

## [A Full Complement of Child-Raising Resources](#)

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# A Full Complement of Child-Raising Resources

By Tara Katir, USA

Dr. Jane Nelsen, author of Positive Discipline for Parents says, "We often act as though we have forgotten that love and joy are the whole point of living and working with children, and find ourselves acting out of fear, judgment, expectations, blame, disappointment and anger. Then we wonder why we feel so miserable." Once the initial bliss of having a newborn child begins to wane, parents discover the hard truth of child rearing--their beautiful baby did not arrive with an instruction manual, and raising him is hard work! As much as you hate to admit it, you may find yourself getting angry, frustrated with your child, then feeling a bit guilty. While there are no pat answers, Jane's collection of Positive Discipline books are an outstanding guide for parents and teachers who are willing to make a concerted effort. In them you will discover how to build a positive relationship with your child, instead of becoming stuck in an endless morass of power struggles, whining and defiance.

In her wide range of books, Dr. Nelsen directly addresses the issues for parents of toddlers, teenagers, parents with "blended" families and parents in recovery from drugs and alcohol. Jane has also written books for teachers to assist them in training students, from kindergarten through high school, to become self-reliant, successful adults. There is even Positive Discipline for Childcare Providers.

Jane's books can be ordered on her website-- [www.positivediscipline.com](http://www.positivediscipline.com) which is a treasure trove of resources for parents and teachers. There are free articles, an online forum, podcasts, free downloads, e-books and MP3 audios, and information on Positive Discipline Workshops.

The next time you find yourself frustrated by your rambunctious toddler or sassy

teenager, give yourself a "time out" and find some inspiration with solutions on the Positive Discipline website. Jane coaxes parents, "It doesn't matter whether you're a teacher, a parent or both.... On this web site, I'm going to show you how to solve defiance, whining, and all the other problem behaviors children and teens use to drive you crazy! And yes, you can do it all without ever blaming or punishing them!"Pipi

## Why Ancient Cultures Allow Children to Express the Natural Human Emotions, or Rasas

By Vatsala Sperling, Vermont, USA

Indian tradition recognizes nine rasas as representing our most important and basic emotions: love, joy, wonder, calmness, anger, courage, compassion, fear and disgust. These emotions are universal to mankind. Five are desirable, while four are unpleasant and usually undesirable.

Watch a small child carefully and you will be able to see displays of all nine of the basic emotions: 1) A baby smiles and gazes adoringly at his mother, showing the emotion of shringara, charm or love. Overcome with love for the infant, she picks him up, cuddles him and showers him with kisses. This is what the baby wanted, a physical confirmation of mother's presence and love. He knows exactly how to display his needs by way of facial expressions when he is barely three months old. 2) Laughing when tickled is a child's expression of hasya, joyous humor and laughter. Watch him play with a pet. 3) A ladybug lands on his table, walks across, flutters her wings and takes off. The child is wide-eyed with adbhuta, wonder or fascination, and has watched every move made by the ladybug. 4) A well-fed and relaxed baby that is asleep does look angelic. He is shanta, tranquility or calmness, personified. 5) Children fighting may display raudra, anger. 6) A child has learned to climb a ladder and gets a better view. He is feeling very accomplished and vira, brave, a hero of his own world. 7) In a hurry, the mother stubs her toe and cries out in pain. A child as young as two will reach out, wipe mom's tears and touch the injury in an expression of karuna, compassion, empathy or mercy. 8) A loud noise startles and wakens the baby and he cries out in fear, bhayanaka. This cry is distinct from all other cries. 9) Try spooning a cooked and mashed vegetable into an infant's mouth. As he sniffs, tastes, spits out and makes a horrible face he is expressing vibhatsa, disgust, with the new taste, very different from that of milk, his staple diet so far. Besides these, a child can display with equal ease and mastery a few more inherent emotions, such as sadness, greed, selflessness, obstinacy, curiosity, clinginess, generosity, dependency, violence, arrogance and rudeness.

The older, child-centered cultures take a different approach to the display of rasas by the powerful beings called children. The parenting techniques followed in many so-called primitive cultures foster attachment, and create such a closeness and bond between mother and child that the mother develops a total acceptance and understanding of her child and his mind. When an entire extended family lives in a one-room longhouse in the rain forest of South America, the adults reach a high level of tolerance to childhood display of rasas. They do not expect the child to conform to the expectations of the adults the moment he opens his eyes to this world. Discipline and assimilation into the community will come later, by way of numerous rites of passage.

In a similar fashion, the child-centered and ancient culture of India takes a very tolerant view of the childhood display of rasas. In India they let the children be children. They understand that childhood does not last forever. Soon enough the child will grow up and learn the ways of the world. There is no need to rush the process, to cause premature aging and untimely maturation.

