UNIT 20 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILD-REARING

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20.1 INTRODUCTION

Before you read about the development of social relationships during the preschool years, you may like to recollect your experiences with preschoolers and consolidate your thoughts. Is your interaction with them what aspect of their social development struck you the most? How did you find them to be different from toddlers or older children in this regard? Write about these aspects in the space provided below.

Perhaps you noticed that the preschooler is becoming independent. She takes initiative and, being more self-directed than the toddler, she is able to achieve more. Perhaps you noticed that she interacts more with her peers. She likes to be with friends and cousins and she plays with them co-operatively. You may have observed that she plays more pretend games compared to the toddler. You may, at times, have seen her reacting sensitively towards people in distress. Perhaps you felt that the child was growing more sure of herself, or more aggressive or more friendly, than in the earlier years. And though you never actually taught her, you discover that she has some fairly strong ideas about how girls and boys ought to behave.

During the preschool years the child adds more dimensions to her personality and also develops behaviour patterns which will be fairly stable over time. Parents have a crucial
role in shaping the child's personality in these formative years. It is the caregivers' socialization techniques and child-rearing practices that determine, to a large extent, how socially competent the child grows up to be. This Unit will focus upon these aspects.

As you are aware, this Course deals with the development of children up to six years of age. However, in this Unit we have, at certain places, traced the development of social skills beyond this period as well, in order to provide you a broader perspective. The Sections about development in the later years of childhood have been enclosed in boxes. They are optional reading; you may read them if you are interested.

Objectives
After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

• explain the importance of fostering initiative in the preschool child and describe the behaviour and attitudes of the caregivers that can help in this
• describe the stages in the development of self-concept and state the factors that help in forming a self-concept
• delineate the stages in the development of concept of gender and describe the role of the caregivers in promoting desirable social values and discouraging sex-role stereotyping
• compare the different ways of disciplining, with reference to their effect on the child’s personality
• differentiate the various parenting styles and identify those best suited to raising children
• identify the causes of aggression and explain how the parents can socialize the child’s aggressive behaviour
• understand the nature of peer interactions in this age group
• understand that the child shows more empathy and prosocial behaviour during the preschool period
• apply your understanding of this Unit to everyday situations and interact with children more effectively
Preschoolers have many skills at their command and are able to plan their actions which allows them to do more and to act effectively. Their greater confidence encourages them to take on challenges. **Preschoolers like to take initiative.** They will try to do the more difficult tasks — jump over a bush, put together a jigsaw puzzle and venture into the park alone. They are eager to accept the guidance of adults and to learn to make plans for their activity. Now the caregiver can channelize the child’s energy, enthusiasm and initiative towards more specific goals. When the child meets with success in her initiatives, she develops confidence and a sense of self-esteem. But there is a problem when in her wish to do something, the child goes too far. For example, the four year old having started painting, not only paints all the papers given to her, but also her clothes and those of her infant brother sitting beside her. This may be clearly too much from the parents’ point of view and, in an attempt to teach the child the limits of her behaviour, they may punish her or restrict her activity. **When parents frequently punish the child, she may develop a sense of guilt.** She may feel that her actions are always wrong and displeasing. When parents restrict her all the time, she loses initiative. She is then likely to do only what she is ordered to do, rather than choosing activities on her own. Such an attitude would be negative for the child’s development.

Thus the task of the caregivers at this stage is to help the child develop self-confidence and some responsibility for her actions, without curbing her initiative. The child must learn to control those actions which are socially undesirable. Parents can help the child in this task by explaining why she must not do something, instead of merely restricting her.

When there is balance between parental control and the initiative taken by children, then children are able to take pleasure in their abilities and are better able to take guidance from adults. But when this balance does not emerge, then the child’s desires come in conflict with what others want her to do. Then, in an effort to avoid guilt and be accepted by others (which seems to be possible only by obeying them), she restricts and overcontrols her behaviour. She may begin to resent those who ask her to control herself. If this conflict is not resolved, the child may grow up to be one who does not take initiative and may also feel that the only way she can do what is right is to deny herself the things that she wants. To avoid such a situation, the caregivers need to be sensitive and must help the child cope with the conflicting feelings of initiative and guilt.
The toddler, you would remember, has acquired a sense of her physical self, i.e., the understanding that she is an individual. The next step in forming a concept of self is defining oneself in terms of one's physical characteristics, attitudes, beliefs and personality traits. This process starts from the preschool years and continues throughout one's life. Let us read how the self-concept develops over the preschool years.

Once the child becomes aware of herself, it is obvious that the first things she will notice are her physical characteristics. Thus, the process of defining oneself begins with noticing one's physical features. Preschoolers define themselves first in terms of gender (boy or girl) and observe how they appear — how tall they are, whether their hair is curly and similar things. You may have noticed that even while describing objects, preschoolers state their outward appearance first. They are likely to say that this ball is red in colour rather than saying that it is made of rubber. Similarly, the preschool child, in developing a self-concept defines herself in terms of her visible characteristics.

When asked to describe their own selves, preschoolers also say what they like to play with, where they live and what they like. They describe themselves in terms of their frequent behaviour or favourite action, such as “can ride a tricycle”. A striking aspect of children's self-concept at this age is that their descriptions of themselves are absolute — they refer to themselves as either big or small, old or young. They do not generally see themselves in relation to others and so, while describing themselves they do not use words like bigger or smaller, older or younger to somebody else. This is in keeping with the cognitive abilities, about which you have read in the earlier Unit. To give you an example of the self-concept of preschoolers, here is a self-description by one of them. He said the following sentences when asked to tell something about himself: Of course, he did not say all of this at once, but gradually with coaxing.

"My name is Ali. I have black eyes and black hair. I am six years old. I like to play with ball. I have brothers and sisters. I live in Narela. I go to school. I have many marbles”.

While playing and interacting with preschoolers, you could ask them questions which bring out what they think of themselves. You can use the following space to write a preschooler's description of herself/himself.

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You may be interested in knowing how the concept of self develops over the later years of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The further development in the concept of self has been described in Box 20.1.
BOX 20.1: Self-Concept in Later Years

Over the years, the child's self-concept becomes more elaborate. As her thinking matures, she is able to think about herself. The older child focuses less on external characteristics and more on internal qualities. She refers to her feelings and thoughts while describing herself. Older children also begin to compare themselves with others and they describe themselves using words like "less smart", "smarter than" and "not so good as". The following self-description of a 10-year-old brings out these aspects.

"My name is Amla. I am a girl. I am tall. I can't draw as well as Anita. I get good marks in school. I like to play hop-scotch. I have many friends".

The adolescent questions the norms, beliefs and attitudes of her society and grapples with ideologies and values. She thinks of these things and her views on these become a part of her self-concept.

Over the years, one's self-concept becomes broader and many dimensions are added to it. The self-concept is not static — it changes as the person changes her opinions and beliefs.

It would be interesting for you to write 10 or 15 sentences about yourself which you think describe you most closely. You could also ask your friend or a relative to tell you what he/she thinks of you. You may find that in some aspects what you think of yourself matches with what others think of you, and in others, your perception of yourself is different from theirs.

