

Generations : In Search of A Middle Ground

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"My parents just don't understand me"

"My child is so disobedient"

"This generation is so selfish. It has no moral values"

"My parents scolded me in front of everyone without even giving me a chance to explain"

We have often heard these statements from youngsters as well as elders. These are some classic case of generation gap between parents and their children. It cannot be denied that the present generation use foul words way too often for it to be considered polite no matter which region you belong to. They definitely need to be more respectful towards not just those elder to them but also to their own peers. It's one thing to rebel to chase your ambition and dreams but another to rebel just for the sake for rebellion without a valid cause and without any care for others' feelings.

But behind the above statements there are so many hidden ones which seldom are talked about:

"My employer molested me, but I can't tell anyone because the news will reach my parents and they will forbid me to work"

"The bully of my class sodomized me, but if I tell my teacher, she would tell my parents who would only blame me"

"Some goons have been stalking me, but if my parents come to know of it, they would stop my education and forcibly marry me off to protect family honour"

"My uncle has been raping me for a year, but my parents never believed me. Instead they slapped me for telling lies and being disrespectful towards elders"

Unlike the former issues, these are some really grave issues which plague our society and the root cause of these is the never narrowing generation gap. For every case of reported child abuse, there are so many unreported ones. Most often the abuser is a member of the family but due to our obsession with upholding our "Indian cultural values", many parents refuse to believe their own kids.

A victim of child abuse goes through multiple traumas through life. Do Indian cultural values really require us to blindly trust an adult but always doubt a child? In

our blind pursuit of making our children obedient and respectful, we often forget that respect is a two way street. It has to be earned rather than demanded. If you want your child to respect you, then the least you should do is to trust them when they come to you with a problem. By not trusting them, we are not just widening the generation gap, but also making our children distrustful towards us and thus make them vulnerable for predators and pedophiles.

The need of the hour is to establish a mutual trusting relationship between parents and kids through open dialogue. Being open with kids doesn't mean that they won't respect you. In fact, you can make your children to be more respectful towards everyone by first respecting them and thus encouraging them to do the same to others. At the same time you should encourage your children to always report anything wrong they see or experience without any hesitation or fear. This way we can hope to achieve a balance between values and trust, between respect and safety and perhaps narrow the generation gap a bit.

Expert Speaks

Since time is always moving forward, the values, tastes and outlook on life are different with each generation, it's this difference that's called a generation gap. I have observed that it's very easy these days for both the parties to put all the blame on the word, 'generation gap'. This is often because of the differences in tastes, habits, opinions, views, etc. Often children are expected to be perfect all the time, mistakes are rarely tolerated by the parents, there's lack of understanding between the two parties and all this often creates a psychological gap that can lead to misunderstanding and lack of communication between the elders and therefore the younger generation.

As a counselling psychologist, I have to ensure a fair hearing to both the parties and try to bridge the gap between the two. There are a few changes that I often advise that include mutual respect, communication, acceptance, understanding, attempting to accommodate rather than change, spending more time together, finding similar interests, showing genuine gestures and prioritising the relationship above the differences. The two generations have their own unique experiences and mindset, they're sure to differ in opinions and viewpoint regarding various aspects of life. So, to simply accept that the differences are natural and that each has a right to their own belief can help in bridging the generation gap.

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