

through this very quickly. Unless you live the values that you wish to see in your children, you can never expect them to learn. When one does not take a principled stand, one will ultimately find oneself drifting farther & farther away from moral & spiritual sensibilities. Live so that when your children think of fairness/integrity, they think of **you**.

Developing Character: When we talk about Islamic education the discussion revolves around strictly academic issues related to technical aspects of curriculum development, testing standards /methodologies, balancing between secular & religious education. We **miss** the greater objective of an Islamic education. That objective, in terms of what is necessary for the immediate success of our children in this world, and their ultimate success in the next, is nurturing balanced, wholesome, honest human beings who live lives based on principle & who exemplify good character in their dealings with other people. About himself the Prophet (p) said: “**Allah has sent me as an apostle so that I may demonstrate perfection of character, refinement of manners & loftiness of deportment.**” How come teachers neglect to impart such life-enhancing qualities?

When our kids are young, many of us rush out to buy a cute little baby book to record the meaningful events of our young child’s life...But there should be a second book, one with room to record the **moral milestones** of our child’s lives. There might be space to record dates they first shared or showed compassion or befriended a new student or thought of sending Grandma a get-well card or told the truth despite its cost.

Think of yourself as the central aspect of your child’s environment. **You can provide your child with the beauty of a Mozart symphony by speaking with a loving sound or adoration & admiration, or the violent cacophony of a car crash by complaining with the screech of clashing disdain.** When you choose the latter, you affect your child’s behavior by providing an influence that directs your child’s personality development into a disturbing formation. Choose the former & fire their imagination. Their imagination then becomes a preview of life’s coming attractions.

If children live with hostility; they learn to fight
If children live with ridicule; they learn to be shy
If children live with tolerance; they learn patience
If children live with encouragement;
they learn confidence

If children live with praise; they learn to appreciate
If children live with fairness; they learn justice
If children live with security; they learn faith
If children live with approval;
they learn to like themselves
If children live with acceptance and friendship;
They learn to find love in the world.

Children’s Learning: There are several kinds of methods to educate children: Observational learning (modeling & imitation); learning from advice; learning by way of orientation, which includes knowledge acquired from recreational & leisurely activities & parables; learning by doing & repetition; learning through reward & punishment. We **destroy the love of learning** in children, which is so strong when they are small, by encouraging & compelling them to work for petty & contemptible rewards, gold stars, or papers marked 100 & tacked to the wall, or A’s on report cards, or honour rolls, in short, for the **ignoble satisfaction** of feeling that they are better than someone else.

Constantly encourage good manners. “Did you say please?” “Say thank you.” “Hold the door for the person coming after you.” Such urgings have to be repeated until the desired traits become ingrained in our children. Repetition in many situations is a great pedagogical tool. Constantly repeated instructions have to be diligently reinforced by adult example. Politeness & courtesy, compassion & tenderness, simplicity & humility, sympathy & sincerity were some of the keynotes of the Prophet’s (p) character.

Get them accustomed to manual work. A group of Muslims were asked if anyone of them had ever changed a flat tire. No one in the assembly answered affirmatively. These are the sort of things every child should learn. Have local mechanics come to school to give courses on the basics of automobile maintenance. In their teen years arrange for apprenticeships at local mechanic shops. Gardening is a great activity. Let children get their hands dirty. Our Prophet (p) knew the value of work. He was a shepherd. He guided caravans across the desert. These activities were integral in shaping his character.

Try to make the space for the children to be children, to enjoy their childhood years. Let them know that these years are preparation for a serious adult life. That coming seriousness though should not be used as a justification to overwhelm them. Moderation provides a golden means. Respecting that “means” helps us to avoid the extreme of an

overindulgent childhood followed by a period of perpetual adolescence, just as it helps us to avoid stultifying, rigid, overbearing child rearing practices that can effectively rob our children of a rich childhood. We must remain balanced, giving our young generation the space to be children, but letting them know that they’re preparing for a weighty life.

You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark
upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer’s hand
be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.

Let’s make the deepest intention to develop our ability to direct our children’s behavior in a beautiful, loving way. We can begin by practicing being more aware of how we react to our child’s form of play. When we dislike the antics our child engages in, let’s focus on how we feel, on what we say/do. Strive to remain anchored in our feeling of our adoration for our child. Express more loving, tender compassion & appreciation & gratitude for our child, even while taking action to take control. With practice, you will gradually develop your ability to direct & correct your child’s behavior without breaking your deeply loving connection.

