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R HealthBeat

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Children Who Talk to
Themselves: Is It Good
or Bad?

Children's Education In
Today's Era

Nurturing
Imaginative Minds

Why Parents Must
Nurture Their Child's
Hobbies & Interests

INFINITE
IMAGINATION



TAKING CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL & FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

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DEAR READERS,

Our country's diverse cultural and religious fabric is the backbone of our society. To ensure a healthy and prosperous future, we must prioritize our physical health and the well-being of our children, both emotionally and spiritually. I am pleased to share my thoughts on this issue of our R-Health Beat while focusing on child development and nutrition and its impact on their future.

According to our ancient wisdom, the foundation of a child's life is laid during the early years. Hence, parents need to nurture their child's hobbies and interests, as it helps their overall growth and development. Moreover, our culture teaches us the value of वसुधैवकुटुम्बकम् "*VasudhaivaKutumbakam*" or "The World is One Family." Therefore, we must create an inclusive and supportive environment for our children to thrive and become global citizens.

Playing an instrument could boost your short-term memory. As Indians, we have a long tradition of music and dance. Our ancient scriptures emphasize the importance of music in developing a child's mind. Playing an instrument can help in enhancing concentration, focus, and memory. It can also be a form of meditation, providing a sense of calm and relaxation to the mind.

Why must parents nurture their child's hobbies & interests? The scriptures tell us that every child is unique and has their own set of talents and interests. Therefore, as parents, it is our duty to identify and nurture these talents, as they are a manifestation of the divine within the child. In addition, when a child pursues their interests and hobbies, they develop confidence and self-esteem.

In our culture, we have always valued the role of the mother in a child's upbringing. In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to rely on nannies and daycares to care for our children, but we must remember the importance of our role as parents in their upbringing. We must provide a nurturing and safe environment for our children's holistic growth.

Education is considered one of India's most important aspects of a child's life. And it is not just about academic excellence but also spiritual and moral development. As parents, we must ensure our children are ready to face the world's intellectual and spiritual challenges.

Ensuring that our children receive a holistic, inclusive, and value-based education is equally essential.

The summer holidays are an excellent opportunity for parents to spend quality time with their children, helping them develop skills and values to prepare them for their next life stage. Follow the precautionary tips to protect your child from frequent coughs & colds in the disease management section, emphasizing preventive healthcare.

We live in a digital age where information overload is overwhelming. Therefore, developing strategies to balance our physical, mental, and spiritual health is crucial. In addition, we must protect our children from excessive screen time, which can have detrimental effects.

Let's understand how to nurture the imaginative minds of our children from an expert. Creativity in today's era as it is a crucial driver of innovation and growth. As parents, we must provide a nurturing environment fostering our children's creativity and imagination.

Keeping with our traditions, we understand the importance of providing a balanced diet for our children, which may include non-vegetarian options for those who consume it. So, let's understand the idea of ways to introduce it.

In conclusion, as an insurance company, we firmly believe in advocating a holistic approach to health and well-being. I hope this nutrition and child development coverage provides valuable insights and advice to help future generations thrive. Let's work together to build a healthy and thriving community where every child can realize their full potential.

I wish you the best of health, always!

Warm regards,

Rakesh
Jain CEO



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EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor: Anand Singhi Raman Arora

Project Head: Dr. Saif Gondekar | Dr. Mahesh Yelapure

Content Reviewer: Dr. Prasenjit Ray | Dr. Kiran Dontha

Concept and Content: Dr. Kirti Choukikar
Chetan Thadeshwar

Marketing and Compliance: Rahul Sharma
Watan Bhajanka

Printing and Publishing: Ashfaque Shaikh

TESTIMONIALS

"Thank you to everyone who worked on this publication. All of the themes and topics are dear to our hearts, and we eagerly wait for the new edition. The current theme is so apt, came at the right and perfect time. Congratulations for the excellent work of the team."



Mr. Chetan Surani

(HOD Marketing, Fortis Hiranandani, Vashi)



Mr. Abhishek Mahato

Principal Officer

Get Paz Insurance Brokers Pvt Ltd (Pazcare)

"We wanted to send a quick note of thanks for your magazine and all of the hard work & dedication that it takes to put something of this caliber together. We are in awe of the content & quality of the articles. We wish you more success and look forward to every issue."

"Let me first start by congratulating the wonderful team behind this magazine. Creating a publication that is thoughtfully curated, well-written, and timely are no small feat and you deserve all the kudos that comes your way—now and in the future."



Mr. Narendra Singh

Sr. General Manager (Insurance)
Jaiprakash Associates Limited

LEARNING TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT COULD BOOST YOUR SHORT-TERM MEMORY

Playing a rhythm-based game for 8 weeks helps non-musicians become better at remembering recently seen faces. This suggests that learning to play an instrument could improve short term memory for non-musical tasks.

Theodore Zanto* at the University of California, San Francisco, & his colleagues randomly assigned a group of 47 non musicians, aged between 60 & 79, to play either a tablet based musical rhythm training game (or) a word search game for 8 weeks. At the start & the end of 8 weeks, participants took a short term memory test to measure the ability to remember a face they saw a few seconds before. Only the group who played the rhythm training game showed an improvement with their initial scores of 4%.

Brainwave data recorded before & after the training showed an increase in activity in the right superior parietal lobe, a brain region associated with encoding visual information attention. This suggested that rhythm training improves the brain's ability to focus attention on a task to get it ready for converting what you're doing into memory.

How playing music affects the brain

Brain scans have helped us to identify distinct differences between the brain structures of musicians & non-musicians. The corpus callosum (a bundle of nerve fibers is the bridge between the two sides of the brain) which is responsible for communication between both parts is the most positively impacted.