When children have strong emotions, the adults do not feel the need to resort to violent beatings or verbal abuse to suppress the expression those feelings. Such a response would only inflict rejection and social humiliation on children for their natural displays. Adults in these older cultures understand that just as a lion hunts a deer, the child, in all his innocence, is simply following his inborn instincts. He is not acting to please or displease. These adults understand that just as nature expresses herself through her elements, children express themselves through their displays of rasas. The display is not the child. It is just a state of mind and therefore is inherently changeable. Pippi

## What Modern Parents Can Do

By Vatsala Sperling, Vermont, USA

When the display of negative rasas by children gets out of hand, there are certain positive things that parents can do:

Take a few deep breaths.

Commit to loving the child without conditions.

Be firm, yet remain flexible to the child's needs of the moment.

See the child for what he is--just a small child in need of support.

Impose no grown-up values and expectations on the child.

See the display of rasa for what it is--a little storm in a tiny tea cup, which will calm down eventually.

At the peak of the display of negative rasas, do not force the child to change his ways or engage with him in a forceful manner. A calm voice and a firm but peaceful demeanor is a stronger weapon than force.

At no point are violent, physical punishments, frightening time-outs, deprivation or verbal abuse called for. Such negative devices affect children for the rest of their lives.

### How to cultivate positive rasas

Do not, do not, do not suppress, neglect, ignore, put down, discourage, demean or humiliate the child when he is displaying any sign of a positive rasa. While excessive praise is detrimental, so are neglect and discouragement.

Focus on cultivating tolerance and patience in yourself. Treat the child as you would expect him to treat you when you grow old, powerless, dependent and

needy. Talk to your child about the expression of positive rasas when the time is right. In the meantime, just show him by the example of your own behavior how the expression of positive rasas brings joy to the family.

Set a family time--free from technology--to create an ideal environment for cultivating your child and teaching him about the display of positive rasas.

Soon enough you will be able to speak to the child about the universal laws of righteous behavior. Every being has the desire to be treated with love, courtesy, kindness, loyalty, generosity, consideration and warmth. While being taught to extend this treatment to one and all, the child will also need to be told about discretion. For example, loyalty is a good quality but the child must learn to choose his company wisely. If he befriends a drug pusher and becomes loyal to him, his loyalty to this friendship will quickly take him right down the drain and into the septic tank. This is where discretion comes in.

When all is said and done, nobody can deny that these are challenging times for parents. Rootlessness, alienation, marginalization and anonymity--these are some of the prices parents pay when they move around the world in search of the perfect situation. Young parents are often cut off from their original cultures and societies. Techno-commercial values constantly push parents and children to test one another. In pursuit of their individual ambitions and needs, parents and children often live in separate worlds, albeit in the same household. And when children enter school, the child who has not been given time to be a child, who has not been accepted with tolerance, often ends up in the school nurse's office being tested for and diagnosed with illnesses such as bipolar disorder, ADHD or oppositional defiant disorder.

Harried teachers, under pressure to maintain order in their classrooms and to have their students meet minimum academic standards, expect all of the children to behave like obedient, quiet, perfect little ladies and gentlemen. Children are not allowed to be children. They are not allowed to deviate from the norm or to freely express all of their rasas.

Sometimes as early as the age of three or four, children are labeled with psychiatric diagnoses and begin to be treated with powerful drugs such as lithium

or Depakote (mood stabilizers), Risperdal, Seroquel or Zyprexa (atypical antipsychotics), Prozac (an antidepressant) or Ritalin (a drug for ADHD). Each of these drugs comes with a frightening list of side effects. If prescribed without any physical markers, but solely on the basis of behavior--or rather the display of rasas--what good (or harm) is being done to the child, the parents and society?

In the face of this, it becomes all the more imperative that parents consider other, more holistic approaches to child rearing. If, as is sometimes the case, the child's display of rasas becomes detrimental to his own or his family's well-being, there are scores of other, non-pharmaceutical options available for modifying mood and behavior. His parents might explore changing his diet, limiting his intake of sugar, preservatives and additives. Calming and healing herbs might help. Perhaps homeopathy could shift his energetic balance, or counseling for the entire family could diffuse the situation.

Training a child in classical music, classical dance or martial arts could help. All of these disciplines have been known to stabilize and channel excessive or disruptive energy in more positive directions. A regular time, free of TV, when family members sit together, work together and converse with one another is also known to provide lasting, positive change for children.

As children grow up and display rasas, parents need to continue to grow up as well--not just in the physical manifestations of age, the wrinkles and gray hair, but in wisdom. This is what a study of the display of rasas in childhood is all about: a call for parents to monitor the growth of their wisdom. When parents learn to take charge of their own growth in terms of tolerance and empathy and resolve to let children be children first, allowing them an age-appropriate display of rasas, they have an opportunity to become truly close to their children and know them in their totality. As children mature, good parents take the initiative for gently channeling their rasas at the appropriate time and place. When parents take this positive approach to child-rearing, the options of violent discipline and drug-based treatments become obsolete. While we continue to ponder who is raising whom, learning to flow with the rasas will bring about lasting peace and joy in many households.