



Harmonious Homes

✦ Human Values Parenting ✦

Guide 8: June 2023

Creating a Harmonious Home

Part 2



Sri Sathya Sai Educare, SSSGC-USA

Introduction:

“A family is the most important functional unit in the world. If the family is running on sound lines, the world will also run smoothly. If the unity among the family members suffers even to a small extent, the world will face the repercussions. Unity gives strength to the lives of the family members. Therefore, every family should strive for achieving unity and harmonious relationships among its members.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 36, Ch. 4, 2003



Module 6, Part I was focused on Swami's invaluable teachings on the creation of a harmonious home - specifically, what such a home should be, who is responsible for creating it and how harmony in a home will radiate outwards to encompass our communities, society and the world. In Part 2 of Module 6, we consider the practical daily practices and habits that are the foundational building blocks of harmonious homes. The seven practices highlighted below were graciously provided directly by Swami to a devotee and, as illustrated by the quotes and explanatory text, represent a simple synthesis of some of Bhagawan's fundamental principles. Each tenet is followed by practical pearls which are intended as concrete suggestions to develop and actualize them - let's absorb, practice and benefit!

1. Developing deep commitment towards one another

A deep sense of commitment towards one another is the hallmark of a harmonious family. The degree of commitment reflects deep faith among family members and is manifested as love and compassion in their behavior towards each other.

Families with commitment understand the need and value of their relationship with one another. It begins with parents serving as role models and working with their children through good and rough times to help them realize how important they are to the family. They also teach children through example how to treat everyone with love, respect, trust and dignity. As children grow into their teen years, they should ideally see their parents deal with tough times constructively and with faith and see them care enough to build lasting relationships with others, based on love, respect and trust. That will help them understand the value of commitment and naturally adhere to it.



Committed families tend to work together through good and bad times, always prioritizing the well-being of the entire family. This sometimes requires that individuals make sacrifices for the common good of their family. Such sacrifices will help foster compassion and empathy among family members.

“Every human has a heart. Every heart is filled with compassion. However, how many choose to share this compassion with others? Sharing the compassion in one’s heart with ten others has been characterized as Bhakti (Devotion). One who does not share his compassion with others cannot be called a human being.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 29, Ch. 7, 1999

“Giving up narrow ideas and feelings, people should show compassion towards their fellow beings. Compassion is the hallmark of devotion. No one can hope to please God without showing compassion towards their fellow beings. A loving heart is the temple of God. God cannot dwell in a heart without compassion.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi, April 1996, p. 88

As compassion and empathy grows, a home will be filled with devotion where oneness (love) will prevail. With these qualities any home becomes a temple, church or a mosque. Here the children can grow in an environment of mutual respect, cooperation and peace and remain healthy, happy and content.

“The home is the temple where the family, each member of which is a moving temple, is nurtured and nourished. The mother is the high priest of this House of God. Humility is the incense with which the house is filled. Reverence is the lamp that is lit, with love as the oil and faith as the wick. Spend the years of your lives, dedicating them for such worship, in the homes that you will create. I bless you that through your faith and strength, devotion and dedication may increase in this land.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 9, Ch. 13, 1969

“It’s love that brings even a person far away closer and more intimate to you. It’s love that drives away the feeling of separateness and promotes the feeling of oneness.”

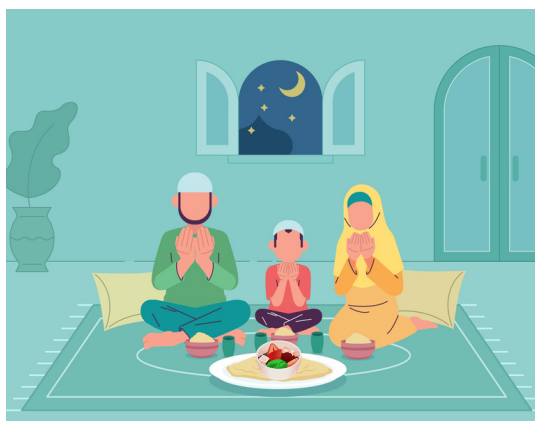
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi, Feb 1994, p. 49

