

Parenting Challenges facing Muslims Today

Week 5: Encouraging the love of reading
Raising children with character (part 1)

Review

- Parent involvement in school and learning ensures children's success
- There is a fine line between appropriate and too much involvement
- Appropriate involvement includes being a good role model for learning, encouraging effective study habits and setting up an environment which is conducive to learning

Review

- Encouraging good homework habits is another way parents can ensure school success

Agenda

- The parents role in children's education, continued
 - Helping your child love reading and learning
- Raising children with character
 - The crisis of conscience
 - What is character
 - Developing a healthy conscience in children

Importance of reading and what you can do to encourage it



Both school and home are involved
in bringing up a reader



- ...the likelihood that a child will succeed in the first grade depends most of all on how much she or he has already learned about reading before getting there...

Dr. Marilyn Adams, from Beginning to Read

What is EARLY LITERACY?

- Early literacy is what children know about reading before they can actually read.
- Early literacy is pre-reading skills.
- Early literacy is “reading readiness”.

Why Start Early?

- Learning to read is essential for school success
- Children should get ready to read long before they start to school
- Research shows that children who are read to from an early age have a larger vocabulary and better language skills when they start school
- Children who struggle with “Phonological Awareness”—a pre-reading skill—often struggle learning to read.

The Importance of the Early Years

How early does a child begin to learn language?

- From the day of birth, a child's brain is receptive to learning language.
- The size of a toddler's vocabulary is strongly correlated with how much a mother talks to the child.
- Children learn to speak by being surrounded by speech
- Your habits of talking and listening will make a difference of in your child's language development

What does the research tell us that we should do about language development & vocabulary?



A.L.I. online course: Parenting Challenges
Facing Muslims Today - Spring 2011

Research Evidence

- Children enter school with a listening vocabulary ranging between 2500 to 5000
- Vocabulary differences at grade 2 may last throughout elementary school (Biemiller & Slonin, 2001)
- Children who enter with limited vocabulary knowledge grow more discrepant over time from their peers who have rich vocabulary knowledge (Baker, Simmons & Kame'enui 1997)
- 86-98% of the words recorded in each child's vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parents' vocabularies (Hart & Risley, 2000)

Use High-Quality Oral Language

- Model good language use
- Engage in daily oral language
- Read aloud good literature
 - Use less “business” talk at home
 - Use descriptive words
- Lots of shared reading and conversations about words



- Business Talk

- Come here!
- Stop that!
- Be quiet!
- Sit down and eat!
- Go watch TV!
- Clean your room!
- Go to sleep!
- Get in the tub!

- Conversations

- Tell me about...
- How was?
- What do you think about...?
- Why is?
- Do you think?
- Who is?
- What do you like?

Other Ways to Help Your Child's Language Development

Recommended Habit	Example
Rephrase & extend your child's words.	<p><i>Child:</i> That's a doggie.</p> <p><i>Parent:</i> Yes, it's a Doberman pinscher!</p>
Ask a clarifying question.	<p><i>Child:</i> That's a man.</p> <p><i>Parent:</i> Tell me more about the man you saw.</p>
Model more complex vocabulary or sentence structure	<p><i>Child:</i> See my building</p> <p><i>Parent:</i> Yes, I see the tall skyscraper you built with lots of windows so people can see the view of the city.</p>
Ask "open-ended" questions	<p><i>Child:</i> I like that story.</p> <p><i>Parent:</i> What was your favorite part of the story?</p>

Reading aloud to children should begin when they are babies and continue well into their school years, even **AFTER** they learn to read for themselves



A.L.I. online course: Parenting Challenges
Facing Muslims Today - Spring 2011

Things You Can Do To Create a Reading Environment At Home

- Fill you house with books
- Establish good reading habits
- Visit the library as often as you can
- Give books as gifts
- Set an example for reading
- Help your child choose books



Some people there are who, being grown, forget the horrible task of learning to read. It is perhaps the greatest single effort that the human undertakes, and he must do it as a child.

- John Steinbeck, 1982 Nobel Prize Winner for Literature



Raising Children with Character

A.L.I. online course: Parenting Challenges
Facing Muslims Today - Spring 2011

Points to Ponder

- Why is it important to talk about character development for children?
- Are we facing additional challenges today than our parents did whilst raising us?
- What is character and how do we know if someone has a good character?

What Is Character?

- Moral strength to do what is right.
- Character is essentially a matter of knowing the good, loving the good and doing the good. So it involves the head (knowing the good), loving the good (the heart) and doing the good. (habits) Eiman and amal.
- A sign of true character is being motivated to do the right thing simply because it's right
- Character is "who you are in the dark"

What is Character?