20.3.1 Origins of Self-Concept

How does one develop a self-concept? You read in Block 3 how the infant's explorations of her own body and interactions with others help her to develop a sense of physical self. These very factors help her to develop her self-concept during childhood years. Let us now read about this.

As the child's abilities develop, she achieves a feeling of competence. She recounts her abilities saying, "I can jump high", "I can cross the road myself", "I can get milk", "I cannot ride a bicycle" or "I can go to the market and buy vegetables". In this way she learns about herself and these become a part of her concept of self. As she grows, her self-descriptions become more complex.

Interaction with others is the second factor that influences the child's self-concept. During everyday activities, parents and others provide the child with information about herself. When the parents make any of the following kind of comments — "Why can't you ever write properly?", "You are clumsy, always dropping things!", "You are smart", "We know you can do this work" or "You are a good child and we like you", the child begins to believe these things about herself and makes them a part of her self-concept. When parents frequently give the child a positive feedback, the child develops a high self-esteem. When parents constantly give the child a negative evaluation of her abilities, the child's self-esteem will be low. Even when parents do not express their opinions, their beliefs about their child get conveyed to her through indirect and subtle ways. Parents who believe that the child is not competent are not likely to give the child much responsibility. Their behaviour may lead the child to form the opinion: "I am not competent to do anything". Then, in keeping with this belief about herself, she is likely to behave in ways that bring out her incompetence, thus reinforcing her low self-concept.

While it is important to give the child a positive evaluation of herself, it is equally important that this feedback be a realistic picture of the child. False feedback which makes the child believe that she has skills and abilities which in truth she does not possess, may lead her to form an unrealistic opinion about herself.

You would have interacted with children often and may also have played a major role in caregiving. Some of you may be parents. Reflect upon your interactions with children. What is the type of feedback you give them? Do you usually praise their good behaviour or
do you only give them a feedback about their incorrect behaviour? Above all, is your feedback realistic? The next time you communicate with children, just make a mental note of the type of sentences you speak. If even for a day, you take care to see the type of feelings you convey to children, you will be able to assess your own behaviour. You may like to note down a few comments about this here.
20.3.2 The Concept of Gender

As you know the self-concept also includes one's concept of gender. Let us see how the concept of gender develops during the preschool years.

You have read that by the end of toddlerhood children can differentiate between men and women on the basis of their external features, like hair length and clothing. They will also be able to tell you whether they themselves are boys or girls. This means that they have acquired gender identity. But this does not mean that they have a complete understanding of the concept of gender. One of the things they may not know is that gender remains constant over time. They may believe that they, as well as others, can change their gender by wearing the clothes and doing activities of the opposite sex.

Thus the next step in developing the concept of gender is the realization that one stays the same gender. This is called gender constancy and is achieved around four or five years of age. Preschoolers realize that they stay the same gender before they realize that this is true for others as well.

The constancy of gender is a little difficult for the preschooler to grasp, particularly since the child's other physical attributes, and her appearance do change. This is not surprising after you have read about the preschooler’s difficulty in conserving. Conservation, you know, involves the understanding that things remain the same even though they have changed externally in some manner. The same is involved in gender constancy. Thus a complete understanding of gender develops around five or six years of age, when the child is a little less influenced by what she sees, be it the length of hair or the kind of clothes worn.

Another aspect of the concept of gender is acquiring sex-role behaviour. This means understanding what is appropriate female and male behaviour. In our society, the notions about these are fairly rigid and strong. Rigid ideas about what is masculine and what is feminine behaviour are called sex-role stereotypes. We think of men as competent, skilful, assertive, aggressive, ambitious, strong and able to get things done. We think of women as warm, expressive, more aware of other people's feelings, caring, quiet, gentle, dependent and submissive. However, with the changing values in society and with the spread of education, these stereotypes have weakened. Women are taking up occupations earlier considered to be male and are becoming more independent and self-reliant. But though the stereotypes are becoming blurred, they are nonetheless present and govern our behaviour to a great extent. You would have often heard parents say to their crying son, “Boys don’t cry”. They buy different play materials for their daughters and sons. Children as young as four years begin to be influenced by these stereotypes. Let us see what ideas preschoolers have about men and women.

Three and four year olds have a remarkable amount of information about the social expectations from the two sexes and have very definite ideas about what boys and girls ought to do. When asked, they may state that “girls ought to play with dolls” and “dress up like women” and that “boys ought to play with trucks and play at being drivers and pilots”. By age five they also acquire stereotypes about personality traits and behaviour. The older preschooler is more rigid in her notions of what is appropriate male and female behaviour as compared to the younger preschooler.

A study also brings out this point rather well. In this study of children between age four and five, the researcher told them a story about a little boy who likes to play with dolls. In the story the boy’s parents tell him that only girls play with dolls and that boys should not. They buy him other toys but the boy still plays with dolls. The children were then asked why the boy was told not to play with dolls and whether it was right to tell him so and what the boy in the story should do.

Four year olds thought that it was acceptable for the boy to play with dolls, as there was no rule against it. But six year olds felt that it was wrong for the boy to play with them.

As children grow beyond the preschool years, they continue to develop their notions of how males and females are expected to behave but they become less rigid about the stereotypes. The nine and ten year olds recognize more readily that one person can combine masculine and feminine behaviour. They can accept it more easily if people do not display the
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stereotypical behaviour expected of them. In the above story, for example, most nine year olds replied that boys usually do not play with dolls but it was not ‘wrong’ for the boy in the story to do so. One boy, for example, said, “You can play with dolls, but boys usually do not”.

An Alternative to Sex Role Stereotyping

It would be good if we were not rigid about correct male and female behaviour but rather understood that masculine and feminine qualities are both necessary for every person and inculcate such an understanding in children. A woman may be interested in repairing cars and want to be assertive — traditionally defined as masculine traits in our society — and still feel herself to be no less a woman than any other. A boy who can be gentle and kind (traditionally seen as feminine qualities) will be better able to establish close relationships than one who is unemotional and dominant.

It is desirable for a person to have both feminine and masculine qualities — to be compassionate and independent, gentle and assertive. There is nothing wrong in encouraging nurturance in boys and assertiveness in girls. It allows children a greater variety of roles, adding a richness to their personality. Our interactions with children must be guided with this in mind. When children raise questions about sex roles, we should discuss them. We may draw attention to individual differences among people, rather than only those based on gender. The aim behind such socialization is to help children reach their potential instead of being limited by traditional models.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Read the following statements carefully and indicate, by ticking (✓) in the appropriate box, whether you agree or disagree with them. In case of statements you disagree with, mention in the place provided at the end of the exercise, why you disagree.

a) Preschoolers like to take initiative and face challenges, but if their actions are frequently punished and restrictions placed on them, they may develop feelings of guilt.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree

b) Caregivers must help the child learn the limits of what she can do and control her undesirable actions by curbing her initiative.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree

c) The preschool child has to find a balance between doing things as she wants and doing what is socially acceptable.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree

d) Preschoolers acquire the concept of gender constancy around five years of age.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree

e) The younger preschooler is not so rigid about sex-role stereotypes as the older preschooler.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree

f) The different child-rearing practices that most parents employ with girls and boys is one of the factors that promotes sex-role stereotypes.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree

g) It would be more fruitful to inculcate desirable traits and behaviours in children without worrying about whether they are traditionally masculine or feminine.

