



## **BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY**

### **The Family and Human Rights**

Presentation to the

### **NGO Committee on the Family**

November, 1997, Vienna International Center, Vienna, Austria

When we use the term family, I am aware that we are talking about the family in all its forms, whether it is a traditional nuclear family, a one parent family, the extended family or a community of people as a family. Whatever form the family takes, any child in that family has a right to loving care, security and a right to be valued. The child also has a right to be in an environment where positive human, moral and spiritual values can develop fully as a preparation for a fully lived human life. The family is the primary learning environment for any child. Children learn by witness, and it is the values modeled within the family, not the values talked about, that the child learns and brings into his or her behavior in adult life. A child brought up in an atmosphere of love, tolerance, respect and responsibility is of course more likely to live by those values later on. With a strong foundation in moral and spiritual values a child is more likely to have greater self-esteem and self value and is therefore more likely to respect and value others and the rights of others. Studies in the early 1980s in Europe showed that children with greater self-esteem were less likely to exhibit discriminatory behavior and attitudes towards those different to them. Children with low self-esteem were far more likely to harbor discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.

Parents need support to provide this basic fundamental right of each child, without which we cannot have a better society.

The '[Living Values Educational Initiative](#)' has produced a kit for values education that includes a module for parents and caregivers where the vital role of the family is acknowledged. The project was initiated by a group of global educators together with representatives of the Education Cluster of UNICEF (New York), the Early Childhood and Family Education Unit of UNESCO (Paris) and the Brahma Kumaris. The project is set within the context of The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the [Living Values: A Guidebook](#), which looks at twelve core values including love, tolerance, respect, cooperation and freedom. The purpose of the project is to provide guiding principles and tools for the development of the whole person recognising that the individual is comprised of physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions.

The parenting module supports parents by helping them to:

- Assess the values that are most important to them;
- Determine which values they wish to impart to their children;

- Build awareness about how children learn about values;
- Develop understanding and skills that parents can use in teaching values to their children.

The section on parenting skills includes such topics as:

- Importance of play and 'us time'
- Positively building behaviors through praise
- The balance of discipline and love
- Active listening
- Think before saying no
- Time out to think and communicate.

The kit is currently being piloted in 50 countries around the world, actively involving parents and teachers. Results are still being compiled, but many families are reporting positive changes in the behavior and degree of social integration of their children.

We would welcome more piloting with families, and copies of the kit are available from our center here in Vienna and at other Brahma Kumaris Centers around the world.

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## **Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University**

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