- Not predetermined, but made day by day
- Three essential qualities:
 1. Good principles
 2. Strong conscience and
 3. Moral Courage

Influences on Character Development for children

1. heredity
2. early childhood experience
3. modeling by parents, important adults & older youth
4. peer influence
5. general physical and social environment
6. communications media
7. content taught in the schools, churches, etc.
8. specific situations and roles

Campbell, V., & Bond, R. (1982). Evaluation of a character education curriculum. In D. McClelland (ed.), Education for values. New York: Irvington Publishers.

How Children Acquire Values

- Children begin to learn values from birth
- What can parents do to teach values?
 - Model Values
 - Discuss Values
 - Use Stories
 - Point out values in action



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

- *"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."*

Parenting challenges today – some
sobering facts about the
environment our children are
growing up in

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

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

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”

- 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”*

Introduction: Parenting Challenges Today

What is causing this "Crisis of Conscience"?

1. The Media and the environment (lack of shared values)
2. Peers – ours and our children's
3. Parenting Practices (lack of time, age of entitlement, the pursuit of personal happiness and self esteem)



Words of Wisdom

"What is right is right even if nobody is doing it and what is wrong is wrong, even if everybody is doing it".

Introduction: Parenting Challenges Today

The PPM Study shows that:

- ◇ Our generation of parents are giving too much and expecting too little
- ◇ We blur the line between friend and parent
- ◇ We have too much of everything except time

- The pursuit of happiness and self esteem . . .

What will make our kids successful and happy?

- Being absorbed in challenging activity
- Self-efficacy
- Frustration tolerance and the ability to cope with stress
- Compassion
- Emotional maturity – self control
- A sense of self-worth tempered by humility

- Although we cannot guarantee happiness for our children, we can do many things to help build strong characters for them which will serve them well in this world and deliver them to the doors of Janna

What is Character?

The Six Pillars of Character

1. Trustworthiness
2. Respect
3. Responsibility
4. Fairness and justice
5. Caring and Empathy
6. Citizenship



A.L.I. online course: Parenting Challenges
Facing Muslims Today - Spring 2011

A strong conscience is the
foundation of character

A Child with a healthy conscience

- Admits mistakes and says he is sorry
- Can identify his wrong behaviour and describe why it was wrong
- Is honest and can be counted on to keep his word
- Rarely needs admonitions or reminders from authority figures on how to act right
- Recognizes the consequences of his improper behaviour

A Child with a healthy conscience

- When wrong, accepts blame and does not try to attribute the blame to others
- Feels shame or guilt about his improper actions
- Knows the right way to act and does it even when pressured by others not to
- Tries to make amends if he causes physical or emotional injury
- Knows how to turn a wrong action into a right one

Three steps to growing a conscience

1. Create the context for moral growth
2. Teach virtues to Strengthen the conscience and guide behaviour
3. Use moral discipline to help your child learn right from wrong

1. Creating the context for moral growth

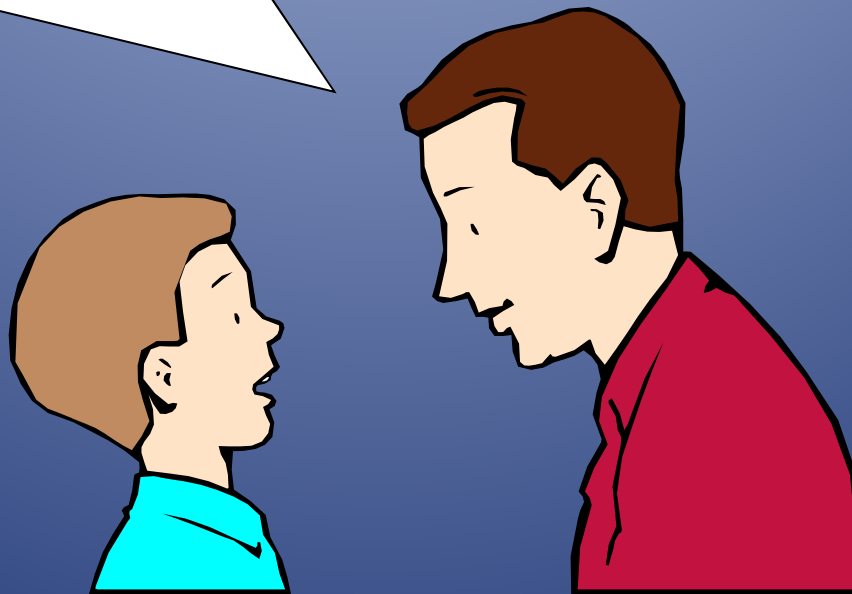
- Parenting practices that promote the development of a strong conscience
 1. Be a strong moral example
 2. Develop a close, mutually respectful relationship
 3. Share your moral beliefs
 4. Expect and demand moral behaviours
 5. Use moral reasoning and questioning
 6. Explain your parenting behaviour

Be a strong moral example

How well do you “walk the talk”?

