she was wearing.

Adult 2: We need to teach our boys to respect people! If they can't behave in a responsible manner, then they should stay at home after dark and not go out into lonely places! I hope the culprit is caught and held accountable.

**We need to build accountability and responsibility for one's actions—be it physical, emotional or sexual abuse or any other type of harm or behaviour.**

*Situation: Child has hit a friend*

Adult: Why did you hit your friend?

Child: Because they were not following rules! They made me angry.

Adult: I see. You could have stopped the game and pointed this out. It is not okay to hit another person however angry you may be feeling!

## **Empowering safe adults in**

### **Understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse**

1. **Are there many perpetrators of child sexual abuse in India?** Perpetrators of child sexual abuse (CSA) are found across national, regional, gender, caste, religious, ethnic, occupational and socio-economic groups. However, we do not have data on this as most crimes go unreported and un-investigated. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt of India, Prayas and UNICEF, 2007 reported that out of 12,447 children (hailing from all strata of society), 53% reported sexual abuse. Out of 12,447 children, 21% reported severe sexual abuse. Many reports (example: RAHI) prior to the recent report had indicated that child sexual abuse of girls was high in India. Now it appears that incidence of sexual abuse of boys is also on the rise. 52% of boys and 47% of girls have reported sexual abuse of one form or the other in the 2007 study. More boys than girls have reported severe form of sexual abuse.
2. **What age group of children are targeted by perpetrators?** This study pointed out that CSA began as early as 5 years of age and peaked around 12–15 years of age and could continue until adulthood.
3. **If 50% of children report sexual abuse, does it mean that 50% of adults are abusers?** No. This is

because offenders often abuse multiple children. By exposing offenders, and taking effective action, one can safeguard many children.

4. **How do perpetrators gain access to the child? The perpetrator is often known to the child—they may be a family member, friends of the family, work in educational or training institutions, etc. The perpetrator uses several tactics to gain access to the child in a private place for a long enough period of time. To do this, they first gain the trust of the parent/ caregiver or the educational institution or take a job where they will have access to children.** They appear trustworthy and caring and offer to take care of the child. They make friends with the child, fill a need of the child and gain their trust. Once alone with the child, they 'accidentally' enter the child's personal space and test their boundaries. Slowly they desensitise children to inappropriate sexual acts through touch, talk about sex, and persuasion. They then proceed to sexualise the relationship. To maintain control over the child and keep them from telling anyone, they use emotional manipulation, threats, gifts, persuasion, etc. The grooming process offers a window of prevention, if adults could maintain healthy suspicion of an adult who tries to be alone with a child/children and if children could be taught personal safety rules and empowered to report people who break these rules. Many perpetrators could then be stopped in the grooming stage itself.

5. **Why do children keep quiet about CSA? Why does it continue?**

Children often do not talk about abuse because they feel they will not be believed, that they will be blamed for it or because they do not want the family to break up. Often the abuser is a family member or is known and trusted by the child. As the child has grown up loving and trusting that person, **the person starts 'grooming' the child** for sexual abuse by touching the child in an unsafe sexual way. The family remains unaware of this and the child feels confused.

If the family has brought up the child to think that anything to do with the reproductive tract is 'dirty' or 'shameful', the child will find it hard to report sexual abuse. In the meantime, the perpetrator feels emboldened and continues the abuse, in a more severe form. The child feels trapped and may think, 'I did not tell anyone when it first started. How can I tell now? Everyone will blame me for not resisting or telling earlier. Anyhow, I feel too ashamed to tell my parents/teacher. Maybe, it will stop.' The perpetrator also begins to use bribes, threats, secrecy, promises and emotional manipulation to keep the child from telling anyone.

6. **If we do not make a fuss about the abuse, will not the child forget it?**

**No. Children do not forget abuse.** It can have several short-term and long-term effects even in those showing no obvious signs. It can affect their behaviour and personalities in many ways. It can result in lack of interest in activities/academics. It can cause children to become excessively sexualised in their behaviour, or it may cause them to dislike themselves, behaving aggressively or being totally submissive. Later in life, difficulty in maintaining relationships, inability to trust close family and friends, harmful sexual behaviour and marital problems may arise.

7. **Should we protest against only severe forms of CSA?**

**No.** If we tolerate minor forms of abuse, then that would become the norm. Let us have zero tolerance for CSA. Also, it is not okay to physically or emotionally abuse a child or even forcibly kiss a child on their cheek or pinch their cheeks if they do not like it.

8. **Will 24-hour surveillance of the child prevent sexual abuse?**

**No.** For one, it is not possible for an adult to keep an eye on a child 24 hours a day. It is much better to empower the child. The child can be taught personal safety rules, and safe and unsafe touch, just as we teach them traffic rules and how to protect themselves from injury. Ask the child to inform someone they trust of anyone who breaks personal safety rules about touching, clothing or talking.

**9. Will explaining about personal safety unnecessarily frighten the child?**

**No.** The child will not be frightened if we explain about personal safety as a choice and introduce the concept in a comfortable manner. Tell the child, 'Just as we have rules about road safety, so also we have rules about interacting with each other.' It is about learning safe behaviours around touching, clothing and talking; and saying No to anyone who behaves in an unsafe manner, going away from them and telling a safe adult. These rules can be taught using simple, easy to understand, non-threatening language and without instilling fear of people in the child's mind. Refer to Enfold's Surakshith App and Bal Suraksha App available in 10 languages, downloadable free on Android phones/systems at Play Store.

**10. If society gets to know about the abuse, will not the child have more to lose than the abuser?**

**No.** The silence of the person subjected to abuse and people who know about it only emboldens the perpetrator and the crime continues unabated. In fact, this silence maintains the 'respectability' of the perpetrator. The perpetrator stands to lose their reputation and standing in the society. The child is a victim—blameless and innocent.

**11. Do we have an obligation to protect not only our child, but other children in our community as well?**

**Yes.** The POCSO Act, 2012 states that any adult who has information about CSA or even suspects that a child may be facing sexual abuse, is required to report it to the nearest police station. As a community, we can collectively protect our children and adults by looking out for each other and calling out people who behave in a harmful manner. Personal safety is not the sole responsibility of a person. It is a collective responsibility. Your safety is linked to the safe behaviour of others around you, and the proactiveness of the bystanders.

