***HOW TO RAISE A KID WITH VITILIGO - a mom’s perspective***

How do you raise a kid with vitiligo? I never thought I would have to face this challenge. My husband called me one day from the doctor’s office and told me that our youngest daughter, Shri, around 6 years old at that time was diagnosed with vitiligo, I thought the world was ending. I didn’t sleep for almost a week.

 I researched on Google about different treatments and within days, I left for India from the USA. I visited numerous hospitals. Over those years, I gathered much information. Not only should Shri be avoiding milk, soft drinks, alcohol, and citrus fruits, she should also be avoiding any type of meat and should be consuming vegetables in her diet. That is how I have raised my daughter for the last 10 years. There are several different treatment methods to treat vitiligo such as the allopathy method, the homepathy method, ayurvedic method, and the Sidda method.

However, rather than just picking one treatment option, I decided to combine all the different methods into one big method to raise my daughter. I did what worked best for my family and that consists of a strict diet and different types of *herbal* medicines. It was truly a struggle because at the time, I was also raising another daughter, just four years older than Shri. It was hard for me because one was allowed to eat anything she wanted and the other one was severely restricted. I managed this to the best of my ability.

One of my biggest challenges was trying to explain to Shri what vitiligo is all about. It was a very tough challenge to explain to her as a kid and even to this day, it remains a struggle. My husband thought that if we put Shri into many different sports as she grew up, it would bring her strength in her mind and she would be able to focus on other “challenges.” It worked. Growing up, she spent her time playing basketball, soccer, volleyball, lacrosse, tennis, yoga, horseback riding. Those are the only ones I can remember, but I am sure I am missing some. She spent her time playing those sports and it made her strong both mentally and physically.

How did I explain vitiligo to others? It was hard for me, even my friends, asked me in front of my kid what was “wrong” with her. Out of fear, I started to hide. Originally, we said that she fell and that the vitiligo was “scars.” The people asking were insensitive and they didn’t think to not ask me in front of my daughter. I didn’t know what to say and how Shri would feel so I said she fell. But now? If anyone asks me, I'm never hesitant to say my daughter has vitiligo.

There are good days and bad days. Some days, Shri would come home crying either because another kid made fun of her vitiligo or she was judged for the way she looked. You have to know how to address this as a parent. I always tell her “people with vitiligo are always the successful ones in the world.” I tell her to not worry and that one day, she will be at the top.

 Vitiligo Organization For Youth was created not only for other kids to feel supported, but also to help support parents. As a family, we are working to support other families and I am open for any questions or comments. Please email vitiligoorganizationforyouth@gmail.com if needed.

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