

BE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR CHILD IN FAILURE

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“Your son is a good boy. He is clever and studious. I was expecting him to pass with first class. But I am sorry that he has failed. I do not understand why he failed,” said our Hindi teacher to my father.

I had received very good marks in all subjects except in Hindi. While scoring 85 marks in Maths, I had got only 30 marks in Hindi instead the passing marks of 35, and I was declared failed in the secondary school board examinations.

My father inquired and found the home address of my Hindi teacher. He visited his house to find out why I have failed. My teacher graciously welcomed my father into his house and spoke to him as quoted above.

That evening my father shared the news of his visit to the far away village with my mother, all my sisters and brothers and me and repeated the teacher’s own words about my failure.

I felt as if heavy weight was taken down from my head and I was relieved. In spite of my failure my Hindi teacher had given good opinion of me to my father and had also expressed his sympathy and concern for me.

After meeting my Hindi teacher my father became my defender and supporter in my failure. I have heard him speaking about my failure to his friends, and defending me saying, “The examiner must have put marks to Varghese’s Hindi paper after fighting with his wife or his children or perhaps he must have examined the paper carelessly and gave him less marks”.

In the previous year for standing first in standard ten in the whole school I had received a prize of a book in the school anniversary celebrations. As a student standing first and getting prizes every year I could not have ever imagined that I would fail in the state board examinations! So I was devastated with the news of my failure. I was so ashamed of my failure that for many years I would shrink from mentioning it to anyone.

My Hindi teacher had told a good word about me to my father and shown his sympathy towards me and my father in the midst of the busy paddy cultivation season left the 15-20 farm labourers to do the job and went in search my Hindi teacher to enquire about my failure! Thus they showed me their love and concern for me.

In the darkest moment of my life the two significant people concerned did not scold me nor put me down. On the contrary, they expressed their love and support and assured me that they were with me in my traumatic experiences of my first failure in life. From such a painful experience I have drawn certain lessons and conclusions for my life.

First, those children are blessed whose parents and teachers stand by them when they fail. Those children know that their parents and teachers love them and not their good show and success. Such children do not have to be on their toes always to get the love and appreciation of their

parents and teachers. They are not slave to the love and appreciation of their parents and significant persons in their lives. They are free and they are masters of themselves and self-possessed. They are not puppets in the hands of their guardians and elders. They have their own personality and dignity.

Second, those children are blessed whose parents and teachers respect them and love them even when their performances are below the expectations. Such children know that the love and appreciation of their parents and teachers are for themselves and not for their big and small performances and achievements. They are not slave to the expectations of their elders and significant persons in their lives. They know that their parents and teachers will respect them and accept them for what they are irrespective of their performances.

Third, those children are blessed whose parents and teachers put their trust and love on them even when they fail or their performances are below par. In such situation the children are able to trust in themselves and achieve success making the failure a stepping stone to climb up. American writer Mark Twain advises us, "Keep away from those who ridicule your great expectations. They are small people. Great people will convince you that you can become great one day."

Those parents, who show love and encouragement to their children in their good performance, should also show such enthusiastic trust and faith in their children even when they fail or show disappointing results. Such children will learn to trust and appreciate themselves even when they face difficulties and will go on to become successful citizens and great achievers in their lives as time passes.

Fourth, those children are blessed who experience the unconditional love and appreciation of their parents and teachers even in their failures or performance below the expectations. When the children bring good results or show their achievements they do get love and appreciation of their parents and teachers. If the children experience such love and support even when they fail or do badly in some areas of their lives, then they can overcome or put up with their failures. On the other hand, when children experience criticism and neglect and even hate instead of love and appreciation, they will find it difficult to cope up or face their failures and less-than-expected results. In such situation they experience inner turmoil and tension on even depression. This situation may lead them to take unexpected and unimagined steps like running away from home or even committing suicide.

Fifth, those children are blessed whose parents and teachers respect their freedom and individuality even when they fail or their performances do not match upto the expectations of elders. Children are independent persons. Children, big or small, have their own unique personality. The parents and teachers must respect and uphold the freedom and individuality of their children.

I remember when I failed my uncle who taught me in seventh standard proposed to my parents to apply for revaluation of my Hindi examination papers. But by the time the re-evaluation result come I will anyway lose one year to pursue my college studies. Then, to apply for re-evaluation we have had to travel one full day to reach the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram; and there was

no hundred percent guarantee that the result would be positive. So I told my uncle and father, “Anyway, I would lose one year. I am confident that I can succeed well by giving mid-year examinations once more for all the subjects. My father, uncle and other elders decide to respect and abide by my decision. I was happy that they respected and accepted my decision. In that childhood event I see the growth of my personality and individuality.

There is a unique way and an unfailing remedy to have the proper attitude and right behaviour towards children. The unique way is to consider your children as the most respected guest in your own house. We welcome our guests with love and respect. We are interested to know much about our guests whom we appreciate and hold in high esteem. Similarly we have a lot to know and learn about our children. With love and respect we learn and discover slowly many things about our children. The more you know your children the deeper will be your relationship with your children.

Usually the parents go out of their way to provide material things for their children. They understand well their children’s material needs. They provide to the best of their abilities the basic needs of their children like food, clothes, a home and even luxurious items like expensive toys and play materials.

But usually the parents and teachers do not care enough to meet the children’s intellectual and emotional needs. All that they want is their children stand first in academic studies. The children are often deprived of their basic psychological needs like unconditional love, respect and appreciation for what they are, their independence and freedom. For the all round development, growth and maturity, children need the understanding and acceptance of their parents and teachers.

Finally in the words of Jesus Christ, “I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18, 3). (Contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in & www.vpaulsj.org)

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