

Dr Sunita Maheshwari: Doctor-Entrepreneur On Parenting

Meet paediatric cardiologist-turned-pioneering healthcare entrepreneur Sunita Maheshwari. We talk to her about medicine, technology and most importantly parenting.

By Monali Bordoloi



Taking healthcare to remote corners of the world is her dream. Sunita provides teleradiology services through her company to hospitals around the world, especially in under-developed countries, where radiologists are not available around the clock.

A regular speaker at paediatric conferences, Sunita has recently written a book on parenting. Mother to Adil Kalyanpur, a budding tennis professional and Alisha, who is pursuing medicine, Sunita spoke to **ParentCircle** about the medical profession, social responsibility and parenthood.

"If you love what you do and follow your heart, you will always make your dreams come true," she says. Here are excerpts from an interview:

What is the biggest value of being in the medical profession?

Research has revealed that those who give, have a lower incidence of depression. As a doctor, one spends one's life caring for and treating patients, and giving. What better way to spend one's time and avoid mental health issues!

Did you face any challenges being a women entrepreneur?

I feel women have an advantage as entrepreneurs. Traits like multi-tasking, empathy for employees and social skills come naturally to us, which help in entrepreneurship.

Any word of advice to mom entrepreneurs?

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In this competitive world of entrepreneurship, growth and business, don't forget those you love. Make sure you set aside time for your children and involve them as much as you can in your entrepreneurship. Make your work fun.

What are the social responsibilities of medical-tech companies?

Medi-tech companies are at the intersection of healthcare and technology. Technology should be able to provide good patient care. It is our responsibility to ensure that technical issues do not hamper our service levels. Understanding healthcare needs and technology has enabled us to think of ways in which we can use technology to help more patients.

Could you tell us about your book on parenting?

Often, I counsel parents about things other than their child's heart disease. And I used my own experiences to help them understand. So, I wrote the *Chota Book of Parenting*, which is literally a small book for easy carrying. It is a light read.

What is your personal approach to parenting?

Parenting is a huge responsibility and should only be taken on when one feels ready. I had my first child after turning 30, as I was not sure I would be a good mom! Currently, our son Adil Kalyanpur is training in Rafael Nadal's Tennis Academy in Spain and playing in the tennis pro circuit while our daughter Alisha is in the final year of medicine. I think I have done a decent job with both my children. I used to practise [mindful parenting](#) i.e. consciously thinking about the values I wanted to impart in them. As parents, you need to be aware that children watch how their parents behave and tend to emulate those traits.

To make my children understand the importance of giving and caring, I used to take them along when I was treating poor patients at camps or doing other social work. I and my husband also emphasised the importance of honesty in life and showed by example, how to work hard yet efficiently. We had open dinner table conversations about the [ill-effects of drugs and cigarettes](#). One of my *mantras* of parenting is to listen and not react. This, I think, creates a non-judgemental space for the children so they can share and talk about things with us, rather than only getting inputs from their peers.

How do you balance both work and home?

I am good at delegation! And [I am also well-organised](#) and a big fan of checklists and calendars. Over the years, these little things have helped me balance work and home. As long as your children know you are there for them and they feel loved, they are more than fine with a working mom.

How do you take care of your own health?

By multi-tasking! I have fixed a wooden board on top of my treadmill, so I check my e-mails while walking on the treadmill. *Suryanamaskars* in the morning do not take much time but keep me flexible. On some days, I go for morning walks. I don't use the elevator and stay active all day long. I eat fruits between meals, have an early dinner and ensure I get seven hours of sleep every night. Doctors must walk their talk!



Five important advice to parents: ^x

1. Show them your love. Children who are hugged and loved when young, have a lower incidence of mental health issues when older.
2. Be consistent and reliable. For example, if you are coming home late, let them know. Think before you say no, but then once you say no stick to it.
3. Limit the number of times in a day you say 'no.'
4. Start good habits young. Make sure that children are in bed by 8 pm, limit TV and phone time to prevent digital addiction.
5. Teach them the joy of sharing and encourage them to give.

Recognitions galore

- Yale-educated Sunita was awarded 2014's 'Amazing Indian' by Times Now
- She got the 'Young Clinician Award' by the American Heart Association
- She got the 'Best Teacher Award' at Yale University
- In 2009, she was nominated one of the Top 20 women achievers in medicine in India
- She was the editor of the *Pediatric Cardiac Society of India Journal*
- In 2016, Sunita was featured in the book, *India's Most Powerful Women*
- In 2010, she was invited to meet American President Barack Obama in Mumbai
- She is passionate about teaching and creates awareness about children with heart disease and treatment options for them
- Sunita has helped open 300 playgrounds for children in government schools, through her organisation

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