More fluid & continued communication between your brain hemispheres enhances your brain's longevity. Studies were done to determine if these changes are the result of music training or if some brains are just predisposed for music. They found that children, who trained, experienced more powerful & structural brain changes.

Brain scans found that the age at which you start learning influences the changes your brain will undergo.



It is not surprising that learning music at a younger age brings the most dramatic changes in structure and function.

Musical training enhances your working & long-term memory. It can also help children with speech processing and assist learning for those with dyslexia.

Wait, there's more....

- Music helps you to strengthen bonds with others.
- Playing Music can make you happy.
- You can develop multitasking skills as it helps in processing multiple sensory inputs at once.
- Music can also protect you from neuro-degeneration & boost your ability to live.



The benefits of learning music & playing instruments are vast and it's never too late to join in. Do your brain a favor and cancel your subscription to the brain-game websites. Start jamming with your favorite instrument instead.

WHY MUST PARENTS NURTURE THEIR CHILD'S HOBBIES & INTERESTS?

It's hard to pinpoint exactly when Parenting becomes difficult & intensely competitive. Parents work exceedingly hard to guide their children in one direction or another to help them excel. In doing so, we have taken much of the fun of being a parent & lost sight of what might make them truly joyful.

Merriam Webster defined Passion as "a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something." Passion isn't a trajectory for a successful life & neither had it guaranteed a college acceptance or a six figure salary. But it's a source of interest & excitement & it's unique to each individual, but passion isn't a life sentence. It can shift & change as kids grow. Moreover, it can't be forced. Passion is the greatest gift of self discovery.

Sadly, Passion & Specialization are often confused when it comes to Parenting. In an effort to make their kids stand out in the crowd, Parents attempt to guide their kids towards a specific area of "Passion" & then center their lives around it.

Psychologist Peter Gary in his book, "Free to Learn - Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life", explains the importance of allowing children to explore without pressure or limits.

Passion, by design, depends upon the individual. My passions are not yours, & mine have evolved over time. To push kids in one direction or another with the hope of finding the golden ticket is to deny them the opportunity to figure out what

really makes them tick. To encourage kids to specialize at a young age, to say this is it for you, is to limit the possibilities that life has to offer.

In his book, "The Happy Kid Handbook: How to Raise Joyful Children in a Stressful World", Gary encourages parents to step back & zoom out in an effort to explore a wide range of interests. When Parents support instead of push, kids find their passion & interests & learn to follow their own paths toward success & happiness.

Four strategies to support Children's pursuit of Passion

Know your child's unique interests

Take the time to get to know & understand your child's interests. Observe your child at play, ask open ended questions & listen when your child shares their dreams.

Think outside the Box

Passion exists everywhere, not just on the playing field or in a music room. Parents have a tendency to lean on organized sports or highly structured enrichment classes, but passion can play out right in your own home. Building, knitting, cooking & writing can all be done without structure and guided instruction. When Parents worry less about resume building & focus on what makes kids thrive, children find their unique interests & are happier for it.



Nurture optimism:

If we want to raise kids who can work through failure and come out stronger, it is wise to nurture optimism. Optimistic kids are more willing to take healthy risks, better problem-solvers and experience positive relationships. You can nurture optimism in your family by teaching them to view setbacks as temporary, modeling optimism & confronting negative self talk. When kids feel confident in their abilities, they find their passions.

Avoid judgment:

You might really love cricket & you probably couldn't wait for your little boy to reach a stage where he can pursue the same. But he might like to stay home and sketch the world. Resist the urge and avoid judging your children's choices. When they feel judged by their parents, they feel rejected.

It's important to step back from our own needs & let kids be kids. The sketch book collection will probably come & go in a few years but your child might be really passionate about Piano. We can't predict where our kids will end up & pushing them towards a certain passion won't guarantee happiness or success, but we can support them in the present & give them the freedom to pave their own road to happiness.



NANNY VS. DAYCARE: THE IMPACT OF CHILD CARE ON DEVELOPMENT

Choosing a childcare arrangement for your baby can be an extremely difficult choice for parents. Many parents wonder which option is best for their child - a nanny or a family member caring for their child or finding a good high quality childcare center?

The most comprehensive longitudinal study to date was done by the National Institute for Child Health & Human Development (NICHD). An effort to explore how quality, quantity, and type of child-care settings affect children's long-term development, this study began in 1991 with over a 1000 infants from diverse family situations & locations throughout the United States, and considered health, behavior, and cognitive outcomes as it followed those children over the subsequent 15 years.

The study showed that what matters the most is not the kind of care a child receives—but rather the nature of their home experience. Children who receive warmth, responsiveness, and the right forms of stimulation at home have the best outcomes, regardless of the type of early childhood care they receive. Of course, the results are more subtle than that. The quality of the setting, the amount of time spent in non-parental care, and the child's age will all make a difference.

A child's language, cognitive, & social development outcomes are all better in high quality care settings, where there is a high ratio of well trained adults. Statistically, Children who spend more than 30 hours a week in non-maternal care in the first 4 1/2 years of their lives, have more behavior problems as well as more minor illnesses (Upper respiratory tract & stomach infections), than those with fewer hours in care. The impact of the type of childcare setting also varies by age. By & large, Children younger than 3, experience less stress when they are being cared for back at their homes.



A baby with a surprised expression is sitting on a pink, textured rug. The baby is wearing a blue tank top and has a gold chain around their neck. In the foreground, there are several colorful Easter eggs in shades of pink, yellow, purple, green, and blue. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue with some light spots.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS SHOWED

Family matters the most

What counts most for a child's growth is that their parents are warm, responsive, & engage positively with them, creating a safe, stable, & stimulating family environment.

Each family is unique

The research encourages parents to choose their own ideal childcare strategy while realizing that what's best will depend on the personalities & needs of each child as well as those of the parents and families.

