



# Harmonious Homes



Human Values Parenting



*Guide 7: February/March 2023 - Review*

Practical Activities and Discussion  
Scenarios for Modules 1 Through 6



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## **Introduction**

Swami says that the nutritive value and energy from food comes only when it is swallowed and digested, rather than just chewed. Similarly, the profound benefits of Swami's teachings on human values parenting occur only through practice and implementation of these values into our daily lives. This module is intended to be a companion volume to the preceding six modules with suggestions for activities and scenarios that will aid in further exploring, internalizing and practicing the principles discussed in each one. These activities can be conducted in the order written along with each module, or can be explored as independent activities to enhance a discussion or practice human values parenting in a supportive environment where parents can learn from each other. These activities are not intended to be completed in a single session, rather as additional exercises that can be conducted across multiple sessions in order to reinforce the concepts presented.

## **Module 1 – “Why Human Values Parenting?”**

In order to fully understand and practice the core principles and teachings on parenting imparted by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, it is critical to familiarize ourselves with the context of His life and work. The first module provides background on His life and mission and focuses on His establishment of the Bal Vikas program in India. It forms the basis of all the nectarine teachings that follow in subsequent modules.



### Suggested Activities:

- **Quiz:** The following quiz is an engaging way to remember and cement the facts and circumstances of Swami's life and work. Education Coordinators and Parenting Study Circle facilitators are encouraged to add additional questions based on the demographics of the parents in their Centers and their familiarity with Swami's life.
  - **Suggestions:** Divide the parents into two teams - e.g. Mothers vs. Fathers. Assign points for each correct answer. Have fun!
    - When and where was Swami born?
    - What were the names of His earthly parents?
    - How many siblings did He have?
    - What did Swami say was the purpose of our lives?
    - Fill in the blanks (1 point for each correct answer):
      - *The end of wisdom is* \_\_\_\_\_.
      - *The end of culture is* \_\_\_\_\_.
      - *The end of education is* \_\_\_\_\_.
      - *The end of knowledge is* \_\_\_\_\_.
    - In what year did Swami start Bal Vikas for children?
    - What is Bal Vikas called in the U.S.?
    - Swami said that Bal Vikas is the primary basis of the great movement to establish what in the world?
    - To whom does Swami attach the greatest importance in the upbringing of children?
    - What is the greatest contribution of a good mother?
    - What was the first college that Swami established?
    - Swami says that women are the repositories of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
    - Charity leads to \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_.
    - Swami says that children should be raised as representatives of God, not as \_\_\_\_\_.
    - When does the upbringing of a child begin?
    - Who is the first and most important teacher of a child?



- What is the goal of Educare?
- When does Swami say that spiritual education should begin?
- How and where are the human values of truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence acquired?
- True self-confidence leads to \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_ and finally, \_\_\_\_\_.

• **Watch “His Work” together:**

<https://vimeo.com/52560575>

<https://www.sssmediacentre.org/#/sri-Sathya-Sai>

- **Discussion:** What aspect of Swami’s life and teaching about the potential of children strike you most deeply? Why?

## **Module 2 – “All are Children of God”**

This module discusses Swami’s approach to human values parenting and how this may differ from traditional views of parenting. Fundamentally, Swami shifts the focus beyond worldly care of a child to parenting as a spiritual sadhana. His vision of parenting emphasizes the spiritual growth of parents so that they are first and foremost, good exemplars for their children and thereby foster the creation of a harmonious home. He directs parents to see children not as possessions, but as spiritual beings in their own right, buds to be nurtured and encouraged to blossom. Finally, Swami shifts the focus away from traditional markers of parental success - good education of the child in the best schools which leads to good jobs, large homes, expensive vacations, cars, clothes - to success defined as the goodness of the child and the intensity of their service to society and humanity.

### **Suggested Activities:**

1. **Discussion:** When asked “How can I be a good parent?”, Swami answered, “Are you a good person?”
  - a. What defines a good person?
  - b. What relevance does being a good person have to being a good parent?



