

RAISING CHILDREN WITH VALUES AND VIRTUES

*A Miri Piri Academy Publication*

# *Yogi Bhajan's*

## Ten Things to Give Your Children

*The Siri Singh Sahib Yogi Bhajan listed ten things to give your children. We explore each of them, and some of the challenges of being a conscious parent today.*



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LOVE THEM

# THE ROLE OF PARENTS: IT BEGINS WITH LOVE

A parent's relationship with their child begins long before birth. A mother intuitively feels her child's identity floating within her womb, embedded within her own subtle body as soon as the soul arrives and introduces itself to her. But even before conception, she opened herself, calling to the souls awaiting rebirth. A father's projection in the conception and birth of his child is no less real. He has set an intention and planted a seed, and he waits and watches to see what it will become. We parents have so much invested in the outcome. Yogi Bhanjan stated very clearly ten things to give your children:

- Love them.
- Build their self-esteem.
- Challenge them.
- Listen to them.
- Expect respect.
- Limit them.
- Make God a part of their lives.
- Develop a sense of learning in them.
- Help them to be community-minded.
- Let them go.



With these ten gifts, you help your children develop the values they will need to be successful, service-full, and spiritually aware. As simple as it sounds, it is not always easy to impart these gifts to our children. How can we set aside our own personality, our own fear and limitations, and develop our capacities as parents and educators to provide the environments that will best prepare our children for success in life?

**The first step is to become very clear about our role as parents. Yogi Bhajan stated it many times in many ways: You are your child's first teacher.**



“Parents are nothing, they are teachers. They are God given teachers. Beyond that, they have no personality because when a child is going to grow up, they are going to go their own way. Why are you dragging yourself with them? You have to “pay the rent” as parents. Pay the rent. Let the tenants go. When they find their own house give them a blessing, send them a gift, don't create a rift.” Yogi Bhajan 07/02/1992

The consciousness of a parent is beautifully illustrated in a story from Bibiji Inderjit Kaur's book, *Stories to Win the World*, entitled “All things come from God and All things go to God.” In this story, a wise man decides to test the King and his wife, who are rumored to be very spiritual and unattached. He brings them their son's turban and claims that he has found him dead in the jungle. When he delivers this news, the Queen's reaction was simple and clear:

“Oh Saint, children are like birds on the branches of a tree. The birds come and rest on the branches in the daytime and when it gets dark, they leave and we don't know where they go or end up. Life is like day and night. My son came as a bird to rest on the branch of my tree and now that the time has come, he has gone. It is God's will and his destiny.”

It is tempting to feel that this child we have conceived, birthed, loved, protected, and nurtured, belongs to us. But these strings of attachment are the greatest betrayal a parent can commit.

That beautiful bird, that soul which you have birthed, has its own destiny, and it is your job as a parent only to nurture, protect, teach, and then let them go.

The act of letting your children go does not begin at 18 when they set off for university. It begins before that moment of conception, when they were just a thought that had not yet taken the form of a name. From that moment, your relationship with them, soul to soul, has been defined by your choice to bring them into the world for the purpose of either fulfilling your own needs, or serving theirs. Your consciousness about this relationship will shape every interaction with them, every decision you make, and every communication from the first moment they look into your eyes until the day of your death. It all begins with love. But what is love?

“The highest stage of love is love for the inner being and love with the highest being within the being.” Yogi Bhajan 07/22/1987



The word “love” has many meanings, many interpretations, and many facets. When Yogi Bhajan said “love them,” he didn’t mean spoil them, cater to them, or hover over them. He meant that parents should serve and relate to the divine being within their being. You are your child’s first teacher. When you relate to your child’s inner being, when you love and serve their divinity, they begin to develop a relationship with their own soul. This is the beginning of self-love. In practical terms, what does this look like? This means investing in the development of their own self-awareness and their own divinity.



- Meditate with your children, and teach them to listen to their breath.
- Take them out in nature to appreciate the beauty of creation. Let them discover the fact that they are a part of that beauty.
- Teach them to be kind and forgiving to themselves as well as others.
- Take care to surround them with people and environments that will serve their highest selves.
- Teach them to relate to their divine selves, beyond thought or emotion.

**Some say that “Love” is not a noun, it is a verb. Loving your children is when you invest your time and attention to serve their divinity. Study the Teachings of Yogi Bhajan, and hear his words on "love." It all begins with love, and it all starts with you!**

## ON LOVE WITHOUT FEAR

“In my experience traveling to India meeting thousands of people, and my 32 years here in America, I have found one thing – we are technically scared people. Fear is the main force which is keeping us together. Unfortunately, where there is fear there cannot be love because the person who is afraid is handicapped. ...When I counsel people I already know they loved each other in fear. They wanted security, not love.” -Yogi Bhajan Lecture – LA-955 April 5th, 2000

1. Sit straight in a cross-legged position. Raise both hands at shoulder level, with the elbows relaxed down. Point the index and middle fingers up and use the thumb to hold down the other two. Eyes are closed. Rhythmically spread the index and middle fingers open and closed. Continue for 11 minutes.



2. Do not stop the movement. Form an “o” with the mouth and breathe powerfully through it, pumping the navel in rhythm with the breath. Continue for 2 1/2 minutes. To end, inhale deeply, hold, and pull the navel towards the spine. Cannon Fire Exhale. Repeat 2 more times. Relax.

