

Parenting Challenges facing Muslims Today

Week 6:

Raising children with character (part 2)

Review

- Parents have an important role to play to encourage the love of learning and reading
- Early readers are more likely to continue to read and succeed at school and beyond
- Things that parents can do include role modeling life long learning, exposing the children to the good use of language, exposing them to books and most importantly, to read to children from the time they are babies to well beyond the time that they can read independently

Review

- Parenting to build character in children:
- The current crisis of conscience and how it impacts our children
- What is character – not predetermined but built day by day
- The most important thing that parents can do is be good role models
- The importance of developing a healthy conscience in children

Review

- There are increased challenges today in character development due to the influence of media and (lack of) social norms
- Parents today tend to give too much and expect too little which does not encourage character development
- We can prepare our children for this world and give them a chance at happiness through fostering discipline, good habits and a strong character
- A healthy conscience is the foundation of a strong character

Agenda

- Raising children with character (Part 2)
 - Characteristics of a strong conscience
 - The steps for growing a conscience
 - The four “R”s of moral discipline
 - Summary: The TEAM approach to developing character

Points to Ponder

- What is our ultimate goal for raising children?
- Are we doing anything as a family or community that goes against our ultimate goal?
- How would we know if our child/ren had a strong conscience?

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

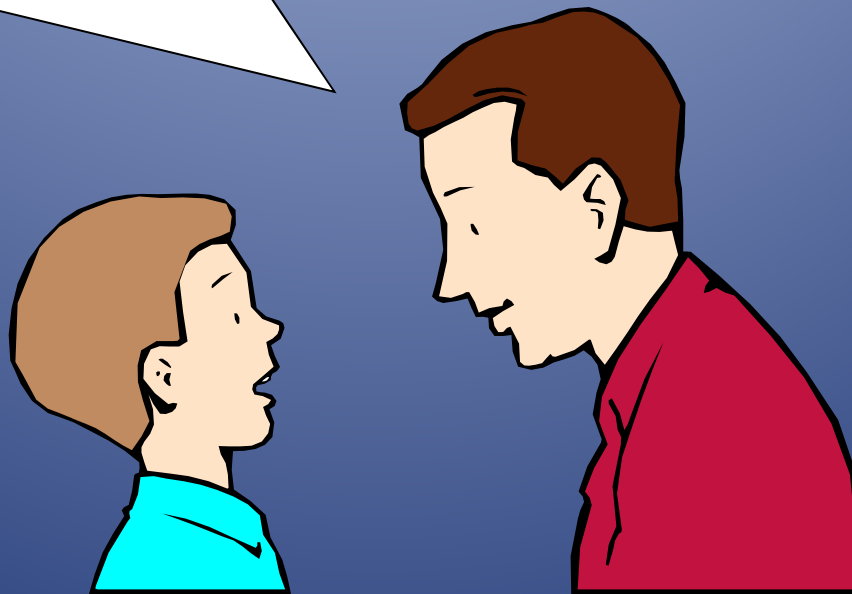
- Parenting practices that promote the development of a strong conscience
 1. Be a strong moral example
 2. Develop a close, mutually respectful relationship
 3. Share your moral beliefs
 4. Expect and demand moral behaviours
 5. Use moral reasoning and questioning
 6. Explain your parenting behaviour

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

As we end, remember that we need to keep our eye on the goal, our ultimate vision for our children. As we go off track, which we will, this goal and vision will help us get back on track . . .



- *“Before the plane takes off, the pilots have a flight plan...but during the course of the flight, wind, rain, turbulence, air traffic, human error, and other factors act on the plane...90% of the time the plane is not even on the prescribed flight path...During the flight, the pilots make constant adjustments to get back on track. The flight of that airplane is the perfect metaphor [for life]...” – Stephen Covey*



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?



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