

ALI 485: The Family: A formation ground for personalities

Session two

◦

How similar/different are you from your close relatives?



From the readings

Man's disposition consists in the man's unified mental structure which is shaped through the interaction of genetics, environment, and willpower; such that it interprets the environmental stimuli consistent with himself and reacts to them in a particular way.

Aliasghar Ahmadi

From the Islamic perspective, the genuine and essential motivation for having a healthy and secure personality is love for the absolute perfection, and the only manifestation of absolute perfection, or infinite perfection, is the Almighty God.

Muhammad Taqi Misbah

Man's soul does not get content with any rank and extent of perfection. This search for perfection is continuous and increasing. The one who sees perfection in the sultanate becomes fond of a greater power after he rises to power, and the one who is fascinated with and fond of a beautiful and attractive appearance will be fond of a more beautiful one when he finds it. From this brief explanation, you should find out about details. Thus, all people unanimously refer to this fact that they love absolute perfection

Imam Ruhullah Khumayni

Factors that affect personality

- 1) Genes
- 2) Nutrition
- 3) Family upbringing
- 4) Education
- 5) Society

1) The role of genes

Marry into a righteous family, for genealogy has effect.

Holy Prophet (s)

Wasail al-Shia, vol. 14,p 30.

Some points

Personality is not determined by any single gene, but rather by the actions of many genes working together.

Genes are not so powerful that they can control or create our personality. Some genes tend to increase a given characteristic and others work to decrease that same characteristic — the complex relationship among the various genes, as well as a variety of random factors, produces the final outcome

Genetic factors always work with environmental factors to create personality. Having a given pattern of genes doesn't necessarily mean that a particular trait will develop, because some traits might occur only in some environments.

From Nahjul Balagha

In a letter to Muawiya Imam Ali (a) writes;
'As for your saying that both of us are sons of 'Abd Manaf, it is no doubt so, but Umayyah cannot be like Hashim, nor Harb like Abd al-Muttalib, nor can Abu Sufyan be like Abu Talib'

Letter no.17

2) Nutrition

Breast milk – The character and attitude of the woman who breastfeeds her child has an effect on the child. Islam recommends calmness, spirituality, and positivity when breastfeeding.

Food – Eating the right foods and following etiquettes of eating impact the personality of a human being.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ
وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

O you who have faith! Eat of the good things
We have provided you, and thank Allah, if it is
Him that you worship

Sura Baqarah, no.2, verse 172

Diet has been found to be one of the factors that affect teenager and young adult violence and aggressiveness; school children hyperactivity, restlessness and poor academic performance; and, managers and employees stress, mood disturbance and lack of motivation.

Extracted from:

<http://aboutislam.net/science/health/diet-human-behavior-food-blame/>

3) Family Upbringing

Certainly, the heart of a young man is like uncultivated land. It accepts whatever is strewn on it. So I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardens up and your mind gets occupied. So that you may be ready to accept through your intelligence, the results of experiences of others and be saved from going through these experiences yourself.

Nahjul Balagha, Letter 31

Many great aspirations, courageous behavior, noble manners as well as crooked personalities have been formed as an effect of parents.

The first home a child knows should be a source of love and respect for him, a place that has order and arrangement.

When a child feels secure and safe in his home and is assured of the love of his parents, he can begin to develop mentally and emotionally.

Each one of you is a guardian (shepherd), and each one of you is responsible for his charges . . .

Holy Prophet (S)

4) Education

- 1) Gives knowledge that helps open the mind and develop the personality.
- 2) Teaches ethics and virtues
- 3) Increases cognitive skills
- 4) Develops healthy habits

Read. Read in the name of thy Lord who created; He created the human being from blood clot. Read in the name of thy Lord who taught by the pen: He taught the human being what he did not know.

Sura Alaq, no.96, verses 1-5

Are those who have knowledge equal to those who do not have knowledge?

Sura Zumar, no.39, verse 9

5) Society

Relationships in society help shape the personality of a person. They influence his emotion, habits, attitudes and general perspectives.

These relationships include;

- 1) Relatives
- 2) Friends
- 3) Community
- 4) Outer society

وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ ۗ وَالَّذِي خَبِثَ
لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا ۗ كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَشْكُرُونَ

The good land—its vegetation comes out by the permission of its Lord, and as for that which is bad, it does not come out except sparsely. Thus do We explain the signs for a people who give thanks.

Sura A'raaf, no.7, verse 58

A man follows the faith, ways and habits of his friend.

Holy Prophet (s)

Usul al-Kafi, v 72, p. 375

The most fortunate are those who have connections with good people

Imam Ali (a)

Gharar al hukm, p. 189

Society affects our personality make-up. Society provides patterns of and platform for realization, activity and socialization. We react and develop traits based on what we face in interaction on the social plane. Some situations demand certain reactions and traits of us and we thereby sharpen these in a form of operant conditioning. Other situations de-emphasize other traits and this makes us jettison or make those traits unimportant and latent in us. Societal and social factors play a major role in our personality chemistry.

https://www.researchgate.net/post/How_does_society_affect_personality

Growth in personality

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Taurat and their description in the Injil; **like as seed-produce that puts forth its sprout, then strengthens it, so it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem**, delighting the sowers

Sura Fath, no.48, verse 29

Case study - Shyness

Aasiya has a four year old daughter who is naturally shy. She is uncomfortable in social situations and clings to her mother when they are with others. Aasiya's niece is three years old and is social and friendly. At family gatherings she has no problems talking to everyone. People love her personality and admire her social skills.

- 1) Should Aasiya be concerned about her daughter's personality?
- 2) How can Aasiya help her daughter develop her personality?