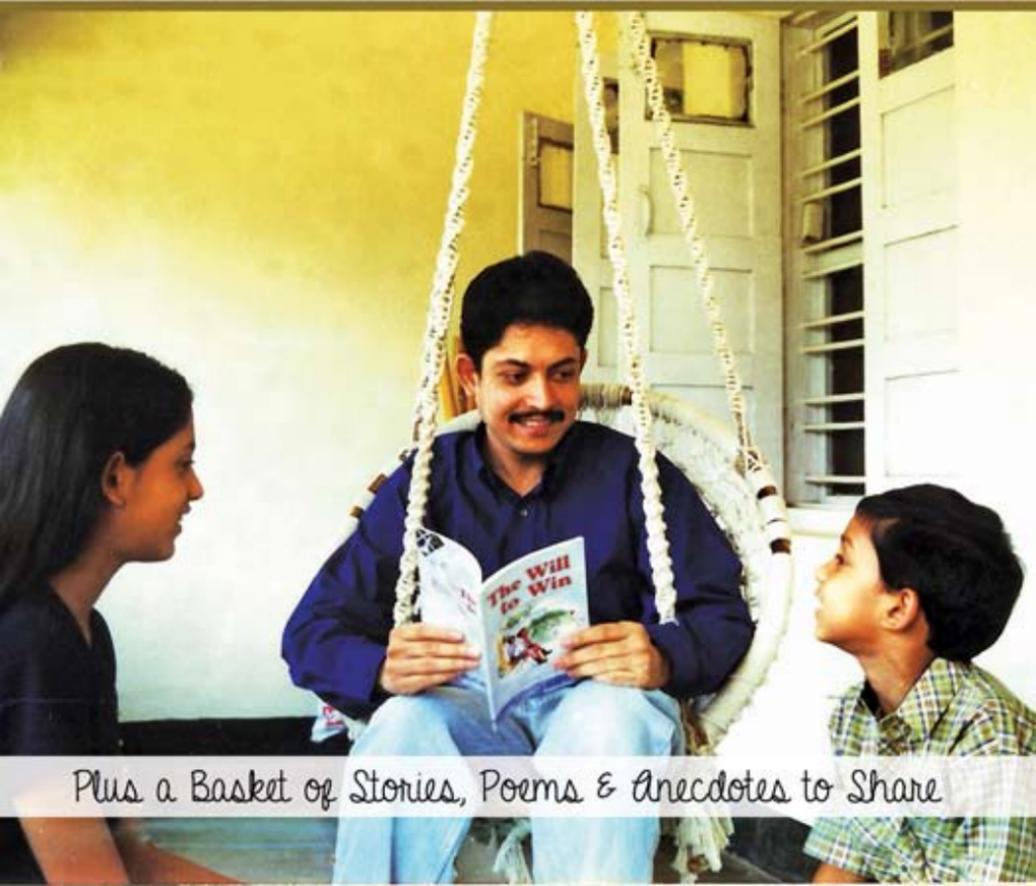




# EFFECTIVE PARENTING

*A New Paradigm*

Ramendra Kumar



Plus a Basket of Stories, Poems & Anecdotes to Share

# Effective Parenting

## A New Paradigm



Suggests a fresh avatar for the new age parent.

Has the potential to make a **good** parent –  
the **best** parent

*Ramendra Kumar*

 Learning & Creativity

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*Dedicated to  
My Father, My Hero*

*Dr. R. K. Khandelwal*



# My Hero

When I was five  
My father was the greatest,  
He was my Hero  
Better than the best.

My best friend was he  
When I was ten,  
Someone to love and trust  
And have lots of fun.

The kite that wouldn't fly  
The boat that refused to sail,  
Every test my Hero passed  
Not once did he fail.

Of love and togetherness  
We shared many a moment,  
His future he neglected  
But never even once my present.

He regarded quality time  
His most precious gift,  
Even if it meant  
Giving his career a bit of short shrift.

When I was twenty  
He suddenly became a stranger,  
I was Mister Know-All  
And the cool, lonely 'ranger'.

I thought he was a failure  
Who had achieved nothing in life,  
Neither wealth, nor status nor position  
He was merely a father to his son, a husband to his wife.

When he should have been climbing the ladder  
He wasted his time on the family,  
Instead of being busy in meetings  
He was tending my hurting knee.

I envied my friend his father's success  
And felt very small,  
How I wished my father too was a Chairman  
So that I could strut proud and tall.

One day my friend saw my album  
Of the time when I was nearly ten,  
In it were all the memories  
The love, the joy, the fun.

As he scanned the snaps  
His face grew long and sad,  
"I wish we could trade places  
And I could have such a loving Dad."

"I have everything," my friend said,  
"That money and status can buy,  
Yet in my album  
There is no photo of Dad and I."

