

Behind the Smiles: Is Your Child Truly Safe at Daycare? A Wake-Up Call for Every Parent

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Every morning, thousands of parents hug and peck their children on cheeks and say goodbye believing they are leaving them in safe hands. They carry the weight of deadlines, meetings and responsibilities, comforted by the thought that their little ones are protected. But what happens when the place meant to nurture a child becomes a place of fear? A recent incident at a daycare centre in Bengaluru has shaken this trust and raised an uncomfortable but necessary question: *How safe are our children when they are away from us?*



While this incident has drawn nationwide attention, it should not be viewed as an isolated event or as a reason to distrust every daycare centre. Across the country, thousands of dedicated caregivers and childcare professionals work tirelessly to provide safe, stimulating, and compassionate care for young children. Nevertheless, the incident serves as a timely reminder that child safety cannot be taken for granted. It calls upon parents, childcare providers, institutions, and society to reaffirm their collective commitment to protecting every child.

Daycare: A Necessity in Modern Families

The changing dynamics of modern society have made daycare centres an essential support system for many families. With increasing workforce participation, nuclear family structures, migration for employment, and limited availability of extended family support, daycare services have become indispensable for countless parents. Choosing a daycare is therefore not a matter of convenience alone; for many families, it is a practical necessity. Parents who rely on daycare should never be blamed or made to feel guilty for balancing their professional and family responsibilities. Instead, the focus must remain on ensuring that every childcare facility upholds the highest standards of safety, care, and accountability.

A Child's World Begins with Trust

Early childhood is one of the most sensitive periods of human development. During these formative years, children develop emotional security, attachment, confidence, and their understanding of the world through interactions with the adults who care for them. Unlike older children, toddlers cannot always communicate discomfort, fear, neglect, or abuse as they experience. They rely mostly on adults to recognize, understand, and respond to their needs. When children are placed in daycare, parents are not merely handing over responsibility for supervision—they are placing immense trust in the caregivers entrusted with

their child's emotional and physical well-being. Every interaction, every word, and every act of care contributes to a child's developing sense of safety and belonging.

Recognizing the Silent Signs

Young children often communicate distress through changes in their behaviour rather than through words. While these signs may not necessarily indicate abuse, they should never be ignored. Parents should pay close attention if a child suddenly:

- Resists going to daycare or becomes unusually fearful.
- Displays excessive crying or clinginess during drop-off.
- Experiences disturbed sleep or recurring nightmares.
- Shows sudden aggression, withdrawal, or unusual silence.
- Loses interest in eating or playing.
- Exhibits unexplained bruises or injuries.
- Regresses in previously acquired developmental milestones, such as toilet training or communication.
- Appears fearful of a particular caregiver or environment.

Open communication with children, regular observation, and trusting parental instincts are often the first steps toward identifying concerns before they escalate.

Choosing a Daycare Beyond Attractive Infrastructure

Parents often evaluate daycare centres based on cleanliness, colourful classrooms, toys, or convenient locations. While these aspects are important, they should never be the sole criteria for selecting a childcare facility. Equally important are questions such as:

- Are caregivers adequately trained in early childhood care and child protection?
- Are background verification procedures conducted for all staff?
- Is there an appropriate caregiver-to-child ratio?
- Are child protection and safeguarding policies clearly established?
- Are emergency response procedures in place?
- Is CCTV surveillance available, properly maintained, and ethically monitored?
- Does the centre maintain transparent communication with parents?
- Is there an effective system for addressing complaints or concerns?

Parents should feel encouraged to ask questions, observe the environment, and seek clarity before entrusting their child's care to any institution.

Child Protection Is a Shared Responsibility

Protecting children cannot be the responsibility of parents alone. Safe childcare requires collaboration among daycare management, caregivers, regulatory authorities, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and the wider community. Daycare centres should implement comprehensive child protection policies, conduct regular staff training, maintain transparent operational practices, and establish mechanisms for reporting concerns without fear of retaliation. Regulatory authorities must strengthen inspections, licensing procedures, and accountability measures to ensure that childcare standards are consistently maintained. Most importantly, society must move beyond assigning blame after an unfortunate incident. Instead, our collective efforts should focus on prevention, vigilance, and creating environments where every child feels secure and respected.

Building Safer Daycare Environments

Creating safe daycare environments requires continuous commitment rather than reactive measures following a crisis. Regular caregiver training, periodic safety audits, parent orientation programmes, transparent communication, age-appropriate supervision, and clearly defined safeguarding protocols should become standard practices rather than optional initiatives.



Parents can also contribute by maintaining regular communication with caregivers, observing behavioural changes in their children, participating in parent meetings, and fostering an open, trusting relationship where children feel comfortable expressing their emotions as they grow.

A Final Thought for Every Parent

Children enter daycare with complete trust. They do not judge the qualifications of caregivers, inspect safety protocols, or understand institutional policies. They simply believe that the adults around them will protect them. As parents and as a society, we owe them nothing less. The recent incident should not become merely another headline that fades with time. Instead, it should inspire a renewed commitment to safeguarding childhood through awareness, accountability, and compassion. Every child deserves a place where learning is joyful, care is genuine, and safety is unquestionable. Because behind every smile is a child who depends entirely on us to keep that smile safe.

"The smallest hands place the greatest trust in us. Let us ensure they never have a reason to fear the hands meant to care for them."