

Motherhood in Islam Session Six

From the Holy Qur'an

Du'as for Virtuous children

رَبِّي هَبْ لِي مَن لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

My Lord! grant me from You good offspring, surely You are the hearer of prayers. (3:38)

وَاصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

And do good to me in respect to my children, Surely I turn to You and I am one of those who submit. (46:15)

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

And those who say: "Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders for the Pious. (25:74)

رَبِّي اجْعَلْ لِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَ تَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ

O my Lord! Make me one who performs *As-Salât* and (also) from my offspring, our Lord! And accept my invocation. (14:40)

Anger in Islam

Anger is a difficult emotion to control. That is why one of the signs of a strong character is the ability to control anger and remain patient. In describing the qualities of the believers, Allah says: . . . *and those who restrain their anger, and forgive people* (3:133) and also *and those who . . . whenever they are angry, they forgive.* (42:37)

Many Hadith also talk about the dangers of anger. The Masumeen (a) have said:

1. *Beware of anger, for its beginning is madness and its end is regret.*
2. *Whoever controls his anger when he can vent it, Allah will fill his heart with peace and faith on the Day of Judgment.*
3. *Among the habits of the ignorant, is to get angry all the time.*
4. *The person most capable of reason and wisdom is the one who does not get angry.*
5. *The strongest of men is he who can overcome his anger with his patience.*

Anger and the Family

Anger is one of the most commonly reported problems in families today. It surfaces in a variety of forms, and can be found in all the relationships within the family. Anger that is left unresolved, and that erupts often, can cause a lot of damage to loving relationships. A home that has continuous anger and conflict is not warm and welcoming for its members. Children in such a home live in fear and tension, not knowing when the next incident

would cause the parents to blow up. Such an atmosphere is not healthy for the mental and emotional progress of children.

Anger is inevitable sometimes, even necessary at certain times. Imam Khomeini in his commentary on Forty Hadith, writes: *It should be known that the power of anger is one of the biggest favors of God conferred upon His creatures by means of which they are able to pursue activities constructive to their world and Hereafter, are assured of the continuity of species, as well as the safety and survival of the individual and the family. It also plays a great role in the establishment and maintenance of social order and civic life. If this noble faculty were not ingrained in the animal's nature, it would . . . have been defenseless against the dangers of destruction and extinction.* So anger is a necessary quality. It is only anger that goes out of control, and is not appropriate, that is condemned. Without anger, children could not be disciplined, or taught to stay away from what is wrong.

Mothers need to be able to use the power of anger discriminately in order to discipline their children. They should use it to establish firm rules, and consequences of breaking rules. They should use it to reprimand the child for wrong actions, so that the child does not repeat them. But sometimes their anger becomes more than what they had intended. Mothers become horrified with themselves when they find themselves getting extremely angry with their children. They wonder how they can get so angry with those whom they love so much. Women who are usually calm and patient, and are seen by the outside world as gentle and understanding, become unrecognizable when they are angry with their children. This is because the strong love a mother feels for her child evokes strong emotions. Unmet expectations, frustrations, and resentment, are some of the reasons why mothers get so angry.

Anger because of unreasonable expectations

Some parents would like their children to behave totally like adults. They don't want them to run around, to play, to talk loudly, even to touch things around the house. What they should understand is that all these activities are part of growing up. To be a healthy adult, children need to have passed through various stages, each of which is a building block in his character.

In Hadith of Mufazzal, our sixth Imam describes the wisdom behind the childish behavior which some adults dislike. He says:

There would not have been, if they had been born with mature intellect, that sweetness, nor that consideration for infants in the minds of the adults which comes from fondling the untutored children. Their artlessness creates a particular attraction. As such he is born into the world without an understanding for anything, quite unaware of the world and what lies therein. He views all these things with his undeveloped brain and inadequate understanding, and so does not feel perplexed. His intellect and understanding develop by degrees, slowly from time to time, little by little. This introduces him gradually to the things around him and accustoms his brain accordingly.

