



SIGNPOST

Nurture right

Behavioural traits need to be developed right from childhood, says Dr Sitara Vikram

While understanding concepts and inculcating skills are important for success of students, there is another, more important dimension that is often ignored in schools - behavioural traits. Behavioural traits are harder to define and therefore even harder to influence and control. The best schools typically are the ones that can change a student's behaviour positively.

There are three fundamentally important behaviour traits to achieve success (success defined as achieving goals, economic progression, leadership positions etc.). These are delaying gratification, discipline and confidence.

The ability to delay gratification is a time-tested indicator of the future success of an individual. One interesting experiment is the "Marshmallow Test", where young children (about 4 years of age) were asked to make a choice between eating one marshmallow immediately (without waiting) and having to wait a few minutes, but then would end up getting two marshmallows.

The children who chose to wait went on to have more successful careers. This is an example of "delayed gratification". This can translate to, for example, choosing to study for a test the next day instead of watching a movie - even though the student might prefer to watch a movie at that time.

The second trait is discipline. Discipline is related to delayed gratification - people who can delay gratification typically are more disciplined. They are willing to do something that may not be enjoyable at the moment, but know that they are working towards a higher goal which eventually will give greater satisfaction.

The last thing is confidence. Confident students are able to carry themselves better, express themselves readily and ultimately perform better educationally and vocationally. They are realistic about their abilities, not worried by criticism and are able to handle failures or disappointments. A child with a low self-esteem on the other hand is fearful, self-conscious, sensitive to criticism and under rate themselves.

The writer is a trained Psychiatrist, experienced in Child and Family therapy, with over 10 years working experience in London. She is the Executive Director of the CS Academy Schools at Coimbatore and Erode, Tamil Nadu.

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