When Jupiter (index finger) and Saturn (middle finger) meet the frequency of the psyche, the subconscious thoughts you have against yourself will float away. Anytime, anywhere you do this exercise it will be sufficient to open up the newness in you. After 5 minutes you will be a different person.

BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

# SELF-ESTEEM BEGINS WITH SELF CONTROL

Self-esteem begins with self-control. Self-esteem is generally defined as the extent to which we approve of and respect ourselves. It can be interpreted as a trite, individualistic Western concept with little basis in reality, exemplified by ubiquitous inspirational quotes like ‘Believe in yourself and anything is possible.’ However, Yogi Bhanan was clear that true self-esteem stems from mastery of the self. Regardless of our circumstances or physical abilities, when we have gained the ability to control our mental and emotional reactions, we earn true self-approval and self-respect.



“Once you have self-control, self-esteem and self-excellence will come. They never remain separate. Waste no time on other things. Self-control is all that there is. Once there is a self-control, then self-confidence, self-esteem, self-excellence, self-knowledge, all becomes yours.” Yogi Bhanan 08/26/1994

How can we teach our children self-control? Self-control is a matter of practice. We do not gain self-control through willpower alone. Willpower is a weak and limited resource that is compromised any time we are tired, hungry, or cold. Self-control is a training of the mind and the nervous system, a habit developed through repetitive practice, so that our immediate emotional reaction to a situation is recognized and transformed into something that can serve the situation. This habit comes more easily to some children than others, but the practice remains the same in principle.

## Teach Your Children to Observe the Monkey Mind

The beginning of self-control is the recognition that our thoughts and feelings are temporary and changeable. Yogi Bhan reminded us often that in the blink of an eye the unconscious mind produces thousands of thoughts. We respond to stimuli in our environment and the firing of multiple neural connections in an unbroken "stream of consciousness" reaction to our inner and outer environments. This is the monkey-mind. Self-control stems from the ability to observe the play. As he put it,

**"You are not body. You are not mind. You are not spirit. You are the combining force of these three. You are the commandant in charge of the trinity. You are not the trinity." Yogi Bhan 12/20/1999**

Before a child can develop self-control, they have to first understand fundamentally that they can observe their thoughts and emotions from the outside, and that they can choose to give energy to those thoughts or not. There are many ways to help your children understand this reality, but it comes down to repetitive practice. At Miri Piri Academy our program was developed directly by Yogi Bhan, and he set the amount of time the students should meditate and do yoga each day as part of the program. Even if meditation every day is not possible, teaching children meditation well before their teenage years begin can help them understand their command of the mind.

**In those countless moments of reaction and emotion throughout childhood, you can remind them:**

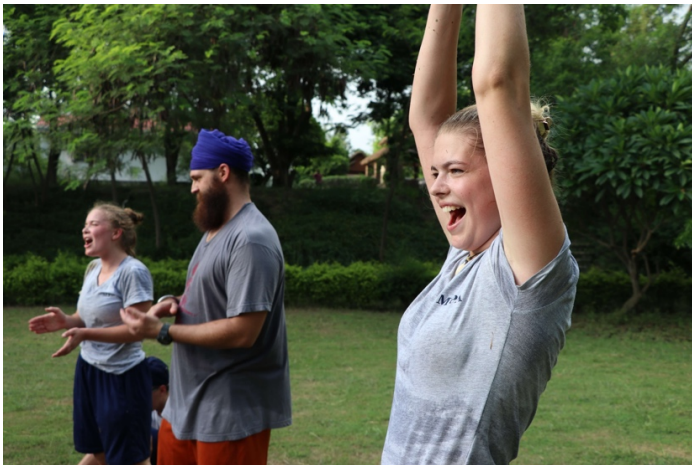
- Sit still for a moment. Your mind is bouncing around, telling you all kinds of things. Watch it for a minute and then choose a thought that helps you feel better and focus on that one.
- Take a deep breath and listen to it. Try to look at your thoughts as they pass through your mind.
- Right now, you are sad because you are thinking of what you have lost. Now think about what you will gain. The way you feel depends on what you are focusing on.
- You are in control of your reaction right now. You can pay attention to your angry thoughts or choose to pay attention to other thoughts.

Even if your child cannot sit still and meditate for any significant length of time, they can still grasp this idea and experience their fundamental sovereignty.

## Teach Them How to Switch Gears

**"But the strength of the mind that we are very proud of, is not in the body, not in the knowledge. It is not what we know, it is not what we have. Then what is it? It is in switching gear from a negative mind to a positive mind to a neutral mind. It's a very simple process. If person does not train himself or herself in those gears, life is lost." Yogi Bhan 09/12/1989**

Once a child understands the monkey-mind, they can learn to use many different kinds of tools to help them switch mental gears so that they can act consciously instead of reacting. Yoga is fundamentally based upon the connection between the mind and body. Through breath, posture, and movement we have a direct impact on our thoughts and emotions. In Kundalini Yoga we transform the energy of our entire body and through our body, our mind. Using breath, mantra, and mudra we can switch gears in a matter of moments. Yoga is one tool, stillness is another. Any time a child has to be still, they practice impulse control in the face of distractions, discomfort, and temptations. For example, at MPA students also stand at attention instead of detention and wait in silence for latecomers at formation. They practice stillness not only in meditation, but also in life. In many ways throughout the day, children can be challenged to sit still.