**2. Role Play version 1:** A mother is in the kitchen preparing dinner and her adolescent son, Sri is doing his homework at the kitchen table. The father, Ramu, is visibly upset. He walks in from work and throws down his briefcase. He sputters, “Keerthi, do you know what that boss of mine did? In front of everyone, he congratulated Simon for the good work on the project and didn’t say a word about me! I did all the work! Simon joined the team halfway and now HE gets all the credit! And now he’s going to get the big year-end bonus too; I deserve that money, not him! I was counting on that bonus to buy the new Tesla I’ve had my eye on.

Mother: “Wow, that’s unfair, Ramu! I hope you’re going to complain and get that credit. We need that Tesla and those bonuses to send Sri (indicating their son) to Harvard. He’s GOT to go to a name-brand business school, otherwise he’ll never get to Wall Street!”

Sri watches and listens to his parents’ conversation.

**Questions for discussion:**

- Have you faced similar situations?
- What do you think of Ramu’s reactions?
- What do you think of Keerthi’s reaction?
- What messages are being conveyed to Sri?
- Provide 2 suggestions for how this situation could be handled better.

**3. Role Play version 2:** Play the scene again with 3 different (or the same) participants portraying a more constructive handling of the situation.

**Questions for discussion:**

- What were the differences between versions 1 and 2?
- What messages did Sri get in version 2?
- What are the benefits to Keerthi, Ramu and Sri in version 2?

## **Module 3 – “Observational Learning”**

Observational learning, the predominant mode of learning in young children, involves learning by watching others and replicating observed behaviors. As the earliest role models for their children, parents exert tremendous influence through their own behavior. At birth, children are pure beings and are readily molded by the modeled behavior of their parents and care-givers. Parents have to be extremely conscious of their behavior with each other and with their children as children will imitate what they see and will absorb the values with which they are surrounded. In addition to parents, children learn from models all around them, on television, in the grocery store, at school, and at home, so a good environment is critical.



### **Suggested Activities:**

**1. Formulate word clouds as a group by brainstorming on the following questions:** (Reference for Word clouds: <https://www.wordclouds.com/>)

- a. Word Cloud: What do you think brings harmony in your home?
- b. Word Cloud: What values do you want your children to have?

**2. Mommy See, Mommy Do. Daddy See, Daddy Do:**

Consider how these common situations can influence your child's behavior either positively or negatively (*Continued in the next page...*).

- *It is dinner time, and Mom and Dad turn on the TV while eating dinner.*
  - What message does the child/children pick up by watching the parents do this action every night?
- *Every morning a mother offers prayers at the family altar.*
  - What does the child/children pick up watching the mother doing this action every morning?

- *A family friend comes home and shares that he is double booked for a meeting while he needs to be in the airport as well to pick up his parents. Father offers to help out and pick them and drive them home.*
  - What qualities or messages does the child/children pick up by watching the father offer his help?
- *Mother is delayed at work and makes it to the school concert just as it begins. The child is very excited that her parents are going to see her perform. Dad brings the daughter on time and they are seated already when the mother arrives. She is, however, distracted by messages from work that she receives on her cell phone and to which she responds. The child observes from the stage that the mother is not paying attention to the concert.*
  - What message(s) did the child pick up from the parent's actions at the concert?

## **Module 4: A Mother's Role**

Swami places tremendous importance on a mother's role in the life and upbringing of her children. In part I of Module 4, a mother's role as an embodiment of the Divine and as her child's first teacher and role model was discussed. He notes that the mother's influence begins while the child is in her womb thus underscoring the need for positive inputs for an expectant mother. After birth, Swami says that the first bond is with the mother who then introduces the father to the child and fosters the bond between them. The first 5 years of a child's life are especially critical. Children absorb and register everything that surrounds them, so the mother can sow the seeds of a spiritual life and virtuous character very early in a child's life by example and through her interactions with the child.

Part 2 of Module 4 discusses Swami's teachings on the importance of mother as the primary care-giver, as the center of the home and the foundation of society. Swami is very emphatic that, as far as possible, the critical role of a mother should not be delegated to a hired substitute. The child will attach himself or herself to the one who cares for him or her, and learn their habits by observation and through interaction with the care-giver. A mother's teaching and example must be bolstered by the atmosphere and environment she fosters at home. Swami reminds us that irrespective of a woman's education or position, her foremost obligation is to protect the home. Through the proper upbringing of children, emphasis on the blossoming of their innate human values and the development of excellent character, a good mother is the very foundation of a loving family and by extension, a productive, compassionate society.

