

Raise your children to be happy, healthy and complete

■ By Ariane de Bonvoisin

“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.”

—Kahlil Gibran

Parents today are overwhelmed with demands on how to raise their kids. We want the very best for our kids. We want them to be smart, athletic, healthy, kind, happy, polite, disciplined, creative and more. We want to give them everything! And before everything, we focus on getting them into good schools so that they can have the best possible education.

Kids on the other hand, are growing up bombarded by technology, needing to compete in every way, comparing themselves with others, trying to be perfect and please their parents, wanting to fit in. As a result, they are often anxious, stressed at a very young age, display behavioural issues, have little self esteem and are simply not happy.

So, from the parents whose intention is so sincere, to the kids who are trying to keep up on all fronts, what needs to change? What is missing?

We need to look at the whole experience of raising our children as a spiritual one, where having conscious kids go out in the world is more important than anything we can teach them. Here’s why raising them as conscious individuals is the best gift you can give to your children.

- Conscious kids grow up with the ability to find and choose the work they love. They are still connected to their heart’s desire, their soul path and will not get stuck in jobs that they will eventually hate. They will often want to serve their fellow beings or contribute to the world in some way.
- Conscious kids grow up to be in good relationships. They stay true to who they are, they do not fear

intimacy, conflict or commitment. They know how to give and receive love and they are not influenced by the pressures of society to get married, have a certain number of kids by a specific age, live a certain kind of lifestyle etc. They experience freedom in being able to make the best choices for themselves.

- Conscious kids grow up to honour their health, they are free from addictions, negative habits and have learnt from the earliest of ages that their body is a temple, something they must nurture and care for. They are strong and full of life force.
- Conscious kids will have a strong group of friends around them. They will feel connected to others; will not feel separate or alone. They would have learnt that life exists in relation to people. It is not a game of the ego to compete and come first, but to collaborate for the good of all.

What we need is a shift

The benefits of making the effort to not only be mindful around your kids, but also to raise them in a conscious household, to share with them what is true and beautiful and to treat them like a soul that is temporarily inhabiting their little bodies, are immeasurable! But it takes diligence and patience. Here are nine principles that can help you in your efforts to raise a conscious child.



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» Instill some positive beliefs

Parents tend to project onto their kids their own beliefs about everything. Religion, food, health, people, money... If you want to raise a conscious child, try sharing the following beliefs with them:

"The world is a safe place." This is very important for them to know. Most kids do not feel safe in the world and will grow up looking for safety in all the wrong places—a relationship, a job, money, reputation, owning a home, i.e. thinking that safety is something external. Help them know that they are always safe, that life is on their side even though hard things can happen, that the Universe, Grace, God—whatever you want to call it—will always take care of them. Help them understand that they live in a friendly world and that safety is an attitude in their mind, it does not depend on anything else.

"People are essentially good, some are just sad or mad, or not loved, so sometimes they will do bad things." This is very different from telling them to be fearful of others and gives you a context when something difficult happens to them, or in the world around them. They will learn not to be scared of others, but to have compassion for what could make someone do something.

"We are all very similar underneath it all, despite different colours, races, religions and countries we

live in." It's important with kids that they don't start associating with differences but with how similar they are to others. This prevents feelings of division, of loneliness, or feeling different than others. Highlight what is the same in everyone.

"Planet earth loves you, is always providing for you through food, sunshine, rain..." Teach kids that the planet is their friend; it wants them to think about the consequences of their actions. That doing good things for it—like planting a tree or a vegetable garden, or being conscious of their surroundings and keeping them clean—is important and they must play their part in thanking Mother Earth.

"Everyone has the right to believe what they want. No one's belief or religion is better than anyone else's." It's our responsibility to introduce our children to all religious stories—Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Jewish and Arabic—so that they can relate and feel informed, not different.

The world needs kids to, at the minimum, know and understand the universal religions and not only be brought up in one chosen religion, which creates a strong feeling of separation with others.

Most importantly, you must believe this yourself. You cannot teach your children anything that you yourself have not embodied.



» Develop their inner technology

Teach them the difference between external technology [iPads, iPods, TV's etc] and their own inner technology, which is even more powerful: their intuition, their psychic abilities, their emotional guidance system, their gratitude. Teach them that the answers are inside of them and their body is way more powerful than any external device.

Value their feelings. Kids need to be shown that their feelings are valued, not only their minds. Ask them, "How do you feel?" not "What do you think?"

