Article FAMILY-7

DON'T PUSH THE CHILD TOO HARD

Let your child grow up in the normal, natural way. Allow him to play also. Rest assured, he will turn out to be a successful person in later life.

■ by D. P. Sabharwal



A child should not study always. He must relax also.

"Can I go for play, mama?"

"How can you? Have you finished your homework?"

"Yes mama, I have," said Akun.

"But that is not enough, dear. You have to study a lot. How can you forget that you are in 10th class? You know how difficult it is to get admission in professional colleges these days?" said Kanu and added, "Therefore, you have to prepare hard for that from right now onwards. So forget all about play and games and get on with your studies."

"But mama, my exams are..."

"I know your exams are not round the corner," said Kanu interrupting him and then added, "but you must understand that for you every minute is very important and you must not waste it."

"But playing is not wasting time, mama. Moreover, I am tired. An hour of play will refresh me. Please let me



When I told her it was good for my career, she accused me of sacrificing a good family life at the altar of success...

in sheer disgust.

When I came home for lunch Daleep was still there. Vineet wanted to tell me all about the school but I was in no mood to listen. The food, though excellently cooked, was tasting like ash in my mouth because all the while I was wondering why Daleep had stayed on for lunch. A full hour had passed since I had put down the receiver. What was he doing in my house for an hour?

Some time later, Anju developed a peculiar boil inside her nose and no amount of antibiotics would help. They would suppress it for a short while and then back it would come with vengeance. Ultimately I fixed an appointment with the best ENT specialist.

All the while Daleep had been out of town on duty. He arrived a day before Anju was to see the specialist. He met me at the office and I told him about Anju's misery. He said,"Leave everything to me," and disappeared.

When I arrived home in the evening, Anju was in bed and was minus one tooth.

She told me that Daleep had taken her to a dentist who declared that she had a bad tooth because of which the infection kept on spreading to the nose. So he had extracted the offending molar.

At that time I had a hearty laugh and accused Daleep of being in league with the toothy. In fact, somewhat unfairly, I insinuated that Daleep must have got his cut from the fee.

"Don't be ridiculous," Anju reproached me. "I never paid any fee and don't make fun of it. You never thought of it. I will always be grateful to Daleep."

"I am not a quack like him," I defended myself.

"No, you are not and thank God for it. But once in a while you should show concern about your wife also, instead of burying yourself in work, work and work all the time."

I did not appreciate her tirade but she had her tooth extracted, so I got up saying,"Now take it easy. You don't know what you are saying."

Later I reflected upon what she had said. Gradually I was losing ground with her. The accusation was unfair and it hurt me all the more. Those of us who are in uniform may not be sentimental but are not certainly thick-skinned.

It was Daleep all over the place. He could get things done. He could make defective gadgets work. Sometimes I wondered if he spent more time at our place or at his job.

Of course, I felt very small when the extracted tooth cured the infected nose.

Once that happened, Anju was totally sold over Daleep and he became almost a permanent fixture in our house.

I began to resent his presence amongst us. I became indifferent and I was sometimes rude to him when he would be with us. But apparently it made no difference to him though I often got a mouthful from Anju for being churlish to him. That made me feel almost like an outsider. Therefore, when the opportunity came, I volunteered for a transfer to an area infested with terrorists.

Anju, of course, did not approve of the new development. She had her reasons which were justified from her point of view. She had just begun to like her stay in that town. Vineet had found a classy school and we had such a good friend in Daleep. Unfortunately, for some of those very reasons I wanted to go away.

When she learnt that I had volunteered for the transfer, her tense nerves were further exacerbated. When I told her it was good for my career, she accused me of sacrificing a good family life at the altar of success which at the best of times was a gamble.

Daleep was present on one of those sessions. Fortunately he remained a silent observer because had he spoken I might have blurted out that he was the very cause of it. By his constant presence in our home he was responsible for breaking it.

Yes, till he had come we were passing peacefully happy days, maybe placid and unexciting though.

(Continued on page 105)

go," pleaded Akun.

"Why don't you understand? You cannot..." Kanu virtually gave a speech and yet did not allow her son to go out and play.

Kanu is not alone in doing what she did to her son. Today there are many parents who are behaving in the same manner with their wards. And their number is ever increasing. That, in fact, is a cause for concern.

