

Do you know when you care for a child's mind you protect the child's rights?

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Every human being by its nature has certain rights and freedoms. Violation of human rights can have for its consequence negative effect on health in general and mental health in specific. Erica-Irene Daes, special rapporteur in her report to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (1986), mentioned that, without the protection of basic human rights, there can only be diminished mental health. Mental health is how we think, feel, and act in order to face life's situations. It is how we look at ourselves, our lives, and at the people we know and care about. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, evaluate our options, and make choices. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life (National Mental Health Services, 2003).

If an adult human being's mental health is affected by violating their right, we can easily think of the conditions when a child's right is violated. It can be predicted easily how much a child's development could be disrupted in those situations. So, it is necessary to consider the connection between the violation of child's rights and damage of mental health.

Many of us are aware about the UN-CRC mentioned child's rights that are documented in the 49 articles. What do those rights say? In generally those proclaim that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. To be fully prepared to live an individual life in society and for the full and harmonious development of the child's personality, she should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. According to the rights apart from the self-determination, autonomy, and freedom of choice, the main importance is supposed to give to prohibition of torture, of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, freedom of speech and freedom of expression. In the present easy attention is put on the relationship between human rights and mental health i.e. child mental health problems and the violation of child rights in our everyday life.

We all know that both environment and biology can be involved in development of mental illness and problems. Examples of biological causes are genetics, chemical imbalances, and damage to the central nervous system. Our control over these biogenic causes is mostly indirect. But among many environmental factors those can put children at risk are what we do to children everyday consciously or unconsciously. For example, children who are exposed to violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, poisoning, or loss of loved ones through divorce, or broken relationships are more at risk for mental health problems.

Most of our countries parents want to make their children as the "Model of an IDEAL person". In one sense it is natural. Everybody wants to become the parent of the mostly praised person in the society. But in practice we want to do it through some wrong principles that are apparently quite effective methods of parenting. We try to do make our expectations come true from our children through strongly imposed disciplines and putting many restrictions. And when the children fail to follow those whatever for the reason we do not waste our time to use sarcastic words to them or to use corporal punishments.

Notwithstanding these as parents we want the teachers or any other mentors of our children to behave in the same manner to make our children as "the Ideal Person". We are doing these without being aware about the real outcome from our children.

As parents we are responsible for our children's physical safety and emotional well-being. But, can we imagine what happens to our children for such behaviours? Consequences of our different types of misbehaviours towards children are quite wide. Those impacts extend from their contemporary physical and mental conditions to the potential future developments in different physical, emotional, cognitive or social aspects. For example: the child feels and experiences-

1. sad and hopeless most of the time without good reason,
2. angry or overreacts to things;
3. worthless or guilty a lot;
4. anxious or worried;
5. grief for a prolonged time after a loss or death;
6. fearful;
7. physical problems or appearance;
8. worsen performance in school;
9. loss of interest in things usually enjoyed;
10. unexplained changes in sleeping or eating habits;
11. avoiding friends or family
12. willing to be alone all the time;
13. feels life is too hard to handle or talks about suicide;
14. hears voices that cannot be explained,
15. poor concentration;
16. problems making decisions;
17. inability to sit still or focus attention;
18. the need to wash, clean things, or become skeptical in certain things of life;
19. persistent nightmares.

When a child experiences these things for a prolonged period of time in his or her very curial developmental years he or she will then become incompetent indifferent prospective abilities of human being. For instance-the child would loss confidence to become explorative, creative, curious, lack in patience to be persevering; find difficulties to take initiatives to solve problems, make decisions, cope with stress, communicate with others etc. In the long run the child will not only be unable to take responsibility independently but also become pessimistic, complaining, suspicious and ruthless to others.

Followings are some common behaviours that causes many emotional and behavioral problems within the children. We usually-

1. don't spend quality time with the child, (In fact in our culture we think only mothers need and should be closer to the child, a father don't need to stay with the child at all.)
2. criticise the child with all negative things when the child makes a small mistake. (In our culture as father/mother of the child, we start critising the mother or the father as the reason for the mistakes. We try to make the child understand that she is worse than the wrong deed.)
3. don't allow a child to work appropriate to their age to feel powerful and when the accomplishes something we criticise and judge how it could be done better rather praising her,

4. don't let a child to solve her problem by her own, we are very straightforward to tell her, "you would not be able to do this".
5. never control ourselves to be involved in any conflict in front of our children. (Not only we show our temper as dangerously as it is possible but we also become as much disrespectful as we can be to others.)
6. forget what rules was set yesterday, i.e. we are very much inconsistent in our rules, as a result the child also forgets the rules to follow, but when once we remember we become hostile towards the child. For the moment we might make the child follow our words but we can't know that internally the child loses respect from us. She thinks "you don't mean what you say every time, you are just a big person who can hurt me anytime when you wish".