Voice & Choice: The more the child has the opportunity of “owning” the decision/problem, the more he/she will learn. The purpose of allowing natural consequences to occur & of designing logical consequences is to encourage making responsible choices, not punish them. This method permits a child to choose & then to be accountable for the decision. Most children, **when permitted to make POOR choices, learn from the consequences.** The most effective method of teaching is for you to remain *matter-of-fact* & *non-punishing*. A child’s question is **not** merely & barely a question. A child’s question reveals a story. It will help your communications & your sanity.

Children: The greatest joy known to humans.
Not, definitely not, your tech toys, gadgets, or your car.
Not your cell-phone that you so dearly clutch on to...not wanting to miss other’s status updates. Not your fancy bedroom with all it’s bling & shiny trinkets that you so caringly & grudgingly guard. Yeah, none of that is as important as your CHILD.

LIKE A
Candle
IN THE WIND

Are you an “adult” who destroys the light & vivacity that laugh in the eyes of a child? Into the blackest depths of this violation of children’s souls one can hardly bear to look; for here we find pious fraud masking the violation of the body by obscene cruelty. Any parent/school teacher who takes a secret & abominable delight in torture (laying traps into which every child must fall), and then beat it to their heart’s content is **sick**. Soon the child’s clear, heavenly eye is clouded over by fossilized ideas & warped opinions, preconceptions & abstractions. A simple free being becomes encrusted with the burdensome armour of the ego. A vital sense of mystery has been hammered out of the child.

Paradise is now a hazy memory.
What toxic parenting/teaching!
A slightly modified version of a popular song is a tribute to the children of the world (Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan & Guyana) whose lives were snuffed out by grotesque monsters.

Goodbye heaven’s rose
May you ever grow in our hearts
You were the grace that placed itself
Where lives were torn apart
You called out to our country
And you whispered to those in pain
Now you belong to heaven
And the stars spell out your name
And it seems you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never fading with the sunset
When the rain set in
And your footsteps will always fall here
Along earth’s greenest hills
Your candle’s burned out long before
Your legend ever will
Loveliness we’ve lost
These empty days without your smile
This torch we’ll always carry
For our nation’s innocent child
And even though we try
The truth brings us to tears
All our words cannot express
The joy you brought us through the years.

A revolution in child care took place 1400 years ago. A man treated children with the respect, love & mercy that they deserved. "They are **not** of us who are **not** affectionate to the little ones." An ominous warning that it's our **behaviour** that determines our "Muslim-ness"; that determines the depth of our submission to God. Examine our "modern civilization" & its brutality to children & the realization dawns on us that we (so-called mothers & fathers) are **savages**. The Prophet's (p) compassion is needed more than ever. Follow his tender words: "**Honour your children & thus improve their manners.**" He, compassionate man, carved his name upon their hearts.

When the cat cries over the rat it's always a case of **false compassion**. Are you the cat & your child the rat in this heart-wrenching poem?

A child smiles into his mother's eyes
And **she** tells him he is an **inconvenience**
His laughter fills the house
And she **complains** of the noise
He hugs his mommy's neck
& she **worries** about soiling her clothes
He cries; He leaves; He's off into the streets
Not wanting to be of any burden
He suffers so much; he is so tired,
He can't even cry; his arms & bones ache
his only wish is to die
When every success is blurred
And all of life seems so absurd
There is no joy even in his fondest dreams
And the sunniest of days seem so dull
That he can't find any meaning in it all
There are those who stand & watch
(teachers, religious & community leaders)
And act like they do not see
And yet, I know they can help
if they weren't afraid to enter
This tempestuous sea
But I pray someday someone
Will come to his rescue
And **maybe next time**
Parents, teachers will understand,
How precious a child is
If they receive another gift...so why cry...cat?

According to a companion he had never come across a person who was more affectionate towards children than the Prophet (p). Traditions reveal his amazing sympathy with the young mind & method for their informal training in daily life, which persuaded the children to cooperate in a joyous enthusiasm for their upbringing & education.

Aishah (the wife of the Prophet) said when the Prophet (p) saw his daughter Fatima approaching, he would welcome her, stand up & kiss her, take her by the hand & sit her down in the place where he was sitting. She would do the same when the Prophet (p) came to her. She would stand up & welcome him with joy & kiss him. Fatimah's fine manners & gentle speech were part of her lovely & endearing personality. She inherited from her father a persuasive eloquence that was rooted in wisdom. **Sing the praises of this father & daughter.** May we live the lessons...abounding joy, kisseys & huggies.