Good quality care

Look for caregivers who are well-trained, warm, & responsive with high adult-to-child ratio settings.

Home care up to 3 years is the best

Little kids perform best - less stress, fewer behavioral problems, better health - when they are cared for at home and a parent can be present with them for the majority of the time.

After 3 years, pre School or junior kindergartens are the best for kids.

There are so many factors that go into deciding what's best for your child. Our final advice is to take your time, be thorough in your research, and trust your gut in whatever you decide. Your child is going to thrive. No matter which arrangement you choose for childcare, you as a parent are still the main influence on your child's growth and development. The way you structure your home, offer encouragement, choose discipline, and plan activities together outside of work will be the basis of your child's growth. You're doing great!



IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR SCHOOL?

As kids return to school, chances are we'll encounter runny noses & sore throats. As a parent, we're often faced with the decision as to whether our child is healthy enough to go to school.

The start of the school season is upon us! It's time for parents to consider some of the health & wellness issues that arise when kids return to the classroom. By going over a checklist ahead of time, families are more likely to prevent problems rather than having to tackle them later.



Dr. Deepak Mulchandani
(Consultant Paediatrician)
Bombay Hospital, Mumbai

In addition to studying hard & staying safe, here are a few back-to-school tips to consider:

Talk to your child during this transition period:

It's important to talk about what to expect and what they're experiencing. Frequent & open communication is the best way to gauge how they're handling change. Remember to empathize with their feelings and be mindful that worrying or feeling overwhelmed may be completely normal experiences.

Kids should be up to date on medical care:

Starting at the age of 3, it's recommended that every child undergo an annual physical exam. This allows your child's pediatrician to address any health problems & screen for potential future issues. Children also typically receive vaccines before the start of kindergarten.

Vaccines:

Vaccination is an integral part of keeping your child up to date with ongoing viral and bacterial illnesses. With the onset of monsoon season, certain vaccine preventable illnesses like Influenza, Typhoid, & Hepatitis A may cripple the child's ability to attend school. Due to sick leaves & absences, this may have a substantial impact on academic performance. One should get in touch with their nearest Pediatrician for correct guidance of vaccines to be administered.

Hand Hygiene:

Teach children how to properly wash their hands & when to do so. (after blowing their nose, using the bathroom, & before eating). This lessens their

chance of becoming ill and spreading disease to others.

Establish Good Sleep Hygiene:

Not only is sleep an important part of a child's physical and emotional health; it also can play a role in how well they do in school. And research suggests that kids are sleeping less than they did years ago. Making sure your children get enough sleep is a crucial part of keeping them healthy. In fact, studies show that missing sleep can affect kids in a number of ways. Lack of sleep can lead to poor concentration, obesity, depression, and injuries.

Eat a Brain-Boosting Breakfast:

Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day when it comes to students. A balanced breakfast of protein & complex carbohydrates has been established as an important factor for brain function and maintenance of a steady energy level through the day.

Offer Healthy snacks:

Snacks are also important because—when combined with healthy meals, they help kids get the nutrients they need. Plus, having small snacks spaced between meals reinforces the idea that kids should eat small meals and eat when they are hungry. This helps them build healthy eating habits.

Seek out a Well-Fitting & Age-Appropriate School Bag:

Make sure to look for straps that are wide & padded, and a bag with a padded back. A proper-fitting backpack sits at the level of your child's waist and is best worn with a strap on each shoulder to avoid muscle strain.

Limit Screen Time Before & After School:

Children's screen time always should be supervised. Use any parental controls & privacy settings available, and closely monitor any social media sites or apps used by your child. As with other healthy habits, implementation is most successful when started early.

Remember to Celebrate:

After you're done preparing for a new school year, try to enjoy the moment! Whatever your ritual, we hope your family has a safe, healthy and successful school year.

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN TODAY'S ERA

"Education is a passport to the future," African American political leader Malcom X is said to have said, "because tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." The quote quite succinctly emphasizes the importance of education in preparing our posterity for the world of tomorrow. And the first step on this route is to choose a school that provides learning that will serve them well in the future. How do you select a school to prepare your child for a dynamic future where global conditions are constantly in flux?

What are the different School boards in India? & how are they different from each other?

India has a unique education system with several National, International, & State education boards. They cater to the different requirements & education choices. Each board has its unique exam pattern, objective & curriculum.

State Boards are unique to each State & follow separate syllabus, strategy & ranking criteria. The syllabus is quite limited, making it a preferred choice among students. They can participate in extracurricular activities while learning a lot about local culture. Currently, there are 32 different state education boards in India.

The **Central Board of Secondary Education (C.B.S.E.)** is one of India's most important & widely recognized education boards. It has accomplished this by implementing traditional teaching frameworks. It enables students to improve their physical, intellectual, & social skills through advanced teaching, knowledge, & application. It follows the NCERT curriculum to help students prepare for India's entrance exams.

Indian Certificate for Secondary Education (I.C.S.E.) is one of India's most pragmatic Private education school boards that reflects on the principles & fundamentals of theories. It places equal focus & allows flexibility in choosing subjects. It's preferred by students who want to study STEM related subjects in college.



Ms. Komal Naik
Coordinator,
Sanjeevani World School

The **Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (C.I.S.C.E.)** is a privately controlled national-level education board that conducts the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) & the Indian School Certificate (ISC) examinations for Class 10th & 12th respectively. Currently, over 2300 schools in India and overseas are connected with this board. It emphasizes application-based knowledge and critical thinking in a syllabus that includes 23 Indian and 12 foreign languages, making it the most rigorous board in India.

The **National Open Schooling Institute's (NIOS)** mission is to make education more versatile & accessible to all students. It helps the students to make choices on what, how & when to learn. A student has a maximum of 5 years to finish their exams. Moreover, they can learn at any time by using a distance learning education model.