**They can be taught to consciously disrupt negative thoughts and emotions in active ways:**

- Drinking a glass of water when they are upset
- Singing or putting on music that changes their emotional state
- Taking a cold shower
- Going for a walk, or even better, a run
- Doing something that makes them laugh out loud
- Socializing instead of stewing
- Choosing to go out and do something for others rather than focusing on themselves

**It begins with something simple like stillness or choosing action instead of inaction, and extends itself to keeping silent when that serves, choosing positivity over negativity in the face of tragedy, and keeping up in the face of every challenge.** When switching mental gears becomes a habit, we no longer have to exert willpower to control our emotional reactions. We naturally pause, breathe, and then choose an action that can serve the situation. As all of us know, this is a lifelong practice. Self-control is not at all like riding a bike, but switching mental gears does become easier and faster the more we consciously practice it. There is no greater source of self-esteem than the experience of ourselves as sovereign beings.



CHALLENGE THEM

# NOBODY HAS BECOME A LEADER WITHOUT A CHALLENGE

“When you are challenged, you show your strength and grit. It is the fastest way to grow and be courageous. Nobody has become a leader without a challenge, it goes with the territory. And no carbon has become a diamond without the pressure of crystallization of time and space. . . . These are the laws that shall never change.” Yogi BhaJan 12/29/1987, addressing the youth at Winter Solstice.

In today’s world, the 24-hour news cycle has pushed a narrative of fear and suspicion so effectively that parents no longer let their children out of their sight. Gone are the days when children walked to school independently or played unsupervised in the neighborhood. Many children are so used to the constant presence of adults that they become fearful or anxious when they are left alone.



In its annual survey of students, the American College Health Association found a significant increase — from 50 percent in 2011 to 62 percent in 2016— of undergraduates reporting “overwhelming anxiety” in the previous year. These are young adults at college, on their own for the first time in their lives, and they are struggling.

When our children are young, we do whatever we can to protect them from getting hurt. We cut their food into the right-sized pieces, watch over them as they crawl and toddle, install childproof locks and foam strips on the edges of furniture, and strap them securely into car seats when we drive. We manage their interactions with others, negotiate their playground disagreements on their behalf, and constantly warn them to be careful. As babies, they need this protection, and it is our job as parents to give it. But as they grow older, we as parents must begin the process of letting go by allowing our children to face their challenges independently. Without a doubt, life will present them with plenty of obstacles, and it is our job as teacher-parents to prepare them to climb.

**A child who is not allowed to struggle will never know their own strength. They will doubt their abilities, feel anxious when they are confronted, and look to others to resolve problems.** Intellectually, most parents understand this, but letting them go is easier said than done. Letting children learn for themselves requires suppressing a basic parental instinct to do it for them. Because of this, Yogi Bhanjan often advocated “distance therapy.”

**"You are temporary, you are momentary, you are the channel, and then you have to go away. The child has to live without you. Make them strong enough that without you that they can always feel you within them." Yogi Bhanjan 07/20/1977**

It is difficult as a parent to see our children in pain and do nothing. Even those of us who can tolerate a higher level of risk will feel the urge to defend our children if a teacher is admonishing them or another child is hurting them.

And in turn, our children have become so used to the constant presence of their parents that they automatically turn to us to resolve any situation.



When my daughter was 10 years old, she decided that she wanted to move into the dorms and become a full-fledged MPA student. I was enthusiastic, but I knew that she had very little knowledge of what that would entail. Because I am a principal she had grown up at MPA, but always in the protective cocoon of a small child who doesn't have to do the hard things. The first morning of her dorm life I went out to jog at my usual time and the students were still on the sports field doing physical training. They were doing laps together around the field. There was my daughter, a 10-year old girl, struggling to keep up with 100 kids, some of them tall, 12th grade boys who had already been running together for several months. I saw her struggling in the back, and the staff were jogging along with her, encouraging her. She was keeping up, but just barely. In that moment, she caught sight of me across the field and fell to the ground crying, her courage dissolving into tears. All of her brave resolve had crumbled as soon as she saw me. That was the last time I went out for a morning jog for a long time. I knew I had to give her space, because there is nothing more empowering than finding out for yourself that you are strong enough! Now, two years later, my brave 12-year-old runs every day by her own choice and desire.



Distance therapy, as Yogi Bhanjan called it, is a simple remedy. As our children grow older, we still want to protect them, but it becomes our primary responsibility to step back and manage the risks behind the scenes. For teenagers, in particular, a parent's most important role is guiding them towards communities that will challenge them and inspire them in a positive direction. We can prepare them with the tools to be safety conscious, to be self-aware, and to listen to their own intuition about the people around them. But then we must let them go, showing them the trust and confidence that we have in them so that they can feel it for themselves. We must choose environments for them that we know will both support them AND challenge them to ensure they will succeed.

**Children can be encouraged to stretch beyond their comfort-zone in a myriad of ways, including:**

- Sending them to overnight camps.
- Signing them up for team sports.
- Encouraging them to deal directly and personally with any conflicts involving friends or teachers.
- Encouraging them to work when they want money, rather than providing an allowance.
- Allowing them to participate in contests or competitions that stretch their abilities
- Challenging them to improve their standards and aim higher in everything that they do.