“While I was growing up  
My Dad too was busy growing,  
And in my stock of photos  
There is not a single one worth showing.”

“You have so many memories to treasure  
While I have none,  
Though I may have a swanky car and a big house  
I have lost a childhood of love and fun.”

As my friend left  
I had tears in my eyes,  
How selfish and mean I had been  
He made me realize.

I went to my father  
A tired and crumpled man,  
I told him, “I am sorry,  
But I love you more than anyone ever can.”

As he took me in his arms  
And both of us began to cry,  
He was once again my Hero  
And I only five.



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## FOREWORD

In my practice as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in UK, I have often come across various situations where the Nature-Nurture dialogue has figured prominently. Environmental issues, mainly family related factors, play a vital role in the mental health of young people. Self-esteem, identity and peer pressure are only a few of the issues the Generation Z is dealing with in everyday life. Bullying, name-calling and drawing comparisons make things worse. Ramendra's book on parenting is very timely and should help parents support their children facing such issues.

*Effective Parenting: A New Paradigm* is not a DIY workbook nor is it a parenting manual. However, it does allow the reader to pause, think, reflect and help make parenting a joyful experience. This book is a great effort from the master story-teller to give readers an opportunity to walk into his collection of beautiful memories of parenting. It is an impressive piece of narrative about parenting interspersed with anecdotes and pearls of wisdom about nurture. His flirtation with nostalgia coupled with stories inspired by his interactions with

## 02 | *Effective Parenting : A New Paradigm*

young minds and hearts makes this book a unique reading experiencing. The book reaches out to parents, would-be parents, grandparents, counsellors and almost everyone who is touched by young people's lives.

The five pillars of parenting that Ramendra has shared in this book are the building blocks of a healthy parent-child relationship. They provide a distinctive insight into how virtues of love, warmth, caring and sharing can make a difference to the pure hearts and pristine minds. His concept of ATM [Any Time Memory card] and Papa's Day-Out are great examples of creative parenting methods that he has shared in this book. *Effective Parenting: A New Paradigm* has the potential to make a good parent into the best parent, or as my eight year old daughter put it when she was a pre-schooler: the 'bestest' parent ever! Happy reading.

*Dr. Anupam Thakur*

Dr. Anupam Thakur is a Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist who has worked in the UK for nearly a decade. Prior to that, he used to work with young people in a tertiary psychiatry teaching hospital in India. He is currently a faculty member at University of Toronto and works in Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, one of the world's leading centres for research in addiction and mental health.

## **INTRODUCTION**

# **THE 5 PILLARS OF THE NEW PARADIGM**



During the time of our parents and grandparents parenting was no big deal. In fact in almost all cases it was a shared responsibility. Children grew up with uncles, aunts, grandparents and of course, parents helping them take on life as it came.

Since then the onslaught of change has created a new society, a new culture and a new value system. The joint family has morphed into single and double income nuclear families. The responsibility of bringing up the child now rests squarely on the parents with little support available from paid help or family. With one and increasingly more often both parents busy in search of the 9 to 5 (or is it 9 to 9!) Utopia the situation is becoming a 'pressure-cooker' one.

This apart, the expectations of the parents from the child and vice versa have increased phenomenally. All these changes put together have turned every concept, ideal and principle of parenting on its head. To be effective the parent of today has to be a Memory-Maker, a Juggler, A Humour Promoter, A Sports Catalyst and a Guru of Values.

I am neither a psychologist nor a social scientist, neither a qualified pediatrician nor a psychiatrist. I am merely a children's writer who cares for kids, a parent who loves children and an adult with shards of memories which still prickle.

In this book I have tried to create a Paradigm of Effective Parenting comprising **Five Pillars of Sharing, Caring, Fun and Joy, Healthy Living and Invaluable Values**. The Paradigm is based on ideas culled from my own experiences as a child from a broken home, my observations as a writer for children and my own struggles as a parent.

The Paradigm is by no means a profound model on the art and science of successful parenting, nor a quick fix offering an immediate and lasting solution. It is a framework offering only gentle suggestions, hints and thoughts which would hopefully serve you as unobtrusive guides as you journey across the tough terrain of Parenting. I sincerely hope my straight from the heart, hands-on approach to Parenting helps you become a more effective parent.

Happy Reading and Happier Parenting!

**FIRST PILLAR  
THE PILLAR OF SHARING**

**GIFTING YOUR CHILD  
THE LEGACY OF MEMORIES**

*“To be in your child’s memories tomorrow, you have to be in their lives today.”*

*- Anonymous*



What is the most precious gift a parent can give to a child? No, it is not money or things which money can buy. It is a bundle of memories – each a gossamer fabric of fun and togetherness. And how is this fabric created? By investing time. As someone has said, *“Spend time with your kids, and give them the most generous gift of all, your time. Toys get lost and broken, but memories last a life time.”* Unfortunately it is time which is suddenly becoming scarcer by the day.

