

Are you worried about your child's behaviour ?

Here is a 'To-Do' List for the parents and guardians!

Niharika is a cute, sweet pre-schooler living with her mother and grandparents. Niharika's father is in defence and posted in remote place and mother works in an IT company. One day Niharika's mother Ms. Haritha received a call from her daughter's preschool. Ms. Amita, the headmistress asked Ms. Haritha to meet her the next week.

Haritha visited the school and met the headmistress, Ms. Amita. Amita welcomes Haritha and informed about Niharika's performance in the school. Amita also informed Haritha that in last few days Niharika's behaviour is disturbing. She expressed her concern over Niharika's impatient, impolite and rude behaviour with other kids in her class and teacher.

Ms. Amita: Ms. Haritha, how is Niharika doing at home?

Ms. Haritha: I guess she is fine, Ms. Amita. Because of my busy schedule I am not able to focus much on her. I understand from her grandparents that she is doing well in her homework.

Ms. Amita: Ms. Haritha, we are concerned a bit about your daughter Niharika. There are complaints from her teacher and other children that Niharika is very demanding and rude with them. These complaints have been coming since few days. We tried to talk to her, guide her on good behaviour. There is no change in her behaviour. So, I called you to inform about this and understand her behaviour at home.

Ms. Haritha: Ms. Amita, thank you for your concern and drawing my attention on this. Yes, at home I have heard from her grandparents on this. Once or twice even I have noticed her being rude at home. I did not act on this as this is a recent observation. Now, that I learn that this is happening in school also, I am bit worried.



Ms. Amita: Ms. Haritha, can you please recollect when does Niharika behave like that?

Ms. Haritha: Niharika never behaved like this anytime at home. She is always been very obedient and polite, of course, naughty like any other kid of her age. Recently, I heard her also being very demanding with the voice assistant device at home.

Haritha recollected that few months back she bought a voice controlled virtual assistant device (e. g. Alexa) to help her book a cab, control smart home products, for any online purchases and orders, get news updates, play music, listen to jokes, play games with her daughter, call family and friends, set reminders, etc.

Niharika even complained once that the device does not obey her orders.

Ms. Amita, I understood that these devices are getting additional feature of making the children polite. Whenever the child uses words like 'please', 'thank you', the device would appreciate such gestures. This will encourage children to use these words more frequently.



Ms. Amita: Ms. Haritha, let me tell you something here. The children do not understand the difference between the human factors and machine limitations. They assume these machines as human beings. There is a limitation to what these gadgets can do to the kids. One more thing, the usage of such devices is going to increase further and we cannot restrict the entry of such devices into our routine life. Along with the advantages of these devices, the bad effects cannot be ignored. The politeness feature in the device is immaterial if the child does not want to use those words. Yet, the device would act as per the child's order, within the scope. The politeness should not be device-induced, rather developed as a habit or mannerism.

On the other hand, let us assume that your child starts using polite words in addressing the gadgets. Then they start feeling that these devices are like humans and they are their buddies. Instead of understanding human bonding they might end up establishing relationship with these devices. Also, we cannot say to what extent we can allow or accept these devices to develop good manners and obedience in our children, and the effect these devices would have on our children in this aspect.

For a moment let us keep these devices aside. Otherwise also, it is important that our children behave properly. The politeness among children has to be inculcated with human intervention and intention.

Ms. Haritha: Ms. Amita, can you please suggest what I should be doing as a parent. How do I take care of this?

Ms. Amita: Ms. Haritha, don't be worried. Some of my suggestions are

- a. Try to spend more time with your child. Listen to them, play with them, and read to them.
- b. Make the child understand that these devices are not mom, dad, grandparents, friends, etc. But they are like any other items in our homes - TV, refrigerator, mobile etc. Let's have some awareness on the "Make Believe" game by the child and objects that has great impact on the child through the make believe game.
- c. Digital world cannot replace humans. Teach them the difference between people and machines.
- d. Introduce polite words to your children from early age like two years.
- e. Children learn from the people around them. So, practice the good things that you want your child to learn - in your personal and professional context, with neighbours, your child's friends and families and everyone.
- f. Appreciate the children when they exhibit good manners, use polite words, respect others. Do it at the very time, as young children feel happy about it and continue to present good manners.
- g. Correct your child on the spot when you find them being rude. (Check Kids Packet article on "Our Rule & Your Rule") This is even with using gadgets. Tell them what is acceptable and what is not, why it is not correct, how they have to behave. Correct their behaviour without causing embarrassment to them. Do not threaten your child to follow good manners. Make them understand why it is important to learn and practice them.
- h. Make your child interact with family members, elders, friends, and other children of their age. Take them out for social gatherings. This will help the children understand -giving respect to others makes them happy. This helps them become sensitive to others feelings like what makes others happy, feel good about.

Ms. Amita: Ms. Haritha, let us see how your daughter Niharika would behave after a month or so.

Ms. Haritha thanked the headmistress and left for home.

After a month, Niharika's mother met the headmistress and told that she followed her advice and now her daughter has become better - she does not shout at anyone, does not demand from the voice assistant. She has become a better kid than before. The headmistress was very pleased with change in her behaviour and told that Niharika's classmates and teacher are happy with her.

Ms. Haritha thanked Ms. Amita for alerting her at the right time and giving her useful suggestions to deal with the situation.

Ms. Haritha and Niharika took leave from Ms. Amita and headed back to home.

Happy parenting!



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