### Suggested Activities:

#### **What do you nurture?**

The role of a mother is to nurture the child from birth through all the phases. Using the illustration below, reflect on the qualities you are nurturing in your child at the various stages of their growth.

#### ***Example :***

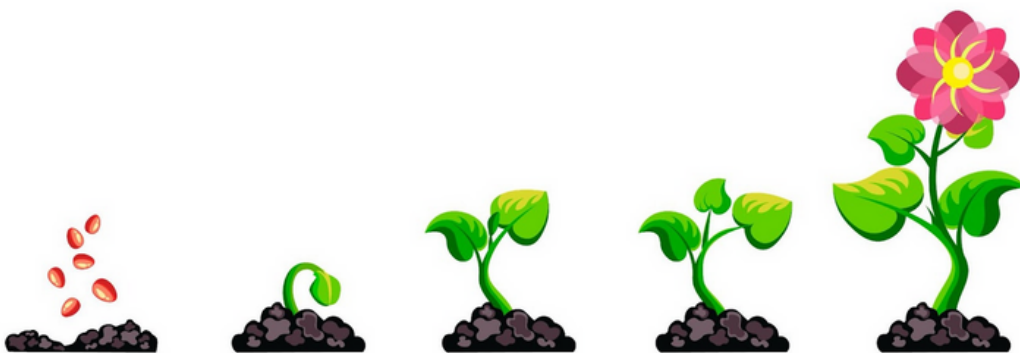
*Seeds:* confidence, humility, patience

*Soil:* Harmony in the home, good role model

*Water:* Love and trust

*Nurture:* Actions you do, actions you allow the child to own

What other qualities are represented in the various stages of growth below? What other nutrition do you think is needed to nurture a healthy plant to thrive and bloom?



## **Module 5: Role of the Father**



In this module we saw how Swami emphasized the role of the father, and specifically how the father must lead by example. A father is critical for the physical, emotional, personality, and spiritual flourishing of the child. Fathers should be exemplary in their conduct and must encourage their children by example more than precept.



## Suggested Activities:

**I. Building Good Habits:** The overall development of a child requires constant and regular practicing of appropriate and good actions which lead to good habits as the foundation of the child's character. In the table below, list out some regular activities and habits you can practice with your child at home to allow what is latent in the child to become patent.

**a. Examples of actions/qualities for:**

- i. *Devotional habits:* Habits such as meditation, singing bhajans or hymns together, praying together at home, visiting houses of worship (temple, church, mosque, etc.), reading spiritual texts, etc.
- ii. *Building Good Citizenship at Home, School and Community:* activities at home or outside the home (seva), volunteering, setting goals, building integrity, work ethic, building self-confidence, being a positive part of school & community.
- iii. *Emotional Resilience:* activities or reinforcement to help deal with disappointment, facing challenges, building social skills.
- iv. *Physical growth:* involvement in sports, regular exercise, eating well, etc.

Devotional Habits	Building Good Citizenship	Emotional Resilience	Physical Growth

**Once each participant completes the table, complete the following word cloud activities to share ideas:**

1. *Word Cloud:* What activities can you do with your child to help him/her with their Spiritual growth?
2. *Word Cloud:* What activities can you do with your child to help him/her with their emotional resilience growth?
3. *Word Cloud:* What activities can you do with your child to help him/her with their personality growth?
4. *Word Cloud:* What activities can you do with your child to help him/her with their physical growth?

## **Module 6 - Creating a Harmonious Home**

In this module, we read Swami's guidance on what a harmonious home should be, who is responsible for creating such a home and how this harmony will radiate outwards to encompass the community, society and the world. Based on Swami's words of wisdom, a harmonious home is a happy home filled with unity, love, mutual respect and contentment among family members. It is a sacred place steeped in faith, devotion and discipline where good character is paramount and human values are practiced by every member of the family.



A harmonious home creates good children. The blossoming of a child's mind and behavior depends on their home. Home is the first school for a child and father and mother are the first teachers. Parents play a critical role in creating the right environment at home for their children to learn and grow.