“Where there is love, there is no hatred; where there is no hatred there is peace. We must always propagate peace and it can be done only through love. What is love? Oneness of feeling is love. If you foster the feeling that the same Atma resides in all, you will be able to love all.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1993, p. 65

Commitment to God and Spiritual Practice:

Swami emphasizes the importance of developing a strong commitment towards family members and strengthening faith in God. This will help foster the practice of human values and the pursuit of the true purpose of life rather than focusing on gaining material wealth. Parents should teach children to treat material goods and riches as gifts from God and to always remain detached from them.



“Riches are a great handicap in the path of spiritual progress. So though you may be rich, do not cultivate attachment to the bank account or to the mansions, cars and comforts you command. Have them as if they are given to you in trust by the Lord.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 9, Ch. 13, 1969

“Mind has to be controlled, purified and finally transcended. All spiritual discipline is directed to this end. Mental restlessness has to be stopped so that Reality can be achieved.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, p. 130

“Your reality is the Atma (God viewed as particular), a wave of Paramatma (God viewed as universal). The one object of this human existence is to visualize the human reality, the Atma, that relationship between the Wave and the Sea. All other activities are trivial; you share them with birds and beasts; but this is a unique privilege of Man. He has climbed through all levels of animality, all the steps in the ladder of evolution in order to inherit the high destiny. If his years between birth and death are frittered away in seeking food, shelter, comfort and pleasure as animals do, man is condemning himself to a further life sentence.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 8, Ch. 22, 1968

Practical Pearls:

Deep commitment among family members can be developed by adhering to the following:

- Set aside individual time on a regular basis for each child by focusing on what is important to the child. This will make your child feel special and well connected to you.
- Maintain healthy communication at home by creating an environment where feedback can be given and received in a positive way.
- Practice daily forgiveness to ensure grudges aren't held between family members and everyone works on forgiveness to restore family harmony.
- Encourage children to imbibe good qualities of head, heart and hands through harmonious interactions with other family members and especially with siblings.
- Teach the family the value and benefit of practicing - truth, discipline, love, compassion and non-violence.
- Emphasize the value of time, energy, food and money and help each other practice ceiling on their desires.
- Encourage family members to speak softly and lovingly to everyone and never fight with each other.
- Parents must act as good role models for children by setting the right example - they should avoid arguing, raising voices or fighting with their spouse in front of their children.



2. Sharing Spiritual Strength and Making The Shrine Room The Center Of Your Home

The spiritual strength of a family is based on their faith and devotion. Faith is trust in God and devotion is love for God. This commitment to trust and love God must be intimately shared by all members of the family, and be the basis for all other activities and needs. Realizing this is most essential to foster harmony at home and for everyone to experience divinity.

“The center of every home must be the shrine room; the fragrance of flowers and incense emanating from there must pervade the home and purify it. The mother must set an example in making the shrine the heart of the household. She must enforce discipline over the children in personal cleanliness, in humility and hospitality, in good manners and acts of service. She must persuade the children by example and precept to revere elders and to allot some time both in the morning and evening for prayer, and for silent meditation. The shrine room has to be kept clean and consecrated; special festival days marked out in each religion, should be observed, so that the significance will impress the young minds. However self-centered and haughty the father is, by systematic regulation of the domestic time-table, with worship of God as its focal point, the man can be made to realize how a God-centered home is home of peace and joy. He too will soon fall in and be a pillar of faith.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 8, Ch. 22, 1968

“If you desire only God without asking for other desires, He gives everything. As one cannot reach that stage, it is inevitable to ask for a few things in the initial stages. There is a saying that even a mother does not give without being asked for. This is true in the case of physical mothers. It is natural to ask her and take from her. You enjoy what you take from her. But in the case of Divine Mother there is no question of asking but it is only enjoying and experiencing. Whatever is given you take. Do not have any discrimination whether it is good or bad. In your opinion it may look bad but the result may be good.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 29, Ch. 22, 1996

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- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 29, Ch. 58, 1996