Parents provide a safe home and community for the children, nutritious meals, regular health check-ups, immunizations, education, treatments and many other things. But with such behaviours undoubtedly we are discarding respecting many of the child's rights. In this stage there might be raise a question "If we would not be authoritarian to the children then how the will learn disciplines?"

There is no one right way to raise a child. But it is true we can make our children as someone who have qualities, like-compassion, perseverance, patience, stability in emotion etc. without being so much authoritarian to the children. parenting styles may vary, but as caregivers we should agree on expectations for our child. National Mental Health Services' of USA Knowledge Exchange Network (NMHS-KEN, 2003) give some simple suggestions on such effective parenting. Following are some example of those. But these are not meant to be complete.

1. Encourage your child to express his or her feelings. Try to learn the source of the child's feelings of pain, fear, anger, and anxiety.
2. Help your child express anger verbally without being violent. Keep your voice level down-even when you are angry with someone or with the child. Seek help if you are overwhelmed by your child's feelings or behaviors or if you are unable to control your own frustration or anger.
3. Listen to your child. Use words and examples your child can understand. Look at your own problem-solving and coping skills. Are you setting a good example?
4. Encourage your child's talents and accept limitations. Set goals based on the child's abilities and interests-not someone else's expectations. Celebrate accomplishments. Don't compare your child's abilities to those of other children; appreciate the uniqueness of your child.
5. Spend time regularly with your child.
6. Let your child with life's ups and downs. Show confidence in your child's ability.
7. Discipline constructively, fairly, and consistently. (Discipline is a form of teaching, not physical punishment). Show approval for positive behaviors.
8. Love unconditionally. Help your child learn from his or her mistakes. Teach the value of apologies, cooperation, patience, forgiveness, and consideration for others while the makes a mistake.

It's our common practice to neglect the mental or psychological issues in our country. We can't believe that mental aspects can have any impact on our life. We think it's just a silly things to pay any attention. But for a child mental aspects are very important and extremely important to pay attention for the normal development of the child. Example of the behaviours of our everyday life towards children that are addressed in this article shows child rights and mental health have mutual connection and consecutive complexity. Might all of us were not aware of our behaviours to the children. But if we notice the problems within a child the very first thing to do is not feeling too upset to seek help. Seeking help may require a lot of patience and persistence on your part. It's important to keep looking until we find the right services for our child or the child in our family or in the neighbourhood. Some children and families need

counseling or family supports. Others may need medical care, residential care, day treatment, education services, legal assistance, rights protection, transportation, or case management. Some families don't seek help because they are afraid of what other people may say or think. Mental health problems are not any curse or anything that is not natural. Delay for seeking help, neglecting or hiding mental health problems is the biggest barrier to solve problems in the initial stage and prevent possible complications.

As there are huge misconceptions around the country about the "psychology" subject itself in our country it could not grow up that much. The most popular profession of psychology in the different mental health problems. Those professionals are experts to conduct seminars, symposiums on the child development, and children's ways of learning, programmes on effective parenting methods, and many other helpful projects. In this connection it is also important to get supports from different organizations' (GOs and/or NGOs). Their close coalition process with the mental health professionals will build different new child and family supporting system. Our children are in great needs to continue to pursue efforts to build community-based services to serve children and families at home. We should take our possible initiatives to build networks of social service agencies to meet the various needs of at risk families. These networks should include services for physical and mental health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse, and homelessness and housing issues. These social problems are closely linked to child welfare, and have profound effects on children and families. Other systems should include child-care, education, and welfare and job centers.

Let build a society that will provide the most effective nourishments to a child to develop as much as the nature pre-set it's potential.

About writer

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‘পৃথিবীতে প্রতি বছর চল্লিশ লক্ষ কিশোর-
কিশোরী আত্মহত্যার চেষ্টা করে এবং এদের
মধ্যে ১,০০,০০০ জন মারা যায়।’

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