**Presentation of child sexual abuse**

The majority of cases of CSA may go unrecognised unless we are aware and look for signs that may be suggestive of sexual abuse. The behaviour of children who have been subjected to sexual abuse can be varied. The way the child presents can be demonstrated by the picture of an iceberg. What is obvious or comes to the surface is only the tip of the problem. The following is a pictorial representation of presentation of CSA, developed by Dr Shekhar Seshadri, a co-author of this workbook series. He is one of the first few psychiatrists in India to begin detailed work and research on child sexual abuse.

**Obvious abuse:**

1. Disclosure by the child
2. Detection (obvious)—pregnancy, child suffering from Sexually Transmitted infections, child having genital injuries

**Suspicious of abuse:**

**(Levels of index of suspicion)**

1. Sexualized behaviour, clear hints given by the child
2. Clear symptoms like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder
3. Sudden unexplained change in behaviour—school refusal, people avoidance
4. Symptom patterns—sudden onset of bed wetting, aches and pains, general ill health

5. Children who **do not** report, hint or decompensate—because they are resilient, have been threatened, manipulated, etc.

*Presentation of Child Sexual Abuse: by Dr Shekhar Seshadri*

Some behaviours that fall outside the 'normal range' of sexual development of young children and could be suspicious of sexual abuse are as follows:

- Child continues to touch genitals in public even though repeatedly told not to.
- Insists on touching genitals or breasts of adults or asks to be touched even though repeatedly told not to.
- Puts objects inside genitals or anus even though repeatedly told not to/inserts objects in other children, even if painful
- Plays sexual roles in angry, sad or aggressive manner
- Expresses disgust or fear of self or other genders
- Simulated or real intercourse. Oral sex.

In older children, suspect child sexual abuse if there is—

- A change in the social behaviour of the child—a happy child becomes introverted, silent, refuses to participate in group activities. The child may become insecure and cling to a trusted adult or become excessively fearful. Occasionally, the child may become violent, easily enraged. The child tries to avoid coming in contact with a particular person.
- Replaying the abuse with another child generally younger or the same age as them. This is known as sexualised behaviour.
- A change in the personal grooming of the child—neglects personal appearance, deliberately tries to look unhygienic, shabby or unattractive. May begin to wear multiple layers of clothing, inappropriate for the weather. This is more likely in older children.
- Change in academic performance, poor concentration, distractedness, sleepiness (since abuse may cause sleepless nights/nightmares/disturbed sleep), lack of interest.
- Change in eating habits: Child starts losing weight or may eat excessively, thus putting on weight. This is more likely in older children.

### **Basic knowledge of the POCSO Act**

**Some key features of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 are as follows:**

- Gender neutral—the victim and the alleged offender can be of any gender.
- Any person below 18 years of age is considered to be a child.
- Offender is presumed guilty.
- Child-friendly provisions for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and trial.
- Special Courts for speedy trial
- Punishment graded as per gravity of the offence.
- It includes an obligation of mandatory reporting.
- The police must register a report of sexual offence. Failure to do so is punishable.
- First aid to child victims is to be provided free of cost. They are entitled to emergency medical care in the nearest hospital. This is not dependent on first registering a FIR.



- Child-friendly procedures are to be followed by the police, medical practitioners, Magistrates and Special Courts.
- It covers a range of sexual offences—penetrative, non-penetrative but touch based, and non-touch-based offences, storage or possession of pornographic material involving child for transmitting or propagating or displaying or distributing or for commercial purposes, abetment; commission, aiding and attempt to commit offence. Some offences are classified as aggravated depending on the relationship with the child, or if they are in government services, etc. Child offenders will be tried under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.

### **Mandatory reporting**

The POCSO Act 2012 requires that any adult who gets to know that a child is being sexually abused, or suspects that such abuse may be happening is required to report this to the Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police station. Reporting the matter to the Child Protection Officer/Head of the School/Institution/parent is not sufficient.

Everyone—parents, school personnel, counsellors, medical personnel—is required to report even if the information was acquired during the discharge of professional duties which are meant to be confidential.

It does not have to wait for the complaint to be first investigated by an institution where the alleged perpetrator may be employed. Failure to report is punishable with imprisonment of up to six months or fine or both.

If the person in charge of an institution fails to report the commission of an offence by an employee or subordinate under their control then the imprisonment may extend to one year with fine.

### **What to report:**

A report of sexual abuse should contain the following if it is known:

- The names and home address of the child and the child's parents or caregiver.
- The child's present whereabouts and age.
- Explain what happened or is happening to the child. The nature and extent of the child's injuries/abuse including any evidence of previous injuries. Tell all you know about it.
- Any other information that you believe may be helpful.
- The identity of the person or persons responsible for the abuse, if known.
- Your name and address.

No person shall incur any liability for giving information regarding a crime.

### **The person reporting is not expected to know**

- legal definitions of child abuse and neglect
- the name of the perpetrator
- if the abuse actually happened, this should be left to the investigative agencies

### **Penalty for false reporting**

Any person who makes a false complaint or provides false information against any person can be punished with imprisonment between six months to 1 year with/without fine. This is about deliberately framing

charges. It does not mean that a person who files a case under mandatory reporting, will be punished if the alleged abuser is not found guilty.

**Refer to the Bal Suraksha App** to learn more about how to prevent and manage child sexual abuse.

### **Managing the alleged abuser**

As described above, hundreds of years of gender bias, shame, silence and stigma around sexuality and sexual abuse often comes in the way of safe adults responding in an empowering manner when they get to know about a perpetrator of sexual abuse.

### **What can be said to an alleged abuser?**

- I trust and believe the child. The child has named you as an offender.
- This is totally unacceptable.
- You do not respect children or the values that the family/institution stands for.
- You are not to go near the child.
- You are not to contact the child.
- Your behaviour is unacceptable. I will be taking the required steps to ensure the safety of this child and other children.
- I am required by law to report you to the police. Child sexual abuse is an offence under the POCSO Act.