Practical Pearls:

In order to strengthen faith and devotion and foster harmony at home, ensure that each member of the household:

- Allocates a minimum of 10 minutes a day to prayer (chanting God's name) and meditation
- Participates in family bhajans and study circle once a week for 30 minutes
- Participates in Sai center activities (SSSE classes, group bhajans and service projects) every week
- Maintains good company and pursues truth and right actions
- Strives to do their very best in all endeavors
- Offers their work as worship to God

3. Building Character and Harmony Through Healthy Lifestyle and Eating Habits

Swami frequently expounds on the importance of food for a healthy life and for spiritual growth. Specifically, the type of food, the quantity of food, and manner in which it is prepared are paramount. As Swami says:



“Every activity of man is dependent on the energy he derives from the intake of food. The spiritual sadhanas he ventures upon depend for their success on the quantity and quality of the food taken by the sadhak (spiritual aspirant). The most external of the five sheaths that enclose the Athmic core, namely the Annamaya kosha (physical sheath), has impact on all the remaining four - the Pranamaya, the Manomaya, the Vijnanamaya and the Anandamaya (the vital, mental, wisdom and bliss sheaths or coverings). The Annamaya Kosha is the sheath, consisting of the material, flesh and bone, built by the food that is consumed by the individual. Food is generally looked down upon by ascetically minded sadhaks and seekers and treated as something which does not deserve attention. But, since the body and the mind are mightily interdependent, no one can afford to neglect it. As the food, so the mind, as the mind so the thought; as the thought, so the act. Food is an important factor which determines alertness and sloth, the worry and calm, the brightness and dullness. The scriptures classify food as Saathwik, Rajasik and Tamasik and relate these types to the three mental modes (gunas) of the same names.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 14, Ch. 31, 1979

Therefore, it's important at home to ensure that "rajasik" and "tamasik" food is avoided, or at least reduced, especially by children. Swami explains what type of foods we should eat to promote a sathwik (pure) character, and also explains the importance of the quantity of food we should ingest:

“Man is the only living being which dislikes raw food found in the natural state. All other animals eat things as they are – grain, grass, leaves, shoots, fruits. Man boils, fries, melts, mixes and adopts various methods of cooking in order to satisfy the cravings of the tongue, the eye and the nose. As a consequence, the food value of these articles are either reduced or destroyed. When the seeds are fried, they do not sprout; that is clear proof that the 'life-force' is eliminated. Therefore, uncooked raw pulses just sprouting are to be preferred. Also nuts and fruits. The coconut, offered to the Gods, is a good Sathwik (pure) food, having a good percentage of protein besides fat, starch and minerals. Food having too much salt or pepper is Rajasik (passion arousing) and should be avoided; so also too much fat and starch, which are Thamasik (disposed to inactivity) in their effects on the body, should be avoided. An intake of too much food is also harmful. Simply because tasty food is available and is being offered, one is tempted to overeat. We have air all around us but we do not breathe in more than we need. The lake is full but we drink only as much as the thirst craves for. But overeating has become a social evil, fashionable habit. The stomach cries out, 'Enough,' but the tongue insists on more, and man becomes the helpless target of disease. He suffers from corpulence, high blood pressure and diabetes. Moderate food is the best medicine to avoid bodily issues.

The type of food that you consume decides the degree of concentration you can command; its quality and quantity decide how much your self-control is lessened or heightened.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 14, ch. 31, 1979

The home environment should be clean, uncluttered and organized. This will help purify the mind and foster peace and harmony.