1400 years later. In our day & age. It was in the Bosnian War. A reporter covering the conflict whilst in Sarajevo saw a young girl shot by a sniper. He threw down his notepad & ran to the girl & a man who had just picked her up before helping them both into his car. As the reporter drove, the man holding the bleeding child begged him to drive faster giving increasingly desperate updates on the girl's condition. Sadly by the time they got to the hospital, the girl was dead. Together the two men went to wash the blood off their hands & clothes. After a bit the man who had held the girl, turned to the journalist & said: "This is a terrible task for me. I must go & tell her father that his child is dead. He will be crushed with sorrow." The reporter was stunned. Looking at the grieving man, he stuttered out the words: "But I thought she was your child." The man looked back & replied: "**But aren't they all our children?**" He was right. All someone's children! All our children! Does your heart bleed for the Muslim children blown to smithereens by Western bombs? My God! How cold you are!

When the girl-child buried alive is asked what she did to deserve murder. In *The Overturning*, one mark of the apocalypse will be the question addressed to young girls who were buried alive. (81, 8-9) In ancient bedouin society, male children were valued more than females. A female child could become a financial burden & the family's honour was always vulnerable to attacks

on her honour. As in other cultures, the disparity in social value led to practices such as infanticide. By placing the condemnation of this practice within the series of apocalyptic flashes, *The Overturning* makes it the epitome of human wrongdoing.

Why is there such a widespread, all-pervasive male child preference all over the world, which results in sex-selective abortion, neglect of female children & female infanticide. India: An advertising slogan of gender scanning ultrasound companies that predict sex is "**600 rupees now, save 50,000 rupees later.**" And you thought that female infanticide was a relic of the past.

Parenting is one of the most noble challenges that ever existed. Where does that noble act of charity begin? One of the ways we can make a huge impact is by starting from home. By working on the spiritual development of children. This is vital for it becomes the compass that guides children to make the right choices. To reject evil & to embrace the high values & ideals that Islam seeks to instill in its adherents.

Parents are so immersed in the worldly life that they forget to pay attention to their children. Some parents think that providing financial support is enough. The fact is, **financial support alone doesn't fulfill a parent's duty towards their child.** When you allow the training of your children to take priority over your career then you are bound to reap a harvest of love & appreciation from them at the closing years of your life. One can only win a child's heart through love & a gentle attitude. **It is the child's right to be loved & cherished.**

Your children are **not** your children.

They are the sons & daughters
of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but **not** from you,
Though they are with you yet they belong **not** to you.

You may give them your love but **not** your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but **not** their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them,
but seek **not** to make them like you.

For life goes **not** backward
nor tarries with yesterday.

Ruining our Children: A list of things **not** to

do to our children.

Giving them worldly ideals: In their formative years, children seek ideals, or mentors they want to emulate. Unfortunately, for most, this gap is being filled by hollow celebrities, wealthy hedonists, or fictional characters. Replace these with our true heroes, who are the Prophets, the companions & righteous people. Loving these people, learning about their lives & achievements & trying to emulate them is essential to our children's spiritual development. Only when one expresses this Islamic love to a child will the child feel confident & strong.

Careless about money: If we're rich, we meet their every need without making them realize the effort that goes in to earning a halal income. Islam places great emphasis on how to spend from wealth. Wasteful expenditure & extravagance is disliked. Charity is encouraged. Muslims are encouraged to spend on the legitimate needs of their families. Responsible finance is essential to building a strong generation. Avoid riba-based (interest) transactions. That 8.9% APR is hell on an installment plan. Consider its implications, both spiritual & worldly. Teach them about debt: it's something that has a serious & direct effect on one's faith. "**Whoever dies free from three things: arrogance, cheating & debt will enter Paradise.**"

Not letting them choose a career: Don't force children to take the beaten path. There are other careers besides medicine, engineering, accounting & law. Encourage them to be scientists, journalists, scholars, economists, politicians (only the sleaziest, immoral scum fill the leadership vacuum). There are Muslims in these fields, but in the Muslim world, these options simply don't seem viable. They are extremely crucial.

Practice what you preach principle: The phone rings. Your daughter takes the call. It's for you. You quickly gesture, telling her you're not home. Your kid now has to lie for you. What lesson are you teaching her? That it's OK to lie & to ignore people. There's always a better way to handle this situation. You tell your son he needs to go to the masjid, while you play dominoes. Kids see

Strong, stable families,
headed by a **quality father** & **quality mother,** are the anchor of civilized society.

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