Do not:

- Ask the alleged abuser if they abused the child. Your job is not to interrogate, investigate or conclude about the validity or accuracy of the alleged crime. That is the job of the police/investigating authority.
- Send out written or recorded material stating that so and so is an abuser. That is the job of the court.
- Do not physically attack the abuser or use derogatory words, it only escalates the matter and may side-track the main issue.

### **Responding to the child**

How to interact with the child who has been subjected to sexual abuse/when there is suspicion of sexual abuse? (by a person trained in interacting with children)

Have a conversation with the child in private, in a casual setting. Let the child take the lead. Ask open-ended questions. If a child reports any type of abuse, the information needs to be treated with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality. Only the relevant people should be informed.

Keep the following dos and don'ts in mind:

DO:

- Speak to the child quietly and privately
- Give the child your full attention
- Listen and show empathy
- Keep your body language open, relaxed, your tone unhurried and normal, your facial expression comforting and caring.
- Stay calm, reassuring and non-judgemental
- Build rapport and explore the child's emotional world. Ask about the child's feelings in general. Do you feel happy; jittery or restless; feel sad; feel afraid or scared; worry about things, etc. For younger children,

a smiley chart to express their feelings can be used.

- Ask about how the child feels about themselves. Are you a good child?
- Enquire about their interaction with people around them, your friends, relatives, your body, the way others treat you, the way others touch you?
- Ask leading questions about personal safety. Has anyone ever touched you in a way you did not like? Has anyone, known person or strangers, ever touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable/shy/yucky in parts of the body we keep covered?
- Explain to the child that sometimes people trouble children in this way. Yucky things are best let out. The person may tell you that it is alright, no need to tell anyone. However, for your safety, it will be best to tell an adult you trust about it. You can tell me.
- If the child reports sexual abuse at the outset or later in the conversation, acknowledge the child for coming and telling you about it. 'Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me this.'
- Believe the child and tell them you believe them. 'I am sorry this happened to you/you had to face this.'
- Acknowledge the child's feelings with, 'You might have felt trapped/helpless/ confused.'
- Let the child do the talking
- Take down the facts
- Give direct answers to the child's questions
- Tell the child that they are not responsible for the abuse, whatever the circumstances
- Discuss a course of action with the child in words the child can understand—be realistic, but do not frighten the child
- Tell the child who else you will need to tell. Do not promise confidentiality. The POCSO Act does not allow you to keep the disclosure confidential.
- Tell the child it was not their fault. 'It was that person's fault. It does not matter that you could not tell me earlier/when the abuse first started. You are not responsible for the abuse continuing.'
- Tell the child that you will do whatever is necessary to make sure that the abuse stops.
- Take steps to ensure that the abuser is restricted from meeting the child.
- Seek further professional help if needed.
- Take legal recourse as prescribed by the law.
- The child's safety should always come first after they have reported about the sexual abuse. If someone within the family or home environment is named as the perpetrator (the person who has committed the abuse), the issue of protecting the child needs to be addressed urgently.

**DON'T:**

- overreact or look shocked
- push for details
- put words in the child's mouth
- question why it took so long for the child to disclose the abuse (if this is the case)
- make promises you cannot keep ('this can be our secret if you tell me'). Do not make false promises like: 'I will send the person to jail. I will beat them up,' etc.
- ask the child 'why' questions as they often sound accusatory
- Do not blame the child with: 'Why did you not shout for help?' 'Why did you not tell me earlier?' 'Why did you not fight?' Remember, they are children, and the abuser is a person known to the child, trusted

and loved by the child.

- Do not ask the child to 'forgive', 'forget' or 'adjust'.
- When working with children who have been subjected to sexual abuse, it is important to avoid the following:
  1. stereotyped or accusatory comments: 'Tell me about the bad man.'
  2. intimidating and coercive comments: 'You can go after you have answered one more question.'
  3. influencing comments: 'Your parents believe something happened and so do I.' (when child denies) or 'Think real hard about what might have happened.'
  4. motivating instruction: 'I want you to try real hard to answer all of my questions.'
  5. rephrasing the child's answer and adding new, possibly inaccurate information.
  6. Remember NOT to command, direct, threaten, preach, lecture, ridicule, interrogate, blame or shame!
  7. If you feel you are unable to support the child, you can always help the child by referring them to a competent, empathetic and trained staff member or counsellor. In any case, you can always believe, accept and continue to care for the child.

## **Supporting children**

### **Developing a positive attitude towards their body, answering their questions around reproduction**

#### **Name the genitals**

To support the development of a positive attitude towards their body, including the sexual and reproductive system, give unambiguous, clear, names to all parts of body. After the head, neck, chest and abdomen, do not skip the genitals and go to the toes! It is not necessary to say 'penis' or 'vagina', but at least say, this is the 'potty place' or the 'susu place'. As the child grows up and begins to learn social etiquettes around talking about sexual parts, you can teach the proper anatomical names, preferably in your native language. Do not reprimand them with 'shame, shame' if they are nude, say 'put on your clothes'. If they are touching or rubbing their genitals in public, do not say 'Dirty girl/boy! Go wash your hands!' Instead distract them and later talk about touching rules (described below). The genitals are like any other part of the body, with skin, hair, and have some discharge, much like the skin and hair elsewhere in the body. Discharge from the vagina or penis is akin to discharge from other parts of the body, like the eyes or the ears. It is not 'dirty' like stools. Urine is sterile. These are small but significant ways of breaking the silence around sexuality, building respect for all parts of the body and its functions and not putting shame or guilt or dirtiness in a child's mind with respect to their genitals.

#### **Answer questions that children have on reproduction**

Use simple, straightforward and age-appropriate language. When parents and caregivers fail to respectfully and honestly answer their questions, children often turn to their peers, or older children, for information. The responses they then get are usually in bits and pieces, leaving them to arrive at their own conclusions. When parents hesitate to respond to these questions accurately, children sense the discomfort and eventually learn not to bring up these conversations with their safe adults. This unattended curiosity can also make them vulnerable to abuse.

