



# Walking a Spiritual Path with Practical Feet

By Cyndy Pratt

Parents of any young children, particularly preschoolers, will know how hard it is to motivate yourself - let alone somehow summon the extra will power and energy to organise and hold regular children's classes.

As is usually the case, the house is a constant mess. There are dirty dishes and vacuuming to be done. Washing to be hung out. And, regardless of how much you do, there are little ones constantly undoing all your good work, getting into virtually everything in their path and applying their sticky fingers to it. On top of the superhuman effort needed to cope with this constant barrage, we are somehow, *almost miraculously it feels*, meant to pick ourselves up, dust off, and find the additional drive to hold Bahá'í children's classes. In many parents' daily lives, *just like mine*, this is really hard to come by. Then there is having ready access to simple, suitable, age-appropriate resources - to do it all with.

Thanks to the ongoing personal initiative and an amazing amount of ongoing effort by two Trans-Tasman mothers, one in New Zealand and the other in Australia, such a parent-friendly interactive resource is now available. (*We can utter a collective sigh of sheer relief.*)

To many parents finding **Enable Me to Grow** and the online multimedia programme - **Radiant Hearts** - is a real breath of fresh inspirational air. Discovering the website and its wealth of contents - all aimed at fostering our children's spiritual development - is a panacea. It is if our prayers have been answered and a couple of fairy godmothers have blissfully stepped in to just help. They even know how we feel and clearly show that in their "A note to Moms". (*which could have been addressed to me personally!*)

**Enable Me to Grow** is the brainchild of two sisters-in-law by marriage - Penina Hitti on the Kapiti Coast, near Wellington,

and Chelsea Smith, now in Brisbane, Australia. (Penina's brother Zafar is Chelsea's husband. Penina is married to an American, Matt Hitti.) Their website is purely a joint personal initiative with neither of them wearing any particular hat. They do it from the perspective of a couple of Bahá'í mothers who just want the best for their children and others. That in itself is what makes **Enable Me to Grow** so special, such a gem. Coupled with this the resources they have amassed in just a couple of years is very impressive and, as the name suggests, continuing to grow. *I will leave you to visit the site and explore its wealth of actual contents for yourself. It is something you will want to pass on to other parents as well.*

Chelsea is a writer/musician who grew up in America. She is passionate about the advancement of women and promoting the nobility of motherhood, and feels supporting Bahá'í mothers practically and emotionally is crucial for community development. Penina, who grew up in Papua New Guinea, brings her info systems, educational and web-editing background to the project. Both

have two children who are under five.

As their respective children grew up and became toddlers, the "sisters" by marriage began to think more about the spiritual elements of parenting. They brainstormed and tested out various ideas, including hosting a Bahá'í children's class for one and two year olds, celebrating Bahá'í Holy Days, teaching their children prayers, working on maintaining discipline in a healthy manner, etc.

Having shared many experiences and developed a common vision about parenting with a Bahá'í spirit, they decided to create the Enable Me to Grow website together with the goal of supporting other like-minded mothers. They wholeheartedly believe that "it takes a village to raise a child" and, in today's world where society has drifted away from this notion, >>>



[www.enablemetogrow.com](http://www.enablemetogrow.com)



## Inspiring and encouraging others

<<< they hope this site will be one avenue for mothers to get some of the spiritual support they need to raise loving and service-oriented children.

From the outset Chelsea and Penina tell other parents, many of them stay-at-home mothers, the website's primary aim is to inspire and encourage others - not to make them feel inadequate, guilty or stressed. Here are a few excerpts:

"All the ideas here are simply put out there in case they might help you meet whatever goals you have for yourself and your family, and not at all to tell you what you should (or should not) be doing. All mothers have different interests, talents, and life circumstances, and this diversity of personality and experiences is part of what makes our community rich and beautiful...

"At this busy time in our lives (while raising small children!) we do not host all four core activities, decorate extensively and put on elaborate parties for each day of Ayyam-i-Ha, spend hours meditating and reading the Writings each morning, stay upbeat and positive throughout every moment of endless housework (especially when we wake up to the piles of dishes and laundry left over night), or even sleep through the night.

"Nor are our children free from shouting, whining, hitting, or any other issue. No amount of education about virtues and exposure to Bahá'í ideals can stop kids from being kids or erase their need to go through all the childhood experiences and various stages required in order for them to grow up. (That's why we have to work so hard to train them so they can mature! And this will take TIME no matter what we do to help along the way.)

"This site, however, is focused on recording the uplifting ideas about mothering as we feel inspired by our own personal reflections on the Bahá'í Writings, and not the other issues. But please know, as you read whatever is recorded here, that many of those same dilemmas you face every day are most likely behind the scenes in our house too... and are taking place the other 23 hours of the day that we are not blogging!

"We find sharing the tips we've found (and heard from other mothers, just like you!) is what gives us hope that we can improve, become more detached from the material world and the materialistic forces around us, and start afresh every day

trusting in God's grace and forgiveness. We hope you will share these same feelings as you read our posts."

One of the website's key offerings is **Radiant Hearts** aimed at helping families with young children learn Bahá'í prayers, memorize short quotations from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and study spiritual qualities together. This builds on the idea that families might like to gather together at some point in the day for prayers and reading of the Bahá'í Writings. The programme helps families organize this time so they can memorize two Bahá'í selections a month, and offers activities so they can incorporate a short hands-on lesson about a spiritual quality as well. Activities are geared to children four and under, but can be modified for older children as desired. The programme consists of 19 lessons, one for each of the Bahá'í months. Each lesson focuses on a spiritual quality, and consists of a prayer and a quotation set to music, two songs, and 19 simple activities (including printables) for each day of the month. Chelsea and Zafar are currently recording the music professionally to be available in March, 2013. It will be offered in two CD volumes and will include the 38 prayers and quotations to help parents and children learn them. Subscribe to the website if you would like news of when it is available.

Perhaps **Enable Me to Grow's** real secret is that it incorporates talking about spirituality, virtues and the Faith along with a running commentary on everyday life - bringing everything back to reality. To illustrate this, here is a recent excerpt from Chelsea's blog by way of a fitting end to this article.

We all know kids say the funniest things... Here are a few things our three-year-olds have said over the past six months:

"Mum, fill yourself up with sugar, love and harmony!" (similar to the quotation from the lesson for Friendliness)

Mum says, "You need to be helpful." Child says, "That's what behooveth man means!" (referencing the quotation in the lesson for Helpfulness)

Child is on the brink of a tantrum when told to get out of bath so mommy says loudly, "Stop shouting and screaming!" Child suddenly calms down and says, "When you get mad, mummy, you need to practise the virtue that I'm practising." (referencing Peacefulness).

**Pictured below are: Penina, centre, and Chelsea, at right, recently photographed with all four of their children: Zorion, Lincoln, Carmel and Zavian.**

