

The Family Feud

Tehniat Farrah

Naushaba was a three year old at the Model Child Welfare Centre where I have been working for the last 18 years. When I observed her for a few days, I noticed that she did not mingle with the other children and seemed a little frightened.

It is a routine practice at our school to call parents if we have any concerns about a child. Following that procedure, Naushaba's mother was asked to come several times. The first two three meetings were not really productive. The mother would come, hear what we had to say and go back. We weren't getting much information from her. She was an educated lady and was herself a teacher at a school.

Then one day she told us the real story. She had separated from Naushaba's father. The husband and wife had had issues since even before the little girl was born. Now they had separated due to their differences.

Meetings over Naushaba's aloofness in class continued for about a year. The mother was repeatedly told to create an atmosphere at home that would be conducive to her healthy growth and that would mould her into a stable person. We made her realize that the presence of both the parents is essential for the healthy growth of a child. After a year of these meetings, she finally agreed to negotiate a reconciliation with her husband. After a gap of several years, the husband and wife reunited.

I noticed a distinct improvement in Naushaba's behaviour. She smiled more, and was happy to interact with other children a little more than she did before.

Naushaba stayed with us two years and we were happy to see how her personality and her performance both benefited after her parents resolved their conflicts.

Was it our job to convince Naushaba's mother to work on her relationship with her husband? Was it our duty? Did we have any right to interfere with her personal life? These are all good questions. The answer to all of them is that when a child walks into my classroom, I have the right and the duty to act in the best interest of that child. That is the most important thing for me.

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