To prevent growing-up teenagers from outdoor activities and games is likely to affect their growth, both physical and mental. They will grow up, no doubt, but without proper lessons of team spirit and give and take—the 2 necessary ingredients for the development of a complete personality. What is more, in most of the cases, such children develop an aversion for studies as well.

No way out

When I expressed the same views to a friend of mine during a discussion on the subject, he said, "Well, I agree with what you say but there is no way out. To get admission in an engineering or medical college, my son has to score more than 90% marks and for that he has to forgo all other activities—no games, no outings, no extracurricular activities, no hobbies: no, nothing whatsoever."

Now does that not sound like paying too much a price for too little a thing? Well, I knew some of you will agree with me while some will not.

Well, to those who do not agree with me, I would like to ask them to dig a little further in such cases and to look at the 2 likely possibilities—either the child is good at studies or is an average student.

Let us take the first case first. Here the child is above average and has been scoring more than 80% marks till date. Now, in a bid to cross over to 90%, all he requires is some extra effort either through self-study or by means of coaching.

Now, whatever be the means of his extra effort in studies to get still better marks, one thing is necessary and paramount—that he is mentally alert and physically fit. Otherwise he will not be able to assimilate whatever he reads.

Thus, it is essential that in between sessions of study, the child indulges in something else—to rest his mind and to recuperate his energies for studies. In this regard let us not forget the age-old saying, "All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy."

Now, let us look at the other set of children who are just average in academics and are being coaxed, cajoled and even coerced to study.

No doubt, these children have to put in real extra effort to make the grade for admission to engineering or medical college. To be honest, a child needs to put in at least 4-5 hours of extra study per day, every day of the year to improve his or her grades from 60% or so to 90% and above.

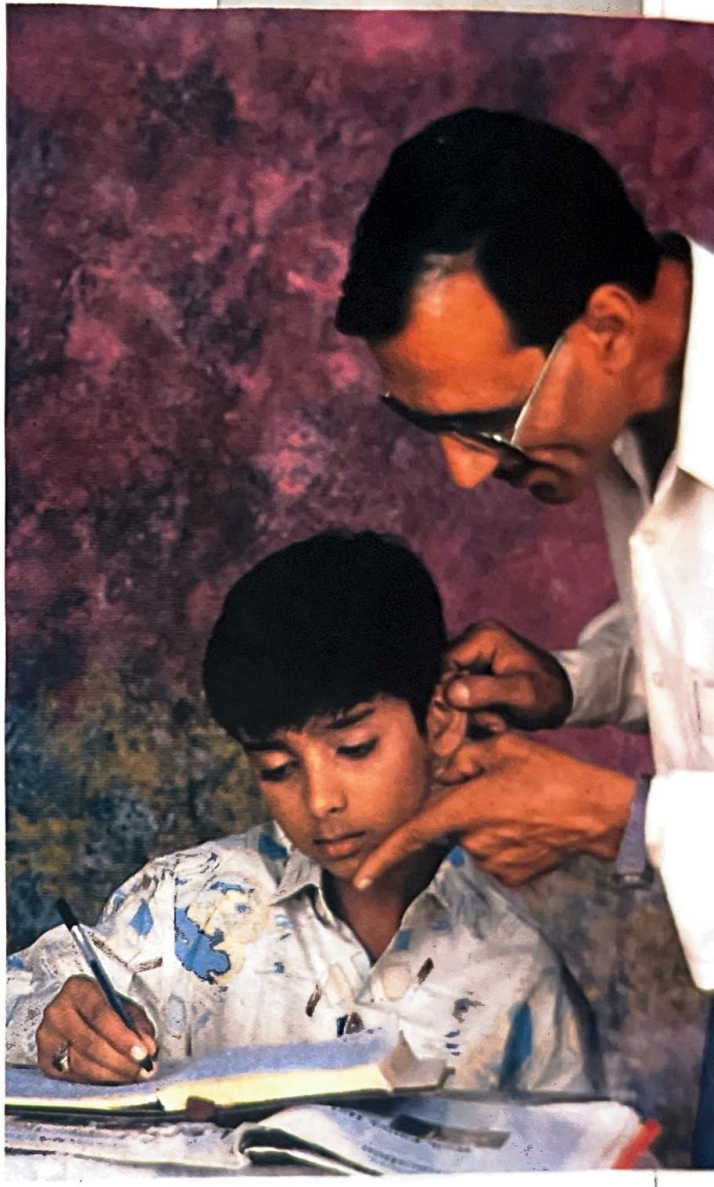
Is it possible? And is it desirable? We as parents need to answer these 2 questions before too much water has flowed down the Ganga!

