



#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

DISCOVERING PARENTHOOD even before becoming a parent

Currently, discussions on the difficulty of parenting are commonplace. There is also much talk on the role of secondary caregivers — grandparents, siblings, or people with no familial connections who assist parents or fill their shoes in their absence.



However, one aspect that gets overlooked is the lesson young people can learn from the entire experience. Still in my late twenties, I am already a secondary caregiver, a “secondary parent” of some sort, to at least two children and being part of their childhood and helping bring them up is teaching me a thing or two.

“How hard can it be?” — I used to think, but now realise, we never know how difficult it is to be a parent until we become one. As a caregiver, I have this opportunity to taste parenthood for a while, and this has been a humbling experience so far.

Ever since I took up this role, I have definitely become more sympathetic towards parents and their struggles. This experience also gave me a newfound appreciation towards my own mother and father. We all have issues with them — some trivial, while others are serious.

However, learning the struggles of managing a child helped me see life through their eyes. This made me feel like no matter how imperfect, they still tried their best, and for that, I am forever thankful. I realised that I would not be able



to do any better.

The most valuable takeaway from all this is the journey of self-discovery I saw myself embark on. Many things from my childhood suddenly made sense, and this newfound appreciation, I believe, has made me a better person.

I am presently taking care of my niece, who turned six this year. Whenever she drops or breaks something, I think she expects to be reprimanded, but I make sure that she is never scolded for such things. And I discovered recently that being admonished for being clumsy has left a lot of emotional scars on me. I realised that when accidents happen, being yelled at does not help at all. And it only affects young children, often giving them unpleasant memories for life.

Similarly, I always crouch or kneel next

to my niece while talking to her, so that she does not have to look up while speaking. I feel like this gives a more emotional connection, and this way, children feel you are friendlier.

So, is it worth it? Surprisingly, yes! Parenthood is all about sacrifices. Take it from someone who was not fond of children. They are loud, and I like a little bit of peace. But even a person like me can vouch that the feeling of being a parent is great. I am not even a real parent yet, and I still feel a strong bond with the two children that I help raise.

My niece has picked up a lot of my mannerisms over the years, and she has learned a few things from me. I have taught her to say thank you whenever someone gifts her something; I have taught her to use a bin instead of littering inside the house; I have even taught her how to play chess! Sure, she does not know what it means to ‘fork and pin’, but she can play a simple game.

I don’t think I am ready yet to become an actual parent, but my respect goes to all the young parents who are figuring it out as they go, and my appreciation goes to every single “secondary parent”. You are sure to learn a great deal from this valuable experience.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Collected