Let them have their imagination. Place no limits on what they believe, whether it is angels, fairies, imaginary friends or aliens. Just because you don't believe in something, doesn't mean they can't. Value it all equally. Do not shut down their connection to this.

Develop their gratitude muscle. Show them the power of being grateful: have one wall in their room where they can write something that they are thankful for, daily. Show them that they get what they focus on and whatever they are thinking about will expand [the good or the bad, so they can be conscious of that].

Have them use their intuition. Get them to rely on themselves, not only on adults, for answers. Always ask them their opinion instead of giving them answers to their questions.

Create a direct connection to their body. Have them get in touch with their bodies, if they are angry or upset. Where is that feeling in their body? This way they can start seeing the relationship between what they think and feel, and realise that their body is not separate. Show them that their posture affects how they feel and that they can stand up tall to feel better, that their physical side is their connection to feeling better. Teach them how to breathe—I mean, really breathe deeply—and how fast that can calm them down and make them feel better. Create 'breathing breaks' where all they do is take 10 deep breaths. Even better, do it with them!

Have them visualise what they want. Teach them to visualise, to use the power of their mind, to imagine how they want a situation to be, and that being positive is always the better option.

Show them the benefit of computers, phones, but at the same time, have them use those to be creative, to learn something new, to listen to music, to watch an amazing nature video, to see another aspect of the planet. Have technology become something they use to develop their inner world, not keep them away from connecting to the most incredible part of themselves.

» Build their self-esteem

Kids are naturally born with a lot of self-love. They have no concept of what they lack, how good they look, or what difficulties they have at school. It is only their environment that instills these beliefs. Kids will be looking to you for clues to evaluate how they are doing on all levels, very early on. Are Mom/Dad happy with me or not?

So, what's a parent to do?

Never label your child. Yes, be very mindful of how you describe your son or daughter. Too often we will say things like, 'she is the athletic one' or 'the smart one' or 'the musical one'. Kids are very aware of what you say about them, to friends, family or anyone for that matter. Be especially careful when there is more than one sibling at home as you may start off a comparison game. A child that hears you saying 'he is the smart one' may not grow up feeling beautiful, or a child that hears 'she is the musical one' may start doing poorly at school.

Repeat these 4 statements often.

"You are loved."

"You are perfect."

"You are good enough."

"You have nothing to fear."

Maybe even write them down and put them in their bedroom or bathroom.

Encourage them to try things, make mistakes and not be perfect. From an early age, kids learn what they are good at and want to stick to those. They know they get 'points' from their teachers and parents for doing something well. Your job is to help them do things they've never done before. It can be something as small as a dive in a pool, doing a cartwheel, speaking a few words of another language or making a video—anything that is new. This isn't about doing anything right; it's just about the experience of something new, with no need for results. This will help expand their awareness of themselves and what they are capable of.



» Teach them to deal with change

As parents, most of us want to protect our kids from change by creating stability, keeping them safe in the same home, the same school etc. And yet, the number one constant in life is change; it's guaranteed to happen. When we have been insulated from change while growing up, we tend to think 'no change=good, change=bad'. We then grow up to fear change.

Share with them the Change Guarantee. Tell them that, "From any change, something good will

come." Whether the change is small or big—if someone in the family passes away, if there is a change of plans, if you move homes or change schools—have them understand that no matter what, something positive is on its way.

Teach them that they have a Change Muscle. We all have a part of ourselves that is really good at change. Our bodies are growing and changing all the time, so we can too. Activate the superhero within them that welcomes life changing around them.

» Share with them conscious communication skills.

Communication lays the foundation for how kids will turn out to be as adults.

The power of words. It's important from the start that kids understand the power of their words, their tone of voice and how they speak. e.g. Explain to them how using words like 'great', 'amazing', 'wonderful', is better than 'OK', 'fine', and 'not bad'.

Listening is part of communicating. If you are around kids, you'll know that talking comes more naturally to them than listening. And yet, kids can be taught how to listen. You can get creative: create a game where they need to listen to something and then say what they heard.

As parents, your dialogue should go both ways. Ask most kids and they will feel their parents are always telling them what to do, what's right and wrong and how they make all the decisions for them. Stop telling them what to do; instead, ask them for solutions, for options. You may be amazed at what comes out of their mouth!