[ ] Agree  [ ] Disagree
2) Observe a preschooler for some time as she plays with other children, interacts with adults, co-operates with the caregiver in eating, bathing and dressing and in any other day-to-day situation. List five situations in which the child shows initiative and a willingness to try out things herself. You may even write from your memory of such interactions.

3) After the child acquires a sense of physical self, what is the next stage in the development of self-concept? Describe briefly.

20.4 CHILD-REARING PRACTICES

Sunil was playing with some marbles in the room. His nine month old brother was sitting on the bed playing with a doll. During his play, the doll fell down on the floor. The infant crawled to the edge of the bed and peered over to look at the doll. He started to whimper. Sunil, engrossed in his play, did not hear his brother. After some time, the infant started crying in earnest. Startled now, Sunil looked up from his play. On seeing the doll he picked it up, handed it to the infant, patted him and played with him for a while. Sunil's mother, who had come in on hearing the child cry, had been observing this interaction from the door. When the infant had stopped crying, she came up to them, hugged Sunil, went to the infant and said playfully, "What happened! The doll fell down! See, Bhaiya is so good. He gave you your doll!", and looked up to smile in appreciation at Sunil.

Ramu was standing outside his house, watching a group of boys going to the village school. His attention was drawn towards a row of ants moving on the ground. He looked at them
and then started stamping on them. His elder brother, 15 years old, was returning from the market. Shocked to see Ramu doing this, he caught his arm and moved him away from the ants. He spoke angrily to him. "What are you doing? It is bad to kill anything. Don’t do it ever again!"

In both these instances, the children are being brought up to show desirable social behaviour. In the first instance, the mother praises the child for helpful behaviour and, in the second, the brother scolds the child for being cruel to living creatures. The children are being socialized.

Socialization, as you know, is the process by which children acquire behaviours, skills, values, beliefs and standards that are characteristic, appropriate and desirable in their culture. Most parents have an idea about what their children should be like. These are the goals of socialization and they vary from one culture to another and even from one family to another within a culture. The child acquires appropriate behaviour through the direct teaching of parents, siblings, peers and teachers as well as indirectly as she watches people and imitates their behaviour. Sex-appropriate behaviour, traits like altruism and respect for other people’s rights are acquired in this manner.

The socialization process begins from infancy, as you would have gathered from the earlier Units. The child of the preschool age is more aware of herself, she is able to use speech and can comprehend events. She is now able to understand what is demanded of her. The parents now become more concerned about socializing her.

While the parents, teachers, peers, radio, television and magazines influence the child’s personality in significant ways, the family is the single most important factor that shapes the child. This is particularly true during the childhood years because the child spends a large part of her time with the family members. The values, beliefs and norms of the culture are imbibed through the family.

In this Section, we will concentrate upon the methods used by parents to socialize the child towards appropriate behaviour and away from inappropriate behaviour. These methods can be called the child-rearing practices. Parents differ widely in the type of child-rearing practices they use. It is particularly important to discuss these, since they influence the child’s personality and attitudes. One of the major reasons for differences among the children is the socialization they have experienced. Certain types of family environments and experiences may be detrimental to the child, while some may enhance the child’s potential.

One aspect of the child-rearing practices is the type of disciplinary techniques employed by parents. Another aspect is the parenting style. Let us first read about disciplinary techniques and their consequences in the following sub-Section. In the next sub-Section we will read about the parenting styles.

20.4.1 Ways of Disciplining

When a child does something which is unacceptable to the parents, they will try to stop that action. Broadly speaking, they respond in one of the following two ways.

Some parents point out the consequences of the child’s action to her, reason with her and appeal to her sense of responsibility and concern for others in order to prevent her from doing the same thing again. When disciplining the child they are likely to say, “Don’t hit Pinkoo. It hurts her!” or “If you don’t pick up your toys, I will have to do this later”. Such statements draw the child’s attention to the feelings and motives of other people, encourage her to reflect on her own behaviour, help her to understand the rules and know the reasons for these rules. These parents are firm in their disciplining, yet they are affectionate and gentle with the child. They convey to the child that a certain action/behaviour is wrong without condemning the child. They say, “What you did was bad” instead of saying, “You are a bad girl”. Such a method of disciplining is affection-oriented and is very effective in socializing the child.

On the other hand, some parents mainly use commands to stop the child from a particular behaviour. They say, “Don’t do that!”; “I tell you stop that at once!” without giving the child a reason for why they want her to stop that behaviour. In this case, the parents use
their authority and power to discipline without reasoning with the child. They may also threaten the child and withhold privileges — "If you do not do this, I won't let you go to the park". They may also use physical punishment. This technique is the power-oriented technique of disciplining.

Most of us use both the above-mentioned styles while disciplining children, as you will be able to say from your personal experience. When the child is doing something which may hurt her or others, most of us would resort to power-oriented disciplining, for there is no time to lose in reasoning with the child. Sometimes no other method but power-oriented technique works. Even after repeated explanations when the child does not stop the undesirable behaviour, parents will resort to threats and reprimands. The age of the child also makes a difference. It is easier to reason with older children, while with the younger preschoolers parents may need to use power-assertion in more situations. Thus, the type of disciplining technique the parent employs is determined by the situation, the temperament of parent and the child's own personality. But despite these, one can see that some parents primarily use affection-oriented disciplining, while others rely mainly on power-assertion to socialize the child.

The affection-oriented way of disciplining is more effective in socializing the child. It enhances the child’s sense of moral values and behaviour and promotes a sense of personal responsibility. The child accepts the parents’ rules as her own and they become a part of her. The child feels guilt and shame when she does something undesirable. Such disciplining style fosters an attitude of being responsible for one’s actions.

The following research study will make the above discussion clear to you. In this study, nine and ten year old children were first allowed to play with some attractive toys for about ten minutes. Then they were told that these would be put aside and they would have to work with an uninteresting pulley mechanism. The children were then divided into three groups. One group of children were simply told, “Don’t look at those toys again until I tell you”. Here power-oriented technique was used to control behaviour. With the second group of children a self-oriented technique was used i.e., one that focused on children’s own feelings — “If you don’t work hard on the pulley mechanism, you will have to do some of this work later and you will have little time to play with the good toys”. The third group received affection-oriented disciplining i.e., the one which focused on the feelings of another person — “You will make me unhappy if you look at the toys now!” and “If you don’t work hard enough, I will have to do some of this work later and I will have little time to do what I want to do”. It was seen that the latter group of children worked the hardest with the uninteresting toy and spent much less time gazing at the forbidden toys, than the other two groups of children. Thus focusing on the other person’s feelings and explaining the consequences was the most effective in persuading the children to do as told.

