

# To parents, from one of your children

Traditionally, we have been taught that parents are always right in the decisions they take for their children. In fact, parents often consider it an inherent right to take their children's decisions for them even though the 'children' may have long crossed the recognised threshold of adulthood. Often, parents and elders of the society resort to religion to justify their claim. These claims and practices, however, are wrong.

Religion has strictly instructed us to respect our parents, to behave politely with them, and to take care of them. It has not, however, instructed us to blindly obey our parents, because an adult has the capacity to think and evaluate his or her options by themselves, and there are always alterna-

## ARTICLE 12: You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



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human beings. They make mistakes like regular human beings do, and there are opinions and schools of thought that could be more refined and pertinent than theirs, as is in the case of every human being.

It is true that when a parent takes a decision regarding their children, no one would have a better intention than they would while taking the decision. However, it will not be right every time, and it is unfair for anyone to suffer the consequences of someone else's misjudged decision. That is why it is important for parents to trust their upbringing and their children, especially regarding the latter's decisions in life.

The role of parents is to help their children take their own decisions, but not to enforce decisions on them, because that is not love, that is not fair, and that is morally incorrect. That in fact shows insecurity and obsession, which is entirely the parent's problem and not the child's – any negative consequence of which the latter does not deserve.

Moreover, if you as a parent are unable to rely on your children's decisions, espe-

cially when they have become adults, it means that there were shortcomings in your child's upbringing, which have caused their incapability of taking important life decisions in the first place.

This means that you probably have not been as good a parent as you should have been, which in turn means you may be ineligible to take the decision for your child that you are about to take as well. That may not be true, but that is what your actions mean.

'But what if my children have made mistakes in the past?' you ask. What if I say that so have you, and so will you in the future, as every human does, and you will not be able to help it?

You have to trust that your children are mature enough to take lessons from the past and use those to take better decisions going down the road.

If you notice an instance where they probably have not, discuss and consult with them, empathise with them. Try to understand their perspective, and their reasons. If you really do love them, and if you respect

your and your partner's ability to raise a competent adult, why don't you venture into their decisions and discuss with them the pros and cons, while being open to the possibility that they may in fact be right, and that the pros of their decisions may indeed outweigh the cons?

If, however, you are totally unprepared to allow them this freedom which is their inherent right as an individual, you simply are being selfish and tyrannical, which indicates that you probably are an insecure person yourself. That compromises your eligibility to take decisions on your child's behalf for him or her.

When you force anyone to do anything, you create a distance between that person and you. And if your reason behind forcing your decisions onto your children is that regardless of your children's suffocation and suffering inflicted upon them by you, you are convinced they will be better off, chances are that you are simply being selfish.

Understand your child's dreams, needs, and wants, and help them become better human beings by offering them guidance and suggestions, and sharing your experience with them, which may help them take better decisions on their own, and seek your advice willingly instead of hiding things from you and hating you for your tyranny.

Everyone has a life of their own, and if you believe that your child is incapable of ornamenting their lives with freedom to take their own decisions, you should question your competence as a parent instead of making your child's life more miserable.

**By Sifat Mosaddek Bhuiyan**  
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**REBELLION IS A SIGN OF A CHILD FIGHTING TO BE SEEN AS WHO THEY ARE.**

- CAROL TUTTLE

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## How to have “The Talk” with children: the streamlined version

Children of the 21st century are undoubtedly three steps ahead of their parents no matter how one looks at it. A gadget-toting ten-year-old can walk and talk like any grown up, but that's only skin deep. The Internet fuelled information pollution can end up leaving a stain of wrong facts in the young minds, especially regarding human anatomy and sexual health. It's no longer enough to leave the “birds and bees” issue as a topic only for puberty-hit teenagers.

### INQUISITIVENESS IS GOOD

Starting from “Where do babies come from?”, moving to “Can the dads have the babies?” to even “Can AIDS spread through mosquito bites?” parents should encourage questions. Children under seven (or even lower) these days are past the “Where do...” questions, but parents often dread them.

Rather than treating the questions as challenges, parents should tackle them with confidence. Having an inquisitive child can ensure a quick brush-up for the parents as well.

As long as parents can picture themselves when they were at that age, no question can get them frazzled.

### WHAT NOT TO TALK ABOUT IN PUBLIC

As much as inquisitiveness is good, the questions are best left being asked in the privacy of your own home. Children tend to have “moments” out in parties or in stores where they might loudly ask about private things.

Typically, this sort of public Q&As are signs that the child wants attention or wants to be seen as knowledgeable as an adult. One good way for parents to address this is to calmly say that it will be answered once they are all at home. Also, to discourage repetition of this behaviour, parents can simply point out that no one else is talking about such things in public.

### TEXT BOOKS AND APPS ARE EXCELLENT RESOURCES

Text books for fifth graders are already addressing puberty as an “everybody passes through it” issue, by eighth grade the general science text book as well as the home science and physical education text books very much cover all aspects of the human reproduction system. Even advanced topics like autism, DNA related birth defects are covered before college.

If we think digital, there are tons of apps out there for android and iOS to teach children about human anatomy as well as websites dedicated in addressing the conservative aspects in a child friendly manner. With valid sources, self-teaching goes a long way.

### KEEPING TAB ON THE BROWSERS

Explicit materials on the Internet are very hard to filter out even with the best blocking software. Even seemingly harmless sites can host absurd age-inappropriate erotica and graphic depictions of sexual activities. Often peer pressure causes children to seek out such things. The worst part of these graphic materials is the lasting impression and wrong ideas that subconsciously affect grown up years as well.

Although children can grow out of this, there is a fine line between curiosity and obsession leading to delusion. Applying full-on Internet restriction is not the way to handle this, parents can casually have a conversation that not even adults see these as good things.

Parents may be taken aback and somewhat shocked if they hear their tween-age

son/daughter shrugging talks regarding sex by saying they know about it already. If modern parents can allot Internet time for learning mathematics and history, they can also make time for human anatomy.

Ultimately, the target is to help a child not only in learning about sex and other reproductive aspects, the child must also grow up to respect other people's privacy as well.

As a conservative society going through the motions of rapid information dumping, the young minds are the first ones that get exposed to the good as well as the bad side of things. Even cartoons and children's shows jokingly include adult innuendo which were taboo topics just ten years ago.

The days of being blissfully unaware are long gone, but that does not mean submerging one's childhood with age inappropriate material. Proper functional knowledge about the human body does not desensitise young minds.

Thinking long-term, if parents can ensure a safe conversation space for their children, there may be no need to have the talk.

**By Iris Farina**