Self-approval skills. Teach your kid the importance of how they are communicating with themselves on the inside—their inner dialogue. This thing called self-disapproval and the critical voice shows up at a very young age. Demonstrate what it's like to say affirming things about themselves: "I love my hair, I love my eyes, I love my teacher, I love my ability to run..."



» As parents, commit to personal growth and doing your own inner work

Remove your own blocks to freedom Any inner programmes that are still in you, such as a need to be perfect, or to be in control of everything, or a money scarcity mentality, will show up in your child. The more you are free of these, the more your child will be too. Get help, read books, do a course, learn to meditate... anything that will help you develop and grow personally.

Rid yourselves of your own dreams and desires for them. Your kids are not there to fulfill your dreams or what you want. Let them do what they want, play the instrument they want, do the sport they want. Give them that freedom. Often, parents

decide that their kids will play the piano or football or study a certain thing at school or take over the family business! Having kids is not about them meeting your expectations or your unfulfilled goals and dreams. Conscious parenting is not about setting up controls of what is good/bad or acceptable/unacceptable.

See your child as a soul, possibly an advanced soul that is even more conscious than you are. Don't talk down to them. See them as an equal, just in a smaller body. Even better, see them as your teacher. They will show you how to be an amazing parent and what still needs to be healed inside of you!