Why is it that the affection-oriented technique has such positive and long lasting consequences? One of the reasons is that when parents use this style of disciplining, they help the child to focus on the feelings of others and this evokes concern. They appeal to the child’s emotions. Along with this, when the parents explain the rule, it gives the child information against which she can judge her own actions and use it to guide her future behaviour.

Ideally, the method of disciplining should be such that it leads the child to internalise the behaviour. This is the ultimate test of good socialization. When a child acts good only when others are watching, she is doing so simply to please them or to avoid punishment. Of course, in the early years the factor that operates in the child’s mind is, “What will my mother/teacher say when I do this?” But as the child grows older, this reliance upon external factors to control one’s behaviour must shift to internal control, so that the child herself feels a desire to behave in acceptable ways.

Before you read further you might like to reflect upon your own behaviour to see what type of technique you usually use with children. Do you use different techniques in different situations? Do you discipline a five year old child in the same way as you discipline a 10 year old? Or are there differences? Would you like to change your style of disciplining? You may like to write your thoughts in the space provided below.
Punishment

We have spoken briefly about punishment in Block 3 as well as in the preceding paragraphs. You know by now that punishment can take different forms:

- **physical punishment**: slapping and spanking
- **verbal punishment**: scolding, swearing, threatening
- **withholding material things**: like eatables, toys or clothes
- **withdrawal of love**: through ignoring, isolating or accusing the child of hurting one's feelings

Let us read in some more detail about this aspect of disciplining, as each one of us has widely different views on this.

If punishment becomes a regular method of dealing with the child's misbehaviour then it can have many negative consequences, particularly when parents do not explain the reason for the punishment. Therefore, **punishment must be used cautiously**. One of the negative effects, about which you have read in the preceding Section, is that the child fails to internalize the rules. Excessive punishment may give the child a feeling that she never does anything right, which is likely to lower her self-esteem. The child usually becomes less compliant with adults and peers. When punishment is used often, it leaves the child feeling resentful and angry with the parent. She may begin to avoid the parent. Severe punishment may generate so much anxiety in the child that she does not learn the intended lesson.

These negative effects of punishment are increased if parents often use physical punishment. Besides, there is another undesirable long-lasting effect of physical punishment and that is — parents who regularly use physical punishment serve as models of aggression. Watching adults use aggression (punishment) to control situations, the child too begins to behave aggressively. Many research studies have supported this fact. In one research study, preschoolers were shown videotapes of parent-child conflicts and asked what they would do if they were the parent. In reply, the children mentioned those methods of disciplining which their own parents used with them. It can be said that parents who use severe punishment are unknowingly training their children to use punishment-oriented techniques later on. It is possible that parents who use physical punishment were themselves disciplined in that way as children.

From this discussion, what can we conclude about the role of punishment? Does it mean that one should never punish children? Whether punishing the child will lead to such negative consequences or not depends on how parents use punishment. If we use punishment in accordance with some principles, it can promote self-control without harming the child's personality. Let us study these principles.

Punishments or prohibitions will have their greatest impact if the adult **gives the reason** for the punishment. Do you remember having read about this aspect in the earlier Section on affection-oriented techniques? This is the most important aspect of disciplining. The explanation, however, must be at the child's level of understanding. Naturally, for the young child the explanation should be brief and specific.

**The timing of the punishment is important.** Punishment is most effective when it immediately follows the misbehaviour. The best time to stop an act is when it is just about to occur or as it is beginning. When the child snatches the toy for the first time, that is when the parent must step in, rather than waiting for the fifth time when the child does it. If this is done, the need for physical punishment will not arise. If there is no other choice but to delay the punishment, then later while punishing the child, the parent must state clearly why the child is being punished.
An important aspect that determines how the child reacts to punishment by the parent is the emotional relationship they share. Punishment from a nurturant and affectionate parent is more likely to be effective than punishment from a cold and withdrawn or hostile parent. This is because when an affectionate parent punishes the child, the child loses the parent’s affection temporarily, which hurts her. So she stops the undesirable behaviour in order to regain the parent’s affection. On the other hand, when the parent is hostile and cold, the punishment is not something very different from the parent’s usual behaviour. So the child does not lose much emotionally when she gets punished and she makes little effort to correct her behaviour.

One must be consistent in disciplining. It should not be that one punishes the undesirable act one day, ignores it another day and praises it yet another day. Neither should the undesirable behaviour be punished by one parent and let off by the other. This inconsistency in actions confuses the child and consequently, undesirable behaviour persists.

The punishment given for a certain action must be fair and mild. However, mild punishment may not always have an effect. While the punishment may be just moderate, it must not be severe because while that makes the child obedient, it also generates resentment and fear.

One of the forms of punishment used by many parents is making the child sit by herself, away from others, for a short period of time. During this time everybody ignores the child. After the punishment is over, everybody behaves normally with the child. The child must be given an explanation for the punishment. Such a method is not generally physically or emotionally harmful to the child.

The child’s role in punishment — It may seem strange if you have not thought about it, but the child’s own personality and behaviour influence the type of punishment she gets. It has been seen that children who are aggressive are punished more strictly than those who are not aggressive. Aggressive and non-aggressive children react differently to punishment, which in turn influences the parents’ behaviour. Non-aggressive children when punished stop the undesirable behaviour, while aggressive children usually increase their undesirable behaviour, particularly if the power-oriented technique is being used. Seeing the child defiant, the parents become more punitive. Thus a cycle is set-up — the child misbehaves, the parent punishes her, the child defies the parent, the parent uses more punishment and the level of the child’s aggression goes up. It becomes very difficult to break this chain of events. It seems as if the parent and the child are caught in a trap. It remains then for the parent to bring about a change in the situation.

Thus, we saw that just as the parents’ child rearing practices influence the child’s personality, the child’s temperament influences the type of rearing practices of parents.

A few more examples will make it clear how parents and children influence each other’s behaviour. A child who remains irritable for most of the time is likely to be frustrating to the parents. They may then react impatiently which in turn increases the child’s irritability. Parents who feel that their children are difficult, interact less with them and respond less sensitively to their cries than other parents.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Answer the following questions briefly in the space provided below.

1) When parents use the affection-oriented techniques of disciplining, what is their behaviour towards the child?

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2) What are the characteristics of power-oriented disciplining style?

3) If punishment is used to discipline the child, what are the aspects the caregiver should keep in mind?

4) What are the negative effects of punishing the child frequently, particularly physically?

20.4.2 Styles of Parental Behaviour

Disciplinary techniques are just one aspect of parent-child relationships. There are many other dimensions of parents’ behaviour that influence the child’s personality. Each parent has a distinct parenting style. Some parents are loving and affectionate while some are hostile and rejecting and yet others, indifferent. Some parents are firm about rules, some are lax and others are strict about them. There are many other aspects of parental behaviour. By and large, the parenting style adopted by a parent is fairly stable over time and across situations. But this does not mean that the parent is inflexible. A parent who is usually strict about enforcing rules may, in some cases, allow the child considerable flexibility. The style of parenting has a long-lasting effect on the child’s personality. Therefore, parents need to decide very carefully which parenting style they would like to adopt.