By spending time I don't mean merely talking a day off, sitting in front of the TV and giving a bunch of sketch pens and a drawing sheet to your 'precious' one. And during commercial breaks turning an indulgent eye on her and feeling

*Spending quality time doesn't mean merely sharing of physical space; it means attention, involvement and sharing of emotional space.*

thrilled that you are the model parent who is spending 'quality time' with the child. By time I don't mean merely sharing of physical space, by time I mean attention, involvement and sharing of emotional space.

Many times when a child rushes to you with a problem or a question or simply an entreaty what is your response, “Not, now. I am busy.” “Don't disturb, son.” “Go and ask your mummy/papa.”

This brings to my mind the thoughtful words of Patricia Clafford: *“The work will wait while you show the child the*

*rainbow, but the rainbow won't wait while you do the work."*

I remember once an Executive Director in my organization told me, "I have seen my daughter grow only horizontally, not vertically. I used to leave for work in the early hours when she would still be sleeping and I would return late at night when she would be in bed." He looked at me expecting me to unleash a torrent of applause in honour of his commitment to the organization. I wanted to tell him, "Mr. Executive Director I have yet to see a more unfortunate and stupid man than you. Unfortunate because you do not know the myriad moments of love, joy, fun and bliss that you missed and stupid because you don't even realize you missed them."

I wanted to quote for him these words of Robin Sharma, "Few things are as meaningful as being a part of your children's childhood."

The relationship between a child and her parent is built on little moments, not on the edifices of deeds and duties. When she reaches out to you and you brush her aside she cannot understand the profound reasons for your lack of response. But what she understands is her own hurt feelings. If you continue to prioritise your priorities over her concerns soon you will cease to be a priority for her. A stage will come when both of you would be doing your duty to each other. And in this strait jacket of duty, love, fun and togetherness will get stifled.

I remember when I was nine years old my father owned an old Lambretta scooter. Every three months he would take it for servicing to Shankar, the

*Being together can impart a special meaning to even the most mundane of activities.*

mechanic. Shankar's 'garage' comprised a single room and an open verandah. My father used to take me along on each of these trips. I had written a 'novel' consisting of 47 pages, in my spidery scrawl. While the mechanic worked on the scooter my father would sit in a chair in the verandah with me perched on a stool beside him. I would keep reading from my maiden 'masterpiece' and he would listen with rapt attention. Sitting there in the heat, dust and grime, with the noise of the market around us, with cacophonous exchanges of Shankar and his boys working as rude punctuation marks – the two of us carried on our literary tryst. After every chapter my father would patiently give his suggestions, answer my questions and then we would move on. Amidst all that chaos there was never any doubt in my mind that my father was giving me his undivided attention. In this process he created a memory which I still treasure and will forever and ever. He also helped me imbibe the value of sharing.

### PARENTING POINTERS

- Wherever you go out – whether it is to the market, as a judge in a debate competition or to a bookshop

take your kid along – provided of course she is willing and free. Togetherness and sharing of the same space can impart a special meaning even to the most mundane of activities like buying vegetables or getting a puncture fixed.

- For socialising pick up families with whom your kids also feel comfortable.
- Make it a point to attend every function in your kid's school – whether it is the annual day, sports day, PTA meeting, nursery convocation or any other event.

“Oh! Come on,” I can almost hear some of you mutter, “I don't have time to breathe, how the devil do you expect me to juggle my impossible schedule and drive 30 odd kilometres in rush hour traffic to watch my kid recite *‘Twinkle, twinkle little star...!’*” But believe, me if you manage to make it and see your little one come on the stage and lisp those lines you will forget all your stresses and strains. Later, those blissful moments of pride you felt as a parent and the joy she felt as a child will remain forever like bookmarks.

- Make dinnertime sacrosanct and TV dinners a no-no. As far as possible have together breakfast, lunch and dinner on Sundays.
- Every night while retiring for the day spend some

time with your child. If she is still a little one tell her stories, if she is older share with her the happenings of the day and encourage her to do the same. Make sure the last thoughts in her mind before she sleeps are those of caring and sharing.

- Every quarter celebrate 'Papa's Day Out' or 'Mama's Day out. Take the kid out on a picnic and make sure the entire agenda –

*Sharing space and spending time with your child will help you fight stress, build trust and cement bonds. Above all, it will help you create a gossamer fabric of memories that are endearing, enduring and eternal.*

where to go, what to eat, what to wear et al, is set by your princess or prince or both.

These are just a few suggestions I have offered. You too can, using your talents, abilities and interests think of innovative ways of spending time with your children and weaving the gossamer fabric of indelible memories.

