

COMFORT IN NUMBERS

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I've never been one to even attempt at keeping up with the Joneses. Why try when I find my heart is always drumming to a different beat?

When it comes to parenting however there is a certain comfort in numbers. We first time moms call up 5 other moms when our babies wake up a certain amount of times or nurse for longer than the 'books' say they should. I learnt early in the game though that it didn't work for me. No one's advice made any sense and that I'd best listen to the cues (the loud and subtle) that my son was giving.

I am pleased to report the high needs, extremely volatile, always wanting mama baby has morphed into a delightful two year old. (Yes there is hope). He is still extremely high energy but is friendly, good natured, loves to chat with everyone, sings all the time, plays by himself and is a generally confident and happy two year old. Then I must've done something right with the baby wearing, co-sleeping, breastfeeding, nursing night and day, responding to his every need kind of mothering.

Anyway I digress.

The point of this article is to highlight a small situation I found myself in lately. South Mumbai has very few good schools that a whole lot of people are clambering to get their children into. It's a constant conversation in the mommy (and daddy) circles and parents will give a hand and foot to ensure that their children get into the best.

One-step in that direction is putting your child in a good preschool. Rumor has it that getting into a well-known preschool is a foot in the door of the desired big school. That big schools, take children from these preschools thanks to some unwritten understanding they have. Whether it's true or not I don't know. It very well maybe and if it is, I may have utterly and totally ruined my child's chances of ever getting into a good school.

Here's the thing. We sent N to a playschool a few minutes away from where we live since March. As mothers do, I discussed preschools with all the mothers around and applied far and wide to make sure I was doing everything I could to increase my child's chances of getting into a good big school.

When the time came however we had to make a decision. Should we bite the bullet, and take comfort in numbers? Should we keep up with the Joneses? Should we do what every other parent we know was doing and change schools to a reputed preschool? Or should we do what no parent had ever done before? Continue to send him to a lesser known but very promising preschool where we had watched our precious pride and joy bloom from a clingy little crybaby to a bubbly, confident, chatterbox of a two year old.

Should we go the tried and tested route or should we go with a preschool that operated purely out of love?

We practice gentle parenting at home. Though our toddler is prone to throwing things, bouts of tantrums, indiscipline from time to time, we don't do time-outs or harsh words. Positive

reinforcement and sitting down and having a face-to-face conversation and holding him close helps. He puts his little arms around me, and cries into my hair while he calms down.

His current school I know follows that philosophy that will bring out the uniqueness in him through gentle techniques and positive reinforcement. Yes there may not be disciplining in the age-old sense of the word where toddlers are meant to behave a certain way. **However I do know that his confidence and joie de vivre will be maintained to the fullest.** Is that not important?

We named him his name because it means liberation. We wanted for our child to be free from all these shackles and rules that we create in order to exist in our society. Would we not go back on all that if we didn't do what we knew in our gut was right for our son in spite of the numbers not conforming?

I must admit I did do a hurried round of mommy phone calls. One friend said and I quote: 'You will be RUINING his chances of big school'. Another: 'No one does that unless they are preference in some school or the other.'

In the end it was an easy decision. (A lot of the credit of making it an easy decision goes to the husband). I am happy our decision was based on what we thought was best for our child over following what everyone else was doing.

Will I eat my words if he doesn't get into a single school a couple of years from now? If he has the sparkle he has today, if he is that ray of sunshine, that little songster going from strength to strength everyday, if he is polite and good to everyone around and is thoughtful and delightful, then no, I won't eat my words no matter what.

Because we're trying to raise a beautiful soul and not a student with straight A's. Because god knows there are far too few of them out there.

Thanks for reading! Hope you've enjoyed my rant today! Do say hi.