It would be difficult to describe all the styles of parental behaviour. For ease of discussion, we will group parents into four broad categories and see how each style influences the child’s personality.

Firm and Affectionate Parenting: These parents are warm, loving and supportive of the child’s efforts and accomplishments. They often praise the child. They show enthusiasm in the child’s activities, respond sensitively to her feelings and show empathy and compassion. They usually put the child’s needs over their own. They understand their child’s personality characteristics and points of view.
Such parents are firm in disciplining. They lay down simple rules and make it clear to the child that these have to be obeyed and what may be the consequences of disobeying. At the same time, they explain the reasons for the rules. In other words, they limit the child's behaviour but within these limits they encourage independence. They allow enough flexibility for the child to act independently within the rules. Before formulating rules and arriving at decisions, they often ask children about their views and encourage discussion. They listen to children's objections. Listening means more than nodding one's head when the child is speaking. It means considering what the child is saying and responding to it. This will give the child the feeling that she is saying something that is worthwhile and that her opinions are important. Such an atmosphere reflects a high level of warmth and a good communication between the parents and the child. The child feels that it is easy for her to express her true feelings to her parents.

Parents who demand and expect mature behaviour from the child set high standards of achievement for her. But along with this, their demands from the child are reasonable and in keeping with her abilities. When the parents' expectations of the child are reasonable, the child is able to meet the parents' standards and derives a sense of competence from this. This feeling of confidence carries over to other situations. It is important to restate one point here. The key concept is realistic expectations. Unrealistic demands will lower the child's self-esteem as she can never fulfil them.

Such a parenting style — affectionate, firm and yet flexible — fosters independence and self-reliance in children. Children show mature behaviour earlier, have higher self-esteem, show more generosity, are sensitive towards others and are less aggressive. They are friendly and get along well with peers. They are more willing to try out new things and explore — a trait that is associated with creativity. They are more planful and perform better in school compared to other children.
Rigid and Inflexible Parenting: The foremost characteristic of these parents is that they use very little reasoning to discipline the child. Rather, they use power-oriented techniques to inculcate desirable social behaviour. They view themselves as those who are in authority. They set the rules and demand that the children obey them unquestioningly. They are rigid about the rules they have set. They do not communicate the reason for their rules and decisions to the child and do not encourage her to have a viewpoint. They value obedience and discourage independent behaviour, questioning and exploration. They are highly controlling of the child’s behaviour. The child is not allowed to think and act on her own. These parents are also less warm and affectionate. They seldom praise the child. Some of them may even be openly hostile and rejecting.

It has been seen that children belonging to such families are generally discontented, distrustful and withdrawn. They may also have difficulty in forming relations with peers and do not get along well with them. Since the children are seldom encouraged to try out things, they have a lower self-esteem compared to other children. In response to the parents’ behaviour, some of these children may become subdued and timid while others may react to the parents’ behaviour by showing a high level of aggression. As teenagers, these children do less well in school since they had no early opportunity to act spontaneously.

Permissive Parenting: These parents are lax in disciplining. They give children all the freedom to do as they want. There are almost no rules for children and the parents do not expect much from them. In fact, children tend to make their own rules. Parents rarely demand that the child behave in a mature manner. Children in these families have the freedom to do as they want and have few responsibilities. Parents express their warmth and love to the children liberally.

Children of such parents have been found to be the least mature or self-reliant. They are not likely to take on responsibility and may be immature in their behaviour with peers. They are not independent and they show high levels of aggression, since the parents do not make efforts to control the child’s aggression.

Neglect in Parenting: These are parents who neglect their children. They are not interested in their children and do not bother about them. They do not show much warmth and love. They do not control the child’s behaviour or expect mature behaviour.

This sort of parenting style is associated with the most negative influence on children’s personality. Children of such parents show disturbances in their relationship with peers, both in childhood and adulthood. They lack social skills of relating to others and do not display leadership skills. In fact, they may show anti-social behaviour in adolescence and adulthood. They are also not highly motivated to achieve and do not try hard for success.

While we have stated that a particular parenting style leads to certain specific personality characteristics in children, it must be remembered that we have only mentioned generalities. The outcomes we have described with each parenting style are the mostly likely outcomes, but they are not the only ones. The behaviour of the parents is just one of the many factors that affects the child’s behaviour. The child is also influenced by the people she meets outside the family. If the parents are hostile but others are supportive and warm, the child’s personality may develop positively. It is also possible that each of the parents uses a different parenting style. If one of the parents is restrictive and the other is flexible, it will have a different impact on the child than when both the parents are restrictive.

20.5 PROVIDING NURTURANCE AND FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

You know that as the child grows, she is able to do many tasks by herself. The preschooler is no longer as dependent on the parents as the toddler. As she enters the middle childhood years and adolescence, she will become more independent. It is important to encourage the child’s desire to do things on her own because this promotes self-confidence. This is also related to how the child deals with situations in life and to what extent she believes that she has control over things.
How independent a child will be in the childhood years, and later in adulthood, depends upon how the parents handle the child's early dependency. Parents want to protect their children as well as prepare them to face danger and frustration. One of the greatest challenges of parenting is achieving a balance between too much and too little protectiveness towards children. Let us read about this briefly.

Dependent behaviour of children takes two forms:

**Affection-seeking:** Children want to be loved. When they are praised and noticed, they feel loved. When the child says, "Look at me!", she is expressing a desire to be praised and reassured of the parents' love.

**Help-seeking:** When faced with a task that the child finds difficult, she asks for help. Besides enabling her to do the task, the adult's help also reassures her that they care for her.

How should the parents respond to the preschooler's dependent behaviour? It may seem paradoxical but when the parents respond to the child's dependent behaviour positively, it makes the child grow up to be more independent than when they punish her for dependent behaviour. A child who asks for affection and gets it from the parents is likely to grow up to be an emotionally secure, independent adult. To put it in other words, children who are not provided nurturance when they need it, may continue to seek it as they grow older. As adults they may feel emotionally insecure and this can lead to dependent behaviour and excessive reliance on others. If the major factor in one's relationships as an adult is the need for love and security, then it can be very handicapping. It can curtail independent functioning to a great extent. An example from preschool years will make this clear. The child who clings to the parents when they leave her at the preschool and does not let them go, is likely to be the one whose dependent behaviour has not been sufficiently responded to by the parents. So she finds it difficult to be separated from the parents for some time each day. In the school this child may seek excessive attention from the teachers. On the other hand, the child who adjusts to the new school environment without much of a problem and makes friends is the one whose parents have provided nurturance. She is thus able to act independently.

On the other extreme are overly protective parents who encourage dependent behaviour and respond anxiously when the child asks for help, instead of encouraging her to try herself. They can make the child anxious as well. The child then does not learn ways of handling problems on her own and, as an adult, may rely excessively on others.

How can one foster independence in the child? It is often a case of each parent finding a balance between indulging the child and being firm and between helping the child at the slightest difficulty and asking her to do everything on her own.

