

... of understanding and reflections

All mothers want their children, irrespective of gender, to be independent, confident and fearless enough to fight with dignity all the challenges life hurls at them. As a society, we know children should be allowed to explore the world, and not be confined in a bubble that may hinder their growth as independent adults, who can learn to take risks, accept challenges and handle stress. But how much of that understanding is reflected in our actions?

Lamia Tarannum grew up in the '90s in a socially conservative family of Dhaka. Although she was privileged enough to attend an English medium school, it was made clear to her, even at a very young age, that she should get married early.

Despite the fact that she attended a co-educational institute, Tarannum was not allowed to talk to her male classmates on the phone or mingle with them outside school. There were also restrictions on what she could wear and what she could not.

"I was a confused child, torn between two worlds," Tarannum said. She regrets missing out on valuable learning experiences. She says she was an obedient child all her life, never strongly protesting against the unjust decisions her conservative parents imposed upon her.

"As a girl, I had hoped my mother would understand my dreams, fears and the mental turmoil better than my father, but she did not, not enough! Now, even at 35, I lack the independence, courage and confidence many girls gain at 20," she added.

Shahana Huda works as a Coordinator, Media & Communication at ManusherJonno Foundation. Huda's work brings her close to girls of tender age, and as a mother of a recently turned adult she has an interesting viewpoint towards this mother-child relationship.

"When a girl grows up, there are certain biological changes that the girl must face which is simply; a natural part of growing up. Both parents, especially the mother, must pay special attention to their daughters during this period of time. They should refrain from doing anything or saying anything negative to upset their daughters,

which might confuse them and damage their self-esteem permanently. Parents in general must never make a comment on the physicality of their children; their skin colour etc.

Instead of concentrating on the tiniest of issues, parents must keep themselves busy in helping their children to become better human beings in the future," Huda said.

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