

Homework Discord

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Vikram's parents were overjoyed when he got admission to playschool. But they were surprised at what the school year brought them

“He’s done it! He’s done it,” announced Nikhil after reading the contents of the letter the courier had brought him. “Done what? And who?” asked Sheila puzzled at his excitement. Nikhil was a calm person and very rarely did he get excited.

“Our son Vikram has got admission to the nursery.” “Really? That’s great,” said Sheila. They both looked at the letter from the Headmistress and held hands and danced around in joy.

Never did Nikhil feel such elation, even when he landed a well paid job in a multinational company nor did Sheila when she finished her M.Sc. in computer science with a first class. Never did they feel as close to each other as now when they looked proudly at Vikram aged three and a half. Vikram had secured admission! They knew there were more than a hundred applications for admission and Vikram had got in!

Sheela ran into the kitchen fetched a lump of sugar put it into Nikhil’s mouth took one for herself. She felt she had to celebrate the event by “making her mouth sweet”. Vikram looked up from where he was playing with his Lego set and wondered what all the fuss was about.

Vikram, of course, did not know the tension that his parents had gone through. They were very keen on getting him admitted to the school, which had a good reputation. It was tough getting admission for one’s offspring and lucky were the parents whose little children did. They remembered how they had coached Vikram to answer questions, which they thought he would be asked. He was a very intelligent child but one never knew about interviews to nursery classes and what was expected of three-year-olds.

Relaxing over a cup of coffee, Nikhil said, “For the next 12 years, I need not bother about admissions”. Sheila smiled in relief. They did not know that their troubles had just begun.

Vikram made no fuss whatsoever on his first day at school. He said bye to his parents as if he had attended school all his little life. But the joy of his of admission was short- lived.

“He has to write words like apple, bear, cow, and deer,” said Sheela in despair. “And he won’t.”

Nikhil had a very simple solution. “Don’t push him. Let things slide a bit.” So Sheela let things slide a bit.

Until she got a letter from the schoolteacher asking one of the parents to meet her. “Your son has not been doing his homework,” said the teacher accusingly.

“I ...I... he doesn’t like writing just now. I thought it could wait a bit,” said Sheela apologetically. “After all he is so young.”

“Wait a bit? What for? Too young? Look at all those kids. They have done their homework.”

Sheela watched enviously as she looked at Vikram’s classmates. How had these kids managed to write all those words given as homework?

Part II of Homework Discord

Vikram’s parents were overjoyed when he got admission into nursery. But now the troubles of schooling unfold. Read on...

“I’ll see what I can do,” said Sheela. After all, Vikram was an intelligent child. He knew the names of all the cars and could even recognise them. He had been given a book on prehistoric animals and astounded people by identifying dinosaurs and pterodactyls. He knew a number of rhymes. So she would get him to do his homework.

She brought a notebook and pencil and said, “Now Vikram, let’s do our homework.”

“No,” said Vikram.

“You must. You are a good boy, aren’t you?” said Sheela.

“No, “ he repeated.

Sheela pleaded, cajoled threatened and scolded. But it was of no use. In despair she rang up her friend Usha whose son was Vikram’s classmate. “How do you get your child to write a page of homework?” she asked.

“It’s tough,” she said. “I have to bribe and scold and bully him. I have to spend my whole evening trying to get him to write that one page. It reduces me to tears. I can’t even plan an evening out. Why should a three year old have to write?” So Sheela did what Usha did. She bribed, scolded, bullied and threatened until at last the homework was done.

Sheela picked up Vikram from school the next day and looked at his notebook. “Untidy” “To be done again” were the remarks. Sheela’s face turned red with anger and embarrassment. That evening she put aside all her work for Vikram’s homework.

She called him but when Vikram realised that he had to write he got up from his chair and ran away. Sheela chased him round the house and dragged him to the table. “You have to do your homework,” she said. “No” said Vikram. Sheela tried all evening. She did not succeed. She placed the pencil in Vikram’s hand but his fingers would not move across the page.

Nikhil had just come home and a desperate Sheela said, “make your coffee yourself. I am busy with Vikram’s homework.”

She had to get Vikram to do two pages of writing. All evening was spent at Vikram’s side as he slowly and painstakingly wrote out the two pages. Sheela had never spoken rudely to Vikram before and now she called him lazy and stubborn. At last it was over and Sheela triumphantly showed Nikhil the book. Like all good fathers he had left Vikram’s early education to Sheela. Nikhil looked at the ugly red marks of yesterday’s homework. Then he looked at the work that was done and said, “Vikram’s handwriting has not improved and the teacher is sure to ask him to rewrite.”

All hell broke loose. Sheela exploded. “You make him do it and see what I have gone through,” she shouted. “What do other mothers do?” Nikhil asked. “I don’t care,” said Sheela.

“And from now on you to take an interest in your son. You see that he does his homework. All you do in the evenings is to loll about.” This was their first quarrel.

“And it was only going to get worse. They realised with that there were many more years of home work to be done and years of domestic discord before Vikram grew up.