“The body is cleansed, by soap and water, but true cleanliness can be achieved only from within. The cleansing of the body may keep physical illness away, but the a-shaanthi (disease) of the mind requires inner cleanliness. A perfume applied to the body might please the company around, but good thoughts and sweet conversation will please them more and for a longer time. As soap is for the body, truth is for speech; both have a high cleansing effect. The mind has to be cleansed by proper education in the crucible of renunciation. The intellect has to be purified by Universal vision conferred by wisdom.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 14, ch. 46, 1980

Practical Pearls:

- Before eating, Swami emphasizes that the food prayer, "Brahmarpanam", be recited so that the food becomes sanctified and is transformed into "prasadam" or holy offering.
 - Meaning of the "Brahmarpanam" food prayer
 - Video: 'Brahmarpanam' - Significance of The Food Prayer | Excerpt From The Divine Discourse | Nov 23, 1999
- Encourage children to help prepare a menu of sathwik food that they can include in their daily diet
- Encourage and reward children for being clean and organized at all times
- Establishing sleep routines for all in the family. It can be life changing.
- Consistent routines build resilience in our children

4. Expressing Love and Appreciation

Life at home should always be an expression of love and gratitude. A spirit of understanding and sympathy has to pervade the home. As we all know, children learn better by watching others rather than always being told to follow a course of action. If parents lead by example, the child imbibes these good qualities and actions. Conversely, when they see parents acting in a negative way or not following what they preach, the child also imbibes this negative behavior. As Swami says:

“Parents, while allowing freedom to the children at home, should nevertheless hold harmful tendencies in check. They should promote respectful behavior by the children to elders in the family. They should be careful how they themselves behave in the presence of children, for youngsters learn a lot by emulation. A spirit of understanding and sympathy has to pervade the home.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 14, ch. 3, 1978

One of the most important character traits that Swami frequently mentions, especially to youth, is that of expressing gratitude.

“One has experienced so much. Having experienced so much, how is one showing gratitude? God does not expect anything in return and He does not wait for it. But one must do one’s duty. One must express one’s gratitude. An ungrateful person is worse than the worst. People experience much, receive much and progress in many ways and therefore should be grateful to the persons from whom they have received. “Matrudevo bhava, pitru devo bhava,” mother is God. Father is God. A mother carries the child in the womb for nine months, makes many sacrifices and endures many pains in bringing up the child. How grateful must one be to such a mother?! That is why it is said, “Mother is God.” She is like God to a child. “Pitru devo bhava”, father is God. A father looks after the child sacrificing his own comforts and providing for the child financially. What gratitude is one showing to such a father? The kind of gratitude expressed towards one’s parents today will be received by one from one’s children in future.

Even animals show some kind of gratitude and love. But today’s man has no limits and has no gratitude. Hence one must redeem one’s human birth by living like a human. Every human is an embodiment of the divine. There is none in the whole of the universe who is not divine.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 36, ch. 6, 2003

Practical Pearls:

- Video: [Why Should We Be Grateful || 28 | Sathyopadesh | Message of Truth From Truth](#)
- Pray regularly together as a family and offer gratitude to God.
- Develop a family ritual where each member of the family expresses gratitude for something at the dinner table each day. Or, have a gratitude box that can be filled with notes every week, to be read out on Swami’s Birthday or Aradhana Day.
- Develop a family habit of showing love and affection - to your parents and siblings, elders in your family or friends.
- Encourage understanding of each others’ needs and challenges, and then adjust with each other.
- Always try to speak obligingly - though we may not always be able to oblige.
- Apologize when we make a mistake.
- Tell your children how grateful you are to be their parent (not the other way around!)

5. Communicating Truthfully and Lovingly



Family relationships must be built on the values of truth, compassion, understanding, peace, love and non-violence.

Communication - both verbal and non-verbal - is most important in fostering loving, supportive relationships among family members and a positive atmosphere at home. Children must understand that it is critical to tell the truth and do so pleasantly. As in everything, parents should be exemplary in their truthful, but pleasant communication.

Swami teaches us that the tongue is prone to two major faults - talking too much, and eating too much, prompted by the desire to enjoy food.

"Truth is man's long-treasured heritage. Truth sustains the world and protects mankind. It is at the basis of justice and morality, peace and purity, faith and freedom. It has to be revered and activated by man at all times, under all conditions. The Gita advises us to adopt "inoffensive speech, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial" (17- 15). In order to solve many problems that arise when one practices the sadhana of Truth, Manu directed man not to speak out unpleasant truth or pleasant falsehood. When it becomes necessary to reveal an unpleasant truth, one has to soften and sweeten its impact by consciously charging it with Love, sympathy, and understanding. "Help ever; hurt never" - that is the maxim.

