



DR MALINI SABA

**M**any parents believe that we are in the digital age, with information at the tip of our fingers and knowledge readily available that can help our children grow into smarter and intellectual individuals.

However, I beg to differ. Raising children in an environment filled with gadgets is counter-productive. Instead of offering information in real-time, gadgets are more likely to reduce children's and adult's attention span and retention capacity. I prefer to be traditional when it comes to my child's interaction with gadgets and that has been working quite well so far.

So how am I raising my 12-year-old in a gadget free environment despite the need to stay connected at all times?

### Let her imagination work for her

Many parents can go back to their childhood and remember relying on their imaginations to build stories, warrior scenarios and so much which they would later enact with their friends. This sort of

## "Raising my 12-year-old in a gadget-free environment"

imagination allows the child to be engaged and not rely on external elements like gadgets. It not only helps my child build her mental power but also boosts her creativity which I encourage her to share with me. Together we narrate stories and fables that might be a figment of her imagination but are very fascinating to hear. In addition to that, I encourage her to indulge in crafts, painting and writing — empowering her to put her thoughts on paper and be as creative as possible. Instruments are something I hope to add to her list but nothing should be forced in the pretext of developing her mindset.

### Encourage her to contribute to household chores

I am a single mother and a working parent. Things can get a little tiring around the house and it helps to include your children in your day-to-day household chores. Now it does not mean that my child is an unpaid help at home, but an active participant in understanding how things run in the house she lives in. This not only keeps her involved but also helps her learn basic life skills that will help her once she leaves the nest. And no gadgets are involved here either!

### Encouraging her to go and have some playtime

All children require recreational activities to maintain their physical and mental health. However, playtime not only builds her physical health but also her social skills, emotional maturity and much more. While we are still amidst the pandemic, I ensure that she goes and enjoys her playtime with friends while wearing a mask and engaging in minimal contact. On those days when she is not able to go out (which I frown upon), we end up playing *Scrabble* or other board games that hold her attention for a long time.

### A gadget-free environment is not hard

Many might consider that I am depriving my child of all the advantages that technology might have to offer. My daughter gets my phone for a limited time when she is talking to her friends or needs to look up something while travelling. Despite being a part of this digital age, I empower my child's natural instincts to keep herself engaged and encourage her to pursue her interests so that she can grow into a capable person with zero dependency on electronic gadgets.

Helping my child to be their best version is something that I strive to do every day.

**Dr Malini Saba** is Founder & Chairman, Ananke Foundation and Saba Group. She is a self-made businesswoman, single mother, psychologist, human and social rights activist and a global advocate for women and girls.