

# A COVENANT FOR HONOURING CHILDREN

RAFFI

**W**e find these joys to be self evident: That all children are created whole, endowed with innate intelligence, with dignity and wonder, worthy of respect. The embodiment of life, liberty and happiness, children are original blessings, here to learn their own song. Every girl and boy is entitled to love, to dream and belong to a loving “village.” And to pursue a life of purpose.

**W**e affirm our duty to nourish and nurture the young, to honour their caring ideals as the heart of being human. To recognize the early years as the foundation of life, and to cherish the contribution of young children to human evolution.

**W**e commit ourselves to peaceful ways and vow to keep from harm or neglect these, our most vulnerable citizens. As guardians of their prosperity we honour the bountiful Earth whose diversity sustains us. Thus we pledge our love for generations to come.



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# CHILD HONOURING PRINCIPLES

The words of *A Covenant for Honouring Children* suggest nine guiding principles for living. Taken together, they offer a holistic way of restoring natural and human communities, thus brightening the outlook for the world we share. They form the basis for a multi-faith consensus on societal renewal.

## RESPECTFUL LOVE

is key. It speaks to the need to respect children as whole people and to encourage them to know their own voices. Children need the kind of love that sees them as legitimate beings, persons in their own right. Respectful love instills self-worth; it's the prime nutrient in human development. Children need this not only from parents and caregivers, but from the whole community.

## DIVERSITY

is about abundance: of human dreams, intelligences, cultures, and cosmologies; of earthly splendours and ecosystems. Introducing children to biodiversity and human diversity at an early age builds on their innate curiosity. There's a world of natural wonders to discover, and a wealth of cultures, of ways to be human. Comforted by how much we share, we're able to delight in our differences.

## CARING COMMUNITY

refers to the "village" it takes to raise a child. The community can positively affect the lives of its children. Child-friendly shopkeepers, family resource centres, green schoolyards, bicycle lanes, and pesticide-free parks are some of the ways a community can support its young.

## CONSCIOUS PARENTING

can be taught from an early age; it begins with empathy for newborns. Elementary and secondary schools could teach nurturant parenting (neither permissive nor oppressive) and provide insight into the child-rearing process. Such knowledge helps to deter teen pregnancies and unwanted children. Emotionally aware parents are much less likely to perpetuate abuse or neglect.

# CHILD HONOURING PRINCIPLES

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

sums up what early life is about: a time for exploring emotions in a safe setting, learning about feelings and how to express them. Those who feel loved are most able to learn and to show compassion for others. Emotional management builds character and is more important to later success than IQ. Cooperation, play, and creativity all foster the “EQ” needed for a joyful life.

## NONVIOLENCE

is central to emotional maturity, to family relations, to community values, and to the character of societies that aspire to live in peace. It means more than the absence of aggression; it means living with compassion. Regarding children, it means no corporal punishment, no humiliation, no coercion. “First do no harm,” the physicians’ oath, must now apply to all our relations; it can become a mantra for our times. A culture of peace begins in a nonviolent heart, and a loving home.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

foster a child’s feeling of security and belonging. The very young need protection from the toxic influences that permeate modern life—from domestic neglect and maltreatment, to the corporate manipulations of their minds, to the poisonous chemicals entering their bodies. The first years are when children are most impressionable and vulnerable; they need safeguarding.

## SUSTAINABILITY

refers not merely to conservation of resources, renewable energy development, and anti-pollution laws. To be sustainable, societies need to build social capacity by investing in their young citizens, harnessing the productive power of a contented heart. The loving potential of every young child is a potent source for good in the world.

## ETHICAL COMMERCE

Ethical Commerce is fundamental to a child-honouring world. It includes a revolution in the design, manufacture and sale of goods; corporate reform; “triple bottom line” business; full-cost accounting; tax and subsidy shifts; political and economic cycles that reward long-term thinking. Ethical commerce would enable a restorative economy devoted to the well being of the very young.