...Man too has to learn this Truth and live accordingly, with the heart attuned to Truth and the Mind saturated with love. Speech must be the flow of Truth. Truth must be revered as one's very breath. The Triple purity - speech free from the pollution of falsehood, mind free from the taint of passionate desire or hatred, the body free from the poison of violence - has to be attained by all. "

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 18, ch. 26, 1985

"Sathya is the path. Dharma follows it. Prema is the experience. It is only then that ahimsa manifests. Himsa (violence) is not limited to harming or hurting others; acting contrary to one's words is also himsa. There can be no greater ahimsa than using our tongue in a sacred manner."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 39, ch. 5, 2006

Practical Pearls:

- Praise your child each time they tell the truth, even if the behavior they manifest has to be corrected.

- Talk about examples from your own life where you told the truth even though it was difficult, and the positive outcome that followed.
- Ask your child how they feel inside when they tell the truth vs. when they don't. Help them recognize the peace that comes with a clean conscience.
- Model constructive criticism and condemn bad behavior NOT the person.
- Emphasize the power of speech and the importance of using words kindly and lovingly.

6. Resolving Conflicts Constructively

Despite the best intentions of all in the household, conflicts will arise between siblings, between spouses, between parents and children, between grandparents and grandchildren. This is natural. However, Swami lovingly teaches us the importance of preventing disagreements by controlling the tongue, and resolving them by practicing love and understanding with each family member and by remembering the transient nature of conflicts. Active and careful listening is also a critical part of understanding each other and a fundamental way of showing love and respect and promoting harmony. Parents have the added responsibility of resolving their differences privately, so that children grow up with consistent positivity and are not burdened with conflicts between their parents.



“In order to promote harmony, the first rule you must follow is control of the tongue. Do not give all your thoughts immediate expression; select, ponder, and then, speak out. Speak softly, sweetly, without malice in your heart; speak as if you are addressing the Sai who resides in every one. Use the tongue to recite the Name Of the Lord; use the feet to go on pure and holy errands; use the heart to contain pure thoughts and feelings.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 5, ch. 15, 1965

“In some houses, parents quarrel in front of their children, which is an unhealthy practice. If there is any difference of opinion between parents, they should resolve it in the absence of their children. Children cannot concentrate on their studies if they are disturbed by family problems. So, parents should never discuss them in front of their children. They should instead teach them all good things and show them good ways of life.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 31, ch. 34, 1998

“All should be united and should lead a happy life with a feeling of camaraderie and fraternity. Unfortunately, today there is a feeling of difference even between a father and a son in the house. The wife and husband, the brothers and sisters, all quarrel among themselves. How can there be peace and happiness in the family? There may be differences of opinion, but they should not last for long. They just come and go like the passing clouds. Why should people fight among themselves? You should not mind these differences.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 41, ch. 18, 2008

Practical Pearls:

- Pause before responding in haste to something that bothers or provokes you. Drink a glass of water, walk away temporarily, take deep breaths, allow yourself to calm down a bit before speaking.
- Be conscious of your tone of voice when discussing a difference of opinion - take time to provide a brief explanation calmly.
- Apologize unhesitatingly when necessary!

7. Being Mindful Of Everyone At Home

Family members have the opportunity to comfort, console and encourage one another in difficult times. And correspondingly, we also carry the responsibility not to belittle, abuse or even ignore one another in the course of a disagreement or to bring down their morale and confidence. Children should feel safe to discuss their fears and concerns with their parents. Parents should encourage children to discuss anything that is of concern to them and be active listeners.