If your school-age child is not asking you about how babies are born, consider initiating some age-appropriate conversations. Many kids in elementary school assume that babies are made when a man and

woman lie next to each other, sleep in the same bed, hold hands, kiss, or swim together.

**Refer to Bal Suraksha App** (free download on Google Playstore in 10 languages)—Prevention tab. You may use words like susu place/potty place/birth passage/baby house/ mama's baby cell and daddy's baby cell to answer the questions of small children if you are not comfortable using words like penis, vagina, genitals, womb, etc.

Q. Why is her stomach so big and fat? (pointing to the abdomen of a woman who is pregnant.)

She is not fat. She is carrying a baby.

Q. How does the baby come out?

Mummy's body has a baby house. The baby grows in it. When it is big enough, it comes out of the 'baby passage'.

Q. Where is this? Where does the baby come out from?

There is a food pipe for food to go in, a windpipe for breathing. In the same way, there is a baby birth passage near the susu place in mummy's body. That's why mummy's body is different from daddy's body.

Q. How did the baby get inside mummy?

Our bodies are made of cells, like a house is made of bricks. A baby is made when daddy's baby cell joins mummy's baby cell. When mummy and daddy want to make a baby, they come very close to each other. They do so because the cells are very small and might get lost. This way when daddy's cell enters mummy's body, a baby begins to grow.

Q: Why do I need to sit and pass urine?

If you stand and urinate, it will run down your legs and you will wet yourself. Unlike boys who have a penis that is external to the body that they can hold and direct the urine away from them.

Q. Why does papa not have breasts?

Papa and mama both have breasts, but women have more breast tissue/bigger breasts (depending on what the child can understand) than men do, and their breasts look more full and visible. This is also so that women can produce milk to nurture and breastfeed their children when they are born.

Q. Why is papa's 'tail' in front? My teddy has a tail on its back.

Papa is male and males have an organ called the penis from where they urinate. What you are referring to is the penis and not the tail. Usually, toys do not show the private parts which is why you do not see it in your teddy.

Q. Mommy, show me your penis

Mommy does not have a penis but has a vagina instead, which is inside the body. We spoke about clothing rules earlier. Adults like to maintain their privacy, and that of others. So, it is not okay for me to show you my private parts.

Q. What is menses/sanitary pads?

When girls grow up, their body begins to make baby cells. Every month discharge comes out of the baby house (womb) for 4–5 days. This discharge is called menses. It would leave marks on their clothes, so girls use sanitary pads during that time.

### **While watching intimate scenes with children**

If scenes depicting intimate sexual acts begin, parents often switch off the channel or try and divert the children's attention. Instead, they could say, 'What is being shown here is something that adults do when they love and care for each other. But they do it in private. When such private acts are shown like this in

a movie, that all of us can see together, it makes me feel uncomfortable. I am switching off the screen for some time.' This opens a window for the children to understand your values and sexuality etiquette. More importantly, they understand that when my parents are feeling uncomfortable about something to do with sexuality, they are talking to me about it. I too can talk to them about things that make me uncomfortable.

### **'Bad' language**

Children pick up inappropriate slang from lots of places—TV, movies, their friends, and especially you, if you use it. Many times, they use these words without even knowing what they mean. It is a good idea to calmly explain why the word is inappropriate and suggest better words to use next time. 'These words are not respectful of our body or its functions. Our bodies are amazing, precious and we respect them. You can use words like....and avoid... .' Give them actual biological terms or commonly used unambiguous terms like 'susu/potty' place in the language spoken by the child.

### **Inappropriate jokes**

You will often find kids this age giggling over 'dirty' jokes about sex, body parts, sexual orientation, etc. but do they really understand them? Do they realise that some of those jokes can hurt people? Kids often tell these jokes without understanding them. Calmly explain why the joke is inappropriate, then tell a more kid-friendly one as an example of an appropriate joke that will still get some laughs. It is important to be a good role model for your child—do not tell inappropriate jokes, especially ones making fun of a particular group of people. Tolerance and respect are learnt behaviours.

### **Understanding and respecting personal space**

#### **Personal Space**

We often touch each other when talking, playing or interacting. It builds bonds and trust between people. At other times, we maintain a certain distance from each other, not too close, and not too far when speaking with each other. This is because we have a sense of personal space.

**Personal space** is the space around us that we consider our own. Any intrusion into this space, without our permission, makes us uncomfortable.

The extent of our personal space changes with the environment, the situation and the people concerned. For example, personal space in a school bus is much less than in a restaurant. Personal space with your mother is often different from the personal space with an uncle.

**Each person has a different comfort zone**, when there is an intrusion into the personal space they may react differently, as shown in the two situations below.

*Scenario 1:* Child nudging another child with a pencil.

Second child complains: Don't do that. Just stop it. I hate it.

*Scenario 2:* Child nudging another child with a pencil.

Second child giggles and says: Don't tickle me!

You can help the children understand the meaning of personal space, what to do if someone enters personal space without their permission and whom they can tell if a person does not respect their personal space.

### **Developing respect for one's own and other's personal space**

*Scenario:* Children sitting on a sofa close together while one sofa has just one child sitting on it.

Child sitting in the middle complains: Don't sit so close to me. I don't like it.

Adult: Learn to adjust. Don't complain.

(children do not learn to respect each other's personal space. They feel that their feelings do not matter, and that they have to adjust with other people.)

Adult says: Some of us feel uncomfortable when someone else sits too close to us. We can care for their feelings and requests. One of you could move to the other sofa and give the person their space.

(Children learn that they can express their feelings of discomfort regarding personal space, and that we can respect each other's space.)

**Strengthening the ability of a child to demarcate and protect one's personal space** will help the child resist abuse. It is okay to say 'No/Stop it' for one's safety.

*Scenario 1:* Family gathering, people hugging each other.

One child says: I don't want to kiss Auntie.

Parent: Okay. You can just greet her.

Child learns that how they feel matters.

*Scenario 2:* Child as above. Uncle trying to hug the child.

Child: I don't like being hugged. Please don't do that.

Uncle: You are so rude!

Child: My daddy says, if *anyone* tries to hug you and you don't like it, you can ask them to stop. He also asked me to tell him about anything that makes me uncomfortable.

