

**FOSTERING HEALTHY
FAMILY
RELATIONSHIPS**

- **The modern day family is diverse in nature, with families today made up of a wide range of people.**
- **Healthy family relationships are key to the development of children's positive mental health, with the family unit providing a central support network for children.**
- **Healthy families can consist of any person or group of people a child shares an emotional bond, common values and responsibilities with, and who contributes significantly to a child's wellbeing.**
- **These families might consist of aunts, uncles, grandparents, step-parents or adoptive parents, and any person who plays a significant care-giving role for a child.**

- **Healthy family relationships greatly influence children's mental health and wellbeing as they help children build trust and feel supported.**
- **Children can share worries and stresses within healthy families, and can be supported to manage through these challenges.**
- **Family relationships also offer children their first opportunities to practise positive relationship skills that they can apply to other relationships in their life; even simple skills like saying 'please' and 'thankyou'.**

- **Close family relationships influence us across our life span and play a crucial role in our growth and development by teaching us about the fundamental ways our connections to others can enrich our lives and wellbeing, and guide us to make good choices.**
- **Increasingly, evidence¹ indicates that being in a healthy relationship is a positive predictor of better health and wellbeing.**
- **Healthy family relationships have their ups and downs with moments that are supportive and moments that can feel disappointing and hurtful. Close family relationships are a very good place to learn how to accept people's differences, manage your own emotions, and practice negotiation and conflict resolution skills.**

- **Fostering healthy family relationships can be achieved through:**
- **Making relationships a priority & Being Involved**
- **One way children learn is through observing adults behaviour, so it is important to role-model healthy interactions and place value on family relationships.**
- **Making time to spend together as a family (Importance of family time)**
- **Quality time is a key ingredient in fostering healthy relationships. Spending time as a family can take many forms including mealtimes, trips to the park, board games etc. Quality time also includes day-to-day activities such as taking children to school and sporting activities. It is not the amount of time that makes these interactions quality, rather the investment of time and interest in children that matters.**

- **Clear, open and effective communication / Positive Communication**
- **Communication is an important building block of healthy relationships. All children respond well to communication that is clear and open. These communication patterns can then be internalised by children and carried into other relationships.**
- **Showing affection**
- **Affection can be shown in a variety of ways; it can be physical or verbal. Showing affection within the family unit supports children to feel loved, cared for and safe.**
- **Supporting each other/dedicate one-on-one time for each child**
- **When children feel supported by family, they are more likely to experience a deeper bond and connection within the family unit. This assists children to manage life's inevitable stress.**

- **Creating opportunities for engagement in leisure activities**
- **Today's modern families are often busy with a multitude of commitments, so creating opportunities to engage in leisure activities is key to supporting families to develop and maintain strong and positive connections.**
- **Clear boundaries and expectations**
- **Children thrive in environments where boundaries and expectations are clear. Ensuring all family members are clear and consistent as far as possible helps to foster healthy interactions.**

- **Stay in touch with academics, friendships, and extra-curriculars.** Parents who have good relationships with their children are involved with their lives. You can't expect to have a strong bond with your children if you simply say "good morning" and "good night" each day.
- **It's understandable that you're busy juggling work and other responsibilities, but you should also make an effort to get to know your kids and learn about what's happening in their lives.**
- **Sit down with them as they do homework. Help them practice their lines for the school play. Invite your kids' friends over so you know what kind of influences they are around.**

- **Follow the 3 F's of effective parenting.**
- Every child pushes the envelope a bit when it comes to communication and behavior. However, as the adult, you must be inclined to respond maturely and calmly to misconduct. Go by the 3 F's to help you with discipline and protect the overall parent-child relationship.
- Be **FIRM**. State what the consequences are and apply them consistently.
- Be **FAIR**. Make sure the punishment fits the crime. Try to avoid harsh or excessive consequences.
- Be **FRIENDLY**. Convey your words in steady yet polite tone. Avoid raising your voice. Simply explain what terms they violated and lay out the consequences. Also, take time to praise them when they are doing well.

- **Families can build healthy relationships with their children through consistency, comfort, care and play, and making sure children feel accepted, loved and appreciated. Having clear expectations and limits on behaviours, routines and boundaries is also important in a healthy relationship.**
- **You can assist your child to recognize and manage their emotions, and be proactive in repairing moments in your relationships with your children that don't go so well or might be negative or destructive.**
- **One last thing is very important too - looking after your own emotional health and your own relationships!**

• QUESTION FOR GROUP SHARING

● *Are parents*

responsible for their

children forever?

•Yes, parents do have responsibilities for their children, but the type of responsibility and support changes as the child ages.

Parents should grow along with their children.

5 Challenges Parents Face when Raising Kids in the Digital Era



In the recent years digital media has revolutionized children's life starting from entertainment, ending on education and communication. These changes have affected parents as well, as they are forced to constantly learn new skills and incorporate them into their parenting styles. What are the main challenges parents face when it comes to raising kids in the digital era?