“The husband and wife should never hurt each other. If either of them commits a mistake, it should be gently brought to the individual’s notice for rectification. Harassing, abusing, and physical violence are bad practices. Never resort to them. If all of you live in unity and constantly contemplate on God, you will achieve purity.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 41, ch. 1, 2008

“You must always be happy and blissful. Sweet smile should dance on your lips. You should not put up a “castor oil face” under any circumstances. You must always be smiling. When others see you, they should also feel happy. Thus, you should always lead a happy and blissful life with a sweet smile on your face.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 39, ch. 12, 2006

Practical Pearls:

- Always smile and be happy
- Spread positivity at home
- Set aside time at home to “unplug” from social media and focus on in-person “face time”.
- Plan family outings and/or game time to foster unity in your family and to have fun!

Discussion Scenario:

You come home from work and find your spouse in an angry mood. What would you do?

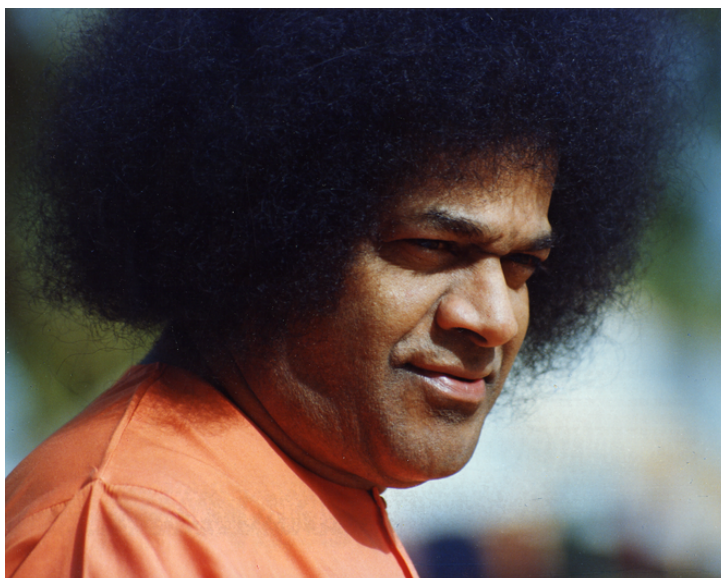
- A. Keep away and avoid interaction.
- B. Slowly assume the same mood and interact in a brusque way.
- C. Ask gently what is the cause and try to acknowledge and listen.
- D. Other

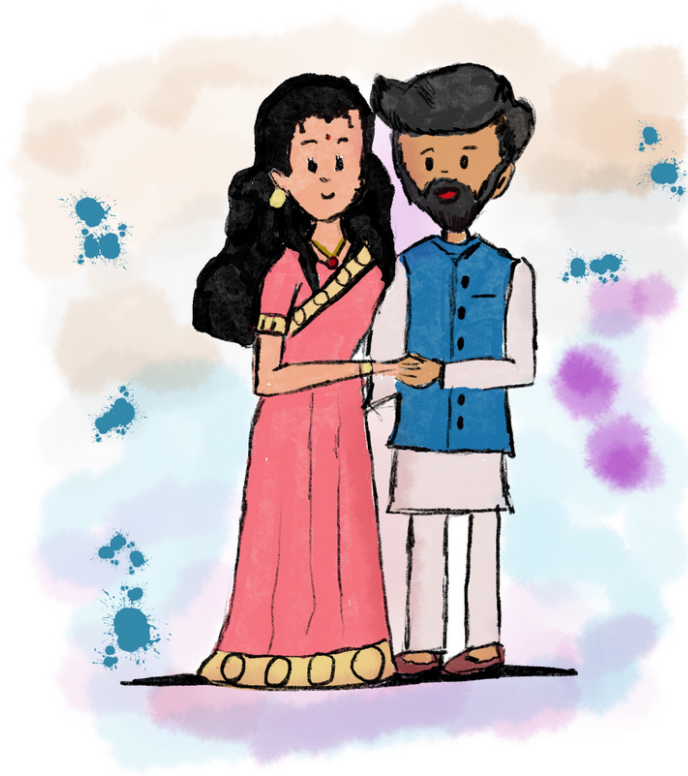
What practices from this module do you think would help in this situation?

General Links:

Nine-Point Code of Conduct and Ten Guiding Principles:

<https://sssgc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Operational-Guidelines-May-2022.pdf> (page 23)





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