ALI 259: Too Much of a Good Thing

Raising children of character in an age of materialism

WEEK 1

A.L.I Online Parenting Series

Winter 2014

Beginning with the end in mind

- What do I really want for my children?
  - This week
  - This year
  - Long term
- What are my strengths as a parent? What do I do well already?
- What are 3 challenges I face in raising my children?

Introduction

What do you want for your child?

"I want to be able to deliver my child to the doors of Janna"

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)

Introduction

The need for this course

- Increase in our material wellbeing

- The state of our youth and families

- What went wrong?

Increase in material wellbeing

- As a community we are much richer than our parents

- Our children have access to vastly greater material resources and opportunities than we had growing up

- Is this a good thing?

Are children today materialistic?

Are children today materialistic? UNICEF study 2011

- Materialism is thought to be a cause, as well as an effect of negative well-being

- Although children wanted newest toys and gadgets, they were rarely wanted for own sake

- Material objects and consumer goods tended to fulfill a range of purposes in children's lives: utilitarian, symbolic and social

- Brands are coveted by preteens and teens either to confer superior status or to avoid bullying.

Are children today materialistic?

- 14 year olds agreed that their well-being centres on time with a happy, stable family, having good friends and plenty of things to do, especially outdoors.

- A recent Reuters study found that youth tend to become more materialistic as they grow

- Parents tend to be compulsive about continually buying things for themselves and their children

The state of our youth and families

What has been the impact of this rise in material wellbeing on our youth and families?

Introduction: Parenting Challenges Today

The top disciplinary problems in public schools – then and now:

Then (1940)	Now
Talking out of turn	Drug abuse
Chewing gum	Alcohol abuse
Making noise	Pregnancy
Running in the halls	Suicide
Cutting in line	Theft and robbery
Dress code infractions	Cheating and plagiarism
Littering	Violence and assault
	Bullying
	Sexual harassment
	Gangs and cults
	Verbal abuse of teachers
	Weapons

Introduction: Parenting Challenges Today

Six Disturbing Signs of the Times – in the mainstream

1. Rise of Youth Violence and crime

2. Increase in Peer Cruelty

3. Rise in Youth Stealing

4. Escalation in Youth Cheating

5. Increase in Sexual Promiscuity

6. Rise in Substance Abuse

Introduction: Parenting Challenges Today

Signs of the Times – in our community

1. Rise of Youth Violence and crime

2. Increase in Sexual Promiscuity

3. Rise in Substance Abuse

4. Disengagement from community

5. Rise in breakdown of marital relationships

What went wrong?

What is causing this "Crisis of Conscience"?

Decrease in protective factors:

- adult supervision

- spiritual and religious training,

- meaningful adult relationships,

- clear and shared value systems,

- community support

- adequate parenting

What is causing this "Crisis of Conscience"?

Increase in risk factors

- Media

- Access to deviant moral messages through technology

- Lack of shared values between peers

- The rise of youth culture

- Minding our own business has destroyed the village that it takes to raise our children

What is causing this "Crisis of Conscience"?

1. Peers – ours and our children's

2. Media

3. Parenting Practices

1. How important are peers?

The extent of peer influence…

MYTH: Peers influence kids' morals more than parents do.

- Peers influence…
  - Dress choices
  - Entertainment
  - Language

- Parents influence…
  - Religion
  - Education
  - Core values

(From 7 deadly myths about raising moral kids:
http://www.behavioralinstitute.org/FreeDownloads/START/7%20Deadly%20Myths%20About%20Raising%20Moral%20Kids.pdf)

2. The impact of media

The impact of media

- Children spend more time in front of the TV than they do in any other activity except sleep
- The average child spends about 4 hours watching TV and 7 hours total consuming electronic media
- Between 54% and 75% of North American 4th graders have TVs in their bedrooms
- TV watching and materialism - Google, Apple and Sony have all been guilty of, and admitted to, inappropriate collection and storing of consumer information to target children as consumers

The impact of media

- 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

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

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?

Boiling Frogs

Questions and comments?