*Scenario 3:* Family gathering, people hugging each other.

One child: I don't want to kiss Auntie.

Parent: Don't be rude. She is so fond of you. Don't hurt her feelings.

(Child learns to accommodate other people's feelings, at the cost of their own.)

*Scenario 4:* Child as above: Uncle trying to hug the child.

Child feels uncomfortable and thinks: I don't like this. But how can I stop him? He is my Uncle.

### **Learning personal safety rules and personal safety guide**

#### **Identifying safe and unsafe behaviours, developing safe behaviours**

Present the world as an inherently safe place. Most adults do care for children and want to keep them safe. Our body is our own and we can care for it. We follow personal safety rules when we are in the presence of others for everyone's safety. When someone breaks these rules or makes us feel unsafe or uncomfortable about our body, we can ask them to stop, move away from them and tell a safe adult about them.

## Rules for personal safety

### Touching

1. We do not touch
  - a) anyone's body in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable or sad or scared or confused.
  - b) anybody on their mouth, chest, genitals or anus/buttocks.
  - c) ourselves in our chest, genitals or anus/buttocks in front of others.
2. No one should touch
  - a) our body in a way that makes us feel uncomfortable or sad or scared or confused.
  - b) us on our mouth, chest, genitals or anus/buttocks.
  - c) themselves on their chest, genitals or anus/buttocks in front of others.

### Clothing

1. We do not
  - a) undress and show our own body in a way that makes others feel uncomfortable/sad/confused/scared.
  - b) show our chest, genitals, anus/buttocks in front of others.
  - c) take off the clothes from anybody's body in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable/sad/confused/scared.
2. No one should
  - a) undress and show us their body in a way that makes us feel uncomfortable/ sad/confused/scared.
  - b) show us their chest, genitals, anus/ buttocks.
  - c) take off our clothes in a way that makes us feel uncomfortable/sad/confused/ scared.

### Talking

1. We do not
  - a) speak about others' or our own bodies in a way that makes others feel uncomfortable/sad/confused/scared.
  - b) talk or joke about genitals casually with others.
2. Nobody should
  - a) speak about our bodies in a way that makes us feel uncomfortable/sad/ confused/scared.
  - b) talk or joke about genitals casually with us.

**Exception:** When we face discomfort in our body or private parts, when doctors have to examine us (in presence of safe adults), when engaging in normative sexual behaviour (when we are young, say 3–7-years-old we often play with each other—touching and showing our private parts to each other. This is ok, but an older person should not join in this game, and we should not force a child who does not want to play this game.). Discuss further, social contexts where certain behaviours may be considered harmless (hugging, sitting, kissing on the cheeks, etc.), where one can take their own decision on what is ok for them or not.

## Safe and Unsafe behaviours

We can explain to children in simple language, that people who follow rules are safe adults and people



who do not follow rules are showing unsafe behaviour. If someone behaves in a way that is unsafe and this is either by accident or from being unaware (accidental touch while playing, pulling down clothing when doing something else, making a joke that is age inappropriate without knowing that a child is around), they should apologise and not repeat it. We can help them think and arrive at who will form part of their Safety network.

### **No-Go-Tell Guideline when someone behaves in an unsafe manner**

Unsafe behaviour: when anyone intentionally (despite knowing this rule) touches/talks with one in a way that makes them uncomfortable or touches on the mouth, chest, genitals or buttocks, or exposes/forces one to expose their bodies.

1. Say No/indicate 'No' if you can
2. Go away from the unsafe person as and when you can
3. Tell a safe person about this person as and when you can, go on telling until someone listens and takes action to support you

Repeat that there is no shame in talking about it, that it was not their fault it happened and that they will not be scolded or punished for it. On the contrary, tell them that it will help keep them and other children safe when trusted adults take steps to stop the unsafe person.

You can encourage the child to talk about any abuse they may be facing by accepting and understanding what the child is trying to convey. For example:

Do:

Child: I don't like that uncle.

Parent: I see. What happened?

Child may say: Because he did not give me a chocolate but gave one to bhaiya instead.

Or the child may say: I don't like him because he hugs me so much, too closely.

Parent can then follow the cue.

Don't:

Child: I don't like that uncle.

Parent: How can you speak like that. Don't be rude. He is your uncle. You must speak with respect to elders.

Child feels scared and does not reveal the reason for her dislike.

A child subjected to sexual abuse wants to be believed and wants the abuse to stop.

**Refer to the Resources section for details on the Surakshith App and Bal Suraksha App and Enfold's videos** on how to talk with children about personal safety, how to speak with a child if there is suspicion of sexual abuse, what can be done to create safer spaces for children and hold the perpetrators responsible and accountable.

## **8. Nutrition**

### **Junk foods**

Junk foods are foods that provide empty calories, that is they do not provide vitamins, minerals, proteins or fibre. For example, sugar provides empty calories while sugarcane provides calories plus minerals and vitamins. Most processed foods contain excess salt and sugar. Salt enhances taste. However, the daily requirement of salt (2 gm for adults) is far less than what we consume (5–8 gm). Extra salt is processed by the kidneys and excreted. Sugar provides empty calories and if these calories are not utilised by the body (by physical and mental work) then the extra calories are stored in the body as fat. The body converts extra food—whether carbohydrates, proteins or fats—into fat and stores it.

The brain uses glucose as fuel. By eating complex carbohydrates, we provide a *steady source* of glucose to the brain. Glucose and sugar are simple carbohydrates which get digested quickly. Blood sugar rises rapidly, reaches a peak and then falls as rapidly, as the body mops up the glucose. On the other hand, complex carbohydrates contain long chains of glucose and have fibre that delays its digestion and absorption. Blood glucose rises slowly, reaches a plateau and then falls slowly, because glucose is being released slowly in the gut. The brain can work efficiently for a longer period of time. Students need to have a good breakfast consisting of complex carbohydrates and proteins so that they can be alert and attentive in class. Skipping breakfast to be in time for school beats the purpose of going to school! Students can skip something else, or get up earlier by sleeping earlier, to eat breakfast before coming to class.