### 20.6 RELATIONSHIP WITH SIBLINGS

Most families in our country have more than one child. Interacting with siblings is as much a part of the child's life as interacting with parents. In fact, in many families where the older child looks after the younger ones when the parents go out to work, more time is spent with siblings than with parents. Siblings thus are significant agents of socialization.

There is one marked difference in the child's relationship with siblings as compared to her relationship with parents. Can you think what it may be? Siblings are nearer in age to each other and the relationship between them is more equal, friendly and democratic than with parents. However, flexible and child-centred parents may be, they are still perceived as authority figures by the child.
Siblings provide the child emotional security. In stressful and confusing situations, they are sources of support and advice. They can be confided in. There are many childhood secrets that only siblings can share. Older siblings set standards of behaviour. You would have noticed how the younger child tries to imitate the older one. Codes of loyalty, helpfulness and protection are very strong between brothers and sisters.

While on one hand, the relations between siblings may be egalitarian, on the other hand there may be conflict, domination and competition. Rivalry and jealousy between siblings is not uncommon and, in these cases, parents must deal with the situation sensitively. The birth of a second child can upset the older child, particularly if the parents begin neglecting the older one.
Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) You have read that each parenting style fosters certain specific personality characteristics in children. List these in the space provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENTING STYLE</th>
<th>PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Rigid and Inflexible</td>
<td>............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Firm and Affectionate</td>
<td>............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Permissive Parenting</td>
<td>............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Neglect in Parenting</td>
<td>............................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) In Column 1 are listed the four styles of parental behaviour. In Column 2 are the various characteristics of such parents. Match them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMN 1</th>
<th>COLUMN 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Firm and affectionate parenting</td>
<td>a) warm, loving and praise the child’s efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Rigid and inflexible parenting</td>
<td>b) rigidity in rules; expect children to obey unquestioningly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Permissive parenting</td>
<td>c) use little reasoning to discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Neglect in parenting</td>
<td>d) not interested in children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) flexibility within rules; explain reasons for rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) do not show much love and warmth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) lax in disciplining; almost no rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h) children are not expected to show mature behaviour; they do as they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i) discourage independent thinking and behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j) less warm and nurturant; seldom praise the child; some may be openly hostile and rejecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k) make realistic demands on the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l) listen to children and encourage discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Block 3 we talked about some of the reasons for aggressive behaviour among children. When toddlers are upset or frustrated, they may express their emotion by behaving aggressively. They may throw things and kick others. Preschoolers, beside displaying physical aggression, also begin to use verbal aggression such as calling names and taunting. It is during the preschool years that parents start to deal with aggression more strictly. Let us now read what may be the causes of aggressive behaviour among preschoolers and how the parents can socialize the child away from it.

There are many situations in which the preschool child may feel frustrated and, therefore, behave aggressively. She may have been punished, she may not be getting the attention of parents, she cannot get the toy she wants to play with or has been left out of the playgroup. When preschoolers play together, some frustration is bound to result, as they fail to consider each other’s point of view. Such situations can lead to temper tantrums, screaming and physical aggression. But there are wide individual differences in the way children deal with or react to frustrations, as well as in the amount of frustration each child can tolerate. Of two preschoolers who are unable to get what they want (i.e. when they are frustrated), one may begin to play with something else (a non-aggressive response), while the other may begin to kick the things lying around (an aggressive response). These individual differences will be noticeable if you were to watch a group of children playing together. Since aggression is neither a desirable nor a fruitful way of dealing with situations, it is important for the caregivers to socialize the child away from aggressive behaviour. One way this can be done is to understand what causes children to behave aggressively and then remove those causes so that the child’s behaviour changes.

20.7.1 Understanding Aggressive Behaviour

The reasons, as for most other traits, are to be found in both heredity and environment. There are inborn temperamental differences among children which cause differences in the amount of aggression shown by each. However, these biological factors only give the child a predisposition to behave — they do not actually cause aggressive behaviour. It is the experiences the child has with the people around her that will facilitate or restrain the expression of these aggressive tendencies. Thus, aggression is, to a great extent, learnt from others. The family setting, the relationship of the child with her parents and the parent’s own behaviour determine whether the child behaves aggressively or not. Let us see what aspects in the family setting can promote aggressive behaviour.

Family Setting and Aggression

You know that one of the ways in which children learn to behave aggressively is by watching others. Parents who are aggressive themselves serve as models for aggression and their children are likely to imitate their aggressive behaviour. One research study showed conclusively that aggressive behaviour is learnt through imitation. In that study, children between three and five years of age were divided into three groups. One of the groups watched a film where an adult punished, threw, kicked and sat on a rubber doll. Another group watched a film in which a cartoon figure hit the doll and third group saw the adult sit quietly near the doll, paying no attention to it at all. After watching the film, children were allowed to play with their toys and a doll similar to the one in the film. Most of the children who had seen the doll being hit by the adult, hit the doll themselves and many of them imitated the adult’s actions blow by blow. Most of the children in the third group played with the doll, without kicking it or behaving aggressively towards it.

Inconsistency between the caregiver’s words and actions is another factor that increases aggressive behaviour in children. When parents verbally disapprove of aggressive behaviour but, in practice, use aggression towards others, the child shows higher levels of aggression. As in the case of learning to be altruistic, it is not enough to say “Do what I say”. One has to set an example.

Parents behaviour towards the child may cause the child to behave aggressively. Parents who are hostile and rejecting towards their child are increasing the chances of their child
behaving aggressively. The child uses aggression as a means of attracting the parents’ attention.

You have read that confused and disordered parenting, when parents do not enforce any code of behaviour, is referred to as permissiveness. This also encourages aggression in the child. These parents are lax about disciplining and such an atmosphere gives the child the freedom to do as she wants. She meets with little resistance to her aggressive behaviour.

You know that when parents use physical punishment inconsistently and arbitrarily, i.e. as and when they feel like it, it usually leads to aggression in the child. But again there are individual differences. Some children suppress their hostile responses if they are punished, but others persist, and some even increase their aggressive behaviour.

It has been seen that there is a difference in the way aggressive and non-aggressive children interpret other people’s behaviour. Aggressive children are more likely to think that there are hostile intentions on the part of people even when none exist. When the situation is not clear, such as being hit by a ball while playing, aggressive children are more likely to think that they were hit on purpose. Consequently, they retaliate, the other child hits back and a quarrel begins.

Aggressive parents and aggressive children tend to reinforce each other. The parents set a rule, the child reacts defiantly and the parent, in turn, gives a stronger punishment and uses stronger threats. The child responds to this by increasing aggression. Thus, such an interaction serves to maintain aggression. This once again highlights the fact that it is not only socialization that influences the child’s personality, but also the child’s temperament that influences her socialization.

