

Parenting to Build Moral Intelligence in Children

Week 1

Agenda for next four weeks inshallah

Week 1: Introduction and purpose of the course, definitions, the state of morality today, the stages of moral development, drawing out your child's moral reasoning

Week 2: The Building Blocks of Moral Intelligence: Empathy. Using discipline to build moral intelligence (the four Rs)

Week 3: The Building Blocks of Moral Intelligence: Conscience

Week 4: The Building Blocks of Moral Intelligence: Self Control

Agenda for today

- The definition of “Moral Intelligence MQ”
- Introduction and purpose of the course
- The importance of building moral intelligence (the state of morality today)
- The stages of moral development
- Drawing out your child’s moral reasoning

Definitions

- Moral intelligence is the capacity to understand right from wrong; it means to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them so that one behaves in the right and honourable way

Definitions

- Three virtues form the core of moral intelligence: empathy, conscience, and self-control. The other four virtues, respect, kindness, tolerance, and fairness, then combine to form what we know about integrity, justice, and citizenship. These principles together create a child's "moral compass," guiding the way toward responsible living in harmony with others

Michele Borba

REASONS TO BUILD MORAL IQ

- **1. Nurtures Good Character.** When we develop the seven core virtues (empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness) in children, we give them principles they'll use to direct their lives.
- **2. Teaches How To Think and Act Right.** Kids need to learn to not only think morally but to act morally. Moral intelligence teaches the specific moral habits that will get kids on the right course so that they do act as well as think right.
- **3. Moral IQ Is Not Guaranteed.** Moral IQ is learned. To ensure kids acquire it, we must intentionally model, nurture, reinforce and teach it.
- **4. Protects Against Toxicity.** We cannot shield our children from the toxic influences in our culture. We must give them deep-seated convictions to stand by their choices and counter any pressures from inside or outside that go against the principles of good character.

REASONS TO BUILD MORAL IQ (contd)

- **5. Teaches Critical Life Skills.** Moral IQ is comprised of skills children need to lead successful and happy lives. These skills include: resolving conflicts, empathizing, knowing right from wrong, controlling anger, negotiating fairly, communicating respectfully, cooperating, using self-control, learning tolerance and sharing.
- **6. Creates Good Citizens.** One of the most important measures of a nation is the character of its people. Moral intelligence consists of seven timeless virtues that are the bedrock of good citizenship and responsible living.
- **7. Counters Temptations.** Moral intelligence helps children navigate through the ethical challenges and pressures they will face throughout life and make the right moral choices so they do act right with or without adult guidance.
- **8. Prevents Violence and Cruelty.** In order to counteract rising youth violence and peer cruelty, we must teach children the three core virtues that lay the foundation for non-violence: empathy, conscience and self-control.

REASONS TO BUILD MORAL IQ (contd)

- **9. Inspires Good Behaviour.** The seven essential moral virtues become a template for creating our children's character, guiding their actions and ultimately defining their reputations as caring, good human beings.
- **10. Shapes Moral Destinies.** Moral growth is an ongoing process that will span the course of children's lifetimes. The habits and beliefs of Moral Intelligence that we instil in our children now will become the ethical foundation they'll use forever. It is what will greatly decide our children's moral destinies and will be our greatest legacy.

And the most important
reason of all . . .

*“Most of my people who will gain entry into
Janna will do so on the basis of God
Consciousness and Good Character”.*

The Holy Prophet (saw)

And another reason: it is our duty to the umma and the world

"Making a child is a moral act. Obviously, it obligates the parents to the child. But it also obligates the parents to the community. We must all live with the consequences of children who are not brought up properly Juvenile delinquents do more than break their parents' hearts, and drug abusers do more than give their parents grief. They mug the elderly, hold up stores and gas stations, and prey on innocent children returning from school. They grow up to be problems, draining a society's resources and patience. In contrast, well-brought up children are more than a joy to their families, they are a foundation of proud and successful communities."

Assessing our children's moral intelligence – what does the result look like?

The Young Adolescent (without adult reminders or coaxing) regularly:

Answer with a Yes or No

- Shows sensitivity and has a lot of feeling for others.
- Tries to see things from the other person's view, not just his/her own.
- Is honest and trustworthy; can be counted on to keep his/her word.
- Feels shame or guilt about his/her wrong actions; accepts the blame.
- Easily calms down when excited or angry; copes with behavioural impulses
- Behaves appropriately without reminders; thinks before acting.
- Treats everyone respectfully and courteously; no back talk or sass.
- Shares, helps, or comforts others with expecting something in return.
- Is open-minded: listens to all sides before forming opinions.
- Focuses on the positive traits of others instead of their differences.
- Tries to solve problems fairly and peacefully; willing to compromise.

If you checked less than 8 "yes" it means the young adolescent's moral IQ could use some boosting.

(From: Parents do make a difference – M Borba
<http://www.parentingbookmark.com/pages/articleBMI04.htm>)

Why is it important to talk about MQ today?