### Trans fats

Trans fats are a type of fat which is mostly created by excess heating or chemical change in fats and oils. We know that foods cooked in vegetable oils like mustard, groundnut, sunflower or sesame oil turn rancid after a few days because the oil gets oxidised. Food manufacturers want to keep the food 'fresh' and edible for months after packaging (for example, biscuits). To ensure that oils do not turn rancid, they are hydrogenated to prevent oxidation. Thus, the industry uses 'hydrogenated' or 'partially hydrogenated' vegetable oils. However, in the process of hydrogenation, the molecules of fat get distorted and become what is called 'trans fat'. Trans fats in the human body cause cell damage. This cell damage has been associated with several ailments including heart disease. We need to read the ingredients listed and identify trans fats such as partially hydrogenated oils, vegetable shortening and margarine. A small amount of trans fats occurs naturally in dairy products like milk, ghee and butter but naturally occurring trans-fats have not been found to be as harmful as synthetic trans fats.

### Strongly acidic foods, caffeine

Strongly acidic foods and drinks like colas containing phosphoric acid, and tea and coffee containing caffeine tend to change the pH of the blood. The body mobilises calcium from the bones to buffer the acid which is then excreted by the kidneys. Intake of such foods is associated with loss of calcium in the urine. Calcium requirements are about 700–1200 mg per day at this age. Many children are not meeting their daily calcium requirements. They cannot afford to lose calcium! Intake of 'junk drinks' replace a healthy nourishing drink, for example, if the child had not had tea/coffee/cola, they would have had milk/juice/lassi which would have nourished his body. Caffeine is also addictive.

Tea, besides containing caffeine, contains tannins which bind with iron and prevent its absorption. Having tea with food prevents absorption of iron present in the food.

Requirement for Iron, \*ICMR, Recommended Dietary Allowance for Indians; Report of an Expert Group, 1990.

### Calcium and Proteins Daily Nutritional Allowances for children of 7–12 years age

Age	Calories kcal	Iron requirement mg/day	Calcium requirement mg/day	Protein requirement gm/day
7–9 years	1950	26.0	400–500	35 41 in 1993
Boys 10–12 years	2190	34.2	600–1993	42 54 in 1993
Girls 10–12 years	1970	18.9	600–1993	42

Source: (ICMR, 1981)

Food 100 g edible portion	Iron in mg	Calcium in mg	Protein in %
methi saag/Fenugreek	16.5	400	4
pudina/mint	16	200	5
drumstick leaves		440	
chaulai saag/amaranthus/China spinach	25.5	400	4
palak saag/spinach	11	73	2
groundnuts	2.8	230	25
almonds	4.5	230	21
dates	7.3	120	2
raisins	7.7	87	2
sesame seeds	15.0	1150	
soyabean	11.5	240	43
wheat refined	2.5	23	11
wheat whole	11.5	48	12
rice milled	3	10	7
Bengal gram/chickpea	1.5	200	17
black gram	9.1	150	24
green gram	7.3	124	24
tuvar dal	6	73	22
kidney beans		260	22
milk	0.2	120	3
curd	0.2	150	3
cheese one slice of 20 gm		110	3.6
ragi 100 gm	1.3	344	3
egg chicken medium 50 g	0.7	25	13
fish	1–4.3	300–4000	10

***Do not consume tea with meals as it binds the iron and prevents its absorption.***

Dietary Sources of Calcium

Food Products	Calcium content mg/100 g
ragi	344
kidney beans	260
soyabean	240
amaranth leaves	530

drumstick leaves	440
dried rape leaves	3095
fenugreek leaves	395
lotus stem dry	405
sesame seeds	1450
fish	300–4000
milk (buffalo)	210
milk (cow)	120
Paneer buffalo	480

Recommended Calcium Allowance for Indians\*

Group	Calcium (mg/day)
man	400–500
woman	400–500
pregnant woman	1000
lactating mother 0–12 months	1000
infants 0–12 months	500–600
children 1–9 years	400–500
10–15 years	600–700
16–18 years	500–600

\* Source: ICMR 1981

## 9. Effect of TV/Video Games/Social Media on the child

### Effect of Television

To clearly understand the effect of television viewing and computer games on the developing brain of a child, you need to be familiar with a few facts and terminologies used in neuroscience.

These are as follows:

The brain, for better efficiency 'specialises' different parts for different jobs. Most well-known are the left and the right cerebral cortex commonly referred to as the left and right halves of the brain.

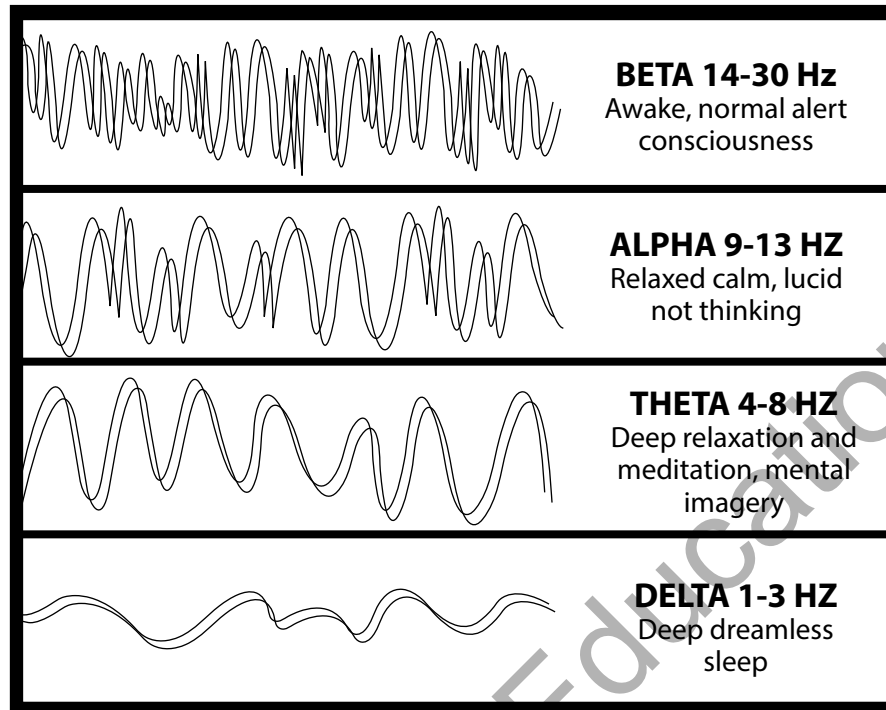
Left half of the brain handles analysis, logic, critical thinking, language.

