



IACN QUARTERLY

ISSUE 19

Hello,

Dear All,

We are pleased to share with you the 19th edition of the *IACN Quarterly*, which continues to highlight developments, experiences, and resources in the field of child protection, family strengthening, and alternative care. This issue is theme-specific, and the theme for this issue is "Parenting".

This edition brings together diverse perspectives and learning resources for practitioners, policymakers, and communities. The *Updates from the Field* section showcases innovative parenting approaches, family-based care models, sponsorship initiatives, and trauma-informed practices that strengthen families and prevent unnecessary institutionalisation. Success stories of reintegration and resilience underline the importance of parental presence and community engagement in nurturing children.

The *Perspectives* segment features thought-provoking articles on shifting from harsh parenting to positive discipline, building communities of informed parents, and the power of emotionally attuned caregiving.

Knowledge resources include policy briefs, research on care leavers, caregiver well-being, and global news updates. This issue also features an interview with an academician on parenting in the digital age.

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who contributed to this issue of the IACN Quarterly. If you wish to share any resources, information, or articles for the IACN website or Quarterly, please write to us at: iacnsecretariat@iacn.in.

Sincerely,
IACN Secretariat

Knowledge Resources

Information and Knowledge Resources on Alternative Care

A Star so Near yet so Far..... Stories of Careleavers from India - **By Aide et Action**
<https://iacn.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/STARS-Stories-of-Careleavers.pdf>

A Brief Mapping of Policy, Discourse, Law & Practices on Aftercare for Neo-Adults In India - **By Aide et Action**
<https://iacn.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/A-Brief-Mapping-of-Policy-Discourse-Law-Practices-on-Aftercare-for-Neo-Adults-in-India-1.pdf>

Compassion for the Caregivers: An Indian Perspective on the Burnout of Caregivers in Child Care Institutions - **By Udayan Care**
<https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/92780/>

Global Monthly News Wrap Up & Resources on Family Strengthening and Alternative Care - **By Udayan Care**
<https://www.udayan-care.org/content/newsletter-alternative-care>

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Commentary, Analysis and Insights

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By Priti Patkar, Co-Founder & Director & Rashmi Taylor, Consultant, MEL & Grant Management, Prerana
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Building Connection and Healing Trauma: Innovative Parenting Approaches
By Lena Dasgupta Basu & Dr. Santwana Adhikari, Child in Need Institute (CINI)

Parenting Without a Past: Healing Invisible Wounds & Nurturing Trust in Foster Care
By Mayur Chourasiya, Consultant Psychologist, Foster Care Society

The Role of Parenting and Emotional Presence
By Syed Asima Ali, Counsellor, Human Welfare Voluntary Organization (HWVO)

Parenting from the Heart: A Family's Journey of Reunion and Resilience
By Praveen Gonsalves, Program Officer – Family-Based Care, Anmol Tangudhama, Karnataka

Udayan Care's Trauma-Informed Ecosystem: Nurturing Resilience Through Holistic Family Strengthening Models
By Dr. Gurneet K. Kalra, Manager, Udayan Care

Parenting on the Edge: Rebuilding Families and Preventing Unnecessary Separations
By Haris Arshid Shah, District Coordinator, Human Welfare Voluntary Organisation (HWVO)

Capacity Building Training "Bio-Psychosocial Perspective on Trauma-Informed Care for Children"
By India Alternative Care Network, Protsahan India Foundation & Saathii

First-Person

Interview with Children, Young Adults and Care Leavers and Practitioners different Care Settings

Interview with Dr. Mamta Chauhan

For Every Child, A Family



Knowledge Resource

A Star so Near yet so Far..... Stories of Careleavers from India

<https://iacn.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/STARS-Stories-of-Careleavers.pdf>

By Aide et Action

It is with immense pride and heartfelt gratitude that *Aide et Action*, in partnership with UNICEF, presents this powerful book — a collection of inspiring stories shared by care leavers across India. These narratives reflect not only the individual journeys of courage and transformation but also the collective voice of a community often overlooked. Each story is a testament to the resilience, strength,

and determination of young people who spent their childhoods in institutional care, growing up without the warmth and security of a family.

From the remote villages of Assam, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh to the vibrant cities of Delhi and Mumbai, care leavers across the country face a turning point at age eighteen — a moment when the support of childhood ends and the struggle for independent adulthood begins. Their experiences highlight the urgent need

for systemic change — where access to education, employment, housing, and emotional support are guaranteed rights, not privileges.

At *Aide et Action*, we believe in the transformative power of stories to bring change. This book is more than a collection of voices; it is a call to action. Let us come together to recognize, support, and stand with care leavers, ensuring they have the opportunities and dignity they truly deserve.

A Brief Mapping of Policy, Discourse, Law & Practices on Aftercare for Neo-Adults In India

<https://iacn.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/A-Brief-Mapping-of-Policy-Discourse-Law-Practices-on-Aftercare-for-Neo-Adults-in-India-1.pdf>

By Aide et Action

India's child protection system has progressed considerably, yet a major gap remains in supporting young adults who exit institutional care at age 18. These individuals, often referred to as "care leavers," face the daunting challenge of transitioning to independent life without adequate social, emotional, or financial support. In response, Aide et Action, in collaboration with UNICEF, has launched efforts to strengthen aftercare by enabling the formation

of SAARTHI—an independent, youth-led Association of Indian Careleavers. For SAARTHI to be effective and sustainable, it must be grounded in the lived realities and evolving needs of care-experienced youth, supported by an enabling policy environment. To assess existing frameworks, a detailed study of laws, schemes, and operational structures—particularly the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, Mission Vatsalya, and the PM CARES scheme—was conducted. The findings highlight

inconsistencies in terminology, a lack of legal clarity, operational bottlenecks, and insufficient attention to mental health and disability concerns. This policy brief presents key recommendations for systemic reform aimed at establishing a comprehensive, rights-based aftercare ecosystem.

This brief has been authored by Shri. Anant Kumar Asthana, a noted child rights lawyer, to inform and influence national-level policy discussions and advocate for meaningful aftercare support across India.

Compassion for the Caregivers: An Indian Perspective on the Burnout of Caregivers in Child Care Institutions

<https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/92780/>

By Udayan Care

A paper titled *"Compassion for the Caregivers: An Indian Perspective on the Burnout of Caregivers in Child Care Institutions"* authored by: Ms.

Akansha Arora, Dr Gurneet Kalra and Dr. Kiran Modi, was published in Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care (Vol. 24, No. 1). This paper examines the lived experiences of caregivers in India's Community

Care Institutions (CCIs), the pressing issue of caregiver burnout, and the role of capacity building in providing care in India, and the importance of empowering caregivers to improve outcomes for children.

Global Monthly News Wrap Up & Resources on Family Strengthening and Alternative Care

<https://www.udayancare.org/content/newsletter-alternative-care>

By Udayan Care

This comprehensive newsletter captures the latest developments in the areas of family strengthening and alternative care covering

General Alternative Care News, categorized by India, Asia, and international regions; a **Resources** section featuring new publications, toolkits, and policy briefs; and **Young Voices in the Media**, spotlighting

personal stories and perspectives from youth with lived experiences. We also highlight **Opportunities and Events**, including calls for papers, upcoming conferences, and relevant initiatives.



Perspectives

Communities of Informed Parents – A Game Changer in Strengthening and Prevention

By Ian Forber - Pratt,
Deputy Executive Director,
Children's Emergency Relief
International (CERI)

Hello Readers,

If you've been following previous perspective articles myself and others have written in this newsletter, you know we've been on a shared journey through the evolving landscape of child protection. For a long time, the prevailing wisdom, often driven by well-meaning but ultimately flawed approaches, was centered on removal. Kids were taken from their families – families who, tragically, were often vilified as criminals – and placed in institutions. These institutions, staffed by good people (and sometimes, unfortunately, by not-so-good people), provided basic needs: food, shelter, and survival. But as we've come to understand, this institutionalization, this severing from society, inflicted immeasurable and often irreparable harm across generations.

The global field of child protection then began a necessary, albeit complex, pivot. The focus shifted to getting children *out* of institutions. In many places, this transition was fraught with challenges. It was often too fast or lacked adequate planning. Children and families, unprepared for the complexities of reintegration, fell through the cracks. Systems, accustomed to the structured environment of institutions, struggled to pivot to the messy, nuanced, and infinitely more complicated but ultimately better way of caring for kids: within their communities.

So, we moved from serving individual children to serving entire families. This shift, born of good intentions, is still very much a work in progress in nearly every country. Good people are working tirelessly to figure it out, to build robust family services that support children to thrive in their own homes.

But here's where i believe one of the crucial missing pieces lies. Without parents being truly informed and

empowered owners of this process, without them understanding the profound impact of their parenting choices, children, families, and communities don't stand a fighting chance. Why? Let's consider a plausible case study.

Imagine a government and a local organization teaming up to case manage a sibling group recently reintegrated into their community after three years in an institution. The family receives some financial support and case management, and initially, in the honeymoon period of return, things go smoothly. Two months pass, and the children, naturally, start acting like children. They push boundaries, they test their parents' limits. The parents, loving individuals but without formal education in modern parenting techniques, revert to the only way they know – the way they were raised. They use fear, intimidation, and physical correction. Are they bad parents? Not at all; it's simply all they know.

