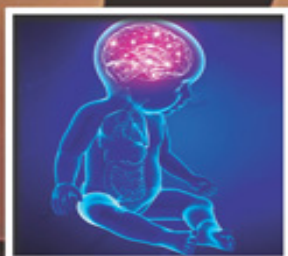


# BLOOMING BRAINS



*Role of Parenting in the  
Millennial age*



*Dr. Anitha Are*

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# INTRODUCTION



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**If You Are Not Tired You  
Are Not Doing Right  
Parenting**



Every parent wishes to do the best for their children. Parents want to raise them in an adaptable environment, provide healthy food and right to education. When we introspect, are we really doing this? Yes, we are to the best of our knowledge, however most of the parents neither are aware of children psychology nor are accustomed to the paradigm of social development.

When it comes to behavioural issues how many children are well behaved? Or As parents, are we capable of judging what construes to be an acceptable behaviour? Most of the parents believe that the children are in stable environment. During my sessions on parenting, following are some of most common questions:-

How can I raise my child to be intelligent, creative and well behaved? do I need to be strict with the child? Is discipline being good or bad? How can I make my child happy? so on and so forth....

Even though I try my best to answer these questions, at times I am not able to help the parents as the basic behavioural psychology has been corrupted at the root level, by the availability of numerous online information sources, which does more harm than good and further confuses the parents and restricts them in taking the right direction in grooming their children. Online information, often, is random and sometimes is not scientifically proven.

As a clinical Psychologist, I want the parents to get the scientifically proven information and they should be made aware of the facts regarding the child's brain development, which plays a vital role in the child's holistic development. In today's day and age, parents started to rely heavily on unsubstantiated online information, which further created misconception on understanding child psychology and behaviour. I initiated to write this book (The Blooming Brains) on the role of parenting in child's overall development. This book will not only give you all the information which is necessary for the parents, weather you are expecting or already blessed with one, but also provide logical insights on the facts and functioning of the nascent brain.

Human behaviour is complex, and brain establishes a key role in formulating thoughts, recognizing behaviour and verbalizing speech. The brain develops from a single cell in the womb. The nerve cells develop with an astonishing speed of 8,000 cells per second. Within a few months brain takes the coveted title of becoming the Central Processing Unit of our body. In fact, the guiding principles instilled by the parent from, prenatal to 6 years of age, creates a substantial mark on the behaviour of the child as an adult.



One of the longitudinal researches conducted in 1962, revealed the difference between the child's behaviour and social acceptance in different domains of their life. Children were randomly assigned to two groups; one was called the control group and the other was called experimental group. The experimental group attended a structural preschool program and the control group didn't. In the later stage of life, the children in experimental group outperformed in academics, language tests, and on standardized tests.

As an adult they were able to hold a steady job and were relatively more economically stable than the control group. This experiment is a classic example of importance of early childhood intervention and understanding the need of carving the path in the required direction. Throughout this book, I have shared numerous helpful parenting tips, which should help parents connect better with their children at the right age to build a long lasting psychological connect.

The child development depends on nature and nurturance. As like any healthy seed nurtured in a good environment, develops into a healthy plant. The same holds true for children. However, do we know what is parenting? What do we know about parenting, which is not biased? We need to understand the importance of nurturance by parents as it is going to affect the child's adulthood in so many ways. Many researchers agree that it is extremely difficult to research on children due to various reasons.

As parents we should all understand and accept following basic facts about human behaviour.

*Every parent is unique:*

Each parent of the child is from two different environments and is of different mind sets. Hence, most of the times parents disagree with each other in parenting styles. We cannot expect 100% co-operation between parents and when two different parenting styles are exposed to the child, it surely leads to a level of confusion in the child.

*Every child is different:*

As no two fingerprints are identical, no two children will react the same way to a particular situation. So, there is no single rule of parenting which will help every child. Idea is to spend as much time possible with the child and understand their likes and dislikes and to figure out what solutions work best for them.

*Children are influenced by others:*

Pear group, teachers, other family members and especially friends in society with same gender will have some or the other influence on the child. In all living beings, human child takes longest time to develop because of the higher thought process, as parents the onus is on us to teach them. Evolution Theory believes that children are born before their brains are fully developed and this leads to parenting challenges. Parents are the first point of contact to take care of the child's need. The immature brain needs continuous instructions to evolve as good adults. The evolutionary theory also believes that language is developed to give deep, efficient and clear instructions to child. The importance of child's brain development starts from pregnancy stage.

*Human social animal:*

Many scientists believe that most successful social groups are the ones where the males play an active role in supporting the females. Babies come to this world with a desire to form relationships with others. The first relationship the children encounter is with parents and the bond further extends to others in the later stages of life. Children have a deep

need to relating to others, and nuclear family structure is greatly hampering the children's need for interaction.



# CHAPTER I



## BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Are you planning for a child? Are you physically, financially and emotionally ready to invite a child? Is the relationship between the parents moving in the right direction? Couples should prepare themselves in advance and proceed accordingly for conception. As unplanned children may be a reason for conflict between the couple, which will eventually affect the child's brain development. Some of the commonly asked question during the parenting sessions are:- Does our conflicts affect the child in womb? Does the child learn things in womb? Does the child respond to the voices?

The little embryo develops very fast in first few months. Especially the brain, developing at the rate of nearly 8000 neurons per second, starting

from the 3<sup>rd</sup> week till the mid of gestation. Neurons climb and crawl, trying rigorously to reach their destination. Post reaching the desired location the physical development is complete and the process is called Neurogenesis. After all the neurons have reached their destination, they start getting connected with other neurons and this is known as Synaptogenesis. Every neuron has 15,000 connections with other neurons, and some may even exceed more than 1 lakh connections. The auditory neuron gets connected with other neurons, which results in the sensory system development, and successfully initiates the process of input relay with the child. Synaptogenesis happens about 17 per cent of the time and rest about 83 per cent of the connections happen after the childbirth. With that, sensory stimulation process is introduced in the womb.