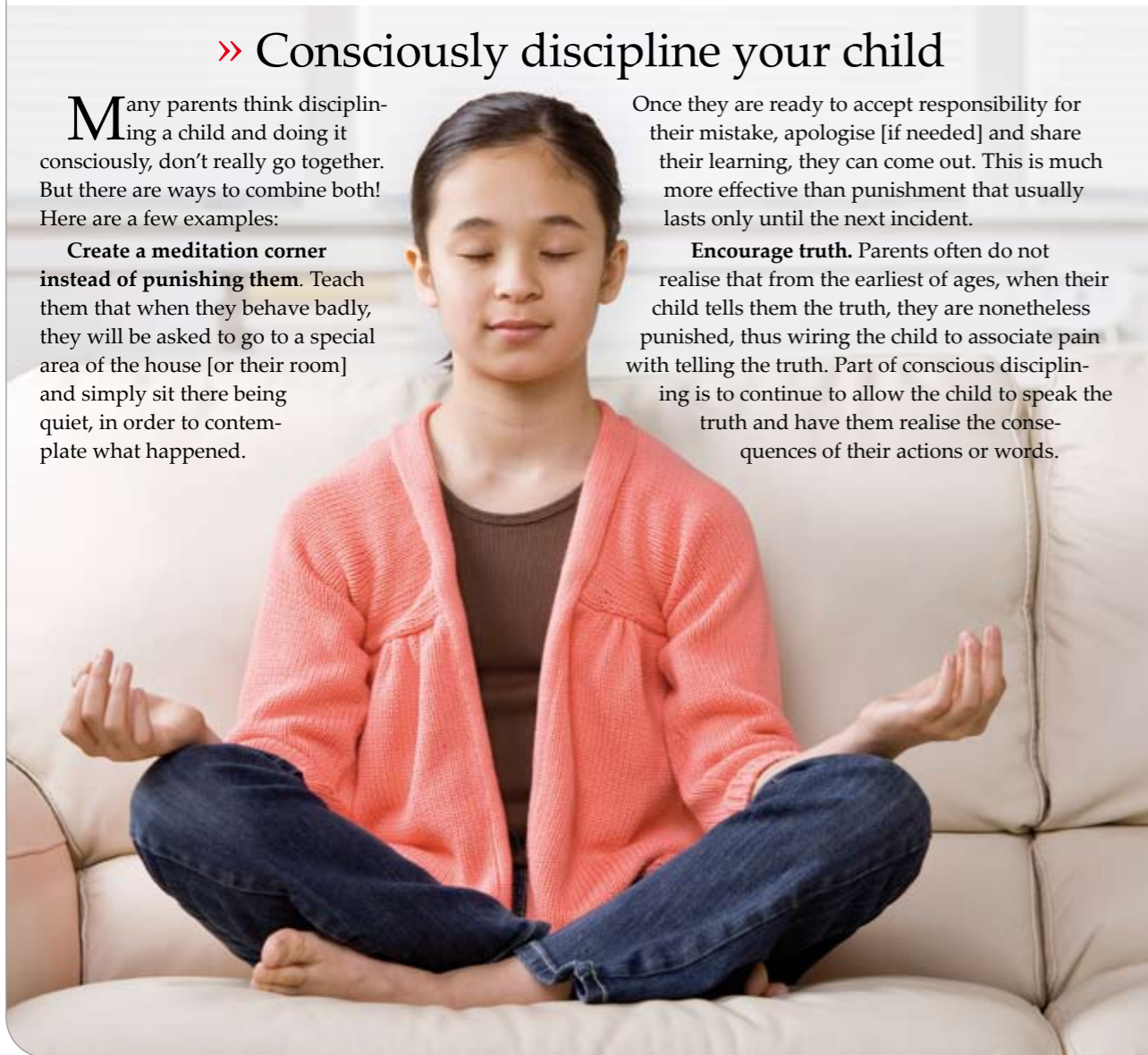
» Consciously discipline your child

Many parents think disciplining a child and doing it consciously, don't really go together. But there are ways to combine both! Here are a few examples:

Create a meditation corner instead of punishing them. Teach them that when they behave badly, they will be asked to go to a special area of the house [or their room] and simply sit there being quiet, in order to contemplate what happened.

Once they are ready to accept responsibility for their mistake, apologise [if needed] and share their learning, they can come out. This is much more effective than punishment that usually lasts only until the next incident.

Encourage truth. Parents often do not realise that from the earliest of ages, when their child tells them the truth, they are nonetheless punished, thus wiring the child to associate pain with telling the truth. Part of conscious disciplining is to continue to allow the child to speak the truth and have them realise the consequences of their actions or words.



» Honour their body and their health

As parents, we can get a little lazy sometimes when thinking about foods for our child. We opt for what is available, fast, and convenient rather than healthy and nutritious. We too don't have the greatest health habits. Your child's body is their temple, it's the foundation for their emotions, their moods and their relationship to themselves. So from the earliest of ages, they need to understand how important and magnificent their body is.

Choose fresh foods, without preservatives, chemicals, GMO ingredients... Be picky; spend time to understand what's in your food. This has a massive effect on children's immune system, how often they get sick and how agitated and anxious they feel.

Watch for trigger foods like sugar, gluten, dairy, wheat, soy and corn.

Help them see how wonderful exercise is. Especially with kids addicted to technology, getting back into their bodies, moving emotions through, boosting their feel-good hormones will all contribute greatly. Introduce things like yoga to them as well. Many kids respond very well to the postures and their benefits, from the earliest of ages.

Create a good sleep routine. Sleep is imperative to make sure your children stay healthy and happy. Start with a winding down routine... it could be listening to some soothing music, or doing their gratitude journal. Teach them how to meditate, to sit still, focus on their breathing and do nothing for a few minutes. Make it something you do together. If you believe in prayer, pray with them. Let them do the speaking, as they get older.

» Be an example of what living consciously looks like

As you know, your child is a sponge, absorbing everything that you do! This means the number one person to be conscious about is yourself. In some ways, it would nearly be easier to follow a 'how to parent' manual, than it would be to have to do the work yourself.

Be mindful of all your behaviors in front of your children. How you talk, fight, eat, work, love their mother/father, touch, stay healthy, treat others, pray, speak the truth or lies... all of it matters. Tune your inner antenna to let you know when you need to change.

Have time for them. Kids need to know that things other than work, cooking and shopping are also important to you! Show them that you have time to listen to them, to talk, to play, to explore, to be

outdoors. Conscious kids need to see that life is not only about working hard, being stressed and meeting deadlines, or you will be raising a replica of your own stressed out life!

Raising a conscious child is less about what you need to do and more about what you need to become as a parent. Parents don't want to hear this but in the end, what is going on in you, in your mind, your relationship, your fears, is often what will be mirrored by your child. The next time you have a challenge with your kid, ask yourself this courageous question: "What in me is having this show up in them?"

The more you focus on changing and improving yourself, the more your child will be free of limiting behaviours. Raise your own consciousness and your child will receive the gift of a lifetime!



Above all, a conscious children grow up with the knowledge of what is true, what is important, what is worth doing with their lives. They will not be under the veil of an illusion like so many others who suffer. They will be able to see and understand how this world works, the importance of love, of service, of silence and their inner world and of seeing the temporary nature of this life; that we are only here for a short time, to learn, to love, to laugh and to get the lessons our souls came here to experience.



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