- You tell your child to say you are not home when someone phones
- Your child oversleeps and misses school, and you write a note saying she was unwell
- You do the majority of your child’s work on a project and have him sign his name
- You buy a ticket for a “child under 12” even though your child is older
- You keep the extra change that the shopkeeper gives you by mistake

“How could you have taken those markers from school? If you needed them so badly, why didn’t you tell me? I would have taken them from the office.”





Words of Wisdom

"Do not worry that your children do not listen to what you say. Worry that they watch everything that you do".

Although modelling is crucial, there is a place for verbally sharing your values – the children are hearing amoral messages everywhere. If you do not speak, the only voice that is absent is yours!



"Before we learn this song, it's important to understand that cutting off the tail of a mouse is never acceptable."

2. Teach virtues to strengthen the conscience and guide behaviour

1. Identify the virtues you most want to develop in your child
2. Accentuate a virtue each month
3. Describe the value and meaning of the virtue
4. Teach what the virtue looks like and sounds like
5. Reinforce the virtue in daily life (as a family)
6. Find opportunities for your child to practice the virtue

Conscience Builder Example

One of the most effective ways to enhance your child's conscience and virtuous behaviour is to reinforce it whenever your child displays it. Name the virtue, then specifically describe exactly what he did right. (*Remember descriptive praise!*) That way your child will be more likely to repeat the behaviour.

E.g.: Honesty: I know it took courage to tell Dada that you broke his glasses. That was being very honest and I admire you for it.

3. Use Moral discipline to help your child learn right from wrong

- The “Four R’s” of Moral Discipline

1. Respond

2. Review

3. Reflect

4. Repair

- Studies find that how parents react to their children's misbehaviour can be destructive or productive in helping them learn right from wrong and in doing the right thing

First R – Respond calmly and assess the child’s intention

- Remember to breathe!
- Stay calm and listen. If you are too upset, call a time out for yourself and continue the discussion at a later time
- Use phrases such as “Tell me what happened”, “What made you do that?” “How did you think this would turn out?”

Second R – Review why the behaviour is wrong

- You need to ensure that your child clearly understands the reason why what was done was wrong so that it becomes a moral lesson
- Lecturing may not be the best way forward here!
- Listening to your child's explanations will give you an idea of her moral reasoning
- Experts believe that moral reasoning develops slowly so your aim is to stretch your child's moral reasoning gently to a higher level

Example of a conversation regarding stealing

Mom: Do you think stealing is right or wrong?

Amir: It's wrong mom

Mom: Why do you think you shouldn't take something from a store or anywhere else?

Amir: you might get caught

Mom: That is one reason. Can you think of other reasons why we should not steal?

Amir: I guess I could get into trouble with the police

Mom: Any other reasons?

Amir: Well, I knew you would be pretty angry

Mom: Why do you think I would be upset?

Amir: Because I am taking something that is not mine

Mom: That is right, Amir. It did not belong to you, and you took it, and that is not right.

Third R – Reflect on the Behaviour's effects

- Pointing out the behaviour's impact on other people is very powerful for children because it helps build their natural empathy
- This can be effective with very young children as well

Example of a conversation regarding stealing

Mom: Ok, so lets think about the man who owns the store. How do you think he feels about his property being taken?

Amir: I guess he is upset

Mom: Why do you think he is upset?

Amir: Because people are taking things from his store

Mom: Sure, but who do you think has to pay for the missing groceries?

Amir: I don't know. I guess the man?

Mom: Yes. How would you feel if you had to pay for things someone else took from you?

Amir: I'd be very mad

Mom: Would you feel that it was fair if you had to use your own salary to pay for it?

Amir: No, it is not fair

Fourth R – Repair the wrong

- The whole purpose of moral discipline is to teach children how to make right when they do wrong

Example of a conversation regarding stealing

Mom: I think you know what you did was wrong. So let us think of what you can do to make things right. What could you do?

Amir: I could say that I was sorry

Mom: That is one idea. Can you think of another?

Amir: Maybe I could leave the money for the game on his counter.

Mom: I do not think it is fair to keep the game even if you pay for it. You stole the game, Amir, and that is not right. What else can you do?

Amir: I guess I could give it back and say I was sorry

Mom: That will take courage Amir. But it is the right thing to do. Let us talk about how you will do it and when you will take the game back.

Moral intelligence builder: Reparations that help children turn wrongs into rights

- Have the child take time to think about what they did
- Older children can write a letter describing what they did wrong
- The child can write a note, draw a picture or call the victim to apologize
- Ask the child to name a few things that he could have done instead of the misbehaviour
- The child should return and repair property and apologize

The **TEAM** Strategy for Character-Building

A.L.I. online course: Parenting Challenges
Facing Muslims Today - Spring 2011



T.E.A.M.

- TEACH
- ENFORCE
- ADVOCATE
- MODEL



The longer you wait to adjust
the trajectory of a rocket that
is going off course, the more
severe the adjustment will
have to be.

It is the same with children.

— Michael Josephson

Questions and comments?



A.L.I. online course: Parenting Challenges
Facing Muslims Today - Spring 2011