The innate values in the heart of each child can only blossom when given the right environment. As we have seen, children learn by example more than precept, and will emulate the behavior they see around them.

### **Suggested Activities:**

#### **1. Read this Chinna Katha by Swami that illustrates the concept of goodness:**

*One Saturday, a father was involved in worshiping the Lord and called his son asking him to get some plantains for one rupee. This son was a good boy and went out to purchase the plantains. But on the way home he saw a mother and her son, who were standing on the road looking famished. When the little hungry boy saw the plantains, he started running towards them. His mother also ran to catch him but then both of them collapsed from hunger. When the young man saw these people suffering so much from hunger, he thought that it was much better to give them the bananas than to take them home. Accordingly, he gave the bananas to the mother and her child and also brought them water.*

*Relieved of their hunger and thirst they began to express their gratitude in many different ways and shed tears of joy. The youngster then went home empty handed and when his father asked him if he had brought the bananas, he replied in the affirmative. When asked where the bananas were, he replied that the bananas he brought were sacred, will not rot and could not be seen. The son explained that he had fed two hungry souls with the bananas and the fruits which he brought home are the sacred fruits of action. His father felt that the boy was a worthy son and that all his prayers had been answered that day. He developed great affection for his son from that day and the bonds of their love grew closer.*

**-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Chinna Katha: The Sacred Fruits of Action - Jan 2008, [archives.sssmediacentres.org](http://archives.sssmediacentres.org)**

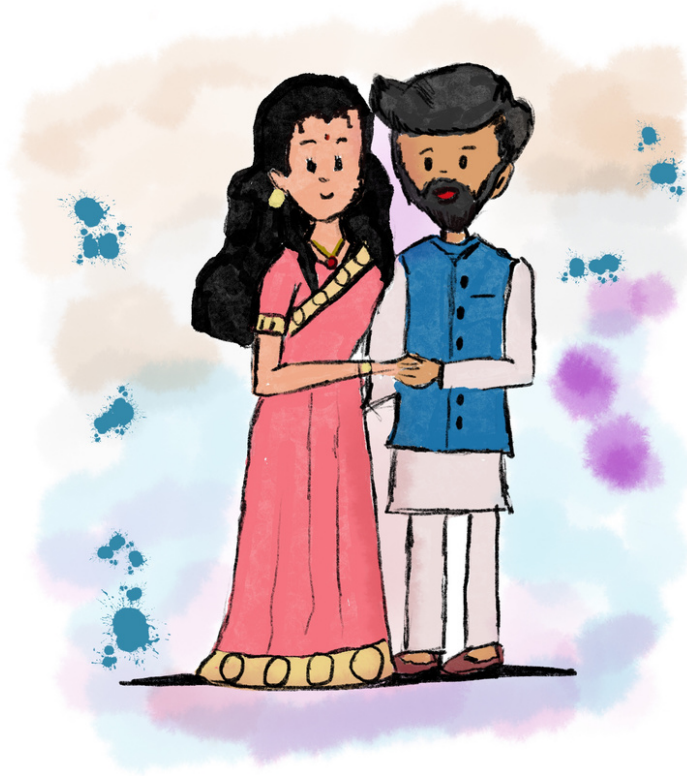
### **Discussion Questions:**

1. One of the important lessons from the Chinna Katha above is the emphasis on the goodness and right action of the child. A precursor to good action is that the child was sensitive to the plight of the mother and child and had empathy. List out some of the activities you can do with your child, at home and outside the home, to practice empathy.
2. What consequence might the father's reaction in the story have on the self-confidence of the child?
3. Have you and your child faced similar situations? How have you fostered the growth of self-confidence in your child?

**2. In your shoes:** We have now explored Swami's words on how to perform our duties as Mother and Father. What role does each play in creating harmony in the home?

Let us consider scenarios and roles with a bit of a twist. Work in pairs. The mother plays the role of the father and father plays the role of the mother. Here are some suggestions:

- *"Your child comes home with a bad grade."*
  - Reflect on how you handle this currently.
  - Using Swami's teachings, how would you like this to change?
- *"Your teenager wants to stay late for a party."*
  - Reflect on how you handle this currently.
  - Using Swami's teachings, how would you like this to change?



#### References of pictures and Illustrations

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