Neuron Evolutionary biologist believes that the morning sickness in mothers is one of the protective elements of brain development. As the mother eats more bland food during pregnancy, it accentuates morning sickness, which in turn is good for child's brain development. Researches have proved that the children whose mothers suffered from morning sickness scored high in their academics. Hence the first few months of gestation are very important for the apt development of the brain. Folic acid intake also plays an important role in brain development.

Can the child feel the touch, smell or hear from the womb? Most of the parents express this doubt. Yes, the child can feel the touch, smell and develops a powerful memory for sounds, while still in the womb. The mythological story about Abhimanyu, who was able to learn a special war skill, when he was in his mother womb, is very famous in Indian culture. Acting as another indicator, that the child starts learning from the womb. The babies hear mothers voice by the end of second trimester. Children also tend to respond to the voices they heard from womb like other parents voice, music heard by mother, etc...

To be in your children's memories  
tomorrow, you  
have to be in their lives today



Five weeks after the fertilization the wiring for smell starts and by end of third trimester all different odours will start to enter the womb. The baby will start to like the perfume used by the mother and grow affectionate towards other commonly found food smells around the womb. This is known as olfactory labelling and the gustatory sensations starts from third semester. The food preferences of the mother in the last trimester will influence the child's food habits and it is conveniently called as flavour programming. Research proves that, all the sensory systems like smell, hearing, taste, touch and vision development reveals an increased mental involvement of the child in the gestation.

*Helping the child's brain development:*

There are few thumb rules for the proper development of the child's brain. Maintaining right weight by the mother is essential for the baby's brain development. For example, with the BMI of 25 to 29.9, the mother can increase 7 to 12 kilograms of weight in the gestation, around 250 grams a week. Increasing weight is important in second trimester. If the BMI is less than 18.9 the mother must increase 12 to 14 kilograms of weight. So, the mother must be careful of her eating habits '*It's not eating its eating right that matters*'.

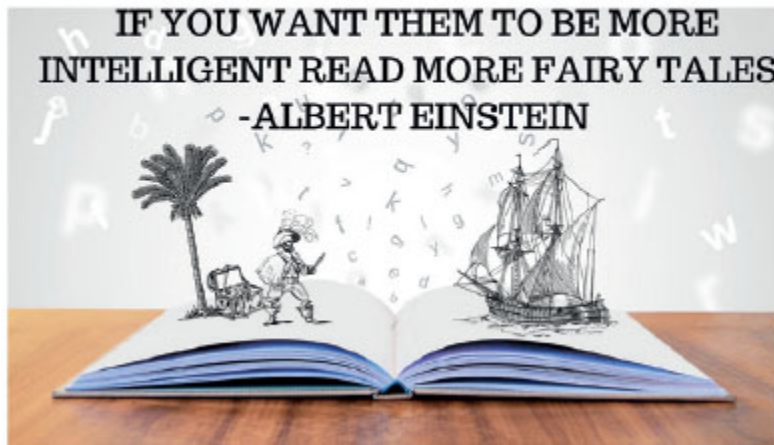
Baby needs 45 different nutrients out of which 38 are useful for the development of brain. Eating a balanced diet will help in the brain

development; so, expecting mothers should reduce intake of sugars and red meat. Omega 3 is most important for the development of brain. Mothers must include food consisting omega 3 as part of their diet. The research proves that omega 3 deficiency may lead to ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or dyslexia and other psychiatric diseases. Study also revealed, children of mothers who had fish in their gestation had high cognitive skills and memory. Malnutrition will affect the brain development and in turn affect the children abilities in the long term.

**IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO BE  
INTELLIGENT, READ THEM FAIRY TALES.**

**IF YOU WANT THEM TO BE MORE  
INTELLIGENT READ MORE FAIRY TALES.**

**-ALBERT EINSTEIN**



Stress affects the child's brain and the effect can be seen in the later stages of life. Mild stress will help the mother to be active and in turn make the baby active. But the chronic stress is toxic to the mother and the baby. Mother's stress will affect the baby's stress response system. The response to stress differs depending on the mother's reactivity to it. Mother may be stress resistance or stress sensitive. The stress hormone cortisol disturbs the glucose corticoids, which controls most of the stress responses. These hormones are controlled by a small part of the brain called hypothalamus. Mother's stress hormones pass through the placenta and enter the baby's brain, which affects the child's limbic system. Limbic system plays a dynamic role in emotional regulation and stress hampers the development of limbic system resulting in irrational emotional responses from the child. Excess glucose corticoids in mom will be passed to child, which will distress the stress response system.

Stress will impair the baby's brain development and might lead to, shrinkage of the brain. Impairment in concentration skills, motor skills, IQ, changes in temperament can be observed from age of 6 years. For the full development of child's brain, mother should be in minimal stress environment, especially in the last trimester. Identifying the triggers of stress and finding the strategies to control stress will provide lifetime benefit on baby's brain.

Stress can be managed by following tips:-

Regular Physical Exercise buffers against stress by reducing the glucose corticoids, in turn reducing the negative effects of stress. Exercise also helps in easy labour. Exercise should not be strenuous as it restricts the oxygen to baby. As per the obstetricians, 30 minutes of moderate exercise is advisable. Meditation for few minutes keeps mother's mind calm and acts as a stress reliever.

#### *Key Points in the Chapter*

- Child senses develop in the womb
- Maintaining ideal weight
- Folic acid and Omega 3 are essential
- Take care of the triggers of the stress
- Follow simple exercises
- Meditation.

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