- **1. Keeping up with their children in terms of technology**
- **Children acquire technological knowledge surprisingly easily comparing to older generations. A picture of a toddler comfortably swiping the screen is not an unusual thing these days. For parents, on the other hand, learning such skills comes with bigger difficulties. Therefore, they need to catch up with technological concepts in order to be able to be on the same page with their kids.**

- **2. Recognizing possibilities that technology brings**
- **Technology can create endless opportunities in education and later in professional life. Think of the recent boom of coding apps and games for preschoolers and the way they make programming more accessible for young learners. Of course this doesn't mean imposing certain subjects on your kids, but rather utilizing the chances created by the fast-developing tech world. Franklin D. Roosevelt once said: *"We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future"* and from what we can predict now, the technology will be even more present in the next years.**

- **3. Protecting kids from the dangers coming from the online world**
- **It is also partly connected with challenge number 1 and staying updated with technology. However, it has nothing to do with the ability to enumerate the features of the latest iPhone, but rather with solid knowledge about how certain things work. This technological awareness is manifested through perceiving benefits as well as threats and dangers like cyberbullying, manipulative advertising, violent content – you name it.**

- **4. Helping kids discover natural environment and outdoor activities.**
- **As more and more kids spend hours glued to screens, parents' task is to help them discover the fun that comes from spending time with nature and doing outdoor activities. Otherwise, they may become passive spectators and the only sports they have contact with will be the ones on the screen. Think about the last time your child talked about sport. Was it an event they participated in or their new playstation game?**

- **5. Teaching kids to cope without mobile devices.**
- **I think everyone will agree with a statement that technology makes life easier, but what happens if suddenly your child is deprived of it? Are they able to manage without devices or do they lose their marbles? Try to picture future scenarios: you don't want your child to have problems in doing simple calculations, because they lost their calculator or their phone's battery died.**

**WHY PARENTS
ARE THE BEST
TEACHERS**

THIS ABOUT SAYS IT ALL FOR PARENTS AS CATECHIST & TEACHERS.

- **Catechist / Teachers cannot take the place of parents in a child's life because:**
 - (a) Teachers are permitted to teach given subjects from a given syllabus within a classroom situation.**
 - (b) They are bound to the prescribed rules and regulations of the school, college or university.**
 - (c) Teachers remain with the children for around eight hours for five or six days in a week. So, time and space limit their interaction with students.**

(d) Since teachers rarely meet the students they teach beyond the school premises, their understanding of the nature and mindset of the children they teach is limited to school hours and school discipline. They have almost no way of knowing how these children behave at home, or, with their neighbours, etc.

(e) Teachers generally teach an entire class of children where one-to-one communication is absent. So, they find it difficult to tackle individual problems of a child from a large group.

(f) Teachers are mainly concerned with the teaching of academic subjects and have no time to instruct children on the more important aspects of life such as values, principles etc, except in an indirect manner.

Parents teach less by telling children what they should or should not do, and more by example.

A father who wakes up late, will never be able to teach his children to wake up early.

A mother who lies all the time, cannot expect her children to be honest in their speech.

Parents, who are disordered and undisciplined, will not realize the importance of teaching their children to be orderly and disciplined. Value education is the education we receive from our

- **Academic education is the education we get from our teachers. Parents who are cowed by temper tantrums and screaming defiance are only inviting more of the same from their children.**
- **An alcoholic father is very likely to have an alcoholic son.**
- **Research on marriage and divorce has shown that children of divorced parents are very likely to have broken marriages themselves.**

- **Why parents are the best catechist / teachers -**
 - 1. Parents have subtle ways of humbling you, of reminding you of your origins, perhaps by showing up at the moment of your greatest glory and reminding you where you went wrong.**
 - 2. Parents can be understanding and accept the more difficult stages as necessary times of growth for the child.**
 - 3. Parents don't make mistakes because they don't care, but because they care so deeply. (*Berry Brazelton*)**
 - 4. Parents through their own behavior and the values, by which they live, provide direction for their children.**

5. Values like honesty, integrity, discipline, obedience, loyalty, and reverence for elders are passed on by parents to their children.

6. Parents can offer their help by suggesting and locating resources likely to be unfamiliar to children, such as people, books, and materials that can be useful.

7. Parents are like shuttles on a loom. They join the threads of the past with threads of the future and leave their own bright patterns as they go.

- ***British novelist Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)*** rightly said that parents cannot expect advice to have the same force upon their children as experience has upon themselves. It would be apt to conclude with Fred Rogers' quote. He said, "parents are like shuttles on a loom. They join the threads of the past with threads of the future and leave their own bright patterns as they go."

- **“Parents teach in the toughest school in the world: The School for Making People. You are the board of education, the principal, the classroom teacher, and the janitor,” wrote Virginia Satir (Columbia World of Quotations, 1996.)**
- **Are parents the best teachers? It depends on what one means by the term ‘teaching.’ If teaching is limited to elementary lessons in the three ‘r’s, namely – reading, writing and arithmetic, then, formal educators in school would perhaps be considered the best teachers. Teachers who teach us in schools and colleges are educators. They are necessary for the formal education of all children. But they are no substitute for parents. They never can replace parents in the shaping of the child’s character, life and future.**

• Questions for reflections and sharing:

• What are the obstacles that you encounter to raise up your kids?

• How far you have done to be a good Catechist and Teacher to your kids?

*Thank you
and
God Bless*

Fr. Val OfmCap