But what if they knew, for instance, that a child who acts out at home, pushing boundaries, is often a child who feels safe enough to do so, precisely *because* they are secure in their home environment? Research supports this idea, indicating that children's challenging behaviors often serve as a form of communication, and feeling safe and secure at home allows them to express emotions they might suppress elsewhere (e.g., in school). Or what if they understood that a balance of clear expectations and logical consequences is the "secret sauce" to positive behavior and maintaining family cohesion? Contemporary research on positive parenting consistently highlights the effectiveness of responsive caregiving, clear communication, and consistent, non-punitive discipline in fostering positive child development and secure attachment (Sanvictores T, Mendez MD, 2022) emphasize the benefits of warmth and clear boundaries). With this knowledge, they could keep their family together, building stronger, healthier relationships.

However, that's not even the biggest win. The biggest win happens when you have a critical mass of informed parents within a community. It literally changes the game. Here are three ways in which a community of informed parents becomes a powerful force for strengthening and prevention:

1. It Fosters a Culture of Supportive Peer Learning and Collective Efficacy: When a significant number of parents in a community are equipped with evidence-informed parenting knowledge, a powerful ripple effect begins. Parents start sharing strategies, offering encouragement, and normalizing the challenges and triumphs of raising children. This creates a powerful peer support network that reduces isolation and stigma. Research consistently shows that peer support for parents builds social connections, enhances self-

efficacy, and empowers parents to feel more competent in their caregiving roles (Kids First Services, 2025). Furthermore, this widespread understanding contributes to what sociologists call "collective efficacy"—the shared belief among community members in their ability to organize and exert informal social control. When parents collectively understand and apply positive parenting principles, it can lead to a reduction in problematic child behaviors across the community (Sampson et al., 1997, 2002; Ingoldsby et al., 2006, though some of this research predates 2020, the foundational concepts remain relevant and are often cited in more recent studies focusing on the importance of multilevel interventions). This collective commitment to positive parenting creates a stronger, more supportive environment for all children.

2. It Enables Early Identification and Proactive Intervention, Reducing the Need for Formal Child Protection Involvement: Informed parents are more attuned to their children's developmental needs and behavioral cues. They are more likely to recognize early signs of distress or challenging behaviors and, crucially, understand that these are often calls for support rather than indicators of inherent "badness." This informed perspective allows them to seek appropriate help early on, whether it's through community-based services, peer networks, or professional guidance, before issues escalate to the point of requiring formal child protection intervention. Studies by Casey Family Programs (2025) emphasize that access to tangible resources and community-based support services, which informed parents are more likely to seek out, can prevent family separation and reduce the risk of subsequent

abuse or neglect. When parents are empowered to access and utilize these resources, it creates a buffer that strengthens families "upstream," keeping children out of the formal system.

3. It Breaks Intergenerational Cycles of Harm and Promotes Sustainable Family Well-being:

The unfortunate reality is that many parents involved with child protection systems were themselves exposed to adverse childhood experiences, including institutionalization or harmful parenting practices. Without intervention and new knowledge, these cycles can perpetuate. However, when communities prioritize and facilitate access to evidence-informed parenting education, they empower parents to consciously break these cycles. Learning about responsive caregiving, emotional regulation, and effective discipline provides parents with the tools to respond to their children in ways that differ from their own upbringing. Research shows that mothers who received emotional support and participated in therapy were significantly more likely to break the cycle of abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 1988, while older, the concept of breaking cycles through support is consistently supported by more recent research on protective factors). By equipping parents with knowledge and skills, we not only protect the current generation but also lay the groundwork for healthier, more resilient future generations, ultimately reducing the strain on already stretched formal child protection mechanisms.

In essence, shifting our focus to building communities of informed parents isn't just about individual family well-being; it's a strategic investment in the fabric of our society. It's about empowering parents to be the primary protectors and nurturers

their children deserve, breaking devastating cycles, and ultimately reducing the heartbreaking need for formal child protection interventions. When communities embrace informed parenting, we create a powerful, self-sustaining ecosystem where children can truly thrive, and the future of our societies looks much brighter.

Citations:

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Why Every Child Deserves a Home Without Fear: Shifting from Harsh Parenting to Family Strengthening

By Priti Patkar,
Co-Founder & Director &

Rashmi Taylor, Consultant
MEL & Grant Management, Prerana

Introduction: The Meaning of a Safe Home

For a child, home should be the safest place in the world. But sadly, many children grow up in homes where they are afraid- afraid of being hit, shouted at, or ignored. In families facing poverty, trauma, or social struggles, parenting becomes harder, and sometimes harsh discipline feels like the only option.

On the International Day of Families 2025, Prerana hosted a conversation on LinkedIn with child protection workers, social workers, parents, and mental health experts. They spoke honestly about one key question:

What does it take to create homes where children feel safe, heard, and loved- not fearful?

The Harm of Parenting with Fear

In many homes, harsh parenting is seen as normal or necessary. Caregivers may believe they are teaching children discipline, but what children feel is fear and hurt.

Experts like **Amrapali Mukherjee** and **Priti Patkar** shared what they've seen in their work:

- Children develop anxiety, anger, or completely shut down.
- They struggle to form trusting relationships.
- They feel worthless and unable to manage their emotions.
- Some repeat the same harsh parenting when they grow up.

As one participant said: *"Fear makes children quiet, but safety gives them a voice."*

Why Safe Homes Matter for Every Child

Home is where children first learn about the world. If it is a place of fear:

- Children hide their mistakes instead of learning from them.
- They search for love and safety elsewhere, sometimes in dangerous places.
- They lose confidence in themselves.

As **Urmila Jadhav**, a member of the Juvenile Justice Board, shared- some children she met on the streets said they left home because it felt safer outside than inside.

A Solution: Positive Discipline

The group discussed **positive discipline** as a better way to guide children. It is

not about letting children do whatever they want. Instead, it's about setting clear rules with kindness and respect.

Positive discipline means:

- Explaining why a behavior is wrong.
- Helping children learn how to make better choices.
- Solving problems together instead of punishing.
- Responding calmly instead of reacting angrily.

As **Mansi Gohil** from Prerana explained, sometimes something as simple as taking a deep breath before speaking can stop a fight from happening.

Parents Need Help, Not Blame

A big message from the chat was this: most parents aren't harsh because they don't care. They are overwhelmed, tired, and doing their best with what they know. Many parents have:

- Financial problems.
- Mental health struggles.
- Single-handed caregiving without help.
- Their own painful childhood experiences.

As **Nicole Rangel**, **Pooja Yadav**, and **Tasha Koshi** reminded us—parents need support to learn new ways of

caring, not judgment. Without help, it's easy to repeat what they themselves experienced as children.

The Law Also Protects Children from Violence

It's important to remember that harsh discipline is not only harmful, it is also against the law. In India, laws like the **Juvenile Justice Act**, **POCSO Act**, and the **Right to Education Act** protect children from violence, even in their own homes and schools.

But as **Himanshu Gupta** explained, simply telling parents about the law is not enough. What works better is:

- Explaining in simple words why hitting is harmful.
- Sharing real-life examples that parents can relate to.
- Using trusted voices from the community to spread the message.

As **Ragamala R. Datta** said, "*Laws tell us what's right, but conversations change hearts.*"

Prerana's Family Strengthening Approach: Supporting Families Before They Break

For years, Prerana has been working in Mumbai's red-light areas and other vulnerable communities, helping families stay together safely. Their **Family-Based Care Program** supports children who are at risk of:

- Separation from their families due to neglect or poverty.
- Violence or abuse.
- Developmental harm because of a lack of resources.

Key parts of Prerana's work include:

- **Keeping children with their families** whenever safe, rather than sending them to institutions.

- **Helping families access mental health care, financial aid, and community support.**
- **Training parents and community leaders** on positive parenting and child rights.
- **Case management**, where social workers create and follow a detailed plan for each child's safety and well-being.

Prerana's model is **child-focused, family-centered, and strengths-based**, meaning they look for what a family does well and build on that, instead of focusing only on what's wrong.

Practical Tools for Positive Parenting

Several useful tools and approaches were discussed in the chat:

- **Reflective Sharing Circles:** Safe spaces where parents can talk about their struggles without being judged (**Tasha Koshi**).
- **The ACT Parenting Tool:** Helps parents and children understand each other's emotions (**Mansi Gohil**).
- **Non-Violent Communication:** Teaching parents how to pause and listen instead of reacting in anger (**Himanshu Gupta**).
- **Simple Routines:** Like bedtime habits or family rules, which help children feel safe and know what

to expect.

- **Self-Care for Parents:** As **Pooja Yadav** shared, even 10 minutes a day to rest or reflect helps parents regain patience.

The Community's Role in Keeping Families Safe

Parents cannot do this alone. Child safety is everyone's responsibility.

As **Chiranjeeb Kakoty** and others explained, families need help from:

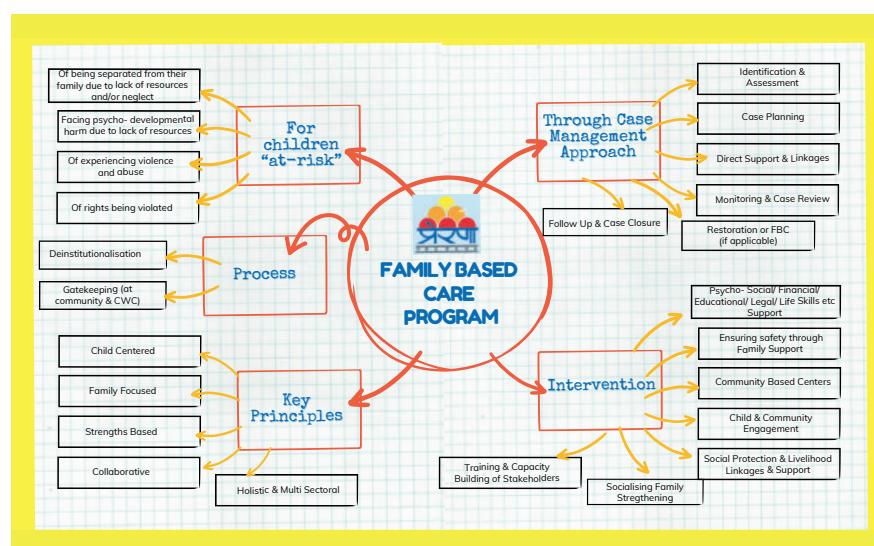
- Child protection groups and schools that teach non-violence.
- Neighbors and relatives who support parents, not shame them.
- Media and social platforms that promote kindness and empathy.