Let me add that if you feel by sharing physical and emotional space with your child you are doing her a favour forget it. You are doing yourself a favour. As

*The most valuable jewels you can ever have are the arms of your child around you.*

someone said, the most valuable jewels you can ever have are the arms of your child around you.

The company of a child is one of the most effective stress busters provided of course, you too become childlike. You should make every attempt to internalise the qualities of love, joy, innocence and playfulness. If you are able to do this at least for those precious moments when you are with her, then you'll emerge from the experience in a calmer, happier and more fulfilled frame of mind. As Fyodor Dostoyevski has said, *"The soul is healed by being with children."*

Finally I would like to draw the attention of all parents to these immortal words of Pablo Neruda, Chilean Poet and Nobel Laureate:

*We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer "Tomorrow." His name is "Today."*

So, dear parents, spend time, make memories and shape your child's 'Today' in such a loving and caring way that her 'Tomorrows' will bloom and blossom.

### **The New ATM**

Many of us are so busy getting things for our loved ones by investing money that we forget to give something which

is free but invaluable. I am talking about the gift of a memory. And this gift comes wrapped in a currency which we all have in plenty but we perennially complain we are short of – the currency of Time. We should

*Give the gift of memory by spending quality time with your child. Memories do not get obsolete, they last a life time.*

remember that gizmos get outdated, gadgets break, clothes get torn, but memories are forever.

We have all heard of ATM or Automatic Teller Machine Card. Today I invite you to invent a new ATM – Any Time Memory Card. This currency is not plastic, it is for real. It has no value, simply because it is priceless. It has no expiry date and comes in all denominations. And whether there is a surge or slump in the market this ATM will always be cherished.

For many years now I too have been making conscious, deliberate efforts at creating memories – to leave behind a legacy of endearing moments for my daughter and son. Every year during the first burst of rain which usually happens in the month of May we three go out on the lawn in front of our house. There in broad daylight, clad in our shorts, we get totally drenched. As we slide through the slush and mud, singing and dancing to glory, the moments are captured on camera. This unselfconscious, uninhibited and unadulterated madness has been going on for years.

And when it stops I don't know who will be sadder my kids or me!

When my kids were still quite young, together we evolved the concept of 'Papa's Day Out'.

My wife Madhavi, who works in the same Steel Plant as me, would be packed off to office for the day. After attaining 'freedom', the three of us would go berserk. The entire agenda would be set by the kids. We would be doing crazy things like having lunch for

*When my kids were still quite young, together we evolved the concept of 'Papa's Day Out' wherein the three of us would go berserk – without their mother around.*

breakfast and vice versa. We would go to the park or on long drives, eat in seedy places, which Madhavi wouldn't be found dead in, watch kitschy movies on the DVD player, sing, dance and do anything and everything which was nutty, wacky and loony. And if it rained there would be a slight amendment – we would 'solemnly' observe 'Papa's Day In' with all the lunacy intact.

### **The Goliath of Technology**

Today technology has swamped every aspect of our life and living. Children, in particular, are busy juggling their lives between the virtual and the real worlds. Some of them are living so much in the virtual world that the virtual seems to be real and the real, virtual.

Facebook, Twitter and the myriad other attractions of the virtual world have the youngsters so much in their thrall that

*Youngsters have very little time, energy or interest in real life relationships.*

they have very little time, energy or interest in real life relationships. And if the net doesn't get them in its net we have the ubiquitous mobile and the irresistible play stations.

How does a parent combat the Goliath of Technology?

- By enforcing strict discipline – “You shall not go on Facebook, no Twitter for you”.
- By becoming a Virtual Vigilante – Stalking his child's activity on the net or reading her text and WhatsApp messages on the cell.

### **The answer is a big NO!**

Each one of these strategies will result in a no-win situation. Enforcing discipline would only result in rebellion. And there is no point in trying to control something which you just can't. If you enforce restrictions at home he will simply go to his friend's place or the friendly neighborhood internet parlour and flirt with the net.

The only solution, according to yours truly is to follow the adage: 'Join 'em, if you can't fight em.'

*'Join 'em, if you can't fight em.' Rather than shunning technology or treating it as an enemy, reach out and embrace it.*

My son Aniket told me that his friend Tanvi and her mum Tuhina sit in adjoining rooms and keep exchanging likes and shares on FB. At first, I found this rather droll. But later I realized that Tuhina's idea was actually quite cool. She was sharing space and time with her daughter and establishing a real connect in the virtual world.

So instead of shunning technology or treating it as an enemy it would make far more sense to reach out and embrace it.

Being a vigilante too would be counter-productive. Rather than being mama or papa Sherlock Holmes it would make far more sense to be a 'foul weather friend' who only deals in the currency of trust.

*Become a foul weather friend to your child and deal in the currency of trust.*

End of the sample preview.

Enjoyed what you were reading?

**Buy Now!**