

What shall I leave to the next generation?

Everyone wants to live a meaningful life. And everyone hopes that there is something they can leave to the next generation. Some people work hard so that they can leave an inheritance for their children. Some strive and pray that they can be a good example that will inspire their children so they don't go the wrong way.

Besides these very important things, there is another type of legacy that can be left to the next generation which is often not appreciated. This is the legacy of our mother tongue. Our mother tongue is a very valuable treasure which was developed by our ancestors over thousands of years. Ask anyone who is fluent in a minority language or immigrant language: do they regret that their parents spoke their mother tongue to them enabling them to be fluent? No-one I've asked ever regrets it. The people who have regrets are those who don't know their parents' mother tongue because their parents only passed on one language to their kids, such as English. If we can give our children two languages rather than just one, why be stingy? Aren't children who know two languages smarter than those who know only one?

If our mother tongue is different from the national language and we speak it to our children, they will know two languages from an early age. Research has shown that if a child is fluent in two languages from an early age, it stimulates the brain neurons and has a positive effect on brain development. Research shows that people with bilingual brains are better at reasoning, at multitasking, and at grasping and reconciling conflicting ideas. Bilinguals retain their cognitive faculties longer than monolinguals, delaying the onset of dementia. Knowing one's mother tongue also has a positive impact on one's sense of identity and appreciation of one's cultural heritage. Knowing two languages is something that makes a child feel special.

If we want to pass on a precious inheritance to our children, there is a simple way to do it, namely just keep speaking to them from the time they are born in our mother tongue. This is the way everyone has learned their mother tongue from generation to generation. It's best if you don't mix languages, just speak your mother tongue all the time. Don't worry that they won't know English; they will hear it all over the place. If you want to stimulate your children's brain and give them cognitive benefits, speak to them in your mother tongue and let them learn English from others.

If you want to join the billions of parents who pass on their mother tongue as an inheritance to their children, take the following steps:

- Decide that from now on you will speak your mother tongue to your children as much as possible.
- If you have already started speaking mainly English to your children, at first say each sentence first in your mother tongue, and then repeat in English if they don't understand.
- Don't worry if your child replies in English. The important thing is for the parent to keep using their mother tongue with their child, and soon they will learn.
- If you don't have young children, pass on your mother tongue to your grandchildren or your nieces and nephews.
- Look for two or three friends or relatives who have the same mother tongue as you, and try to persuade them of the advantages of passing on their mother tongue to their children.