The **International Baccalaureate (IB)**, situated in Geneva, Switzerland, was formed in 1968 & is also recognized by UNESCO. It operates approximately 5500 schools in 159 countries. The curriculum is focused on experiment-based learning by not fixing any reading lists or textbooks. The IB board offers the following educational programs: Primary Years (3 - 12 years), Middle year (11 - 16 years), Diploma & Career related (16 - 19 years).



The **International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)** is administered by the Cambridge International Examinations or CIE board. It is an international education board in India with over 10,000 schools connected with Cambridge International in 160 countries. The goal is to establish a solid foundation of knowledge through lifelong learning.

What are the essential factors that will help us choose the finest school for our children?

The role of a teacher is crucial to a child's overall learning experience. Checking the teacher's credentials and academic achievements is an excellent place to begin. A school should also have an adequate teacher-student ratio in order to provide individualized attention to all students. One of the key factors that distinguish a school is its curriculum. The curriculum is required, but the school should also provide possibilities for the child's personality & cognitive ability development. Schools should also emphasize practical application of academic learning to ensure effective inculcation. A good school should include co-curricular activities to support a child's entire development, as well as in-house programming to help them obtain important skills for the future.

How does choosing the right board impact our children's future career opportunities?

Most parents mistakenly prioritize prestige over practicality. Choosing an expensive school does not guarantee that the child will thrive academically. The predetermined curriculum focuses on the application of knowledge & skill-based learning. Choose a board that will help your child to develop skills in addition to receiving an education. Whether it's public speaking, entrepreneurship, athletics, fine arts or music, or even vocational skills: Choose a school that encourages children to flourish holistically.

INFLUENZA IN CHILDREN: FOLLOW THESE PRECAUTIONARY TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR CHILD



Dr. Mrinal Sircar

Director & Head, Pulmonology
& Critical Care Fortis Hospital, Noida

In recent times, cases of H3N2 flu infections among children below the age of 5 are on the rise. The majority of them complain of a cough that can continue up to 3 weeks, as well as very high fevers that last for several days. With these complaints, quite a large number of children are also experiencing loose motions. In children, H3N2 can cause major complications and takes a little longer to recover.

What is Flu?

Influenza (flu) is a very contagious viral infection that affects the air passages of the lungs. It causes high fever, body aches, cough, & other symptoms.

Is this a new strain?

According to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) records, up to 50% of all hospitalizations due to respiratory illnesses are because of the H3N2 strain of the Type A Influenza virus. Influenza is a common respiratory illness caused by the Influenza virus of which there are several types A, B, C, & D.

The swine flu H1N1 and the most commonly circulating strain this year H3N2, are common types of Type A influenza.

How do you know whether your child has H3N2?

Unfortunately, H3N2 lacks specific signs and symptoms. It is difficult to differentiate between the symptoms of the disease, H3N2, and the common cold, seasonal flu, or even mild cases of Covid-19 based on symptoms alone. High-grade fever, chills, body ache, sore throat, runny nose, cough, loose stools, and vomiting are some of these symptoms.

H3N2 symptoms can become more severe and persistent in certain kids, requiring hospitalization. Lethargy, poor feeding, respiratory issues, chest tightness, or persistent high fever are a few of these.

How does this disease spread?

The virus is highly contagious. It spreads via infected droplets and contaminated surfaces.

How can you protect your children?

To keep yourself and your family safe during the ongoing outbreak, follow these basic precautions:

- Drink plenty of water & eat a balanced & Healthy diet.
- Follow and practice good hand hygiene by often washing your hands or using a hand rub.
- Avoid overcrowded social events & public areas.
- Always wear face masks while stepping out of the house.
- If you have a fever, cough, or cold, stay away from young children, the elderly, and anyone who has ongoing medical conditions. When interacting, cover your face.
- Avoid using self-medication. Consult your Doctor as & when required.

Vaccination to protect & prevent Influenza

The most vital pillar for protection against diseases is immunization. In India, trivalent & quadrivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccinations are approved for use and advised for all children over the age of 6 months. Your child will receive two doses of the flu vaccine when receiving it for the first time (often between the ages of 6 months and 1 year), and after that, annual vaccinations are indicated - the best time being at the onset of winter.

Every year, a new strain of the vaccine is available (based on anticipated virus strains), so you should make sure your children have the shot, ideally before flu season starts. Ideally, all individuals should receive an annual flu shot, and those at high risk for serious illness, such as young children under the age of 5, elderly people over 65, pregnant women, or people with chronic medical conditions like Diabetes, asthma, COPD, heart disease, chronic liver or kidney disease or cancers etc. should absolutely and strongly be recommended doing so.

TIPS TO DEAL WITH INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Are children nowadays drowning in a sea of media-supplied information?

The Internet, & all of the new computer & communication technology that has sprung from it, have been a boon to the information age, making information available at children's fingertips instantaneously. The sheer volume of information now accessible online is staggering with over 50 billion pages on the Web. Children are being raised in this new information age, and it will most likely be a determining role in how their brains & minds develop.

For all its benefits, a real danger for children is that they are drowning in this torrent of information. Neuroscientists call this notion "cognitive overload" & it occurs when the inflow of information hinders rather than helps the ability to process that information & think clearly.

Now let us digress briefly & make an important distinction: Information is not thinking. Thinking involves what children's brains do with the information: Perceive, Remember, Organize, Synthesize, Reason, Create, Problem solving & make decisions. Raising children who will thrive in the digital world is all about teaching them how & wiring their brains to think, not just access information.

This overflow of information affects children in several ways. First, in today's world of technology, information is coming at them from many directions, for eg. Television, Computer texts, hyperlinks, & on screen ads. Children are enveloped in an environment of constant information & distraction. As a result, they have neither the time nor the attention to process most of the information & use it in productive ways; for instance, to learn a subject in school or explore a topic of personal interest in great depth.

