



EXPECTATIONS- COLLABORATION

Context: The objective of this discussion is to dwell into how a family navigates the tension between keeping order (structure, responsibility) and allowing space for creativity, play, and emotional expression (self-expression).

Objectives: In this session, parents will explore questions like:

1. How can we encourage our children's creativity and playfulness while still teaching responsibility for shared spaces?
2. What messages are our reactions sending to our children, and how can we communicate expectations without making them feel like they're failing?
3. How can we co-create practical, age-appropriate routines that make chores feel collaborative and positive instead of punitive?

Scenario:

Jay (father), Veena (mother), Maya (daughter), Adi (son)

[Setting: Living room. Toys are scattered, a half-finished drawing on the coffee table, and shoes by the door. Jay walks in, sidesteps a Lego.]

Jay: (sighs) Okay... how many times do I have to nearly break my toe before these Legos find their way home?

Veena: (calling from the kitchen) I just asked them to clean this up an hour ago.

[Adi walks in with a soccer ball, Maya is behind him humming, holding markers.]

Jay: Adi, Maya—come on, guys. We've talked about this. This place looks like a tornado hit it.

Adi: Sorry, Dad. I was just showing Maya how to do a rainbow kick. We forgot about the Legos.

Maya: And I was making a birthday card for Aunty Priya!

Veena: (calmer) I love that you're both being creative and playful. But we need to work on cleaning up too. It's becoming a bit much.

Adi: We *do* try! But sometimes, it's like—right when we finish one thing, we get excited about another.



Jay: (rubbing his forehead) We get that, but the house isn't going to clean itself. Your mom and I have work, cooking, laundry...

Veena: (pauses, then softer) You know what—maybe we need to rethink how we're asking. We don't want you to stop being yourselves... but we also need some help keeping things together.

Maya: (hesitantly) Can I say something?

Jay: Of course, sweetheart.

Maya: Sometimes when you guys get mad about the mess, I feel like I'm messing up all the time. Even when I was trying to do something nice, like the card.

Adi: Yeah... it makes me not want to say anything. I just clean in secret, so I don't get in trouble.

Veena: (sits down) Oh, honey. That's not what we want at all.

Jay: We've been so focused on the mess, we forgot *why* there's a mess—it's because you're learning, playing, creating. That's a good thing.

Veena: Maybe we can make a better system—like a "clean-up song" or a 10-minute family tidy-up after dinner?

Adi: That would be cool. We could race to see who finishes first.

Maya: And you guys can help too! It's more fun when we do it together.

Jay: Deal. We'll be the Clean-Up Crew. But we're keeping score. Loser does the dishes.

[Everyone laughs. Veena gives Maya a hug.]

Veena: Thanks for sharing how you feel. We're always here to listen, okay?

Adi: We'll try harder.

Jay: And we'll try to be more patient. Let's make this house feel like home—messes and all.

[Fade out with the family picking up toys together and laughing.]



Questions:

1. Were the parents' expectations realistic, and how did the children feel about them? What helped the children open up about their feelings?
2. How did the parents' approach shift during the conversation, and what role did listening and empathy play in resolving the tension?
3. How can families balance maintaining order with encouraging self-expression, and share responsibilities in small, sustainable ways?
4. How are expectations usually communicated in your home, and how can parents model openness and adaptability when things don't go as planned?

SWAMI SAYS ...

A family is the most important functional unit in the world.... Unity gives strength to the lives of the family members. Therefore, every family should strive for achieving unity and harmonious relationship among its members.

- Sathya Sai Speaks Vol.36, Discourse 4, March 2003.

WRAPPING UP ...

- Facilitator to summarize the highlights from discussions as well as individual reflections [Brief takeaway by facilitator.]
- Reflections- request attendees to share anything that was interesting or intriguing or inspiring. Reflective prompt: *Let's go around and quickly hear from everyone in one or two words, your takeaway from today's Parenting session.*
- Commitment- Let us, as parents, commit to recognizing that our hopes and ambitions must never come at the expense of our children's well-being. May we resist the urge to live through them or push them too far, and instead support them with love, balance, and respect for their individual limits and dreams.