When families, communities, and systems work together, children thrive.

A Story of Change

The team from **ART UC (Udayan Care)** shared a hopeful story of a family during COVID-19. A father, struggling with job loss and frustration, was helped through counseling and community support. Slowly, his relationship with his children improved. His youngest, who had stopped going to school, began learning and smiling again.

This shows that, with support, change is possible even in the hardest times.



Every Child Deserves a Home Without Fear

The conversations on the International Day of Families 2025 reminded us all:

- Children have a right to feel safe at home.
- They deserve to be guided with care, not controlled with fear.
- Parents do their best, but they need support to break harmful cycles.

Positive parenting is not a luxury. It is protection. It is the child's right! And when homes are safe, whole communities are stronger.

Conclusion: A Shared Responsibility

Making homes safe is not just a parent's job. It is a community responsibility.

Schools, governments, health services, neighbors, and child protection agencies must work together.

As one participant beautifully said: *"Healing begins when we listen*

without judgment. Safety begins when we respond with care."

Let's work towards a world where **every child, in every home, feels safe, valued, and free to grow without fear.**

Acknowledging the Voices Who Made this Possible

This conversation was enriched by the voices of:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priti Patkar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smriti Mishra
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amrapali Mukherjee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART Udayan Care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Florence Koenderink	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarita Shankaran
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nicole Rangel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Miracle Foundation India
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chiranjeeb Kakoty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rashmi Taylor
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ragamala R. Datta	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> India Alternative Care Network (IACN)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tasha Koshi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indian Association for Promotion of Adoption and Child Welfare (IAPA)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Himanshu Gupta	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pooja Yadav	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mansi Gohil	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urmila Jadhav	



And many more parents and practitioners who shared their stories and wisdom.

Parenting with Presence

By Asoni Grace,

Project Coordinator- Advocacy, Research and Training, Udayan Care

Parenting with presence isn't about always being physically available or getting everything right. It's about being emotionally attuned offering our attention, even in small moments, and responding with empathy and awareness. In the context of our work with families through the **fit families together*** project of Udayan Care, I've seen how a presence of an adult figure in a child's life can be a quiet yet powerful act of love and for the child to thrive, especially for parents facing economic and emotional stress, choosing to pause, listen, and connect despite life's pressures can shift the entire emotional landscape of a child's world. Through this piece, I would like to explore how being emotionally and mentally *present* (not just physically around) can nurture emotionally secure, resilient children and, just maybe, saner adults (us included).

Working together with families on the FiT Families Together project, we often find ourselves sitting with families who love their children fiercely, but for whom 'being present' is a daily battle against time, poverty, and survival. The theory of "emotionally attuned parenting" meets a very different kind of reality here, ranging from daily wages to shared rooms, and the unrelenting demands of urban poverty. So how do we talk about "parenting with presence" in these contexts? How do we speak of "parenting with presence" in a context where presence itself feels like a privilege?

We are focusing on what *is* possible, encouraging small but meaningful shifts in everyday routines. Through regular positive parenting sessions, we aimed to provide safe, non-judgmental spaces for parents to pause, reflect, and share their experiences and challenges. These sessions aren't just about giving advice; they're about co-

creating pathways for connection. Together, we explore how even a few minutes of listening, a gentle tone, or a shared story can change the emotional climate at home and we also talk about bonding, attachment styles, and the power of routine interactions like a mother who once said, "My child never listens to me," but later reflected, "Now I understand how I can really listen to him first." Or another mother, who initially struggled with trust in her relationship with her child, but over time, found that her trust in the project space became a bridge for rebuilding trust at home.

Take, for instance, *Sangeeta, a mother of three who works as a domestic worker and often returns home exhausted. In one of the sessions, she shared how she began setting aside just ten minutes before bedtime to chat with her children about their day. "Earlier I used to say I had no time," she said, "but now my children wait for*

that time we talk, laugh, and it feels like we're closer."

Another such story is that of Pinky Devi, a single mother from East Delhi. After losing her husband, Pinky struggled to raise her 12-year-old daughter, Natasha, amidst mounting stress and isolation. As Natasha became withdrawn and emotionally distressed, Pinky often responded with frustration until she started participating in regular parenting sessions on emotional regulation, non-violent communication, and stress management. Pinky learned to listen with empathy, share parts of her day, and connect with her daughter more intentionally. In time, Natasha became more open, emotionally stable, and re-engaged with school.

These everyday stories from the communities we work with remind us that parenting with presence doesn't always require more time or money, it requires awareness, intention, empathy, and the willingness to truly show up, again and again. And that's exactly what we aim to nurture through our Positive Parenting domain, one of the **10 domains of Circle of Care and Protection***.

Research from the WHO (2021) underscores the link between emotionally supportive parenting and long-term mental health outcomes. But honestly, you don't need a peer-reviewed study to notice the difference between a child who feels emotionally safe and one who doesn't but I believe that you can see it in their eyes, their body language and their trust.

What the theorists have been telling us (forever)

- John Bowlby (Attachment Theory): Secure early bonds = emotionally stable adults. It's that simple (and that hard).
- Albert Bandura (Social Learning Theory): Your child is always

watching you. What are they binge-learning today?

- Ryan & Deci (Self-Determination Theory): Kids need autonomy, competence, and connection. Helicoptering may not help.
- Murray Bowen (Family Systems Theory): Kids reflect the emotional climate of the family. Your anxiety may just be contagious.
- Bronfenbrenner (Ecological Theory): Your child isn't just shaped by you but by school, society, social media, and the aunt next door.

Children are usually perceived extensions of the family's reputation. Within this, emotional needs can be overshadowed by academic expectations, moral teachings, or "what will people say" syndrome. But change is stirring. In schools, NGOs, even WhatsApp parenting groups, there's a growing openness to conversations around mental health, child rights, and respectful discipline.

The challenge? Balancing tradition with transformation. Parenting with presence does not require a rejection of cultural values but it demands we humanize them. Can we respect elders and validate a child's feelings?

From what I've observed and learned throughout, what children (we) remember isn't how tidy their rooms were or how many marks they got, it's who listened to them when they were scared, who hugged them when they messed up, who allowed them to cry, and still stayed close.

So, whether you're a parent, a teacher, a mentor, practitioner or a community worker, your presence matters. Your attention matters. In fact, in a world full of distractions, it may be the most radical thing you can offer. And if we get this right, perhaps the next generation won't just survive, they'll thrive.

* *FiT Families Together, is a community-based family strengthening project of Udayan Care, where we support families, whose children have been restored from Child Care Institutions. We work on both preventive and reintegrative aspects to ensure every child can grow up in a loving, safe, and supportive environment under the 10 domains of the Circle of Care and Protection. The project is currently active in South, Southeast, and East districts of Delhi.*

*10 domains of Circle of Care and Protection viz Basic Need & Safety, Household Finances, Physical Health, Mental Health, Education and Vocation, Child Self- Awareness, Community and Social Connections, Legal Entitlements, Positive Parenting and, Hope & Faith, an indigenously developed framework to meet the needs of the community and ensure a proper reintegration process and support families extensively to ensure holistic development as a unit to prevent the risk of child separation through

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Updates from the Fields

Building Connection and Healing Trauma: Innovative Parenting Approaches

By Lena Dasgupta Basu &

Dr. Santwana Adhikari

Child in Need Institute (CINI)

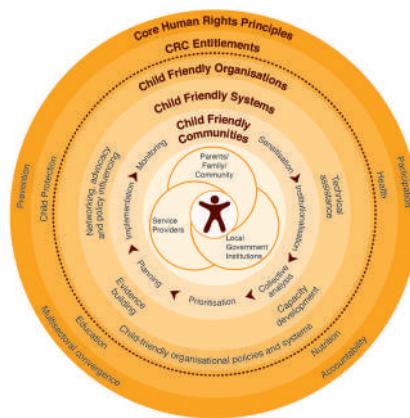
Introduction:

CINI is part of the Steering Committee as well as of working groups of India Alternative Care Network (IACN) and aims to build *Child Friendly Communities* where all children up to 18 years of age, irrespective of their socio-economic, cultural, gender, ability or other status can fulfil their rights to survive, be healthy, develop to their full potential, be protected and cared for and participate in decision-making processes that shape their lives. It seeks to strengthen partnerships between children, their parents and communities, service providers and local self-government bodies (urban and rural) for implementing children's rights. Among the core strategies, CINI follows 'gatekeeping and family strengthening' by rolling out CINI's Preventive Child Protection Model, which aims at preventing family separation, avoiding institutionalisation and promoting prompt restoration.

Many families are unable to support and care for their children owing to numerous limitations that pushes the family and child into a vulnerable position and often leading to family separation. Similarly, children, who have gravitated away from their homes and have landed up in the child care institutions, languish there and wait to be restored. CINI believes that family is the best place for a child and that institutionalization is a measure of last resort. Thus, CINI's preventive child protection model aims at averting any form of separation of children from their families by addressing the root-causes of child neglect, abuse and exploitation. It includes the adoption of mechanisms that reduce over-reliance on institutionalisation, at one end, and enhancement of family-based care or alternative family-based care, on the other. It applies a triage process seeking to identify solutions tailor made to each child. The overarching principle guiding CINI's child protection approach is the best interests of the child.