We must give our children space to navigate obstacles through their own skills and strength, while ensuring that the people and places they are interacting with will not damage them in the long-run. Giving your child independence happens in stages, from deliberately allowing your child to range far at the park, to allowing them to ride their bike through the neighborhood, to sending them away to summer camp or boarding school.

Give them training, and then give them space. Let them stumble a little under a protective umbrella so that they can experience the self-empowerment of picking themselves up. It will give them the strength to meet the more serious challenges that come later in life. **Let them learn to shine in their own right, and they will shine brighter than you can imagine.**

**“The greatest progress in life is when you know your limitations and then you have the courage to drop them.” Yogi Bhanjan**



LISTEN TO THEM

# LISTEN TO DEVELOP THEIR INTUITION

Yogi Bhajan listed 10 gifts to give our children, and the fourth one is to listen to them. Listening sounds simple, but it is not. Listening requires your own intuition, patience, and parenting skills. At its most basic level, active listening requires **focus**. In a stressful, fast paced world surrounded by phones, computers, and televisions, even this most basic pre-requisite for listening has become difficult in many homes.



This is not something to feel guilty about. We have legitimate reasons for using our phones and computers throughout the day. We have work, emails, schedules, research, shopping, mapping, calls to make, and planning to do. But conscious parenting requires being aware of the impact of all that activity. When we establish healthy boundaries and habits for ourselves, we can be focused and present in our children's lives. It is not always possible, but if we make listening our priority we can develop the habit of stepping away from work and other distractions to be fully present when our children are trying to communicate. This is the first and most basic step.

“Parents teach their children everything, but they do not teach them three main things. Listen - how to listen. Speak - how to speak. Patience - how to be patient. And a person who doesn't know how to listen, a person who doesn't know how to speak, and a person who doesn't know how to be patient will always suffer. These are three criteria of any success that you want to have in your life.” Yogi Bhajan  
01/20/1989



We need to be willing to focus and have the patience to listen actively, waiting to formulate our own thoughts and responses until after our children are done speaking. We then can reflect back to them what they are saying and ask them thoughtful questions that will help them understand themselves in a deeper way. We are not trying to solve their problems, we are opening a space for them to understand themselves more and to discover their own strength and wisdom. This fits right in with the third gift that Yogi Bhajan recommended, to challenge your children. By opening the space for them to understand and solve their own problems, they are discovering how wise and strong they themselves are. They discover their own intuitive power to recognize the truth and see the way forward.

“Children need intuition. To create intuition we should have the patience to listen to them.”  
Yogi Bhajan 12/28/2003

As every parent knows, children (and adults, also) do not always communicate with words, especially when they are young. And even when they are using words to express their thoughts, emotions, and fears, they may not be clear or conscious of what is truly at the heart of what they are saying or feeling. Active listening, in the classic sense, is the art of waiting to think about our response until the other person is done speaking, reflecting back to them what we heard and checking if we understood them correctly. Yogi Bhajan advocated a deeper level of listening, a patience and consciousness that allows you to reflect back not only what your child is saying, but the frequency of their communication so that you can get to the core of what they are trying to express at the soul level.

“How you can relate to your soul? Through your head? No. Through your heart? No. Through you? No. Through your consciousness? Yes, if you are intelligent enough to balance yourself. If you are conscious enough, you will know what chakra a person is talking from, what chakra his frequency is coming through, and as you talk to the other person what chakra frequency you are talking from. If you have the conscious availability of knowing your own frequency through your own chakras, then you are on the path.” Yogi Bhajan 03/31/1986



Very recently I was caring for a 10-year-old girl who often struggled to verbally express herself. She was hurt by something another child had said to her and ran away to the dirt road outside, where she sat silently. It was getting dark, and obviously I was concerned for her safety. I was also tired and ready to relax in bed, but I knew I wouldn't be able

to rush her. I made little headway asking her questions about what she was feeling because she was just not a talker. I made less headway explaining to her the other girl's motivations and reassuring her about how much she was loved. She actually lay down in the dirt and prepared to spend the night on the road! Finally, after an hour, I gave up trying to explain things to her. I didn't know what to do, so I just sat quietly and decided to recite Kirtan Sohila, the evening Sikh prayer that celebrates the union of the soul with the Infinite. She had never heard the words, and certainly didn't understand the meaning, but as soon as the prayer was done she got up quietly and went to bed.

Sometimes listening is a mental exercise, but true listening comes from the soul. Whether you are a parent at home, or a teacher at MPA, you will have hundreds of opportunities every day to model how to listen, how to be patient, how to truly feel and relate to the frequency of another being. Listen to them, and who knows, your child may reflect back and surprise you with intuition and wisdom beyond their young years.



**SUNIAI - “By deeply listening, one attains truth, contentment, and spiritual wisdom.” - Guru Nanak Devji - Japji Sahib**

## MEDITATION TO LISTEN WITHOUT FEAR

Taught by Yogi Bhajan on 12/8/90

This meditation works on the heart center and the head, and the interlock of fear that blocks your ability to actually listen to another person. It stimulates the stem of the brain and the old emotions to release. You can then combine your reality with the actions of the medulla and hypothalamus circuits to express yourself truly and listen to another person clearly.

You need an inner status of reality and security in order to listen, to act on what you know. Otherwise, arguments and suggestions may be rational and positive, but they are hard to hear and to act on. This will help to create that balance inside. It will get you past the fears.