When their minds are being flooded with information, their primary source of motivation is not to think about

that information, but rather to move the information through their minds as quickly as possible and make room for the next wave of information.

At the heart of the problem with information overload is that such large & never ending quantities of input interferes with children's ability to engage in what we call, "interput", which involves all of the processes that go into thinking between input to output. With so much information flowing in and out, interput suffers; there is neither the time nor the energy to adequately process all of the information that children receive these days.

Writer Nicholas Carr, stated that information without any interput has serious consequences. The absence of it prevents children from taking ownership of the information. It also keeps them from transforming the input from cold & lifeless data into a power plant of insight, creativity & innovation. & ultimately prevents them from putting the information into conscious, meaningful, & beneficial action.

How to prevent information overload in your children?

Engage your children in a conversation about information. We will be surprised to learn that our children are acutely aware that the current rate of information that is flooding into their brains is overwhelming & stressing them out. Work with them to find ways to reduce their input to a manageable level. Set reasonable limits on how they can relieve their stress, enable them to engage & allow them to do better in school & other important activities.

Parents can also install an ad blocker extension to get rid of unwanted ads. This can help reduce internet clutter & also prevent kids from clicking on inappropriate sites. Encourage regular breaks every 30 minutes to take some pressure off their eyes. Staring at the mobile or tab screens can negatively impact eye health that may develop into myopia or short sightedness in the future.



Information overload is a real phenomenon & when it's reduced, we have created a space in their lives in which they can absorb the information that is most beneficial to them. The result? Fewer feelings of being overwhelmed & stressed, more time to devote to important things, more thinking and focus on personal, family & school lives.

NURTURING IMAGINATIVE MINDS

Anvi, a 4-year-old preschool child, excitedly told her Mom, "...and then we drank purple milk that came from a purple cow." Webster defines imagination as "the ability to form a picture in your mind of something that you have not seen or experienced; the ability to think of new things." Every child is born with an imagination. At times, parents and adults nurture children's imaginations and take joy in their creative thoughts and acts. Other times, we might (deliberately or unknowingly) stifle children's imaginations, perhaps concerned that children don't understand what's real. Most children older than 3, however, know that purple cows don't really exist but enjoy opportunities to imagine and think creatively. Allowing children to use their imagination is helpful and there are many benefits of pretend play in child development.

Creative Thinking & Imagination for Child Development

Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Imagination is the door to possibilities. It is where creativity, ingenuity, and thinking outside the box begin for child development. It's a way to how children learn about the world. Employing creative thinking while manipulating play dough, creating recipes by mixing dirt and water, working with art materials, splashing in puddles, or pretending to fly can further child development.

Imagination fosters cognitive and social development. Everyone wants to raise children who reach their highest intellectual and social/emotional potential. In early childhood education, critical thinking skills and creative problem-solving abilities are goals for children's development. Imagining, trying new ways of doing things and experimenting help develop critical thinking in children and foster creative problem-solving.



Dr. Rahul R. Kulkarni

(MBBS DCH)

Fellow in Neonatology (NNF)

(Consultant Paediatrician at Astha Children Hospital, Siddhivinayak Hospital & Apollo clinic, Wanowrie, Pune) (Panel Consultant at Sahyadri Hospital, Bibwewadi & Shahishav Children's Hospital, Pune)

Furthermore, it builds social-emotional development by allowing children to contemplate different resolutions, thus boosting children's confidence, which can be used in interactions with others. Imagination and creativity are also skills that our children will need when they join the future workforce.

Creativity for Kids: Tips for Nurturing Creative Minds

Spend time outdoors: The benefits of nature for child development are endless. Because nature is ever changing, it provides countless opportunities for discovery, creativity, & problem-solving. The natural world inspires children to think, question, make suppositions, and develop creative minds. Children can draw in sand, make designs with twigs, build forts with branches, or simply lie on the ground and look up at the sky

Invent scenarios: When your child invents a scenario, he tries on lots of different roles and organizes his thoughts while developing social and verbal skills. Encourage your child to play house, doctor, zoo, farm, space station, school, or store.

Join in the imaginative play by taking on a role yourself: Play with stuffed toys or puppets. Let your child lead your playtime together. If your child is into superheroes, think of the power your child might want as his own superpower feeling. Consider having your child create a new superhero!

Verbal activities: From rhymes to riddles, silly sounds to phonics, games such as "I Spy" or making up lyrics to common tunes, verbal interactive activities can inspire and nurture creative minds. These activities build vocabulary & help your child learn phonics.

Encourage art activities: Art is a creative expression that nurtures imagination, not a lesson in following directions. Through painting, sculpture, collage, clay, drawing or any other medium, art is a way for children to work through emotions, make decisions, & express their ideas. It provides a sense of freedom yet also encourages focus & concentration. Art activities also develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Furthermore, art activities build confidence because children gain a sense of mastery over materials resulting in a new creations.

Share literacy activities: Make reading time memorable and discuss other possible scenarios or endings for the story by using your child's imagination. Make up stories with your child, at times with her as the main character; other times propose moral dilemmas. Take turns making up a continuing story.

Ask open-ended & thought-provoking questions:

Asking questions that provoke imaginative and creative thinking is an effective way to invite your child to express his ideas and share his visions, while giving him the message that his ideas are important. "What do you think would happen if....?" "What's the difference between a dog & a cat?" "What are some other ways to do this?"

Limit screen time: Focusing on a screen is a passive way of learning for children. An alternative would be to encourage children to create something new & different. Engaging children in a kinesthetic manner using their entire bodies and their 5 senses also opens the mind.