As a learning organization, CINI has experienced that the children thrive more holistically and healthily within

a family setting, especially when they are cared for, nurtured, supported, and raised by their parents or, in the absence of biological parents, by other loving and responsible adults in the family who take on the parental role.



Parenting in foster care: developmental psychology lens:

In the context of foster care, traditional parenting models often prove insufficient due to the complex trauma histories children bring with them. Research directs towards a trauma-informed and attachment-centered approach to caregiving in such homes. Trauma-informed parenting

frameworks, such as those proposed by Bath (2008) and implemented through interventions like the Resource Parent Curriculum (Grillo, Lott, & Foster Care Workgroup, 2015), emphasize safety, emotional regulation, and connection with children. These models prioritize understanding the neurobiological effects of trauma on behaviour and encouraging caregivers to respond with empathy. Subsequently, such training increases foster parents' confidence and effectiveness while reducing placement disruptions (Leve et al., 2012).

Additionally, attachment-based parenting models focus on relational repair in the relationship between the child and foster parent. The Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) programme, developed by Marvin, Cooper, Hoffman, and Powell (2002), teaches caregivers to recognize and respond to children's attachment needs with sensitivity and consistency. Similarly, the Attachment and Bio-behavioral Catch-Up (ABC) intervention, pioneered by Dozier et al. (2006), has shown significant positive outcomes in enhancing secure attachment behaviours among foster children.

Alternatively, foster parents can practise a range of intentional, evidence-based strategies at home to support the emotional and relational needs of children in their care. These parents can establish a daily routine for meals, bedtime, school and all transitions build a sense of stability and safety (Bath, 2008). Labelling emotions and validating a child's feelings- is another area where these parents can build emotional regulation and resilience, often underdeveloped in children with relational trauma (Gottman et al., 1996). Instead of time-outs, the caregiver is suggested to remain present and co-regulate with the child during emotional distress. Given the importance of repair after conflict, caregivers can model apology, emotional reflection and reassurance

to strengthen relational bonds (Marvin et al., 2002). To co-create a caregiving and responsive environment for children's elements such as safe touch, reflective listening and use of calming sensory tools become crucial. These practices represent a paradigm shift from correctional behaviour to relational healing by rewriting internal narratives of young children shaped by loss, distrust and instability.



REAL Father: A Community based parenting initiative of Child in Need Institute

The Responsible, Engaged, and Loving (REAL) Fathers Initiative was designed in 2013 through formative research and collaboration with communities in Northern Uganda. This initiative was a collaborative partnership between Child in Need Institute (CINI), India, and IRH (Institute of Reproductive Health), USA, under the Passages Project in 2020. Originally developed and evaluated as a pilot programme to prevent harsh discipline of young children and intimate partner violence, REAL engages young fathers between the ages of 16 and 25 who have children between 1 and 3 years of age. This transition point in the Diamond Harbour District in West Bengal and Cachar and Dhubri Districts in Assam brought an opportunity in their lives to discuss and engage with different ideas and behaviours and to develop skills for nurturing their relationships for their children and family.

Men in the community are identified by fathers, their partners, and other community members to become mentors. These mentors participate

in training and guide young fathers through home and group visits. This mentoring programme aims to increase positive father-child interactions and to improve the couple's relationship through a series of home visits and group meetings.

There is a total of seven themes in the discussion guide: Fatherhood, How to Be a REAL Father, Family Dreams, Loving My Family, Communication, Family Planning, and Parenting.

The REAL Fathers Initiative is unique as it focuses on fathers and addresses issues such as intimate partner violence, while strengthening the bond between fathers and their children. Hence, it was highly appreciated by stakeholders, participants, and family members.

Substance addiction prevalence was high in the area where the initiative was piloted in Diamond Harbour, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. It was observed that after the study, local people and participants praised the initiative as it gave them a purpose to live a life free from negative influences. It was also observed that people in the surrounding areas became genuinely interested in enrolling themselves and their family members in this initiative.

Conclusion

Both foster care and community-based parenting initiatives like the REAL Fathers Initiative highlight the profound impact of nurturing, trauma-informed, and relationally focused caregiving. In both contexts, the role of a parent or caregiver goes beyond providing basic needs; it involves understanding the child's developmental and emotional needs, fostering trust, and building secure connections. By prioritising safety, empathy, and emotional attachment, these approaches enable children and families to heal from trauma and build resilience. Together, they underscore a vital shift in the understanding of parenting — from

traditional, punitive methods toward practices that nurture belonging, emotional wellbeing, and a hopeful future for every child.



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Parenting Without a Past: Healing Invisible Wounds & Nurturing Trust in Foster Care

By Mayur Chourasiya,
Consultant Psychologist,
Foster Care Society

Introduction

What does it mean to welcome a child into your home who looks away when you smile, flinches when you adjust their collar, or goes silent when spoken to? This is often the beginning of foster parenting, not a journey built on memories but on patience, trust, and emotional repair. Unlike traditional parenting, foster care doesn't begin with shared rituals or family legacies. It begins with trauma but can bloom into healing when caregivers show up not as saviors, but as consistent, compassionate humans.

Understanding the Emotional Landscape of Foster Parenting

Children in foster care often carry invisible wounds. Many struggles with mistrust, emotional dysregulation, and social withdrawal. As a result, foster parents may encounter resistance, aggression, or emotionally numbs responses that stem from early trauma, not defiance.

In such contexts, conventional parenting strategies may fall short. What's needed is **trauma-informed, empathy-led care** that meets the child where they are emotionally and developmentally.

Routine and Joy: Building Security and Connection

"Routine is reassurance, and joy is glue."

Children from disrupted environments find safety in structure. Predictable daily routines from shared meals to bedtime rituals offers a sense of control and belonging. But **attachment is not built on routine alone; it's built on shared joy**.

Simple rituals like painting together, preparing meals, or Friday night storytelling can anchor children emotionally. These routines help form a **relational rhythm** one that communicates, *"You matter. You're safe. I'm here."*

Beyond Trauma: Strength-Based Parenting Approaches

Healing doesn't only happen through fixing wounds; it also happens through **nurturing strengths**. Foster parenting

National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

4. Marvin, R. S., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Powell, B. (2002). The Circle of Security project: Attachment-based intervention with caregiver-pre-school child dyads. *Attachment & Human Development*, 4(1), 107–124.
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that embraces **positive identity development** helps children see themselves as more than their past.

Suggestions:

- **Celebrate small victories** ("You stayed calm during a hard moment.")
- **Use growth mindset language** ("You're learning how to handle big feelings.")
- **Support creative self-expression** (art, journaling, dance) to explore identity safely.

Trauma-Informed Practices: Responding, Not Reacting

"Healing takes time, not demands."

Understanding trauma responses (fight, flight, freeze) allows caregivers to respond with compassion, not control. Children who have experienced trauma may misread neutral cues as threats, leading to outbursts or withdrawal.

In such moments, tools like **emotion cards, feeling thermometers**, deep breathing routines, or simply **validating statements** ("I can see you're upset. I'm here.") can help calm the nervous system and restore a sense of safety. These strategies help children build

emotional awareness and regulation without escalating conflict.

Research supports these interventions: trauma-informed parenting reduces behavioural disruptions and fosters secure attachment (Perry, 2017: 45).

Parenting Styles that Promote Emotional Growth

“Connection before correction.”

While trauma-informed care emphasizes emotional safety, the **parenting style** adopted plays a pivotal role in shaping healing outcomes. Among these, **democratic parenting** stands out for its emphasis on **empathy, consistency, respectful boundaries, and collaborative decision-making**.

Unlike authoritarian approaches that demand obedience, democratic parenting fosters autonomy, mutual respect, and emotional attunement are essential qualities for children recovering from early relational trauma.

Case Illustration: Vasni’s Journey with Democratic Parenting

Vasni, a 10-year-old girl in foster care, initially showed emotional withdrawal, irritability, and difficulty communicating. Her foster parents

felt unsure wondering if her behaviour reflected defiance or deeper distress.

Through guided sessions, they were introduced to **democratic parenting**, A style that blends structure with emotional connection. With professional support, including activity planning and reinforcement tools, they shifted their approach to focus on connection, choice, and collaboration.

They began to:

- **Hold nightly check-ins** to explore her emotions: “What was hard or happy today?”
- **Use validating language:** “I see you’re upset. It’s okay to feel that way.”
- **Invite autonomy:** Letting her choose her bedtime book or weekend activity.
- **Reinforce positive behaviours** using a star chart (e.g., “talking calmly” or “sharing a feeling”).
- **Create a calm corner** for self-regulation and reflective pauses.

Over 4-5 Session, Vasni showed greater emotional openness, began expressing her needs more clearly, and developed healthier anger regulation. Her sense of **agency and safety** grew **hallmarks of a democratic parenting environment**.

Supporting the Parent: Avoiding Burnout, Embracing Joy

Foster parenting is emotionally rich and emotionally taxing. Without regular support, many caregivers’ experience burnout, guilt, or helplessness. This can lead to placement disruptions and emotional distress for both caregiver and child.

Protective Measures:

- Peer support groups
- Access to trauma-informed counsellors
- Respite care and routine emotional check-ins
- Recognition and space to celebrate joy, not just manage crisis

Conclusion

Foster parenting begins without a shared past but it holds the power to shape a child’s future. With a blend of **trauma-informed care, joyful rituals, strength-focused strategies, and support systems for caregivers**, foster families can offer more than shelter. They can offer **safety, belonging, and healing**.

When foster parents are equipped and supported, children don’t just survive their past but they begin to dream again.

