

Emotional Intelligence: The Gift We Give Our Children

~ Saheli Sheth (Peoria, USA)

Acceptance of All Emotions

What happens if you take a soda can, shake it up, and then open it? It overflows and spills! In the same way, our feelings overflow and spill into other areas of our lives if we ignore them or don't talk about them.

Satsang is so unique because it teaches us the brilliant skill of *emotional intelligence*, which means **learning to become friends with our own emotions**.

Sadguru Sant Pujya Shantidada's beloved *sevak*, Pujya Seemadidi, exemplifies how to accept uncomfortable emotions. A couple of times, I've cried in her presence when I miss Shantidada. Her reaction is profound; she'll put her hand on mine and cry with me. The purpose of her crying isn't to turn the attention toward herself, but rather, to show that she understands. She doesn't see crying as a weakness. She doesn't try to put a false Band-Aid on our grief by saying "He's in a better place now" or "At least he's not in any pain." She never tries to 'fix' or take away the unpleasant feeling.

Instead, she prays for strength for us. With her hand still on mine, she'll close her eyes and do *dhun* for me through her own tears. Her powerful prayer for me serves another purpose: It protects her from becoming overly worried about me. **She remains strong so that I can borrow strength from her.**

Seemadidi provides a comforting presence for others' pain because she is not scared of her own emotions. After Pujya Shantidada's passing, she shared with me that whenever she cries, she doesn't question why she's crying; she simply allows her tears to come, without any judgment, and accepts them as an emotional release. When we are able to accept the full range of our emotions, we teach our children that they are allowed to do the same.

Teaching Children the Right Ways of Channeling Uncomfortable Emotions

Through our own actions, our children learn how to channel their feelings. For example, think back to what your parent(s) or guardian(s) did when they were stressed, upset, or angry.

Did they shout?

Did they use alcohol or tobacco to numb the pain?

Did they sleep for hours to avoid the pain?

Did they take the anger out on someone else?

OR

Did they take a deep breath and go to their room to calm down?

Did they create art?

Did they talk openly about how they're feeling?

Did they pray and talk to God about it?

We often learn by what we witnessed growing up. Just as we learned by watching our parent(s), our children learn by watching us. To teach our children how to channel their uncomfortable feelings, we may first compassionately and honestly ask ourselves: **What do we do when we are upset, stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, or angry?**

Do we raise our voices, or do we go for a walk?

Do we start overthinking, or do we write our thoughts down to clear our minds?

Do we ignore our feelings until we lose our temper, or do we connect with our friends and community for support?

Do we distract ourselves by scrolling through our phones or watching excessive TV, or do we talk about it with someone?

Engaging in exercise, spending time in nature, writing, meditating, creating art, and talking to a support person are just a few of the many excellent ways to process our emotions. None of us wants our kids to be like exploding soda cans, spilling their feelings onto others. To help our kids become friends with their emotions, may we first lovingly become friends with our own feelings. And if we ever need a community to turn to for support, our satsang family is here with open arms. ◆