Allow down time: Unstructured, unscheduled time allows children opportunities to imagine & create.



Early childhood is the peak time to nurture children's imagination. So if your child comes home and says, "...and then we drank purple milk that came from a purple cow," or something similar, offer encouragement for their creativity and imagination.



IMPACT OF SCREEN TIME IN CHILDREN: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Dr. Vivek Iyer
(MD) PAEDIATRICS
Paediatrician & Neonatologist
Zydus Hospitals, Ahmedabad

The year Y2K marked a significant turning point in history, with technology advancements and their applications increasing exponentially in the years that followed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the penetration of technology into our lives. Artificial intelligence has become a core factor in almost all decisions, big or small, taken by us. However, the quick pace of technological advancement raises the question of whether it is too soon and has negative impacts on future generations, especially on children.

Screen time, defined as the time spent looking at any device (input or output) used to view something, has become a major concern in the discussion about the impact of technology on children's lives. While the widespread use of technology and the internet has positively impacted children by providing them with access to an unlimited array of resources, including mainstream education, and world knowledge, there are considerable negative impacts as well.

Studies have shown that infants and young children who are fed their meals while they are watching a screen experience poor nutritional development, delayed speech development,

and an inability to coordinate or engage in complex activities. Additionally, increased screen time has been linked to the early development of ASD & ADHD in this age group. School-going children have also shown poor academic performance, poor decision-making skills, and desensitization to command-following due to excessive screen time.

Adolescents have been most affected by the negative impacts of screen time, which has been associated with a rebellious streak, aggressive or overtly introverted behavior, addiction, loss of self-value and financial crimes. In extreme cases, it has also led to extremely violent behavior and actions.

To address these issues, it is recommended that screens do not be introduced to children under 2 years old. From 2 to 5 years old, around half to one hour of screen time per day is permissible, mainly for educational and mildly recreational content. For children from 5 years old to the adolescent age group, a maximum screen time of an hour or so per day is allowed, except for compulsory school or academic screen time. For adolescents, permissible educational and other learning-related screen time is required, but along with parental control, website access tracking, monitoring online presence and activity, and controlling online financial activity. Encouraging children to be screen-literate while not becoming a pawn to technology's shortcomings, or becoming addicted, is crucial.

However, balancing screen time exposure, along with providing a childhood filled with fun, play, activities and social interaction is also necessary to allow them to develop into outstanding social individuals.

In conclusion, the impact of technology on children's lives is exceedingly complex, with both positive and negative effects. While it is essential to embrace technology's advancements, it is equally important to be aware of its negative impacts and take measures to ensure children's well-being.



IS SELF-TALK **NORMAL IN** **CHILDREN?**





Dr. Rajaram G
MBBS, DCH, DNB,
Consultant General Paediatrics
(Rainbow Children's Hospital,
Marathahalli, Bengaluru.)

We often see children especially preschoolers talk to themselves and wonder if it is normal.

Private speech or self-talk is a spontaneous self-directed talk in which a child 'thinks aloud'. This is part of normal development in children which helps in regulation of their thinking process and emotions. Unlike adults who self-talk mostly in solitary moments, young children use private speech in public. When they begin talking to themselves, their communication skills with the outside world improve. Parents or teachers should not think that it is bad or abnormal and instead use this as a window into the minds of young children.

The importance of private speech in child development was first described by Jean Piaget, a Swiss Psychologist. He used the term 'egocentric speech' to describe self-talking in children. According to him, this was a sign of cognitive immaturity which fades away by the age of 7 to 8 years.

Later, Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist proposed that self-talking is not a sign of cognitive immaturity but a form of development which is important for cognitive functions like planning, monitoring and guiding self which eventually transforms into inner silent speech. Research about private speech over the last 2-3 decades concurs with Vygotsky's theory.

There are three basic functions of private speech:

- **Self-regulation** (to control their behaviour),
- **Self-evaluation** (Yes! for self congratulation, 'I can't believe I did this' for self-punishment) and
- **Self-instruction** (during problem solving).

Other reasons for private speech include practicing language skills, memory aids, imagination and creativity.

Private speech undergoes changes as children grow. Between the ages of 3 and 10, it gradually becomes softer and briefer, later changes to whispers and lip movements and it gets internalized eventually. When a task is new, children self-talk a lot and as they master the task, it gradually reduces.

When to worry about private speech?

We often see children with behavioural/developmental issues like ADHD and Autism. They also have private speech but it is more frequent/repetitive and persistent in them. There are studies which suggest that even in these children; it is an effective tool for doing their tasks.

However, if a child has speech delay, repetitive behavior, poor eye contact, hyperactivity in addition to frequent self-talking, he/she needs to be evaluated by a Pediatrician/Developmental Pediatrician. Also, if self-talk is affecting daily life or social interaction, it needs professional management.

To sum up, self-talk in children is very common and it is part of normal development in children which helps in improving cognitive, behavioral functions and language development. If it is associated with developmental/behavioral issues or affects daily life, it needs further evaluation.

THE BENEFITS OF CORPORATE CRÈCHE

*It was after she became a mother that Gurgaon resident *Rekha had to think about switching jobs because the firm where she worked didn't offer a crèche facility. She now works with an aviation firm, which provides daycare for her seven-year-old daughter.*

"Every day, I pack my daughter's bag with her lunch & a change of clothes, which I hand over at my office's crèche. The school bus drops my daughter off outside the facility, where a dedicated daycare didi awaits to pick her up," she explains.

Introduction

Women play the role of mothers, wives, & business executives; & each of these roles demands the very best. While this seems like an impossible situation, working moms have to live with this. They need some support for striking a balance between their responsibilities at Home & work.

Women make up 22.08% of the total workforce in the country, according to World Bank data from 2018. According to statistics, Maternity is a major factor in the early departure of female employees. They experience great stress as they struggle to return back to their jobs post their maternity leave.