The Role of Parenting and Emotional Presence

By Syed Asima Ali,
Counsellor, Human Welfare Voluntary Organization (HWVO)

“Behind every child who believes in himself is a parent who believed first.”

Parenting is often misunderstood as simply fulfilling a child’s basic needs—like food, shelter, and clothing. However, real parenting transcends material care and lies deeply rooted in emotional

presence. It involves being genuinely available for the child, not just physically but emotionally, mentally, and relationally. A parent is the child’s first emotional anchor, the first teacher, and the first model of trust and care. True parenting is about creating an environment where the child feels secure, heard, respected, and valued. It requires empathy, patience, consistent guidance, emotional responsiveness, and understanding.

In regions like Kashmir, where poverty, conflict, and displacement have

reshaped childhood experiences, emotional presence is not just important—it is crucial. In such contexts, it can mean the difference between mere survival and healthy development. It can be the deciding factor in whether a child grows up with emotional scars or with emotional resilience.

Through our work at the Human Welfare Voluntary Organization (HWVO), we have witnessed the transformational power of positive parenting. Over the past two years, we have conducted a series of

sessions focused on parenting, emotional literacy, and child development. These community-based interventions aimed to reintroduce and reinforce the concept of *positive parenting*, emphasizing not discipline but connection, not control but understanding. Positive parenting encourages caregivers to see their child as an emotional being—capable of thought, pain, joy, and struggle—and respond with attuned care. These sessions covered themes such as empathy, active listening, emotion regulation, and responsive caregiving. We emphasized how building secure attachment and emotional trust helps the child feel safe enough to express themselves and confident enough to take on challenges. Many parents who attended these sessions later reported positive shifts in their relationship with their children, including improved communication, reduced behavioural outbursts, and stronger emotional bonding. Through structured discussions, role plays, and case-based reflections, we helped parents recognize that love must be felt, not just assumed, and that their emotional availability is more impactful than any material gift.

In our counselling experiences at HWVO, many children initially labelled as problematic were, in reality, experiencing emotional neglect or trauma. Their misbehaviour was not rebellion but a silent cry for help. Their anger, withdrawal, or defiance were often ways of expressing fear, loneliness, and confusion—emotions they had no words for. Often, these children had never been truly listened to. And often, their caregivers were not aware that the absence of emotional presence can be as damaging as any other form of deprivation.

Reflections

Case Study 1: The Cry of an Unheard Child

One such story unfolded during a psychoeducation session at a 'Religious

seminary' in Shopian, South Kashmir. A 12-year-old girl from North Kashmir showed visible signs of distress. She had not eaten for three days and repeatedly pleaded to be sent home. Despite the institution providing basic physical care, the emotional pain from her abrupt separation had not been addressed. In our counselling session, she spoke of her loneliness, her feeling of being abandoned, and how deeply she missed the emotional comfort of her family. Her parents had sent her away driven by **religious aspiration**, unaware of the psychological burden it placed on her. She had once been an enthusiastic student, but since the move, she had lost interest in learning. Her academic disengagement was not due to laziness, but emotional disconnection. Following a culturally sensitive and empathetic conversation, her parents came to understand the psychological impact of their decision and eventually agreed to bring her back home. This case revealed how crucial it is to include children in decisions that significantly affect their lives, and how vital timely parental engagement is in preventing emotional damage.

Case Study 2: Silent Suffering in Institutional Care

In another case, during a session at a Child Care Institution, the HWVO's team met a teenage girl who had been living there for two years along with her younger sister, both placed due to extreme poverty. The girl remained quiet and withdrawn. Upon deeper engagement, it was revealed that she was a survivor of abuse prior to her placement and had never spoken about it due to fear and a lack of trust in adults. She was also bullied in school and misunderstood by teachers and staff. Her silence was mistaken for defiance, and her emotional pain continued to grow unnoticed. Her academic performance declined, and her emotional needs remained unmet. While the institution provided her with food and shelter,

it could not provide the emotional nurturing she desperately needed. Her story reflected how unaddressed trauma can compound over time and how institutions, though well-intentioned, cannot replicate the emotional intimacy and individual attention that family care offers. Her case powerfully highlighted the irreplaceable value of emotional presence, understanding, and individualized care—things that only a committed, emotionally available adult can provide. Whether through parents, caregivers, or emotionally responsive mentors, children need more than shelter; they need someone who truly sees their pain, acknowledges their struggle, and walks with them through healing.

These case studies reflect a broader social issue: many children in our communities are separated from their families not because they are unsafe at home, but due to poverty, emotional disconnect, or lack of awareness. In such instances, institutionalization becomes a default response, but it is rarely the best one. What we truly need is more robust systems of support for families, not more institutions. When parents are emotionally engaged and supported, they become more attuned to their child's needs. They learn to recognize signs of distress, to communicate openly, and to make informed, compassionate decisions. And most importantly, they provide a sense of belonging that no institution can ever replace. Separation is not always a solution—support is. Families need timely access to psychological and social support before their situation deteriorates into crisis. They need tools and skills to manage emotional strain, especially in contexts of poverty and conflict.

So how do we strengthen this support system?

- First, we begin with parenting education. At HWVO, we have witnessed first-hand the transformative power of

community-based parenting sessions. These workshops demystify emotional development, teach caregivers how to read behavioural cues, and promote consistent, empathetic responses.

- Second, we must build support networks for families in crisis—through access to mental health professionals, financial aid, helplines, and peer support groups. Families should not face adversity in isolation.
- Third, we must foster two-way communication between families and professionals. Home visits, parent-counsellor dialogues, and feedback platforms can bridge the existing gap. We must also challenge the stigma around help-seeking. In many communities, asking for emotional support is misinterpreted as weakness or failure. That perception must change. Seeking help is not a sign of incapability—it is a strength, a step towards responsible parenting.
- Lastly, we need to develop and strengthen alternatives to

institutionalization. Models like kinship care, foster care, or support within extended families can ensure children remain connected to their roots while receiving the support they need. This approach not only ensures emotional continuity for the child but also strengthens family and community ties.

This is not the sole responsibility of the parent. Teachers, social workers, health professionals, and community leaders all have a part to play. Supporting a child must be a collective community responsibility. Institutions can act as temporary shelters but not as permanent replacements for emotional care. Children thrive when surrounded by people who are consistently present, emotionally available, and genuinely invested in their well-being. The role of parenting and emotional presence is thus not just a family matter—it is a societal imperative. The stories shared above are not isolated—they are common, especially in underserved areas. They call for systemic change. They

highlight the need for programs that build family resilience, prevent unnecessary separation, and place the emotional well-being of children at the centre of all decisions. Through our work at HWVO, we continue to champion the belief that families—when supported—can be the safest and most nurturing space for a child.

In conclusion, parenting in today's complex world—marked by poverty, displacement, and trauma—is no easy task. But even under the most difficult conditions, emotional presence remains a powerful and protective force in a child's life. Institutions can provide structure, but they cannot replace the bond of a parent's hand, the comfort of a familiar voice, or the healing power of being emotionally seen and held. Our mission should be to build systems that support, not separate; educate, not judge; and empower, not replace families. Let us commit to strengthening parental capacity, community solidarity, and child-centered care. Every child deserves more than just to be raised. Every child deserves to be seen, heard, and emotionally held.

This initiative is part of the Family-Based Alternative Care project implemented by Human Welfare Voluntary Organization (HWVO) with the support of UNICEF, aimed at strengthening family systems, preventing unnecessary institutionalization, and promoting overall well-being of children through community-based support.

Parenting from the Heart: A Family's Journey of Reunion and Resilience

By Praveen Gonsalves,
Program Officer – Family-Based Care,
Anmol Tangudhama, Karnataka

Does parenting come with a manual? Yes, No, or maybe!

Here's an excerpt from a conversation between father and practitioner

interview, showcasing how parenting is not much about perfection but more about patience, presence and partnership and that is what it takes to rebuild trust and relationships after separation.

In the village of Chandan Hosur, Karnataka, a daughter, Shruti (name

changed) returned home after living in a Child Care Institution (CCI). For Krishnaraj (name changed), a father of three, the meaning of parenting deepened when his daughter returned. Shruti was placed in institutional care in 2022 due to her family's extreme poverty and conflict. Krishnaraj left the family

and his wife raised the children alone in a rented house with small income. During Shruti's tenure in CCI, her mother visited her regularly and both mother and daughter were supported through counseling. Later, with support from Miracle Foundation India, the CCI team connected with the father and worked on stabilizing the family through counseling sessions, training etc. Shruti's parents were reunited, and after sustained counseling, Shruti agreed to return home.

Parenting as Presence: What the Father Says

When asked how parenting feels today, Krishanraj's response is simple but powerful. *"We all eat together at dinner every day,"* he shares. *"That's when the children tell us what happened at school or home. We listen."*

"My elder daughter helps her mother with housework. Her brothers take care of domestic animals. In the evening, the boys go to play, and my daughter stays at home."

Krishanraj shares that parenting is not an external set of instructions but more quiet and consistent act of presence. He describes his family life where all roles are naturally distributed.

He notices that when his child is upset, he actively involves them in everyday decisions.

"If we see they are sad or angry, we talk. We try to understand. Maybe it's something at school, maybe something at home. And then we comfort them."

And it's not just listening, Krishanraj ensures that his children actively participate in home life.

"Our children are always with us, whatever work we do, whatever decisions we take at home, they are part of it."

When Krishanraj was asked how his family celebrates when something good happens, his answer was simple:

"When our child is happy, we feel proud and happy too. We share it with our close relatives and all join in prayer."

These small gestures of sharing joy, including children in decisions, and building predictable routines, help children and families stay united and thrive.

