



## HEALTH AND HAPPINESS-PRESSURE

**Context:** This material will dwell into the impact of parental pressure on young children, revealing how the race for early achievement can harm their well-being and happiness.

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

1. How does high levels of pressure affect a young child's emotional and physical well-being?
2. What is the difference between healthy encouragement and harmful over-expectation?
3. How can parents support their child's growth while preserving joy, play, and emotional security?

**Scenario:** Ramya (Mother), Ravi (Father), Sruti (daughter)

What started as a friendly weekend get together, turned into a discussion forum on the achievements of the children in the group.

Mitra and Varun are very high achieving scientists with many patents to their credit. Alekhya, and Amol, their children, wouldn't disappoint their parents. She is doing Algebra 1 in 5th grade and Amol is on his way there, after achieving G by 5 Star in Kumon, while he is still in 2nd grade.

Ramya and Ravi, have all their dreams and hopes concentrated on their only child, Sruti, a bubbly first grader. After this get together, every evening turned into a Math/English class for this first grader. Locked inside the house, lacking play time. Weekends turned into long drives followed by intense sessions of imparting information into the little brain.

**Ravi:** *Okay, Sruti, tell me the seven continents. Quickly, we'll do multiplication after this.*

**Sruti:** *I don't want to. My tummy hurts...*

**Ramya:** *Don't give excuses, baby. Winners don't stop when things get tough. Remember what we talked about? Medals, trophies... just like Alekhya.*

Intense desire to see their daughter receiving the colorful medals and ribbons coupled with the urgency to see it now, led to countless stressful hours. What is normally a long-term goal to any child, became an urgent and important square in the Eisenhower matrix for Sruti.

**Sruti** (whispering to her stuffed bunny): *I don't want to learn one more thing today. I just want to play pretend tea party with you. But if I tell amma, she'll get that look again... like I made her sad.*



While still being a 6-year-old, Sruti, tried to please her parents. The enormous weight of this effort crumbled the young girl, and symptoms started popping out - hives and rashes, stomach issues, frequent nagging cold and coughs to name the least. The smile slowly faded away from her sweet little face and silence is her new language.

### QUESTIONS:

1. How do we balance encouraging achievement in our children with protecting their emotional and physical well-being?
2. In what ways can social comparison, whether intentional or not, shape the parenting choices we make?
3. How do we define success for our children? Who gets to define it?
4. What strategies can we adopt to protect the joy of learning and childhood, especially when we feel external or internal pressure to keep up?

### SWAMI SAYS ...

*The ancient sages laid down certain rules and precepts in accordance with the times. These were intended to foster human values and were based on scriptures and the Vedas.... The sages believed that these disciplines were conducive to the promotion of the highest human qualities and were divinely ordained to help mankind.*

- Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.22, Discourse 24, July 1989.

### 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 modeling mindful choices and nurturing a home where contentment, simplicity, and shared values guide our family life.