Imagine as you sit for this meditation that you self-hypnotize yourself to feel a million people sitting before you. You have come before them to elevate their consciousness and their lives. They depend on you. You listen to every heartbeat and frequency; you are confidently radiant, and take each thought to Infinity.

### Part 1

**Posture:** Easy Pose.

**Mudra:** Place your left palm flat against your chest, with the left fingers pointing toward the right, and the thumb flat against the chest and pointing up towards the chin. Place the right hand palm flat



against the back of the left hand, fingers pointing towards the left, and the right thumb pointing up towards the chin. **Eyes:** Look at the tip of the nose.

**Mantra:** Play Ong Namo Guru Dev Namo by Niranjan Kaur. Chant with the recording. Continue for 11–31 min.

**To End:** Inhale very deeply and hold while pressing your hands hard against the heart chakra. Hold up to 20 seconds. Exhale. Repeat a second time, this time pressing hands against the heart and squeeze the spine. Hold up to 20 seconds. Exhale. Inhale deeply, exhale deeply, inhale deeply exhale deeply. Then inhale, press the hands hard, and squeeze the spine from the bottom to the top. Hold up to 40 seconds according to your capacity. Exhale and relax.

### Part 2

Sit in Easy pose. Arms arc up with the hands about 9 inches above the Crown Center. The fingers are interlaced and the thumb tips touch and point backwards. Breathe heavy Breath of Fire for 1 minute. To end inhale deeply and stretch the body for 15 seconds and relax.

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EXPECT RESPECT

# EXPECT RESPECT THROUGH SELF-RESPECT

“Guru Nanak said, ‘Sat Nam.’ You don't understand Sat Nam. Sat Nam means my name, my identity, my personality, my existence is True. It's a pure truth. He leaves no room for duality, for any reason, for any purpose, whatever that is. His personality was straightforwardly clear that ‘Ek Ong Kar,’ ‘you are the creation of that One.’ One by one, every individual has to be respected. Every existence has to be respected. Every life has to be respected. If you refer to something, you should have not only reference, you should have reverence also.” Yogi Bhajan 11/08/1992



Reverence is the foundation stone of relationship, not only with other people but to the Divine within. It is the first step on any spiritual path. Without reverence there is no relationship, without relationship there is no reverence! How will our children learn to have respect and reverence? Through the power of our own self-reverence and, in turn, through the respect that we offer to them.

"Project yourself in one way only. That in God you dwell - you are God's people...Tell all the world, all the living world, that you are God's being. If your children know that you are a divine person, you do not understand how much love, reverence, and respect they will give you."  
Yogi Bhanan 07/08/1981



**When most of us think about the idea that a child should respect their parents, a lot of our own personal baggage and pain gets in the way.** We start to think about whether parents have earned that respect. We remember scenes in which a parent shouts loudly about their authority, demanding obedience. Some remember how they faced physical punishment as a means to teach a lesson. But Yogi Bhanan did not say, "Teach them respect." Instead, he said, "Expect respect." Respect comes from your own self-reverence, not from your position of authority or your power over your child. By respecting yourself and your own divinity, you reveal yourself as a person who is worthy of respect. And when you offer them respect, they learn that they too can expect respect.

At our most recent Miri Piri Academy graduation ceremony, a student recounted the deep respect that he held for one of the Mukhia Jethadars (dorm parents) at MPA. He shared how at one time he and a roommate had gotten into a physical fight and, after some discussion with their Mukhia Jethadar, a consequence was assigned. He and the other boy were to meet in the afternoon at the sports field to till and flatten the soil. When they arrived at the field, their Mukhia Jethadar was there also. But instead of standing and watching while they worked, he joined them in the hard labor. All afternoon they worked together in the sun until the work was completed. The boys knew that he respected them as much as they were expected to respect him.

The following meditation, which can be found in the Yogi Bhanan Library of Teachings, is a powerful tool in building your own self-reverence and projecting that out to the world. Through the power of our own self-respect, we build the possibility of expecting respect from our children.



## PROJECTION OF THE DIVINE IN THE SELF

Taught by Yogi Bhajan on 01/20/1977

This meditation is a powerful projector of the Divine in the Self and originates from a great Mahan Yogi. It may be done with a group of eleven people, which builds a beautiful group energy.

**Time:** 1 hours and 2 mins.

**Eyes:** Open and focused at the tip of the nose

**Mantra:** Ra Ma Da Sa Sa Se So Hung



### Instructions:

1. Sit in a comfortable meditative posture with a straight spine.
2. Bring the hands palm up in front of the Heart Center.
3. Cross the right wrist over the left wrist.
4. Hook the thumbs and fold the fingertips up to meet each other.
5. The mudra will create a bud-like shape with the thumbs inside the folded fingers.
6. Eyes are open; focused on the tip of the nose.
7. Inhale deep and chant Ra Ma Da Sa Sa Se So Hung in a monotone 3 times on the exhale.