Socializing Aggression

How does then one break into this cycle of aggression? It is important to do so because the trait of aggression is, by and large, fairly stable over time. Studies have shown that aggressive children generally behave aggressively as adults. One of the foremost things is that the adults must modify their behaviour. Another way to reduce the child’s aggression is to help her understand that there are other ways of expressing anger, besides being aggressive. When parents punish the child for behaving aggressively, they have given the child the message about what she cannot do, but they have not told her what she can do. Consequently, the child again repeats what she knows best i.e. she behaves aggressively. Therefore, it is important to teach the child alternate ways of dealing with frustration and anger. Some of the ways could be talking things over, expressing anger verbally, asking for help, trying harder or abandoning the task for a while and coming back to it later.

Reflect upon the interaction pattern of any family that you know closely. Would you say that there are high or low levels of aggression in this family? Do you feel that their behaviour could be modified in some way?

20.8 EMPATHY AND ALTRUISM

You have read about empathy and altruism in the last Block. You have read how some toddlers will hug or kiss a person who is looking distressed, in an effort to help. That they
can infer the emotional state of another person means that they can recall their own earlier emotional experiences and understand how the other person must be feeling. They are, however, still limited to their own perspective in deciding what would be most comforting for the distressed person. During preschool years, as the child's ability to see things from another person's perspective develops further, she responds by doing what the distressed person would like. The following incident brings out how well five year old Salma understands her mother's feelings and how sensitively she deals with them.

Salma's mother was not feeling well and was resting in bed. Salma, who had been playing outside, came in to find her mother looking ill. Salma went up to her, placed her hand on her forehead and said, "Are you ill? Should I tell Papa? We will call the doctor. O.K.," and ran out of the room to look for her father in the neighbouring house.

But, of course, preschool children do not display such understanding every time. There are many instances when they behave as if others must be feeling just as they do. They believe that others would be sad and happy at the same happenings as they themselves. Others would be sad if "she lost her toy", and happy "if she hit the ball on target". Learning to take another's viewpoint is a slow and gradual process. As you know, it is towards the end of preschool years that children become less egocentric. They then realize that others would feel sad and happy for different reasons.

**BOX 20.2 : Development of Empathy in Later Years**

Gradually, over the middle childhood years, the child is able to empathize with several contradictory emotions at once, as the following example will show. Ramu and Suresh challenged Ali to climb the tree growing near the pond in the village. Ali took up the challenge and the three of them went towards the tree. Ali began to climb, but he had just climbed a little when he fell down. Suresh began to clap and jump in glee on having been proved right, but Ramu began to move forward to help him and then stopped abruptly. On being asked later why he did not go to Ali's help, Ramu said he knew Ali was hurt but Ali was also feeling embarrassed and would not have liked it if someone came to his help.

Over the middle childhood years the amount of sharing, helping and cooperation increases. Gradually, children acquire a more complete understanding of others' emotions and their responses become subtle. With the touch of a hand or a glance they convey that they understand what the person is feeling. An adolescent is able to infer what another person may be feeling even though the person may not show that emotion.

20.8.1 Fostering Altruism and Empathy

Just as in the case of aggression, children differ markedly in the extent to which they show prosocial behaviour. And the trait of prosocial behaviour is, by and large, stable over time. As in the case of most personality traits, the social experiences in the family determine the child's empathetic responses to a great extent. One of the factors is the attachment bond with the caregivers, developed in the first year of life. Children who form a secure attachment in the first year of life, show greater concern and sympathy with peers in childhood years.

Disciplinary techniques and the child-rearing practices used by the caregivers also influence the extent of empathy shown by preschoolers. Affection-oriented disciplining helps to develop empathy, as it helps the child to understand how the other person is feeling. Once the child feels empathy, she is more inclined to behave in prosocial ways. You must have seen this in your interactions as well. The child who recalls how difficult it is to shift a table alone, moves in to help a child. In contrast, power-oriented techniques, where the parent uses statements like, "Don't do so! I am telling you!" or "Stop that!", do not give the child any clue about how the other person is feeling or what is wrong. This does not help develop empathy.

As the child interacts with more and more people, she gets an opportunity to take into account viewpoints. This brings about increased empathy.
FRIENDSHIP AND PLAY

Friends and agemates are an important part of one’s life and have a great influence on one’s personality. Many of us have lasting friendships with the peers we came to know in childhood.

Play is a strong motivation to make friends. Playing with others begins after two years of age. Toddlers begin interacting with each other. They will touch each other, smile, squeal, utter sounds and play with each other’s clothes or feet. If one of them has a toy, their interaction may continue for a longer period. They may play with the toy, taking turns with it. These early ‘friendships’ are not stable and may not carry over even to the next day, unlike the friendships of a later period.

During the preschool years, interactions between children increase and become more positive. Older preschoolers play with each other, cooperating and taking turns. They begin to make friends. They prefer to spend time with and be close to some peers, and not with others. They may express sadness and unhappiness when separated from them. Preschool children usually select playmates of the same sex. They engage in pretend play with their friends, are more agreeable with them, comply to their demands, offer sympathy and assistance to them and ask about their experiences.

While interactions with peers become more social than in toddlerhood, preschoolers do not make lasting friendships. Friendships of this period have been described as “Momentary playmateship”. They are quickly formed and terminated. To the five and seven year olds, a friend is someone whom they are playing with at that time. This view of friendship comes through if you ask them how people make friends. In response they are likely to say, “they play together”. Playmates for the child are usually neighbours or schoolmates.

Towards the end of preschool years children begin to understand that it is common interests and feelings, and not just things, that keep friends together. But they take into account only the immediate events. So one hears statements such as, “She is not my friend any more because she didn’t do what I wanted her to”, “You like a friend if he does what you want”. During middle childhood years trusting each other, responding to each other’s needs, presence of desirable attributes such as kindness and considerateness in the friend are critical features of friendship. Friends help each other. In adolescence the meaning of friendship becomes deeper. Friends understand each other and share each other’s innermost thoughts and feelings.
20.9.1 Why Friendships are Important

Friends serve many important functions for the preschooler. Foremost, friends give the child emotional security. The child feels accepted by people who are like her. Secondly, friends like to do just the things the child does. No adult will have the patience to crawl under a chair, then climb on to a table, then jump from it and then stand on one leg and repeat this activity five times in order to please the "demon of the mountain who has threatened to drop huge rocks". They do things which would not be half as much fun doing alone. Thirdly, friends learn many skills from each other. Fourthly, friends set standards against which the child can judge herself. A sense of healthy competition that is generated, spurs the child to develop many skills. Friends also provide the child with information about herself and her abilities. All this helps the child to form a self-concept.

Fifthly, interactions with peers foster cognitive and social development. While playing with and talking to peers, children begin to look at things from another's perspective. Repeated encounters of this nature help the child to move away from egocentric thinking. Taking another person's perspective, you know, is basic to many cognitive tasks and a crucial element of successful social interactions with people.

20.9.2 Children's Play

As children grow older, there is a change in the nature of their play in keeping with their growing social and cognitive abilities. Let us first see how the nature of play changes cognitively. 'Till about two years of age, the child's play activity is mostly sensori-motor, such as running, stacking objects, rattling beads, pushing things, throwing a ball and so forth. Once children are able to think symbolically, they engage in make-believe play. This, you know, occurs around two years of age.
You know that over the years these pretend games increase in complexity. It is not as if in the preschool years sensori-motor play does not occur at all. It does, but in combination with other kinds.

