

7. Open and Honest Communications

- One should set aside quality time for heart-to-heart communications with one's spouse and children.
- One should maintain open dialogues with appropriate others, and avoid denial, especially on sensitive issues, e.g. intimacy and sex-life.

8. Personal and Social Responsibility

- Entering the grihastha ashram is an opportunity to take on more KC responsibility.
- Devotees can preach effectively by demonstrating responsibility, integrity, and other exemplary qualities.

9. Economic Development & Prosperity

- An important householder duty is to ethically generate wealth and prosperity.
- A devotee should avoid an unhealthy poverty-mentality, understanding the benefits of prosperity, both individually and to promote Krishna consciousness.
- Charity is an essential duty for grihasthas.

10. Focus on Children's Welfare

- Nurturing spiritually qualified children is the main purpose of married life.
- Children should not be neglected for any reason, e.g. in the name of spiritual life.
- Financial stability is necessary to help fulfill children's needs.
- Proactive steps must be taken to avoid all forms of child abuse.
- Parents should develop affection, a sense of protection and responsibility towards all children in the community, not just their own offspring.
- Krishna Consciousness should be made relevant and accessible to children.
- Parents should accept appropriate support and training in regards to rearing children.

11. Family Love and Affection

- It is natural to have affection for others, and especially other Vaisnavas. Krishna Consciousness does not accrue from simply negating or stifling worldly-affection; nor are family ties necessarily, e.g. at every stage of life, an impediment to Krishna Consciousness.
- A stable emotional background, where family members feel wanted and appreciated, is essential for children's personal and spiritual growth.
- There is great value in a strong sense of community, as traditionally expressed through the extended family.

12. Regulated, Balanced and Exemplary Lifestyle

- Regulation is an important feature of devotee life, especially for householders who have to juggle many different types of responsibilities.
- Devotees moving to the second ashram should anticipate significant changes in lifestyle. Some difficulties in establishing a balanced and regulated lifestyle are to be expected, and one should seek suitable support and guidance.
- Householders should maintain their spiritual priorities, e.g. sadhana, as well as upholding their more-worldly obligations.
- Preaching without practical example is not effective. Devotee householders should demonstrate such exemplary lifestyles that others become inquisitive as to what underlies their success.

The Grihastha Training Course is a four-day interactive seminar teaching such topics as values, perceptions, and expectations of married life, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, financial responsibility, and parenting skills—to name a few. This course is designed for those devotees considering marriage, those engaged to be married, newly married couples, and mature married couples wishing to enhance their relationship.

How to Build Strong Krishna Conscious Families 12 Ways



Abridged from
Strengthening the Bonds That Free Us
VTE Grihastha Training Course
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**ISKCON Founder Acharya
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada**

The 12 Principles and Values of Krishna Conscious Family Life

The following 12 principles and values were developed by the North American Grihastha Vision Team as a part of the VTE Grihastha Training Course they authored entitled, "Strengthening the Bonds That Free Us."

1. Alignment with Srila Prabhupada

- Krishna Conscious family life is consistent with the teachings and example of Srila Prabhupada, which must be applied with consideration of time, place and circumstance.
- In the field of grihastha life, one should take into account the local culture without compromising Srila Prabhupada's teachings. One should not attempt to simply transpose practices from one culture to another without understanding the principles and values underpinning them.

2. Spiritual Growth and Progress

- Family life as well as the home itself should be an ashrama of spiritual culture.
- Personal growth and character formation are integral to spiritual development.
- Though Vaishnava theology values ultimate renunciation, such renunciation has to be internal and mature. Otherwise, it is inappropriate and may be dangerous both individually and socially.

"We require so many householders to set the example for others—how in Krsna Consciousness we can live peacefully and sanely, even in married life."

—*Srila Prabhupada, letter, 12/9/68*



3. Spiritual Equality/Material Difference

- The Gaudiya Vaishnava theology offers a clear conceptual model to address issues of unity and diversity.
- Men and women exhibit general physical and psychological differences that need to be acknowledged as practical realities while simultaneously avoiding rigid and/or unhealthy stereotypes.
- Husband and wife best negotiate their respective roles with consideration of Krishna Consciousness and their own personal and cultural backgrounds.
- Men and women have equal rights to practice spiritual life and to develop their individual relationships with Krishna.
- Householders are advised to integrate, as far as possible, their material and spiritual identities. Even though the latter is ultimately more important, a devotee should not neglect self-understanding on the material level.

4. Positive and Realistic Vision

- One should enter the grihastha ashram with the correct attitudes and expectations, especially being careful to avoid misinterpretation of scriptural truths and/or being influenced by inappropriate personal and social paradigms.
- One should, as far as possible, avoid both negative attitudes and unrealistic expectations towards married life as both may dampen one's enthusiasm. It is also essential to hold before oneself suitable criteria for a successful marriage.
- Support from elders, as far as possible and practical, is important in entering into any marriage arrangement.

5. Mutual Respect and Appreciation

- Respect for all others is a basic Vaishnava value.
- Without mutual appreciation, it is not possible to develop more intimate relationships. A decline in appreciation will lead to a deteriorating relationship.
- One should learn to develop intimacy without familiarity.

6. Commitment and Dedication

- With determination and unshakable commitment, one can surmount the inevitable hard times that come in married life.
- Affection and love don't happen automatically, as in the popularized concept of romantic love, but are developed through service.