LIMIT THEM

# GIVE THEM LIMITS TO THEY CAN TRANSCEND THEIR LIMITATIONS

“A child wants to be strong to face tomorrow. That's what a child wants, but the child is not trained that way. They are protected – not prepared. So naturally, children have to revolt and they can't take their parents' proclamation, “I want to protect you.” **What for? What are you protecting them from? Prepare him, prepare her.**” Yogi Bhanjan 05/17/1993

Today I dropped my daughter off at the airport for another year at Miri Piri Academy. She was not happy about going to school this year and it was a difficult morning with tears and silence and anger. We had been discussing all summer the reasons I have made the decision for her to return to MPA again, but despite hearing and understanding my reasons, she wanted to try something different. She felt that she was missing-out on some alternate experience of teenage life that she desperately wanted to try.



As a parent, these are some of the hardest moments. The moments when we put our foot down, when we limit our children's choices, when they cry or scream or protest repeatedly, and we have to stick to our decisions regardless of their anger or sadness. These are the moments when we have to remind ourselves that we are here not just to protect our children, but to prepare them. Setting limits is an important part of that preparation.

Ultimately, we want our children to recognize that they are part of the Infinite, that their spirit is vast and they have the capacity to transcend the limitations imposed by their communities, environments, and especially their own fears and mental patterns. The purpose of setting limits on our children's environments and choices is to give them an opportunity to build their confidence, skills, and awareness for that moment when it is time to transcend those limits, even those limits that we have set for them.

“So first, a person learns only in limited environments. And when they become perfect in the perfection of their own confidence in limited environments, then they can tackle unlimited environments.”  
Yogi Bhanan 03/11/1974



By setting limits we teach them how to navigate life where every choice has constraints and consequences. We teach them the skill of recognizing how to work within limits when necessary and how to overcome limits when circumstances demand it. Whether it's a uniform, a schedule, limited screen-time, curfew, or school choice, as parents we set limits not only to protect our children, but to prepare them to successfully navigate the maze of life.

Every situation presents choices, positive and negative, and challenges to our beliefs about what we want to do or are capable of doing. Children will question and challenge every limitation, discovering within themselves new capacities and skills to work within those boundaries or the acumen to decide to transcend them. Ultimately, as they gain confidence in themselves, they will discover ways around the limitations that are no longer serving them and respect for those limits that are valuable. For example, our younger and newer students protest bitterly about the daily one-hour screen-time limit at MPA. However, by the time they graduate they nearly always express appreciation for the opportunity to really be present with each other.

When my daughter inevitably grows in confidence, knowledge, discipline, and self-awareness, she will one day be ready for that alternate experience she is looking for.

**In a thousand ways, large and small, we prepare our children for life by setting boundaries so that they can grow strong enough to stand tall and transcend any limitation, real or imagined, that is holding them back.**

MAKE GOD A PART OF THEIR LIVES

# LET THEM EXPERIENCE THEIR OWN DIVINITY

Yogi Bhajan told us that we should make “God” a part of our child’s life, but what does that mean? For some people, the concept of God is rooted deep in the dogmatic instruction of their youth. And while many have rejected that simplistic view, it is sometimes difficult to give voice to exactly what we think God is. The concept of God, as Yogi Bhajan shared with us, is not the concept of a magical-man in the sky. It is a Generating, Organizing, and Destroying energy that pervades the universe and all creation, including you and me. It is not something outside of us, but inside and all around us.



*“There is no God  
outside of you.  
Neither was, nor  
is, nor shall be. It  
is all in you. The  
very breath of life  
is divine.”*

– Yogi Bhajan, 8/22/1986





This concept of God, of the Divine Energy, is not exclusively a Sikh concept. It is a universal understanding that speaks to the vastness of the spirit and the divinity of every living being. Young children intuitively understand this, because they feel the flow of Divine Energy within themselves long before they can verbalize it. When you bring words to the experience, it is grounding and validating for them. By giving our children a relationship with God, the Divine, in whatever form or language preferred, we introduce them to the attitude and the altitude that will carry them through any challenge.

“Guru says raise your caliber, raise your altitude, go higher, look at things from the heavens. From up high, when you look at the world... you'll find that things are very small, and they are not worth the attention [you give it].” Yogi Bhan 10/15/1995

**Give them that altitude, to see life from an exalted perspective. When they understand their own divinity, they connect to the Creative Energy that can manifest change and profoundly impact the people and the world around them.** Give them that awareness, to see that they are connected to all living beings, to see that their thoughts, their words, and their actions have an impact and an effect on others. This is an important step towards understanding the credo, “Recognize that the other person is you,” one of the five sutras of the Aquarian Age.

Give them the humility to understand that life flows beyond the boundaries of their own ego and that all powers, talents, and riches in life are a gift. Even the power to teach and to serve is a gift easily given and taken away. Give them the habit of prayer so that they can relate to the Divine Self, beyond mind and body, and rise above their challenges to live in the spirit of Cherdi Kalaa (the ever-rising spirit). Give them God. God will never let them down. How do we do that? It seems like a complicated and difficult task, but it can be the most simple thing. Tell them who they are... Give them an experience of it... Repeat.



“I was with the children in New Mexico and one child asked me ‘Where is God? How can I meet Him? And what is the best and the easiest way?’ Now, when a child asks you this, you have to come out with an answer whether you like it or not, and you cannot tell the small little children who trust you to wait one month... I said, ‘Son, it's very easy. When you breathe in, God comes in you. When you breathe out, you go into God. And if there is anything more than this, then there is no God, and neither there is you.’” Yogi Bhajan  
02/12/1989

When my daughter was two years old, she made up a song and repeated it constantly in the interminable hours we spent together at the swing-set. “1,2,3, God is with me. 1,2,3 God is with me.” she used to chant over and over again. This is still my fondest memory of her childhood. This simple mantra wasn't a reflection of her advanced understanding, or of my exceptional parenting; it was just a product of her surroundings.



