

Parenting to Build Moral Intelligence in Children

Week 3

Agenda for today

- Review and recap
 - The stages of moral development
 - The importance of modelling
 - Drawing out your child's moral reasoning
- Parenting to develop self control in children

Parenting to build self control in children

Introduction

- In Islam, we are held accountable for our actions from the age of bulugh
- We have been granted free will and the responsibility for actions stems from this ability to exercise free will and self control
- By the time our children are baligh, ideally they should not only know what is right but also use their free will to do the right thing
- In other words, by the time we are baligh, we should be able to exercise self control to follow what is right and stop our selves from indulging in what is not allowed

What is self control?

- Self control is the ability to control one's emotions, behaviour and desires in order to obtain some reward later. In psychology it is sometimes called self-regulation.
- Self Control is also known as impulse control or self regulation. Some psychologists prefer the term "impulse control" because it may be more precise. The term self regulation is used to refer to the many processes individuals use to manage drives and emotions. Therefore, self regulation also embodies the concept of willpower. Self regulation is an extremely important executive function of the brain. Deficits in self control/regulation are found in a large number of psychological disorders including ADHD, Antisocial Personality Disorder, addictions, eating disorders and impulse control disorders.

Self Control in children

- Self control is the moral muscle that temporarily stops potentially hurtful actions. It does so by giving kids those critical extra seconds they need in order to recognize the possible consequences of their actions and then put on the brakes. So that they don't proceed with acting on their harmful thoughts.

The importance of self control in building moral intelligence

Poorly developed self control puts kids at a huge moral disadvantage: when harmful ideas or thoughts pop into their heads, their internal brake system is non-existent, and instead of stopping, they barrel full speed ahead and straight into trouble. And this seems to be happening to an alarming number of kids these days.

Michele Borba, Building Moral Intelligence

What does self control look like in children?

Reality check: assessing our children's self control

A child with healthy self control

- Rarely interrupts or blurts out answers to questions
- Waits her turn and rarely interrupts others
- Is able to manage her own impulses and urges without adult help
- Rarely blows up in angry outbursts
- Rarely acts without thinking
- Has the ability to wait for something
- Has little difficulty bouncing back from upsetting situations

The crisis of self control – the evidence

- According to D Goleman's study on children in 1970s and again in 1980s, the children declined across the board on 42 basic indicators of emotional health and improved on none.
- Recently released data based on paediatrician reports found that attention deficits and hyperactivity problems have increased from 1.4% to 9.2% in two decades.
- Thus experts conclude that today's kids are more impulsive and disobedient, more irritable and violent than previous generations and their poor self control is clearly hindering their moral growth.

Why is it so difficult for children to demonstrate self control today?

The crisis of poor self control

- Overworked, stressed out parents
- Early abuse and trauma
- Overreliance on chemical restraints instead of self restraints
- Glorification of out of control behaviour in entertainment
- The age of instant gratification

The result of stressed out parents

- In a survey of 1,000 children, the children rated their mothers lowest on the ability to control their temper when the children made them angry.

Families and Work Institute, USA

The importance of self control- the marshmallow experiment

- The marshmallow experiment of four year old testing for self control
- The Stanford Marshmallow Experiment indicates that good impulse control might be psychologically important for academic achievement and for success in adult life
- The marshmallow test concluded that children who were able to delay gratification (that is who were able to exercise self control and wait for the marshmallow) were psychologically better adjusted, more dependable persons, and, as high school students, scored significantly better grades in the collegiate Scholastic Aptitude Test
- The researches suggest that the way the preschoolers were able to delay gratification was by distracting themselves and imagining that the marshmallow was something other than a delicious treat

- After knowing this, will we still stop our four years from fasting if they indicate that they want to?

3 Steps to building self control

- 1. Model self control and make it a priority for your child
- 2. Encourage your child to be her own motivator
- 3. Teach your child to control his urges and to think before acting



Words of Wisdom

*"Strength is not in physical combat but
rather controlling oneself when one
is angry"*

Holy Prophet (saw)

Modelling self control - Just press pause

- **(1) Self-Awareness** - the ability to stand back and observe our lives, thoughts, actions, etc.
- **(2) Conscience** - an inner voice that helps us to evaluate what we observe.
- **(3) Imagination** - the ability to see something different from past experiences or responses.
- **(4) Independent will** - the power to take action.

Modelling self control – the talk

- I need to calm down, I feel angry
- I'll save my money instead of buying that thing
- I understand the rule, so I will not break it
- The cake looks so good, but it is almost dinner time
- I'd really like to go with you but I made a promise to do . . .
- I have to finish my work, so I will watch TV later

Modelling self control – the actions

- Take three breaths when they feel stressed
- Wait patiently in line
- Say no to urges that they know are bad choices
- Do not lose control when angry or upset
- Plan what they will do and follow through
- Behave properly even when no one is watching



Words of Wisdom

"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)

Teaching Self Control to our children

- Although modeling is key, there will be times when the best of children will slip up
- We can use these as teaching moments to teach self control and lay the groundwork for moral behaviour
- How we discipline our children when they make mistakes can play a vital role in their moral growth

Teaching Self Control to our children

Part One: Calming down:

- Describe the problem behaviour.
 - Briefly describe problem behavior. “You are raising your voice.”
 - Use empathy. “I know you are upset right now.”
- ◇ Give clear instructions
 - “Go to your room and calm down”
- ◇ Allow time to calm down
 - “We both need a little time to calm down. I’ll be back in the a few minutes.” Helps save face

Teaching Self-Control

Part Two: Follow up teaching

The "4 Rs" of disciplining to build character

1. Respond (calmly instead of reacting)
2. Review (the behaviour and why it was wrong)
 - Do you remember the rule about raising your voice? Do you remember why we have that rule?
3. Reflect (on what they can do differently)
 - Next time you are angry, what can you do instead of raising your voice?
4. Repair (the damage caused and thereby promote accountability)
 - Give a consequence or accept an apology

Self control is a learned behaviour

- Takes time, patience and practice

Let us remind our selves of the key take away messages

- Model, model and model
- There is no substitute for time
- All discipline is self discipline
- You can empathise with children while holding them accountable for their actions

And some practical and simple things
we can do . . .

The Kindlon study found that teens who showed the strongest MQ were those whose

1. Families frequently ate dinner together
2. Parents were not divorced or separated
3. Parents expected them to keep their rooms clean
4. Who didn't have a phone in their room
5. Who did community service.

And remember to keep hope alive . . .

The miracle of the Chinese Bamboo Tree



Questions and comments?



Feedback

- Please email with feedback regarding this course.
 - 1) What was useful
 - 2) What could be better (apart from sound quality!)

marziahasan@hotmail.com

www.familyconnectionsint.com