The nature of play also changes from a social point of view. Toddlers generally play alone because playing games with rules requires greater cognitive ability and social skills. Children are not able to play these till later. Preschoolers can participate in simple group games but participation in games with more abstract rules is seen in the middle childhood years.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Answer the following questions briefly in the space provided below.

1) What are the factors in the family that promote aggression in the child?

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2) How can parents foster the development of empathy and prosocial behaviour in children?

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3) Briefly describe the nature of friendship during the preschool years.

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4) What role do friends play for the preschoolers?

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20.10 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, you have read about the salient aspects of social development in the preschool years. Preschool years are a time when the child is developing initiative. In an attempt to "manage" the child and teach her the limits of her behaviour, caregivers may place many restrictions on her and punish her. This may cause a feeling of guilt in the child about her actions. Caregivers must channelize the child's initiative towards constructive ends, which will help her to develop self-confidence. During preschool years the concept of self broadens. The preschooler begins to define herself in terms of her physical characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, likes and dislikes. The self-concept develops as others tell the child about herself and as she herself finds out about her abilities. By five years of age, the child is clear about his or her own gender. Sex-role stereotypes are learnt early in the childhood years and this is not surprising since adults behave differently towards boys and girls. They expect different personality characteristics in boys and girls. However, it would be more useful if caregivers inculcate desirable social values, without being overly concerned about whether the values are conventionally masculine or feminine.

The disciplinary techniques used by parents to socialize the child have a strong impact on her personality. Affection-oriented techniques, which rely on reasoning with the child to foster the desired behaviour and appeal to the child's sense of responsibility, have a beneficial impact, while power-oriented techniques, which rely on threatening the child or withholding privileges without explanation, can be harmful. The former techniques promote internalization of moral values and enhance the child's sense of personal responsibility.

Of all the forms of punishment, physical punishment is often the most harmful to the child. When the parent does not explain the reason for the punishment or is inconsistent, then the child may begin to resent the parent. She does not internalize the rules. Excessive punishment can lower the child's self-esteem and generate anxiety. If punishment is used judiciously, it can lead the child away from undesirable behaviour. Besides the disciplinary techniques, the parenting style influences the child's personality. One can broadly speak about four styles of parenting — firm and affectionate parenting, rigid and inflexible parenting, permissive parenting and neglect in parenting. Firm and flexible parenting techniques fosters the most positive combination of skills in the child.

Socializing the child away from aggressive behaviour is an important task of the parents. Children who are more than normally aggressive usually grow up to be aggressive adults. Aggression is, to a great extent, learnt by watching others use aggression as a means of dealing with problems. Parents who are hostile and unloving towards the child promote aggression. Inconsistent disciplining is another factor. Parents must modify their own behaviour and must teach the child non-aggressive ways of dealing with frustration.

Children show empathy and altruism frequently during the preschool years. As they are better able to see another's point of view, they respond to the person's distress suitably. Affection-oriented techniques of disciplining foster the development of empathy and prosocial behaviour. Like aggression, these are traits that are fairly stable over time.

The interactions with peers become more meaningful during the preschool years. Preschoolers begin making friends. Playmates for the child are peers whom she sees most frequently and friendship involves sharing toys and play material. During the preschool years, the nature of play changes from both the cognitive and the social point of view. As the child's social and cognitive skills mature, she spends more time in co-operative play and less in solitary play.

20.11 GLOSSARY

Anti-social behaviour: Behaviour that is harmful to the functioning of a group or a society.

Arbitrarily: Based on opinion, accident or sudden decision only; not on reason.

Creativity: The mental process that leads to solutions or ideas that are unique and novel.
Defiantly: Showing disobedience.

Feedback: Any information about oneself that leads one to modify one’s behaviour and action.

Realistic picture: A true picture.

20.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) a) Agree
b) Disagree. The caregivers have to teach the child self-control and limits of her behaviour but they have to do so without curbing her initiative. If something must not be done, they must explain to the child why it is so, instead of simply restricting her actions.
c) Agree
d) Agree
e) Agree
f) Agree
g) Agree

2) There will be many situations where the child wants to do things by herself — such as wanting to bathe herself, initiating conversation or a play activity. All these are examples of showing initiative.

3) In the next stage of the development of self-concept, preschoolers begin to define themselves in terms of their physical characteristics. They talk about what they like and do not like, what they are good or bad at doing and where they live. As yet, they do not see themselves in relation to others.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) The parents reason with the child about the rules. They are firm and gentle. They correct the child’s behaviour without ridiculing her.

2) When parents use power-oriented techniques, they use commands to stop the behaviour. They do not explain the reason for their commands.

3) The following aspects must be borne in mind:
   i) The reason for the punishment should be explained.
   ii) It should be given consistently.
   iii) Punishment should immediately follow undesirable behaviour.
   iv) It should be mild or moderate in severity.
   v) Punishment from a loving parent is more effective than one from a hostile parent.

4) It may leave the child resentful. Feeling that parents are unfair, she may avoid them.
   — The child may fail to internalize the standards.
   — It may lower the child’s self-esteem and create feelings of shame and doubt.
   — It may inculcate aggressive behaviour in children.
Check Your Progress Exercise 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMN I</th>
<th>COLUMN II</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Style</td>
<td>Personality Characteristics of Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Rigid and Inflexible</td>
<td>discontented, distrustful, withdrawn, difficulty in peer relations, lower self-esteem, do less well in school, some may become aggressive and others timid, moderately self-reliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Firm and Affectionate</td>
<td>Independent, self-reliant, higher self-esteem, get along with peers, do better in school, planful, achievement-oriented, high on empathy and pro-social behaviour, more confident, willing to try out new things, mature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Permissive Parenting</td>
<td>least mature or self-reliant or controlled, least likely to take on responsibility, likely to be thoughtless of others, may show high levels of aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Neglect in Parenting</td>
<td>lack social skills, no leadership skills, disturbed relations with peers and adults, possibly anti-social behaviour in adolescence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) The family dynamics can promote aggression in the following ways:
   - parents may serve as models for aggressive behaviour
   - inconsistent disciplining of aggressive behaviour shown by the child
   - use of physical punishment in disciplining the child
   - hostile and rejecting attitude of the parents towards the child

2) Parents can foster empathy and prosocial behaviour in the child by:
   - providing warmth and being caring towards the child
   - modelling prosocial behaviour
   - using affection-oriented method of disciplining
   - being firm and affectionate in parenting

3) Friendships of preschool age are ‘momentary playmateship’. To preschoolers a friend is someone you play with at that time. Preschoolers are not concerned about lasting friendships. Older preschoolers realize that feelings keep friends together, but they only think about their needs.

4) i) Friends provide emotional security.
   ii) From them the child learns many skills.
   iii) They serve as standards against whom the child evaluates herself.
   iv) Interactions with friends foster cognitive and social development.
   v) Friends enjoy doing the same things as the child herself.