

# Are we the role models for the children in our life?

## TIME FOR AATMANIRIKSHAN (SELF-ANALYSIS)

Are we the role models for the children in our life?

One out of three children is considered overweight or obese ...and the largest chunk of the blame lies with the mother and the father ...as some 80 percent of overweight children have overweight parents. The sources of this problem are, amongst others:

- Parents do not eat well ...children also do not eat well.
- Parents do not exercise...children also do not exercise.
- As parents, we are less active ...children are less active.
- We spend more screen time (in front of televisions, video-game consoles, computers, tablets, smart phones) ...children are glued to screens.
- We supply children with all sorts of addictive electronic gadgets apparently to buy 'some peaceful time' without training them on the correct usage of these equipment.
- We want our children to be 'IN', thus live to 'what others would think rather than live to our own standards and satisfaction.
- As parents, we keep shying away from our prime roles as the first/fundamental educators of our children; we pass on the ball to teachers and peers or simply leave them to grow in the wilderness!!!

We need to remind ourselves of the gardener who carefully tenders plants. He ties those growing haphazardly to straight sticks. Thereafter these plants grow into marvellous trees with straight trunks, green crowns, flowers and fruits. Untended, a plant grows into an unevenly swerving/curvy tree which may be straightened by reducing it to poles and planks after it is chopped. Alas it would no longer be a tree.

Are we giving enough attention to our children as the caring gardener does to plants? Are we the role models for the children in our life? ...Imagine the fate of untended children ...indeed a scary future!

Screen time is ever-increasing ...both quantity and quality time for the family - shrinking.

The 'make-believe' hectic life leaves us fewer free moments to home-cook nutritious meals. Fast food, electronics, quick-fix solutions are the stark reality.

Super-sized servings, too much fatty/sugary processed foods and our couch-potato-lives convey a silent but forceful message to children: it is normal to be overweight and unhealthy!

Sadly most children live with poor role models; we tell our kids to get up from the television, video-game console, computer, tablet, smart phone and go out to play while we take over the channel changer and/or confine ourselves to screen time!

### **The quiet before the storm**

The public health impact of the increasing prevalence of obesity at younger and younger ages is not that visible ...but with time these “unfortunate” children will start developing heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, kidney failures, amputations, blindness, and ultimately death at younger and younger ages.

Likewise, imagine a massive number of young children take to chain smoking, alcoholic beverages, substance abuse (drugs, etc.). The public health impact, emphysema, heart disease and cancer, is a slow process ...who cares? We are all seeking immediate gains, pleasures ...careless of the medium and long-term impacts of our thoughts, speech and actions, as well as our disrespect of the physical environment; our overall polluted lifestyle.

No parent want this for their children ...yet, it is reality and it is happening.

The overweight problem of children is in fact a parenting problem. As parents we totally disregard the fact that our influences are decisive; dietary, exercise and lifestyle patterns directly or indirectly set in childhood tend to be permanent.

Rishi Bodh Mahotsav is time to revisit the Vedic teachings, enlighten ourselves and more importantly walk-the-talk.

...Devabhagam Yathapurve Sanjananaa Upaasate... (Rig Veda 10.191.01)  
Synchronised thoughts, speech and physical actions are imperative to attain common goals. Life is meant to dwell on a learning curve towards capacity building for integrated wisdom that empowers us to follow the example of our ancestors: be open-minded and live in harmony as well as achieve higher goals by virtue of being united.

...Vishvedeva Shanti...(Yajur Veda 36/17) Sages / seers (rishis) and elderly/experienced/learned persons procure us peace through the sharing of their knowledge and life experiences.

...Vishvāni Deva Vayunāni Vidvān...(Yajur Veda 40.16) Sages (learned persons) of the highest virtue lead us to acquire noble thoughts, deeds and actions, to strive for scientific, political and economic prosperity, as well as to stay away from evil, deceit and vice!

As parents, grandparents, peer groups, we should lead-by-example.

We need to change our habits: adapt the way our family eats, exercises and how we spend our time together, if we really want to help children lead healthy

lifestyles and prevent them from becoming overweight, sedentary, and addicted to substances, electronic screens, etc. As adults, we need to initiate several small changes so that our legacy to future generations is not just the greatness of technology but great physical, mental/moral/spiritual and social wellness.

If we fail to be the change we wish to see in others, our children will be the first in recorded history to surpass us only in terms of material wealth NOT to outlive us be it ...physical health ...life span ...living values ...as human beings.

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