Employers have just begun to recognize & are actively seeking the best solution. Many businesses are now intending to provide in-office crèches for working mothers.

Advantages of In house Crèches:

Convenience is undoubtedly the main benefit of on-site childcare. This allows employees to bring their infants to work & pick them up at the end of the day. One can take care of their babies while also saving time. Working mothers feel more comfortable & focused because they don't have to worry about baby care during the day.

According to studies, Working parents become **more productive** when they have their babies nearby and know they are being cared for. Aside from keeping working parents happy, an onsite crèche is a significant recruiting tool for **enticing talented employees** who would otherwise switch over to others to ensure childcare. Also, the existing women employees are more likely to stay with their employers for a long time, which will enhance employee happiness & help the business flourish.

Another advantage of onsite daycare is that employees take lesser leaves if they can have their children in close vicinity while they work. Several studies have found that employees who have access to onsite daycare at work had **reduced absenteeism rates**.

These facilities benefit not only the new mothers but fathers too. "My wife works night shifts so we prefer to bring our daughter to the office on days when their school is off. Now that their summer vacations are here, I will be bringing her to work more often so that my wife can sleep through the day," says *Ritwik, who works in an investment firm.

Not only do these crèches offer basic facilities for children, but they also offer playschool integrated programmes, nap rooms, kitchen & meal rooms, reading corner etc. They are aimed to provide support to working parents by providing a safe & healthy environment for their children while they work.

We live in a busy world. The employer needs to adopt a mindset whereby they are willing to support their employees in raising their families. The crèche environment also provides children of different age groups to bond & communicate with each other which is congenial for a child's upbringing.



WILL FUTURE GENERATIONS USE ROBOTS AS EMOTIONAL COMPANIONS?

The 2012 film "Robot & Frank" depicted a "near future" in which we could spend our golden years "co-dependently independently," aided by ever-present robot companions that could detect loss of balance and falls, and prompt us to do constructive home projects like gardening, and even become our good friends.

That future may be closer than we think.

As technology continues to advance & Robots become more sophisticated & capable of interacting with Humans in a natural & engaging way, it's likely that Future generations will increasingly use Robots as emotional companions.

Many examples of robots being used as companions already exist, such as the popular robot pets created to provide companionship and entertainment for people of all ages. These robots are frequently programmed to respond to human interactions in a lifelike manner, employing sensors and artificial intelligence to learn from and adapt to their behaviors accordingly.

The Acceptance of Robots

We need to understand what will make us more open to accepting Robots as Emotional companions. The data suggests that people familiar with the technology are generally more comfortable with them. In a survey of 426 American adults, it was found that age was the most important factor of Robot acceptance. The average score for people aged 21 - 30 was 3.6 points, for people aged above 60 years, the score was much lower: 2.41 points. This shows that future generations are likely to have a more open approach to robots.



Is it possible to teach emotions?

A 2014 study found that robots appeared to develop feelings that were linked to physical flourishing or distress. This was taught by being grounded in things like battery levels & motor temperature. The robots could learn that something was wrong, & react accordingly if they felt low on battery and could then link that experience to a feeling, like sadness.

Numerous studies have also been conducted in the area of facial recognition. A 2017 study involved building a facial recognition system that could perceive facial expressions in humans. The AI could then change its inner state to better show human-like feelings in response over time, with the aim of being able to interact with people more effectively.

Building robots that love us back

So far we've focused on Robots becoming assistants & carrying out service roles more effectively with the help of emotions. But if we've learned anything from sci-fi movies it's that Robots could also make awesome friends. In the 2014 study, "Developing Robot Emotions", Researchers Angelica Lim & Hiroshi G. Okuno explained: "Just as we may understand a good friend's true feelings (even when they try to hide it), the system could adapt its definition of emotion by linking together person-specific facial features, vocal features, and context." "A caregiver's presence could make the robot 'happy', associate it with 'full battery', and its presence would therefore be akin to repowering itself at a charging station, like the idea that a loved one re-energizes us."

Looking forward

It is critical to evaluate the ethical and societal ramifications of deploying robots as social companions. People may become unduly dependent on robots for companionship and social interaction leading to further isolation and detachment from other humans. Therefore, it will be important for future generations to carefully consider the role of robots in their lives and ensure that they are used to enhance human relationships and social connections.



FROM MILK TO MEAT: INTRODUCING NON-VEGETARIAN FOOD TO YOUR LITTLE ONE

As your little one grows up, you may consider introducing non-vegetarian food to their diet. While it may seem daunting, introducing your baby to non-vegetarian food is essential in their healthy development. It is crucial to start with the right food items and follow the proper steps to ensure a smooth transition. Learn some ideas on how to introduce non-vegetarian cuisine to your baby.

When to Introduce Non-Vegetarian Food?

The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends waiting until your baby is six months old before introducing non-vegetarian food. Before this age, your baby's digestive system is underdeveloped to handle solid food.

Start with One Type of Non-Vegetarian Food at a Time

When introducing non-vegetarian food to your baby, starting with one type of food at a time is essential. This approach helps you identify any allergies or sensitivities your baby may have to the new food. Start with small portions and gradually increase as your baby gets accustomed to the unique and new taste and texture.

Cook the Food Thoroughly

It is essential to cook non-vegetarian food thoroughly before feeding it to your baby. This cooking process eliminates any bacteria in the food and ensures it is safe for your baby to consume. Moreover, please note that overcooked or undercooked meat may not be safe for your baby.

Avoid Adding Spices and Seasoning

When introducing your baby to non-vegetarian food, avoid adding any spices or seasoning to the food. Your baby's taste buds are still developing and may find the added flavours overwhelming. Instead, start with bland food and gradually introduce new flavours and spices over time.