The child lives in a world quite different from that of the parent. Parents sometimes view the life of the child from an adult perspective, and forget that to the child his little world is very important. Although they must be kept away from harmful and dangerous things, a child should be allowed to explore things that arouse his curiosity. Let him meddle with things that he is interested in, if the consequences are not very destructive. The house should not be a prison for him, with constant orders to sit down and be quiet.

Allow the child to have a little independence, especially in things that are not greatly significant. The small mistakes that he may make will teach him to do different next time. There is a difference between issues of grave importance that cannot be compromised, and issues in which some flexibility can be allowed. Life should not be so serious that every small thing should be treated like a major issue.

Some parents also make the mistake of expecting too many achievements from their children. A parent should know his child, and his strengths and weaknesses. If a child is not too bright, it is enough to encourage him to work hard and achieve according to his potential. To expect that he must bring perfect grades, and then show disappointment when he cannot, hurts the child and lowers his self-esteem. This is the same for all expectations the parents has from the child. They must be proportionate to the age and ability of the child.

Controlling Anger

One of the most effective ways of controlling anger is to stop it in its initial stages. According to Imam Khomeini in the above mentioned article, one should withhold the self in the initial stages of anger. This is because the more one gives in to anger, the more intense it becomes. The escalation of anger is like a furnace that starts burning and soon the flames become violent and furious. It is then difficult to control. It covers the mind and the person becomes quite unreasonable.

Some practical methods for controlling anger recommended by Islam include:

1. Leave the place where anger may be provoked further.
2. Change posture, so if the person is seated he should stand up, or sit down if he was standing.
3. Engage in the remembrance of God. Remember the Qur'anic ayats and Hadith on anger, and how Allah is merciful to those who control their anger on others. The Holy Prophet used to tell Imam Ali (a): *O Ali, do not get angry. And if you do get angry, sit and think of the power of your Lord over His servants, and His forbearance with them.*
4. Busy oneself in another activity.
5. Do wudhu, for water cools the fire of anger.

The following hadith show some practical ways of controlling anger:

1. *Surely anger is a spark ignited by the Devil in the human heart. Indeed when anyone of you gets angry, his eyes become red, the veins of his neck become swollen, and Satan enters them. Therefore whoever among you is concerned about himself on account of it, he should lie down for a while so that the filth of Satan may be removed from him at that time.* Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a)
2. *Whoever is angry with someone, let him sit down at once if he is standing, for indeed, it would repel from him the uncleanness of Satan. And whoever gets angry with his kinsmen, let him approach him and pat him, for the feeling of consanguinity, when stimulated by touch induces calmness.* Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a)

Ways of decreasing anger and conflict with children

1. Make known your expectations - sometimes people assume that others know what is expected of them. This is not always true. Almighty Allah has blessed us with the power to express our feelings and communicate with others. We need to make use of this great ability granted by God. A mother must tell her child what she expects of them, and even show them how exactly it can be done. If a child is told to keep a clean room, he must be told what that means. A mother and child may have very different understandings of what is a clean room. That can create conflict if it is not sorted out.
2. Be careful not to express anger when enraged - sometimes offensive things are said in anger which are later regretted. After the conflict is over, the memories of hurtful things often linger. A mother may say some awful things which she does not really mean, because the tongue is a very dangerous weapon. If she feels her anger is rising very high, it is better that she deal with the conflict later.
3. Be just – children should be dealt with fairly. If the mother makes a mistake, she should be able to admit it and explain to her child that she has made a mistake and apologize for it. The child would learn an important lesson that even adults sometimes make mistakes, and are not too ashamed to apologize for it.
4. Discern Patterns of Conflict - If there is continual tension between the mother and child, it is necessary to ask what causes it. The mother should try to avoid certain circumstances that cause conflict. Although it may be impossible to avoid it completely, foresight and planning may be able to decrease the number of conflicts that occur.