Shruti has now very well reintegrated in the family, she participates fully in rhythm of family life, she enjoys doing house chores, she is happy attending school regularly, and also love spending time with her siblings. The same father she once resisted is now part of her everyday.

Parenting Through Pressure: Managing Without Burnout

Though life remains challenging, Krishanraj says he hasn't experienced deep parenting fatigue, his responses reflect awareness and coping:

"No, that kind of situation has not come yet. But if it does, my wife and I are ready to face it together."

Krishanraj and his wife find ways to manage stress together. He says,

"These days we don't feel that burden too much," he says. *"But if we are tired, we support each other.... Every Sunday, we take a break from work and spend quality time with the family. If we're under pressure, we listen to prayers on TV or another device. That helps."*

While terms like "self-care" or "parental burnout" may not be used, the practices are evident through weekly breaks, spiritual grounding, and shared responsibilities between parents.

What Families Need: Not Handouts, but Guidance

One of the most compelling moments in the conversation comes when Krishanraj is asked what kind of help would make parenting easier.

"We are not asking for gifts or money," he says. *"We only want guidance from people who understand our life and can help us take the right steps."*

This perspective echoes what many rural families and other vulnerable families in communities feel, what they seek is not charity, but dignity, support, and respectful partnership.

A Family Restored, A Future Reimagined

At present, Shruti is back home with her parents and siblings. She attends a local school and continues to receive follow-up support. Her family's Thrive Scale assessment shows steady improvement in living conditions, education, and relationships.

Through the voice of a father who listens and a daughter who returns, we are reminded that parenting at its core is about connection. It's about sitting together at dinner. Talking. Listening. Belonging.

Udayan Care's Trauma-Informed Ecosystem: Nurturing Resilience Through Holistic Family Strengthening Models

By Dr. Gurneet K. Kalra,
Manager, Udayan Care

In a world where number of children and youth navigate life without the consistent presence of parental care, Udayan Care has been impacting and crafting ecosystems of compassion, stability, and developmental growth. Rooted in a trauma-informed philosophy, the organization's diverse programs integrate psychological theory with on-ground community engagement to promote healing, empowerment, and long-term well-being. Udayan Care's core belief is that trauma does not occur in isolation, and neither should healing. Trauma-informed practice recognizes that adversity, be it the loss of parents, abuse, or neglect, leaves deep emotional imprints and the healing, therefore, must be relational, consistent, and inclusive. Through its flagship initiatives under the family strengthening umbrella, the organization addresses the psycho-social impacts of disrupted caregiving and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These programs not only cater to children in institutional care but also emphasize reintegration, emotional safety, and sustained well-being. Secure human connections, especially those formed during developmental years, are foundational to recovery and resilience.

The interventions combine scientific rigor with contextual responsiveness, thereby merging theoretical approaches like Bowlby's Attachment Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development stages, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to foster secure, nurturing environments for every child and young adult in its care. The Udayan Ghar model provides a safe, structured residential family environment for children separated from parental care. At the heart of

this model is the concept of *Mentor Parents*, who serve as voluntary, consistent, adult figures who serve as a living embodiment of Bowlby's emphasis on secure attachments. What distinguishes the Udayan Ghar model is its biopsychosocial lens, wherein the interplay between the child's inherent traits, their environment, and emotional security takes center stage. The care staff, mental health professionals, and social workers collaboratively nurture children's holistic development, enabling them to form meaningful relationships and rebuild trust. This care doesn't end when a child turns 18. The Aftercare and Aftercare Outreach Programs focus on guiding young adults through transition phases thereby offering life skills training, emotional support, and career development guidance. Here, youth are not passive recipients, rather they're collaborators and are involved in decisions about their own futures, reinforcing agency and autonomy, both of which are key indicators of successful independent living, which builds autonomy, a key predictor of long-term resilience and well-being.

Understanding that childhood trauma impacts not only emotional health but identity formation and future relationships, Udayan Care employs a Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) approach. This framework emphasizes emotional and physical safety, consistency, and positive reinforcement. Caregivers are trained to recognize that behaviors are often survival strategies, manifestations of internalized trauma, and thus should be met with empathy and structure rather than correction alone. The interventions focus on early detection of trauma signals, individualized casework aligned with psychosocial development stages, building resilience through strength-based methods and

community inclusion. The goal is not only to prevent re-traumatization but also to equip caregivers with the tools to support recovery and growth.

The guiding theories which inform Udayan Care's practice include:

- Bowlby's Attachment Theory** informs the relational aspects of caregiving, where stability and secure adult bonds are of utmost importance. The concept of "Mentor Parents" underscores the importance of consistent, nurturing relationships for developing trust and self-worth and being the reliable, emotionally available figure's in a child's life.
- Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory** offers a lens to understand the evolving needs of children and youth at different life stages. Whether it's cultivating autonomy in early years or forging a sense of identity during adolescence, interventions are customized to support healthy psychological growth.
- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory** serves as a blueprint for mapping the child's environment, from immediate caregivers to broader cultural influences, and provides a lens to view each child within their layered environmental systems. This model influences decisions around staffing, community engagement, and organizational policy, recognizing that a child's development is shaped by layered environmental interactions.

Each theory does not stand alone but weaves into the broader trauma-informed ecosystem that Udayan Care diligently nurtures. One of Udayan Care's remarkable strengths is its integration of theory into grassroots

action. The organization leverages local networks to build community-based care systems, thereby strengthening resilience from within. Caregivers and youth are regularly engaged in reflective dialogues, case reviews, and participatory planning. Children are exposed to volunteerism, arts, and public speaking, to build a sense of agency and aspiration. The FiT Families Together program works to prevent institutionalization by supporting vulnerable families through economic aid, mental health counseling, and

parenting education, thereby enabling the child to remain in a safe, biological or kinship-based setting whenever possible.

This model aligns with global best practices, where family-based care and early interventions dramatically reduce trauma-related disruptions in development. Udayan Care recognizes that sustainability lies not only in services but also in systems reform. Their internal case management system ensures that each child's journey is

documented, evaluated, and adapted to evolving developmental needs. What's striking is the participatory nature of decision-making, where even children contribute to conversations about their care, preferences, and goals. Moreover, at the organizational level, policies are structured to promote horizontal communication and shared accountability. Through its holistic, theory-informed, community-driven approach, Udayan Care demonstrates that resilience is not innate, but cultivated, one relationship at a time.

Parenting on the Edge: Rebuilding Families and Preventing Unnecessary Separations

By Haris Arshid Shah

District Coordinator, Human Welfare Voluntary Organisation (HWVO)

"Even if we don't get any support, I just want my daughter back home."

—Mother of Zeenat*, a child reintegrated through HWVO's FBAC programme

Parenting is often perceived as an instinctive, deeply personal act, a universal thread binding caregivers to their children. But what happens when life's harsh realities, poverty, displacement, illness, or grief erode a parent's ability to nurture? In Jammu and Kashmir, a region scarred by political uncertainty, economic hardship, and generational trauma, parenting is not merely a personal endeavour but a collective challenge. It demands the collaboration of communities, institutions, and systems to ensure families remain intact. For over a decade, the Human Welfare Voluntary Organisation (HWVO) has worked in the most vulnerable corners of this

region to strengthen the protective environment around children. Through the UNICEF-supported Family-Based Alternative Care (FBAC) Project, we strive to prevent unnecessary institutionalizations and reintegrate children into safe, nurturing family settings. Our work has revealed a profound truth: parenting in Kashmir is not broken it is overwhelmed. With the right support, it can flourish anew.

In the absence of adequate resources, many families in Kashmir turn to institutional care as a last resort. Parents grappling with chronic illness, unemployment, or displacement are often advised, sometimes by well-intentioned officials, to place their children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs), believing this offers safety or opportunity. However, the emotional, developmental, and relational toll of such separations is immense. Children lose the warmth of family bonds, and parents are left with the aching weight of absence.

Consider Sofia, a 9-year-old from Sothern Kashmirs Kaprin village, whom we met during a routine visit

to a CCI. She sat apart from other children, her eyes heavy with longing. In a quiet moment, she confided to our team that she missed her mother and dreaded returning to the institution. Sofia's parents, both alive, had placed her in the CCI due to her mother's debilitating illness and her father's financial ruin. Through careful counselling, home visits, and family readiness assessments, we facilitated Sofia's reintegration into her family. Her mother's words, "Her smile is my strength," echo in our minds as a testament to the power of reunion. Sofia's story is not an outlier. The majority of children in CCIs are not orphans; they are the children of vulnerable families who, without support, see no other path forward.

The notion that parenting must be flawless to be effective is a myth that undermines families already stretched thin. In Kashmir, we work with caregivers like Bashir Ahmad, a single father navigating parenthood with limited literacy and failing health, or Safeena's grandfather, a 70-year-old labourer striving to keep his orphaned granddaughter in school. These

*Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the children and families.

caregivers embody resilience, not failure. Their efforts are not defined by conventional parenting ideals but by their unwavering commitment to their children despite overwhelming odds.

At HWVO, our role is not to judge parenting through an academic or theoretical lens but to meet families where they are and bolster their capacity to care. Through the FBAC program, we provide access to counselling, government welfare schemes, sponsorships, and psychosocial support, creating an environment where parenting becomes feasible again. For instance, we connected Bashir Ahmad with financial aid to stabilize his household, allowing him to focus on his children's emotional needs. Similarly, Safeena's grandfather received community-based support to ensure his granddaughter's education continued uninterrupted. These interventions are not about reshaping caregivers into ideal parents but about reinforcing their existing strengths and surrounding them with resources.

