

## **Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

### *From Mulberry Leaf to Silk Gown: Teaching Patience*

**E**VER STAND IN A GROCERY LINE, filled with distress that transactions aren't going more quickly? Noticing this tendency in herself, former Meher Schools parent Mary Jane Ryan decided to take up the study of patience – which led to her book *The Power of Patience: How This Old-Fashioned Virtue Can Improve Your Life*. This insightful volume offers countless suggestions of ways patience can improve everything from our relationships to our health, and highlights the importance of consciously teaching this virtue to our children.

Are we good role models? Stopping to pay attention to what a child is saying even though we're busy demonstrates patience far more effectively than any words. In her book Ryan points out that irritation at being interrupted or distracted when we're busy is a form of impatience.

Children have the same frustrated reactions we do when we ask them to stop what they're doing and move on to another activity. We can help them learn by not shaming them for their upset and pointing out their patience and strength when they exercise self-control and comply with our requests. In situations when we can't respond to children quickly, we teach patience by explaining what we are doing, suggesting what they might do in the meantime, and commenting positively on their ability to wait.

Then there's the importance of teaching children to wait and look forward to new stages of development. When we say "You can have a sleepover when you're a little older," we are teaching children that they don't have to have everything right now, that growing up has its rewards, and that the future is full of wonder. There is an old Chinese saying appropriate to springtime: "With time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes a silk gown."

*May 27, 2015*

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