The atmosphere our children are growing up in today is morally toxic for two main reasons:

- 1) A number of critical factors that encourage morality are slowly disintegrating: adult supervision, spiritual and religious training, meaningful adult relationships, clear and shared value systems, community support and adequate parenting (lack of protective factors)
- 2) The environment is not supportive but damaging to our values and they are being constantly bombarded by messages that are against our moral system (increase in risk factors)

Why is it important to talk about MQ today?

The lack of protective factors

- Lack of time
- Absence or abdication of parental responsibility
- Absence of a shared value system
- Minding our own business has destroyed the village that it takes to raise our children

Why is it important to talk about MI today?

The increase in risk factors

- Parenting practices today
- The media
- Peers and the prevalent youth culture

- It is almost impossible to shield our children from all the toxic influences in society today. That is why it is crucial that we build their moral intelligence so that they have a deeply developed sense of right and wrong and can use it to stand up against those influences

Some sobering findings on the state of our children's morality

Josephson Institute of Ethics Survey (2004) (High school Students)

- Two-thirds admitted to cheating on tests
- 40% admitted they lied to save money
- 25% had stolen from a store in the past year
- 1/3 said they would steal from big stores if they did not get caught
- 63% said their friends lie to teachers and parents
- 25% admitted to lying themselves
- 90% believed that “being a good person is more important than being rich”

- It appears that no matter how children behave, they think that they are “good people”!
- In other words, they inflate their own self image in relation to their character
- The researchers concluded that their self image is flawed:
- *“Despite admissions of high levels of lying, cheating, and theft, high school students maintain a high image of their character and ethics both in relative and absolute terms”*

- That is why we need clear standards and benchmarks to measure whether, in fact, we have succeed in raising moral children, children who will make the right decisions based on timeless principles from Quran and hadith rather than on the wavering and changing principles of current societal norms.

Some sobering findings on media influence

- 83% of the episodes of the top 20 shows among teen viewers contained some sexual content. “Grand Theft Auto, the best-selling video game among teens and preteens allows players to simulate having sex with a prostitute and then killing her
- Before 18, the average child will have witnessed 200,000 acts of violence on TV, including 16,000 murders
- 8 year old boys who viewed the most violent programs while growing up were most likely to engage in aggressive behaviour by age 18
- More than 50% of teens report getting some or most of their information on sex from TV
- Children spend more time in watching TV than in any other activity except sleep
- The average child spends about 4 hours with TV and 7 hours consuming all electronic media
- Between 54% and 75% of 4th graders have TVs in their bedrooms

The impact of TV on the unconscious mind

Within minutes of beginning to watch TV, the brain changes from the alert brain waves (beta waves) to the hypnotic waves (alpha waves) where the judgement centre of the brain is bypassed. So the violence and decadence that the child sees, bypasses the judgment centre in the brain and is implanted in the child's brain without any ability on the child's part to decide whether what they are seeing is right or wrong. The violence and decadence are accepted by the brain without any moral judgement being applied to it. It then becomes part of the child's permanent subconscious.

Dimitri A. Christakis, et al. Early television exposure and subsequent attentional problems in children. *Pediatrics* 113 (2004):708-12

Boiling Frogs



Boiling frogs

- They say that if you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will leap out right away to escape the danger. **But**, if you put a frog in a kettle that is filled with water that is cool and pleasant, and then you *gradually* heat the kettle until it starts boiling, the frog will not become aware of the threat until it is too late. The frog's survival instincts are geared towards detecting sudden changes.
- *This is a story that is used to illustrate how people might get themselves into terrible trouble. This parable is often used to illustrate how humans have to be careful to watch slowly changing trends in the environment, not just the sudden changes. Its a warning to keep us paying attention not just to obvious threats but to more slowly developing ones.*

Reality check on children's use of media

- Do you know how many hours a week your children watch TV?
- Are you lenient about what you allow your little ones to watch?
- Do you know which videos your children are watching at friends' houses? Which video games they are playing?
- Do you have safeguards in place regarding your children's use of the internet?
- Do you allow your children to play with your cell phone or ipad?
- Do the shows your children watch have a positive influence on them?
- Do you sometimes watch the very things that you prohibit your children from watching?

And some hope on the extent of peer influence

- **MYTH: Peers influence kids' morals more than parents do.** Scores of studies-including ones by the American Academy of Pediatrics - report that while peers do have a huge moral influence, parents influence their kids on moral issues that matter most such as religion, education, and values. Peers influence deals more with daily issues such kids' entertainment, music, and dress choices. Parents must recognize they can still have the inside track in their children's moral development because they can have the closest relationship, if they chose to nurture it. The bottom line: peers will be a bigger moral influence if parents allow them to be.

(From 7 deadly myths about raising moral kids:

<http://www.behavioralinstitute.org/FreeDownloads/START/7%20Deadly%20Myths%20About%20Raising%20Moral%20Kids.pdf>)

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More hope for us

Teens who practice their religious faith show:

- Higher levels of altruism
- Lower levels of theft, vandalism, violence, and drug and alcohol use.
- Less likelihood of sexual activity.

-2002 Child Trends Research Brief, *Religious Involvement and Children's Well-Being* www.childtrends.org

Questions and comments?