Right brain handles visual jobs, imagery, spatial work, intuition, creativity.

Prefrontal cortex handles the so called 'executive functions': planning, organising, prioritisation and sequencing behaviour for self-control, moral judgement and attention.

EEG or electroencephalogram records electrical brain activity in the shape of waves on paper. For our discussion we need to consider just two of these, Beta waves (associated with alert, thinking, analysing state) and Alpha waves, associated with relaxed, lucid, awake but not thinking state.

Television offers a child a very attractive form of entertainment. Some channels are considered educational. The effects of television on the neurophysiology and development of the brain are shown below:



### **Are they learning?**

As early as the 1980s, researchers in Australia found that while the right brain was busy 'storing information and images in its memory bank', the left side, which does critical analysis, is lulled into a stupor by the television's flicker. It also makes it difficult to remember exactly what you have been watching. In some ways, it is a form of learning. At best, however, TV learning is comparable to sleep teaching. That may have some use, especially for producers of commercials. However, for subjects that require analysis and careful thought, the TV is virtually useless. It is more effective to read newspapers to learn about world events than to watch it on a screen. This has profound implications for watching news and other forms of 'educational' TV.

### **Any Damage?**

The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) warns: Television can be especially damaging to developing minds and may be related to ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) (attention problems).

Fast-paced, attention-grabbing 'features' of children's programming (for example, rapid zooms and pans, flashes of colour, quick movement in the peripheral visual field, sudden loud noises) were modelled after advertising research, which determined that this technique is the best way to engage the brain's attention involuntarily.

The compelling visual nature of the stimulus keeps the right brain busy at the cost of the left brain. It blocks development of left-hemisphere language circuitry, logical and analytical thinking.

The child will often demand for what they has seen in a TV commercial advertisement.

### **Promotes anti-social behaviour**

Television viewing is also now linked with stunting brain development in the child's frontal lobes leading to reduced impulse control and increased antisocial behaviour.

### **Are they involved?**

Ten children watched their favourite television programme, while the researchers monitored their brainwave patterns. The researchers expected to see a preponderance of beta waves indicating that they were involved and responding to their favourite programs. Instead, the children were almost the whole time in an alpha pattern. 'That meant that while they were watching they were not reacting, not orienting, not focusing, just spaced out,' said Dr Eric Peper.

### **Interference with optimal brain development**

Both halves of the brain develop well if engaged voluntarily and independently, as in games, hobbies, social interaction, or just 'fussing around'. TV replaces these activities. The brain's prefrontal cortex is responsible for planning, organising and sequencing behaviour for self-control, moral judgement and attention. These centres develop throughout childhood and adolescence, but some research has suggested that 'mindless' television or video games may idle this particular part of the brain and impoverish its development. And significant long-term damage occurs even at so-called modest levels of viewing, between one and two hours a day, the report, entitled *Remotely Controlled*, says.

### **Effect on Academics**

A dose-response relationship between the amount of television children watch and the degree of educational damage they suffer is now emerging.

Academics, especially reading scores, suffer as TV viewing substitutes reading habit.

### ***Trying to study after watching TV is not a good idea***

The lowered alertness and feelings of passivity do not end after viewers turn the TV off. Study participants say they have more difficulty concentrating after viewing than before. The left side of the brain may remain in a stupor even after the viewer turns the TV off.

### **Critical brain functions shut down**

The brain goes into a hypnotic state. Watching TV may feel relaxing. It reduces alertness and shuts out the rest of our world. The brain changes from beta waves (associated with alertness, thinking, reasoning) and goes into an alpha brainwave state associated with relaxation, passivity and suggestibility.

**Television** is 'the greatest health scandal of our time... (and) reducing television viewing should be a population health priority. Perhaps because television isn't a substance or a visibly risky activity, it has eluded the value judgments that have befallen other health issues.' Dr Sigman, member of the Institute of Biology.

### ***Exposure to violence on Television***

More than 1,000 reports and studies on television violence indicate that it contributes to aggressive behaviour and desensitisation to violence.

### ***Setting television habits***

- Limiting screen time to one hour a day could help the kids focus on activities that are beneficial to them.

- The parents could discuss with their children and decide what shows the kids can watch. Not all cartoons are appropriate for children. Some cartoons are aimed at adolescents and it might be too confusing for the child to watch. A lot of cartoons promote violence as well.
- The parents could talk to the kids about what is real and what is not. Often cartoons do not portray life realistically and this could help them avoid dangerous situations.
- If the children consume other forms of digital media, the parents could try to limit the usage of television even further to enable the kids to learn from real life and have time for physical activities.

## **Effect of video games**

### ***Brain activity changes***

Akio Mori, a professor at Tokyo's Nihon University, studied 260 people and found a greater decrease in beta waves the more one played video games. 'Beta wave activity in people in the (highest amount of video game playing) was constantly near zero, even when they weren't playing, showing that they hardly used the prefrontal regions of their brains. Many of the people in this group told researchers that they got angry easily, couldn't concentrate, and had trouble associating with friends.'

### ***Does the brain perceive the games as real?***

Players get so wrapped up in the game that they forget their surroundings and begin to see the game as a real quest. Studies have shown that playing video games can increase heart rate and blood pressure, as well as decrease prefrontal lobe activity while the person is playing the game. This could account for changes in the player's mood and cause them to become more aggressive or emotional.

### ***The Video-Game Brain: Beware***

'Youth who are heavy gamers can end up with 'video-game brain', in which key parts of the frontal region of their brain become chronically underused, altering moods.' This study also asserts that a lack of use of the frontal brain, contributed by video games, can change moods and could account for aggressive and reclusive behaviour.

### ***Visual tasks improve***

Video game players were found to outperform non-video game players on the localisation of an eccentric target among distractors, the number of visual items they could apprehend at once and the fast temporal processing of visual information.

