**They Become What They See**

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Each child is the seed of a new life – bearing inside of it the fruits of life’s possibilities. -Cory van den Bossche

Each child is unique, carrying within themselves the energy and the ability to unleash their unlimited potential. However, every child is limited only by their upbringing and how they are nurtured. On the other hand, parents always want to give the world to their children, shower them with love and present them with endless opportunities to help them nurture into decent human beings.

Yet there is an ever-widening gap between how we expect our children to turn out and how we are raising them. As the line between modern-day education and entertainment blurs, we see more and more parents relying on gadgets, cartoons, and YouTube channels.

My concern is-are we even aware of what we are feeding our children’s brains with? What is the impact of all the unmonitored and unsupervised exposure to cartoons and video content on the developing brains? I am not saying that all content that exists is bad, or will necessarily have negative implications, but I do believe that our children become what they see!

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International researchers are continuing to study the effects of this exposure on young children. According to one study, 89 per cent of parents of children aged 5 to 11 years reported that their child used YouTube. It may surprise you to learn that 81 per cent of 3-4 years old and 57 per cent of children under the age of 2 years watch YouTube. These statistics raise serious alarm bells about how we are raising our kids. I understand many of the women reading this will come up with counter-arguments like they have household chores, they are working mothers, their partners do not play a supportive role in children’s upbringing, and so on. But we as women are equipped with this innate ability to sensitively manage things, gauge situations, and mould the scenarios accordingly. I think women when they become mothers enhance their multi-tasking skills, their emotional intelligence also sharpens and their motherly instinct become heightened enabling them to become supermoms and care for their family’s emotional needs.

Despite all this, the biggest challenge I see mothers today facing is their obliviousness to the content their child gets exposed to. Another factor is the amount of screen time children consume due to the unsupervised sessions. According to one study, by the age of 18, the average child is exposed to 200,000 violent behaviours on television. Many of these are likely to be from unrealistic cartoons that appear to be harmless. Several popular cartoon shows depict violence in a humorous or acceptable light.

What is worsening the situation is the independence young children receive in the form of personal space and privacy. Children must be given confidence, must be engaged and nurtured in a way where they can befriend their parents but are also aware of their respect and authority. We see it as common practice for young kids to spend hours on YouTube searches or playing violent video games. The effects of these are now also prominent in our society which were only tales of the west. Young kids involved in violent crimes and even murders are part of our news headlines. We read them a day forget about and move on.

There are some amazing social media platforms that connect parents and women from all walks of life. However, there is seldom a discussion that focuses on the importance of parental control, content supervision, substance abuse on youngsters, and even exchange of ideas to understand children’s psychological needs. What is also sad is the fact that many of us have actually gotten away from the good practices of the past. The art of conversation has almost diminished from our family norms. Remember the good old storytelling times when children would spend hours talking to their grandparents, parents and other family members. We may not have realised it back then but listening to a healthy conversation, stories with moral values, and tales of historic and religious marvels added to our personalities as confident conversationalists, piqued the interests of young minds toward wonderful explorations and strengthened the family bond.

Unfortunately, we now see the roles of grandparents reduced to almost as senior citizens who need to be greeted a few times, fed and then forgotten. I know, some of us will complain these are different generations, old ways do not apply, and whatnot. But let me ask the mothers reading this, “Has the need and importance for human interaction diminished over the years?” Do you really not see the benefits in content supervision or letting grandparents be grandparents? Aren’t we educated or equipped to create specific schedules for our children leading to a healthier lifestyle?

Our role in our children’s successful upbringing has become ever more significant. As the nuisance around us rises so does the challenge and the importance of ensuring that our children are exposed to the good and healthy as they become what they see!

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