Choose Nutrient-Rich Food

When introducing non-vegetarian food to your baby, choosing nutrient-rich food that provides the necessary vitamins and minerals for their growth and development is essential. Some examples of nutrient-rich non-vegetarian food include:

- Lean cuts of chicken and turkey
- Fish such as salmon and trout
- Lean cuts of beef and pork
- Eggs

What's there for vegan families?

For vegetarians and vegans, soy products and quinoa, a plant-based protein source with essential amino acids, can be excellent substitutes for animal-based proteins. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that the quantity and quality of the protein found in soy may vary from that found in non-vegetarian protein sources.

Introduce New Food in the Morning

When introducing new non-vegetarian food to your baby, do so in the morning. This approach helps you monitor your baby for adverse reactions throughout the day. If your baby shows any signs of an allergic reaction, such as vomiting, diarrhoea, or rash, contact your Paediatrician immediately. However, suppose you have concerns about meeting your protein needs or a medical condition requiring a specific dietary recommendation. In that case, it's always best to consult a qualified Dietician.

In conclusion, introducing non-vegetarian food to your baby is paramount in their healthy development. However, it is crucial to follow the proper steps to ensure a smooth transition. With these tips, you can confidently introduce non-vegetarian food to your baby and help them develop healthy eating habits!

TOP 10 CHILD FRIENDLY HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS IN INDIA

Everybody loves a vacation, but for families with children, it is quite a task to decide a destination. Here's a list of holiday destinations in India which are perfect for children, while letting parents unwind at ease.

Darjeeling: The magnificent backdrop of blue sky, snow-capped mountains, & lush green tea gardens, as seen from a toy train, is perhaps what children will appreciate the most. Children will love toy train & cable car rides through scenic tea gardens.

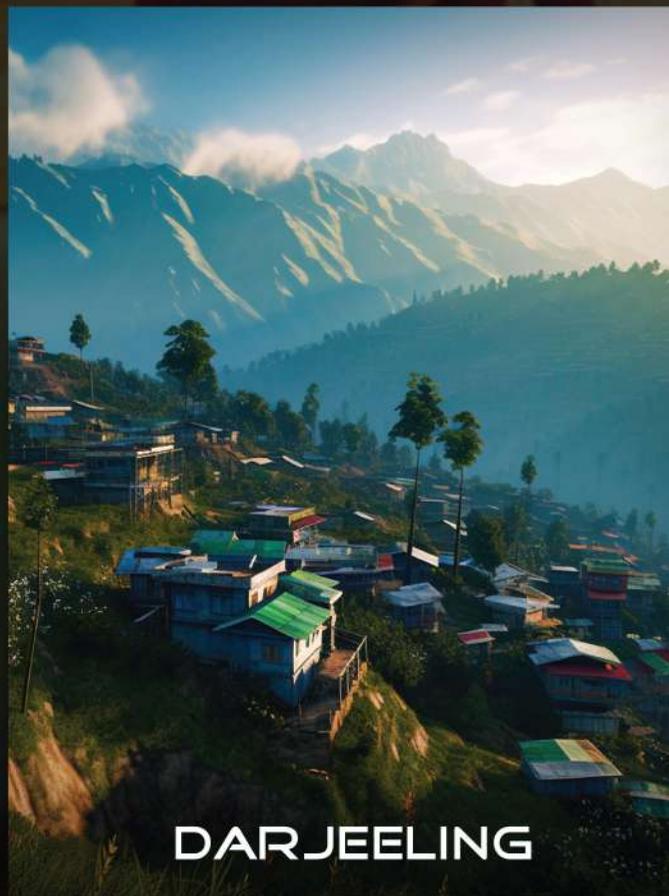
Ooty: With all of the chocolate treats available at the local confectioners, the hill station not only provides a calm environment for parents but also a treat for youngsters. Take your children to the Honey & Bee Museum to understand how honey is collected.

The crystal clear river Beas flowing through the valley as you enter **Manali** is undoubtedly exciting for children. Add some fun adventure sports to this picture-perfect setting, & there won't be a single frown over the vacation. Take them up to Rohtang Pass and let them play in the snow.

The City of Lakes, **Udaipur** is a great way to acquaint your child with history during a vacation. The royal city offers rich culture with knowledge for all ages. Children will enjoy watching Light & sound show at the city palace as well as puppet shows that tell some really interesting stories.

The golden sands of **Jaisalmer** are definitely inviting for children. The thrill of riding a camel is undoubtedly one that they won't be able to forget in a lifetime. Take them for an overnight desert safari & see how the moonlit sands twinkle in their eyes.

Mahabaleshwar: Take your children to the Mapro garden & let them pick strawberries on their own. The joy of doing



something so unusual is what you will be rewarded with. Take them to the tablelands & opt for horse riding.

Nothing in the whole world can teach a kid more than nature can. **Jim Corbett National Park** is an excellent opportunity for you to introduce your child to nature. At one of India's best national parks, you're greeted by beautiful plants and animals. The most thrilling experience is seeing the Indian Tiger that calls this region home. A fantastic site to introduce your children to India's royal keep!



With its numerous entertainment opportunities, the **Rann of Kutch** can provide children with the gentlest exposure to the deserts. Camel cart rides to the white desert, jeep rides on the magnetic hill kalo dungar, and a variety of cultural events such as folk dance, puppet, and magic performances to keep kids hooked and interested.



The picturesque **Mayani bird sanctuary** in Maharashtra will amaze the kids with the sight of the rare Siberian Flamingos, as well as over 400 other bird species. Make it a memorable experience for the kids by allowing them to feed the birds.

So, what are you waiting for? Pack up your bags and leave with the kids for an amazing vacation, and spend some wonderful time connecting with them.



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