At Miri Piri Academy, God - the Divine Energy, is a tangible part of everyday life. We experience it in seva at the Golden Temple, Japji Sahib in the morning, Ardas (prayer) before school, Kundalini Yoga in the afternoon, meditation and chanting together in the evenings, and stories before bedtime. This is our life at MPA, and you can create this simple routine no matter where you are. **Breathe in. Breathe out. Make God a part of your life together.**

DEVELOP A SENSE OF LEARNING IN THEM

# LEARNING TO BECOME LEARNED

The eighth gift we can give our children is a love for learning. Yogi Bhanan said “Develop a sense of learning in them.” This is not a suggestion to share all of our knowledge with our children, but rather a suggestion to encourage in them the desire to discover things for themselves. He said:



"You want to be excellent, you want to be happy, and you want to be prosperous. I've not yet met one person who doesn't want to be excellent. You will only become excellent if you become learned. And you can learn from anything. Everything is worth learning." Yogi Bhanan 05/22/1993

Yogi Bhanan's own family invested heavily in his education, spending hours teaching and practicing Gurbani with him, choosing a Catholic school nearby because it was the best they could provide, sending him to a master Yoga teacher when he was old enough to begin his training. He founded Miri Piri Academy for the children of our community as an extension of that love, and took a personal interest in everything that we teach at the school. As he explained it,

"You have to fundamentally understand you have to learn and you have to learn anywhere and everywhere you can get it. Learning is for you, learning is not for me. Learning is not for us; learning is for each one of us. A Sikh means who is willing to learn and is learned. Live by learning is called a Sikh. It became a religion... I don't know what for." Yogi Bhanan 07/06/1992

**So how do children develop this sense of learning throughout their lives?** There are countless studies, books and experts on this topic. Dale Stephens, author of “Hacking Your Education” and founder of a movement to empower young people to take ownership of their own education boils this advice down to a few key suggestions:

1. **Surround your child with books** - read with them, go to the library together and let them choose their own books, talk about the books you are reading and be interested in the books they are reading. Show them by example that you yourself are constantly learning new things. Books may be old fashioned, but they help your child develop a sustained focus and delve deeper into an idea than learning by Google or Youtube.
2. **Encourage your child to teach** - Teaching is an integral part of learning. Once you reach a stage where you can teach someone a concept, that’s when you know that you truly understand it yourself. As Yogi Bhanjan always said, if you want to master something then teach it. From a young age you can ask your child to play the teacher and share with you what they are learning. They can tutor younger children and lead class discussions or presentations.
3. **Focus on making learning fun rather than on the outcome** - Children naturally love to learn, and younger children learn for the sheer joy of it. However, researchers have found that from third grade on, enjoyment of learning often drops continuously - a phenomenon some blame on the increasing focus on grades and report cards as kids get older. The most effective classes are the ones where students get a chance to work on an interesting project or go on an adventure. The most effective parents are the ones that share in the excitement of what is being learned rather than focusing on grades and report cards.
4. **Let your child choose what to learn** - This is the most important and straightforward rule. Even though you might be convinced that your child needs to learn math or science, you should also take into account what he or she wants to learn. When you give them the power to direct their own learning, they will take responsibility for their own education. They will learn what it means to delve deeply into a subject, to research, to read, to seek out teachers, to practice and apply their learning. That process of discovery will increase their joy of learning and teach them how to learn anything they become interested in.
5. **Help your child find people and resources to help them on their journey** - At the beginning your child will need help learning how to find what they want to know. Teach them how to use the library. Teach them how to use the internet for more than just entertainment. Teach them how to recognize what is an authoritative source and what is not. Help your child find the adults who will fascinate them, whether they are teachers or mentors at an internship or job. The value of an inspirational teacher cannot be overstated.
6. **Help your child build confidence in their own knowledge and skills** - Those who have the most motivated children support them through challenges but don’t micromanage or pressure them. They don’t jump in and say “You’re doing that wrong. Let me do that for you.” By overcoming challenges on their own -- whether a music piece or a math problem -- your child gains a sense of competence, something that all enthusiastic learners share.
7. **Make sure they know that learning is lifelong** - Don’t just tell them. Model this for them so that they will understand through experience. Learning is possible until the day we die, not just during school. A master pushes past what is expected of them and learns on their own.

**And why are we doing all this learning? So that we can share it.**

Learn everything, become learned, experience everything, become expert. But specialize in giving. There is nothing more beautiful than giving... Ask, "Where can I get all I want to give?" Yogi Bhanjan 10/21/1993



HELP THEM TO BE COMMUNITY MINDED

# PLANT THE SEED OF COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS

"Recognize that the other person is you," this is one of Yogi Bhajan's most widely known teachings. To be community minded is to understand the inextricable connection between ourselves and the people around us.