Central to our work is a case management approach, a methodical process that allows us to tailor support to each child's unique circumstances. Every child receives a Comprehensive Individualised Care Planning and Implementation, which details their mental health, educational progress, emotional well-being, and family conditions. These tools enable us to provide targeted, timely interventions. For example, when we encountered Amina, a 12-year-old whose mother had passed away and whose father was unemployed, we developed a Plan that included counselling for grief, enrollment in a local school, and linkage to a sponsorship program for financial stability. Over time, Amina's father regained confidence in his ability to parent, and their bond grew stronger. Parallel to individual case management, we have established over 70 Community-based Child Protection Groups (CBCPGs) across three districts.



Discussion with the parent of a child identified for reintegration under the FBAC program. This engagement played a crucial role in assessing family readiness and facilitating a smooth transition back home.

Photo Credit: Yamin Yasin, Social Caseworker – HWVO



Discussion with the parent of a child identified for reintegration under the FBAC program. This engagement played a crucial role in assessing family readiness and facilitating a smooth transition back home.

Photo Credit: Yamin Yasin, Social Caseworker – HWVO

These groups, composed of trained community members, act as grassroots guardians of child protection. They identify at-risk families, refer cases to HWVO team, provide immediate support, and mobilize local resources. In one instance in Shopian, a CPG raised ₹5,000 to prevent the institutionalization of two sisters whose sole caregiver had fallen critically ill. By rallying neighbours and local businesses, the CPG ensured the family could stay together. These efforts underscore a vital truth: parenting is not an isolated

act but a communal responsibility. When communities step in, families are less likely to fracture.

Kashmir's landscape is not only defined by its rugged mountains but by the emotional weight of conflict, loss, and grief. Parents raise children while navigating the deaths of loved ones, violence, natural disasters or psychological distress. Traditional parenting tools bedtime stories, structured routines, or discipline strategies often fall short in such

contexts. Trauma-informed care is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

Our trained counsellors and psychosocial volunteers provide families with emotional support, grief counselling, and mental health referrals. Take the case of Murtaza, a 14-year-old who fled to Punjab in search of work to support his debt-ridden family. After his rescue and return, we linked his family with Mission Vatsalya sponsorships to alleviate financial strain. Through counselling sessions focused on communication and trust-building, we helped Murtaza and his parents rebuild their relationship. These interventions go beyond advice; they involve listening, healing, and walking alongside families as they recover.

Over the past two years, our work with hundreds of families has illuminated several truths about parenting in crisis. First, most parents want what is best for their children. Their struggles are not a reflection of personal failure but of systemic gaps - poverty, lack of healthcare, or inadequate social safety

nets. Second, with the right support, families can regain their capacity to nurture. Third, community-led initiatives, when empowered, amplify parental agency and reduce reliance on institutional care.

For example, in Pulwama, a widow named Rifat faced the prospect of sending her three children to a CCI after losing her husband to illness. Through our intervention, she received vocational training, a small business grant, and regular counselling. Today, she runs a tailoring business and proudly keeps her family together. Stories like Rifat's demonstrate that when systems step in with practical, empathetic support, families can thrive.

As India strengthens its child protection systems, we must adopt a rights-based, context-sensitive approach to parenting. Support for caregivers should be woven into the fabric of social protection systems, schools, and welfare schemes. Counselling, respite care, peer support groups, and financial subsidies should be

standard offerings, not afterthoughts. At HWVO, we advocate for parenting to be recognized as a cornerstone of child protection planning, integrated into sponsorship models, legal aid frameworks, and policy discussions.

The stakes are high. Families fracture when systems fail them, not because they lack love, but because they lack support. Parenting is the most powerful tool we have to protect children, but it can only succeed when we protect parenting itself. By investing in families, we invest in the future of children, ensuring they grow up not in institutions but in the embrace of those who love them most.

Author Bio: *Haris Arshid Shah is the District Coordinator for HWVO's UNICEF-supported FBAC project in Shopian, Jammu and Kashmir. With over five years of experience in child protection, communications, and community-led interventions, he is dedicated to restoring dignity to vulnerable families through participatory, rights-based development.*

Capacity Building Training “Bio-Psychosocial Perspective on Trauma-Informed Care for Children”

By India Alternative Care Network (IACN), Protsahan India Foundation & Saathii

A two-day capacity-building training titled “Bio-Psychosocial Perspective on Trauma-Informed Care for Children” was organized by India Alternative Care Network in collaboration with Protsahan India Foundation and Saathii NGO on 27th and 28th June 2025 at the India Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi. The training targeted frontline child protection personnel working in various Child Care Institutions (CCIs) and District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), including welfare officers, counselors, non-institutional care officers, and child and adolescent



counselors. A total of approximately 40 participants attended the training.

The training commenced with introductions of the Protsahan team: Ms. Sonal Kapoor, Founder and CEO, Protsahan India Foundation, and her team - Avantika, Tarun, Payal, and Preeti. This was followed by the distribution and completion of pre-assessment forms by all participants to gauge their baseline knowledge and expectations. Ms. Rita Panicker, Founder Director, Butterflies, delivered an opening keynote emphasizing the vulnerabilities faced by Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNC), the resource constraints frontline social workers often experience, and the wider socio-ecological factors influencing child wellbeing.

She also spoke about the influence of toxic social media role models on adolescents and how social media often becomes an emotional escape space for vulnerable children.

An expectation-mapping exercise followed, during which participants voiced their key learning needs from the training. Recurring themes included the desire to learn how to work effectively with CNC children, adopting interdisciplinary approaches, strategies for maintaining their own emotional stability, and tools to communicate sensitively with children to prevent re-traumatization.

Sonal (Lead Facilitator) further contextualized the training by emphasizing the intersectionality of vulnerabilities such as caste, gender, poverty, and migration. She highlighted the importance of Psychological First Aid (PFA) and reiterated that frontline workers do not need to be clinical psychologists to provide meaningful psychosocial support.

The first major content module introduced the **H.E.A.R.T. Model**, Protsahan's whole-child trauma-informed intervention framework.

The model components—**Health, Education, Arts, Rights, and Technology/Livelihoods**—were explained in detail. The facilitators stressed the importance of addressing both physical and mental health, using creative tools like art, and ensuring rights-based approaches while integrating technology and livelihood support in child care programs. A significant learning was understanding the difference between tracking **outputs (activities done)** and **outcomes (impact achieved)** in psychosocial work.

This was followed by CareVerse learning videos focusing on **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** and **Guidelines for Working with Trauma Survivors**, each shown twice for reinforcement. Facilitators engaged participants in reflective discussions after the videos, covering topics such as the neurobiological impact of trauma, types of childhood trauma, and how trauma affects the body and brain. Key reflections emerged, such as the realization that child protection is ineffective without social protection systems, and that frontline workers must focus on the core principles of PFA: *Look, Listen, and Link*.

The morning session concluded with the **'Chaos and Connection' Masterclass**, a highly interactive activity involving 'ants and butterflies' to represent trauma and healing in the brain. Participants learned about the three key parts of the brain—**Brainstem (Reptilian brain), Midbrain (Emotional brain), and Prefrontal Cortex (Cognitive brain)**—and how trauma can keep children stuck in survival mode. A short grounding **breathing exercise** was facilitated to help participants regulate before lunch.

The post-lunch session began with a **guided meditation and self-affirmation exercise**, where participants engaged in positive affirmations towards one another and practiced self-compassion through a 'self-hug' exercise. This was followed by a discussion on the



victim-to-survivor journey, stressing the importance of language in shaping a child's identity.

Another CareVerse video on **Trauma Healing using Expressive Arts** was showcased and discussed in detail. Facilitators clarified the distinction between **Art Therapy (conducted by trained therapists)** and **Art-based tools (used by social workers and caregivers)**. Emphasis was placed on art as a medium for self-expression, emotional regulation, and relationship-building with children. The session closed with storytelling led by **Manisha (Head, Ground Operations, Protsahan)**, using the storybook **'Gaon ka Bachha (The Village's Child)'**, focusing on the role of the community in child protection and healing.

Day 2 began with an engaging **Mentimeter knowledge check**, where approximately 80% of participants responded correctly to key learnings from Day 1, indicating effective knowledge retention. The morning's first session explored the **psychology of shame and guilt**, with Sonal explaining how repeated guilt experiences can turn into toxic shame, often shaping negative core beliefs in children. Participants reflected on the language and approaches they use when working with children struggling with self-worth and trauma.

A short **movement-based energizer** was used to re-energize the group, followed by the **'Childhood Trauma Mapping - Bindi Masterclass.'** This hands-on activity involved participants reading real-world child vulnerability scenarios and placing bindis on corresponding

brain areas most impacted by the described trauma. Facilitators drew connections between tactile learning, trauma neuroscience, and Gabor Maté's theory on **Authenticity vs. Attachment**, emphasizing that children often choose attachment over authenticity in unsafe environments.

The latter part of Day 2 focused on **Digital Child Protection and AI Awareness**, using two key CareVerse videos:

1. **Strengthening the Circle of Child Care with AI**
2. **Trauma-Informed Online Protection for Children**

The facilitators led critical discussions on the ethical and child protection risks associated with AI tools. Participants reflected on AI's factual inaccuracies, biases (gender, caste, socio-cultural), and the necessity for human oversight. The training underscored that **AI is a tool, not a replacement for human empathy and judgment**, and drew analogies like "AI is the seatbelt, but humans must drive the vehicle." Participants were encouraged to be critical consumers and advocates for digital safety for the children they serve.

The training concluded with the **post-assessment**, participant reflections, and closing comments. Several frontline workers expressed feeling empowered and better equipped to incorporate trauma-informed care into their everyday practice. Some key closing participant reflections included statements like:

- "I feel powerful after this training."
- "The HEART model will guide my approach from now on."
- "Understanding psycho-social perspectives is now non-negotiable."
- "I'll always remember to tell children: 'It's not your fault.'"
- "Healing is possible."



