The Art of Parenting

BY SADHGURU

Questioner: How would you define a good parent?

Most adults assume that as soon as a child is born, it is time to become teachers. When a child enters your house, it is not the time to become a teacher; it is time to learn, because if you look at yourself and your child, your child is more joyous, isn’t it? So it is time you learn life from them, not the other way around. The only thing that you can teach your child – which you have to, to some extent – is how to survive but when it comes to life itself, a child knows more about life experientially, by himself. He is life; he knows it. Even with you, if you take away the influences you have imposed upon your mind, your life energies know how to “be.” It is only your mind which doesn’t know how to “be.” An adult is capable of all kinds of sufferings – imagined sufferings. A child has still not gone to that.

So it is time to learn, not teach. The only thing that you can give is an atmosphere of love, care and support for the child to grow. Good parenting is not about teaching the child what to do and what not to do, it is just about creating an atmosphere. If you want to grow your garden, you don’t sit there every day and try to extract flowers or fruits out of it. You just maintain the atmosphere and it grows well, isn’t it? That is all you can do, and that is all that should be done.

If parents are truly concerned about their children, they must raise their children in such a way that the child will never have any need for the parent. The process of loving should always be a liberating process, not an entangling process. So when the child is born, allow the child to look around, spend time with nature and spend time with himself. Create an atmosphere of love and support and don’t try to impose your morals, ideas, religion or whatever in any way. Just allow him to grow, allowing his intelligence to grow and helping him look at life on his own terms, as a human being – not identified with the family, or your wealth or whatever else. Just helping him to look at life as a human being is very essential for his wellbeing and the wellbeing of the world.

At the same time, the perils of living in this world are always there. It could be drugs, it could be an accident, it could be various perversions – all these things are there. But what you need to understand is, whether you like it or not, today or tomorrow, your child has to learn to live with his own intelligence, making his own choices as to how much of what he has to do in his life. So the sooner he gets equipped for this, the better. This does not mean you push a young child on the street to learn his own ways. You don’t try to counter-influence him with your own morality and values. You just help him to look at his life with more intelligence, rather than being influenced by this or that.

Home should not be a place of imposing your culture, ideas and morals upon the child. It should be a supportive atmosphere where there is no imposition upon the child and his intelligence is encouraged. If the child feels most comfortable at home, he will naturally try to spend more time there than outside. Right now, a street corner may feel like a more comfortable place for him than being at home because of the impositions in the home ground. So, if that discomfort is not there, he will not make the street corner his sanctuary. But that does not mean he is not going to be exposed to the hard realities of the world. He will always be, and they will influence him in some way or the other. But always, the parent encouraging the child to learn to think for himself, to use his own intelligence to see what is best for him is the best insurance you have so that the child grows up well.

Sadhguru, a yogi, is a visionary, humanitarian and a prominent spiritual leader. An author, poet, and internationally-renowned speaker, Sadhguru’s wit and piercing logic provoke and widen our perception of life. www.ishafoundation.org