It has been said that "nothing is ever impossible." Well, it may turn out to be true in exceptional cases which we will look into later, but it does not apply to the majority. A jump from 60% to 90% marks is almost impossible for most of the students, whatever may be the determination and willpower of the child as well as of the parents. This fact is borne out by statistics and can, in fact, be checked from the records of any school.

Now, let us consider those few rare combinations of child and parents who are fully determined to prove that "nothing is impossible if you try hard and harder." Such a child has to get up early and sleep late. Throughout the day he is busy and sunk in his books, whether he is at school, at home or at a coaching centre, doing either the school work or trying to cope with the additional task given by the tutor. There is no diversion for such a child. He or she can neither go out to play any games nor can he/she indulge in either reading any other book/comics/magazines or pursue any hobby. I say so because during the last couple of years, I have watched 3 children undergoing this strenous routine.

Well, it may be worth all the trouble, provided the end result is favourable.

Let us remember that competition in life will not end with securing admission to a medical or engineering college. Your child will have to face it at every step in his life...



Children have to make extra effort to make the grade.

But it is not always so. In a majority of cases, a child does reasonably well, but even that is not "good enough" to carry him through. Now sacrificing all the nice things of adolescent age and devoting all the time to the books, the child can still not scale the peak and has to watch from just a step below, others leaping to the summit of success.

Frustrating

Needless to say, it must be pretty frustrating and morale shattering to the child. Well, it is. I have seen 3 ever-smiling, bubbling with energy and cheerful kids of 10th class becoming desolate, miserable and unhappy because despite their very best efforts, they failed to make the grade.

There is a well known saying that "wise are those who learn from the mistakes of others." Therefore, as regards our children's education, let us learn the right lessons. Let us not push them too hard and let us save our children from frustration and depression that is bound to set in if one is not able to achieve a goal set too high.

We can do so by first understanding the capability of our children and then trying to know their aptitude. If one looks around carefully, one can find many cases where children are forced to take science subjects against their wishes. Why are we doing so? Probably we consider engineering and medicine as the only 2 respectable and worthy professions. Well, it might have been so about 2 or 3 decades ago, but it is not so any more.

Today, there are many more avenues which offer excellent career opportunities, a few of them being management, accountancy, media communication, computers, journalism and, above all, teaching. To specialise in these, one need not take science subjects in school which, no doubt, demand more time compared with arts and commerce subjects.

Mohan was an average student till class 10. Against his wishes, his parents made him study science in 11th and 12th classes. In spite of tuitions in physics, chemistry and biology throughout the year, he was not confident of scoring good marks in his 12th class final examination; so he did not appear first time.

Next year he secured 84% marks but that did not get him admission in any of the medical colleges. He was thus forced to seek admission to B.Com. After 3 years, it was a real delight for him and his parents when he stood first in the university. But in the bargain he had, nevertheless, lost one precious year during which he as well as his parents suffered a lot of mental tension.

Omnipresent competition

Competition in present-day life is becoming omnipresent. Till now only grown-ups, trying to settle in service or business were exposed to it. But now it has filtered down to children and their education. During the last 6-7 years, the percentage of marks required to get admission to any premier institution has gone up from 80% to 90% and more. Not every child can perform to that level. But many parents do not realise this. Ignoring the hard realities, they tend to push their children too hard to achieve "the almost impossible." As a result, more often than not, the only thing they succeed in, is demoralisation of their children.

Well, there is no need to do so. In the world of today, there are endless avenues to pursue and achieve perfection in. All that is required is to look into these unconventional areas of education and choose one for the child which will suit his capabilities and temperament.

Let us remember that competition in life will not end with securing admission to a medical or engineering college. Your child will have to face it at every step in his life. Therefore, let him not burn his candle at both ends. That way he or she will not last long enough.

Let your child grow up in the normal, natural way. Allow him to play and indulge in various extracurricular activities and hobbies. Rest assured, your child will turn out to be a better, confident and successful person in later life. ■



"I demand same perks and salary as your creative personnel draw. I'm also a creative person.... I create trouble, don't I?"