Session on Gender, Sexuality and Affirmative Care – Post lunch Ms. Khushi Pahuja, Program Specialist, Saathii NGO and Air Cmde. (Dr.) Sanjay Sharma (Retd.), CEO and Managing Director, Association for Transgender Health, walked the participants through the nuances of Gender, Sexuality and Affirmative Care. The session provided valuable insights into understanding children's behaviors and the lived realities of LGBTQAI++ individuals. The discussion emphasized the difference between "normal" developmental behaviors and what is considered "normative" within social and cultural contexts. Real-life examples of children expressing gender diversity were used to encourage reflection on empathetic and supportive responses.

Key issues highlighted included the struggles of gender non-conforming and queer children, such as bullying, discrimination, rejection, and family violence. The harmful impact of "normalization" surgeries on intersex infants was discussed. The session also explored concepts of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, underscoring the need for affirmation rather than stigmatization.

From a mental health perspective, the presentations explained how non-acceptance and unresolved identity

conflicts can lead to dysphoria, self-harm, substance abuse, and reduced life expectancy. The metaphor of the "closet" was used to highlight the isolation and fear many LGBTQAI++ individuals face.

The session concluded by stressing the importance of empathy, acceptance, rebuilding trust, and creating inclusive spaces in schools, families, and healthcare. Participants were urged to adopt gender-affirmative practices to ensure dignity, safety, and holistic well-being.

Participant engagement was high throughout the training with active participation during all masterclasses, reflection circles, and group discussions.

Recommendations for future training include incorporating more live case studies and role-play-based practice sessions, allowing time for individual consultations for complex cases, expanding the AI and digital safety module with real-time AI demonstrations, and providing pre-training reading materials to participants for better preparation.

The training successfully met its objectives, equipping frontline child protection workers with trauma-informed, context-sensitive, and rights-based psychosocial care skills.



First Person

Interview with Dr. Mamta Chauhan



Dr. Mamta Chauhan
Professor, IIHMR University |
State Lead – Centre for Behavioural
Sciences (supported by UNICEF)

With over 25 years of experience in teaching, training, research, and public health, Dr. Mamta Chauhan has been at the forefront of building capacity, developing behavioral interventions, and supporting families through her academic and field engagements. She holds M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees

in Psychology from the University of Rajasthan and has worked extensively with organizations like UNICEF, UNFPA, and various public institutions. Currently, she leads the Centre for Behavioural Sciences at IIHMR University, established with UNICEF's support, which focuses on community-based interventions and behavioral research.

In this conversation with IACN, Dr. Chauhan reflects on **changing parenting styles in the digital era**, the **impact of socio-economic disparities**, and practical ways to strengthen parent-child relationships. Read the snippet of the conversation below.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this interview are those of Dr. Mamta Chauhan in her personal and professional capacity. They do not necessarily reflect the official

statement or positions of IACN. The information provided is intended for general awareness and discussion on parenting and child development. It should not be considered as a substitute for professional medical, psychological, or legal advice. Readers are encouraged to seek appropriate professional guidance where necessary.

1. Thank you Dr. Chauhan for agreeing to have this conversation with us. Could you please share some of the unique challenges parents face today?

Thank you Kavita, for the opportunity. What I have seen in my practice and work is that the family structures have changed significantly. With more nuclear families and both parents

working, children often come home to an empty house. They miss the opportunity to share their daily experiences with parents, grandparents, or siblings—as was common in joint families.

Increased exposure to technology has also reshaped parenting. Before COVID-19, parents tried to restrict screen use, but the pandemic made online learning unavoidable. This blurred boundaries and led to an increase in unsupervised technology use. Parents themselves are spending more time on devices, and children naturally model this behaviour.

Another challenge is the **lack of open communication**. Many parents give instructions rather than engage in conversations. When children feel judged or pressured by high expectations—especially in single-child families—they may stop sharing altogether. Without a supportive environment, parenting often becomes directive rather than nurturing.

2. How do economic hardship and social inequality influence parenting?

Economic stress directly shapes parenting approaches. Parents struggling financially face the constant challenge of providing quality education, meeting peer-driven demands, and maintaining social status. This often leaves them with little time or energy for meaningful engagement with their children.

Interestingly, I have observed that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, though resource-constrained, often develop greater independence, resilience, and life skills. Parents in these households tend

Helicopter parenting is a style of raising children where parents are overly involved in their child's life, often to the point of micromanaging their experiences and decisions. This can manifest as excessive supervision, intervention in conflicts, and shielding children from challenges or mistakes.

A 2022 study published in the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care examined Indian families—particularly those with single children—and found that 83% of parents displayed helicopter-parenting behavior, much higher than in families with more than one child.

to give their children more freedom, although it is difficult to say whether it is a conscious decision or a situational default. In contrast, overprotective or “helicopter parenting”¹, more common in financially stable families, where every need is immediately fulfilled, limits a child’s ability to become self-reliant. Such children may struggle with rejection, criticism, or delayed gratification, which can affect their mental health.

However, it is important to distinguish between **delayed gratification** and **neglect**. When needs go unmet due to resource constraints, parents must communicate openly with their children. Otherwise, resentment, low self-esteem, or feelings of neglect can develop. I have observed that parents today are adopting more open and honest communication with their children, which is a positive change compared to previous generations.

Additionally, one positive shift that I have observed is the increasing involvement of fathers in children’s daily lives. Unlike earlier times, when fathers were seen mainly as disciplinarians, today many fathers are actively engaging, which helps build healthier family dynamics.

3. How does technology and social media impact parenting across different social and economic groups?

Technology is a double-edged sword. On one side, it provides parents with resources, peer networks, and educational tools. On the other hand, it creates constant comparison, confusion, and anxiety. Parents often look for quick online advice instead of building real-life connections.

Children imitate what they see. If parents are glued to their phones, it becomes difficult to enforce screen-time rules for children. Many parents complain about their child’s phone addiction, but they themselves model the same behavior. The key is for parents to use technology mindfully—for growth, learning, and support—rather than as a distraction.

4. How can parents strengthen emotional connections despite financial or social stress?

Parents should create regular “me time” or “family time” for open, non-

1. Shaki O, Gupta GK, Yadav P, Faisal FA. Helicopter parenting, from good intentions to poor outcomes. What parents need to know? J Family Med Prim Care. 2022 Aug;11(8):4753-4757. doi: 10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_2474_21. Epub 2022 Aug 30. PMID: 36353010; PMCID: PMC9638553.

judgmental conversations. Spending **quality, distraction-free time** with children is essential. Parents should create moments for open, non-judgmental conversations where children feel truly heard. This means putting away phones and turning off the TV during interactions.

Instead of only asking closed-ended questions like *“Did you eat?”*, parents should encourage deeper sharing by asking open-ended questions. Sharing one’s own emotions and daily experiences (in an age-appropriate way) also helps children open up and builds stronger bonds.

5. Are there specific daily habits or family rituals you recommend?

Bonding doesn’t always require structured “talk time.” By “structured time,” I don’t mean forcing children to sit and talk at a fixed time. It can naturally be woven into everyday routines—cooking together, doing household chores, or walking in the park. These activities give children space to express themselves and instill a sense of agency.

Simple rituals such as **family meals, weekend outings, or monthly playtime** can nurture trust and joy. Importantly, parents should not hide all their struggles; moderate sharing teaches children resilience and empathy. However, over-sharing with heavy negative emotions can burden children.

6. From a child’s perspective, what helps them feel closer to their parents?

The foundation is **open and honest communication**. When parents share honestly—but not overwhelmingly—

children feel safe and valued. This motivates them to mirror positive behaviors.

Parents must balance honesty with care: avoid conversations filled with anger or hopelessness. Acknowledging one’s own struggles and seeking support when needed—whether from peers, communities, or professionals—is also important. Emotionally healthy parents raise emotionally healthy children.

7. How can parents encourage open communication when children face external pressures or stigma?

The two biggest barriers are **judgment** and **reactivity**. When children sense they will be judged or interrupted, they stop sharing. Instead, parents must practice active listening—allowing children to speak without interruptions or premature advice.

Trust-building is a consistent process that requires patience. Parents should also adapt communication to the child’s age—talking to an adolescent as if they are a small child, or vice versa, can block genuine understanding.

8. How can parents use community resources to raise emotionally resilient children?

In urban areas, parents can use community spaces such as sports clubs, day-care centers, or parenting groups. In rural areas, resources are limited beyond anganwadis, but communities can still come together to share best practices and support each other. Peer-learning among parents is a powerful tool.

9. What role do schools, NGOs, or local organizations play in supporting underprivileged parents?

Schools, NGOs, and local organizations play a **critical role in bridging gaps** for parents who may lack resources, awareness, or social support. For many underprivileged families, parenting is shaped not just by love and care but by daily struggles to provide for their children. Institutions can step in to ease these challenges in several ways:

- Creating safe spaces where children can express themselves without fear.
- Offering **pre-conception and parenting counseling**, including financial and emotional preparedness, can help families prepare not only emotionally but also financially for raising children. For example, teaching parents about nutrition, health check-ups, and developmental milestones helps them support their child’s growth.
- Providing access to support networks where parents can learn from one another.

Schools and NGOs can act as bridges, linking families to resources and empowering them with effective parenting skills.

10. What is one piece of advice you would give every parent?

- **Spend quality time with your children.**
- **Have patience.** Parenting is not about perfection—it is about consistency, empathy, and creating a safe space for children to grow into resilient and emotionally healthy individuals.