"Individual consciousness has to go into a group consciousness to find the universal consciousness. It's simple law of consciousness." Yogi Bhajan 10/12/1972



When I first started my work at Miri Piri Academy I was tasked with supporting the graduating students in making plans for their future life. Being in their teenage years, most were anxious to go out and become independent and explore their identity within the wider world. As we discussed where they might continue their education, I always asked them to remember the concept of 'Sangat.' **In the Siri Guru Granth Sahib the Guru constantly reminds Sikhs to be in the company of the 'Sadh Sangat,' the congregation of disciplined ones. Why?**

"Why we meet here constantly? Just to practice group consciousness, share the knowledge, go through it, practice it, feel it, experience it. Why it is better than individual consciousness? We help each other, we support each other. Our very existence together like this is a help. Man is a social animal, the father of political economy Aristotle said, 'Man is a social animal, his higher nature will only come up when his social impact of his personality is fulfilled.'" Yogi Bhajan 05/02/1972

**As the strings on an instrument will vibrate sympathetically to the notes being played around them, so we human beings tend to vibrate with the same consciousness as the people around us.** No matter how much we believe something, how much we want something, how strongly we feel about something, we are social beings and we are deeply affected by the community around us. As parents and teachers it is important that we understand this and make sure that our children recognize the power of group consciousness as they make important decisions in their lives. If we value discipline, awareness, and spiritual consciousness then our choice of congregation must take that into account. Choosing a community of love is an act of wisdom.



But group consciousness is not just being aware of how the people around us are influencing us. It is also about how we are influencing them. What can we do to serve? What can we do to elevate? What can we say to inspire, bring a smile and motivate each other? Can we be the one to increase the frequency and raise the pitch when others are low? Which one of us will be the one to bring the Long Ek Ong Kar's up to the proper pitch when we've all dropped an octave? Being community minded is both an awareness of the impact others have on us as well as the impact we have on them.

So the trick is, how do we ingrain this community consciousness into our children? How do we teach them to recognize how the people around them are influencing them, and in turn, how their own words, thoughts, choices, and actions can have an impact on everyone else in their community? Many young children show compassion and empathy very early, but often times we model for them the opposite. Though they struggle to balance their own needs and desires with this natural instinct towards kindness, they learn from us where and when to prioritize our own needs above those of the group. Examine yourself. Where are you drawing this line? Are you giving your time, energy, money and attention to family, to your wider community, to others you don't know? Do you participate in the wider community and involve yourself where you are needed? Your example is the first and most important teacher of community consciousness.

Next, put them into an environment where their success or failure depends on a group, situations where selfish needs and desires have to be constantly balanced against the needs of others. Be available to teach them how to navigate this rough terrain, but let them try to work things out themselves. Whether its teamwork, dorm living, or the power of music and chanting together, give them a visceral experience of the power of a group working together. **Above all, give them the experience of teaching and leading others, so that they understand through experience how their attitude and example influence everyone around them.**

Last year one of our 11th grade students was doing his Teacher Training practicum and taught a Kundalini Yoga class for the first time. When we asked him what he had learned, he told us that he finally understood how challenging it is to teach when students in the class are spacing out, tired or distracted, and that he would make a better effort to participate fully when he was in a class from here forward. Often it is only when our children have the opportunity to lead and to teach that they begin to understand how much impact their own attitude has on everyone around them. This is the seed of community consciousness.





LET THEM GO

# LET THEM GO

Here we are, back at the beginning. It started with love, but that love is not love for a possession, but love for the sovereign “higher being within the being.” That love begins with the recognition that our children do not belong to us, they are birds who have come to rest on our branches only for a short while. If we truly love them, then we have already let go. We have let go of our projections, attachments, expectations, needs, and desires. We have nurtured their bodies and minds. We have given them the time, the space, and the opportunities to develop self-confidence, wisdom, and self-awareness. We have served as their teachers, and we have let them go. Now there is nothing left but prayer.

“There is no power nor worship in this Universe greater than prayer; there is no love other than prayer.” Yogi Bhanjan  
7/14/82

The truth is that there is really no choice. They are going to follow their own path, whether we release them willingly or not. The test of our love is whether we feel joy in watching them fly.

In closing, I would like to share Yogi Bhanjan’s request to parents:







"I am just asking, give your children a chance please. Don't let them walk on the same rough road on which you have walked. Give them the chance of encouragement and endurance. Let them stand on their own feet, let them walk tall, let them go through it now so they can have a bright tomorrow. Let them face it today. Give them a chance to handle today, whatever it is. You are alive and well today. You can protect their today if there is a serious wrong, but tomorrow they have to protect their own tomorrow, with their own will and their own grit. **Give them the chance to build that grit.**" Yogi Bhan June 30, 1991



This publication was made in collaboration between the Kundalini Research Institute and Miri Piri Academy to support parents all over the world who are interested in Yogi Bhajan's teachings about raising children. Miri Piri Academy is a school in Amritsar, India that was founded by Yogi Bhajan and combines a traditional academic education with the study and practice of Kundalini Yoga and Sikh values.

Miri Piri Academy is committed to creating an environment for students and staff that fosters mastery of the mind and elevation of the spirit, which allows the student to experience the depth and power of their being. Through the practice of a Dharmic lifestyle, the technology of Kundalini Yoga, and our academic program, we nurture a love for learning and provide our students the foundation of self-confidence and skills to face any challenge life presents to them. Miri Piri Academy inspires generations to live as courageous, kind and conscious human beings who, through their service, help create strong international communities and elevate the spirit of all.

#### AUTHORS



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*RAISING CHILDREN WITH VALUES AND VIRTUES*