### ***Violent vs non-violent games: does it matter?***

Researchers at the Indiana University School of Medicine say that MRI brain scans of kids who played a violent video game for 30 minutes showed an increase in emotional arousal, and a corresponding decrease of activity in brain areas involved in self-control, inhibition and attention. That same effect was not present in the kids who played a high speed, racing, non-violent game. Vincent Mathews, the principal investigator on the study said, 'Based on our results, I think parents should be aware of the relationship between violent video-game playing and brain function.'

### ***Violence breeds violence?***

According to American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 'studies of children exposed to

violent media have shown that they may become numb to violence, imitate the violence, and show more aggressive behaviour. Younger children and those with emotional, behavioural or learning problems may be more influenced by violent images.'

### **Effect of Social Media**

Social media is a platform where people across the world post the best moments of their life. This might mean that kids could grow up with low self-esteem after seeing a lot of things that seem 'perfect'. They might also develop body image issues.

The children also face the threat of being accessible to anyone with internet access. It increases the risk of being tracked and online bullying.

Since children do not understand what or who could cause harm to them via the Internet, they might give out secure information which may be misused by others.

They are susceptible to seeing more sexually inappropriate content. Although it is normal for children of all ages to be curious about sex, this could lead to false and unsafe information about sex. They can also be easily targeted by sexual predators online.

### **Safe Internet and Social Media Use**

- Let children know that screen time is limited to one hour maximum, to ensure that they have time for other activities. Explain that social media can take time away from activities that could help their brain develop.
- Use child-friendly browsers that restrict access to certain sites to help them start learning internet safety.
- Children could initially start practising using social media by using parents' social media accounts, this way the parents will have access to the child's messages and other online activities.
- Avoid letting children surf the internet alone until the parents are sure that the child understands the rules of internet safety.
- Ask children to not download or register themselves in websites that are not approved by the parent.
- Do not give out personal information to people they have not met in person, like location, name of the school, address and phone numbers.
- Remind them that what they see on the internet could be a lie or a fabrication of things. Things are rarely real and authentic on social media.
- Children should not attempt to meet online friends without parents' approval and supervision.
- Social media platforms have built in algorithms that can read the child's likes and dislikes and show only the content the child likes. This could mean that the kids could get addicted to scrolling relentlessly through their social media feed.

## **10. Resources**

### **Apps**

Developed in collaboration with Unicef and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (CDAC Hyderabad), under the National Mobile Governance Initiative, the apps are meant to enable children and adult stakeholders to have access to information regarding personal safety, legal measures, and the prevention, intervention, and management of abuse, all in one place. **The apps are free of cost and downloadable on Android devices from Google Play Store in 10 different languages**



### Bal Suraksha app

Provides essential information about the prevention and management of CSA to **adult stakeholders**, such as parents, schools, doctors, nurses, police, lawyers, and media. The app also supports stakeholders in learning how to interact with perpetrators of abuse, and the children who have faced abuse. Emergency numbers and support structures are also listed.



[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cdac.safe\\_spaces\\_children\\_English&hl=en](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cdac.safe_spaces_children_English&hl=en)

### Surakshith app

Directed towards **children** between 6 and 18 years of age and teaching them personal safety rules in the form of illustrations and stories. The app helps children learn No - Go - Tell, and understand that the responsibility of abusive actions lies solely with the perpetrator. The content also goes over blame and shame, internet safety, and digital citizenship for older children.



<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cdac.mlearn.enfoldcartooneng>

These Apps, in 10 languages, are free on Google Play Store (android phones)

### Videos

Main heading: VIDEOS In ENGLISH, INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE	
Subheading: Gender, Sexuality, Body Image and Self Esteem	
Attitudes towards Sex and Sexuality. How do these form and impact us? (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6iKekZPuU&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=6">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6iKekZPuU&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=6</a>
Exploring Our Biases in a Gendered World - (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TYbFkI7LM0&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=1">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TYbFkI7LM0&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=1</a>
How Does Sexual Identity Develop In Children? (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaeL-CRFknY4&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaeL-CRFknY4&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=8</a>
How Does Our Self-esteem and Body Image Affect our Self-esteem? (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLy7AQfk-tow&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=17">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLy7AQfk-tow&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=17</a>
Subheading: Sexuality and Personal Safety Education for Children and Adolescents	
How To Talk With Children About Personal Safety (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3UuFbvyb-pk&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=10">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3UuFbvyb-pk&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=10</a>
How To Talk To Your Children About Sex	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4x_HhFjJAM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4x_HhFjJAM</a>
The Right Age To Talk About Sex	
How To Talk To Kids About Their Private Parts	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUA30IzOuEI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUA30IzOuEI</a>

How to Support Young Children in Learning Personal Safety – Part 1, English	<a href="https://youtu.be/zVokiitqYQk">https://youtu.be/zVokiitqYQk</a>
How to Support Young Children in Learning Personal Safety – Part 2, English	<a href="https://youtu.be/CaOgacyVwdE">https://youtu.be/CaOgacyVwdE</a>
Subheading: Sexual Violence and Response	
How To Talk With A Child When There Is Suspicion Of Sexual Abuse (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTcKmdrSDeM&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=12">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTcKmdrSDeM&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=12</a>
Sexual Abuse: help Create Safe Spaces - Hold the Abuser Accountable and Responsible!	<a href="https://youtu.be/egVZZsxDe2s">https://youtu.be/egVZZsxDe2s</a>
Listen - prevent and support healing from child sexual abuse	<a href="https://youtu.be/TIHN1vCEcUk">https://youtu.be/TIHN1vCEcUk</a>
Which Socio Cultural Factors Enable Sexual Offenders. What Can We Do To Change Them (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEyy3L-t9iOs&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=7">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEyy3L-t9iOs&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=7</a>
Subheading: Restorative Practices	
What are Restorative Practices? What happens in a Restorative Circle? (in English and Indian Sign Language)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1himExp1QI&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1himExp1QI&amp;list=PLfJ4JqXpGnG1jzazXL3fqGY8Bp6AaWN-R0&amp;index=4</a>

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