

Effective Islamic Parenting

The Soul of your child is like an uncut precious jewel entrusted into your care by Allah. To you is given the awesome responsibility of shaping that precious jewel into a beautiful form, pleasing to the eye of Allah. It is your sacred duty to ensure your child grows up to be a good and right human being (Muslim). The oneness (tawhid) of Allah is also expressed in the unity of Islamic life. Raising your children to be good and right human beings is part of the necessary Islamization of world society. The simple fact is that it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to raise your children to be truly good and right human beings in the world as it is at present.

Only in a fully Islamic world will the conditions exist where children will naturally develop into the good and right humans beings desired by Allah. That is the beautiful future we can offer our children, but to do this we must do battle with the influences of the present wrong world as we create that promised future for our children. We do this by learning the knowledge and skills it takes to be an effective Islamic parent, and developing in our hearts the unstoppable desire to put these skills and knowledge into practice in our everyday life as we aid our children in their development.

We are greatly blessed by Allah to be Muslims at this particular time in world history. The unique social and historical conditions, combined with new the knowledge and technology now available, make it not only possible but highly likely that within a generation or so we will live in that long unfulfilled dream of all Muslims, a truly Islamic world.

These unique conditions existing today are: the fact that the prevailing dominant world culture, the Western culture, is undergoing a widespread social collapse due to the inherent wrongness within its belief systems and behaviours; that the conclusions of modern science have finally reached a point where one must acknowledge science now supports the traditional beliefs in God and His works; that we have recently come to understand the laws of learning by which all human characteristics are developed; and, that we now have a worldwide communication network so effective that any important new idea could reach virtually every person in the world within days.

The result of these existing conditions is that: those suffering from the collapse of the Western way of life and thought are desperate for some solution to their distress and will see in Islam that much needed answer; atheism and secular materialism will lose their power to take the faith in Islam from our youth; through the spread of the knowledge of learning theory each new generation will come closer to the perfect expression of Islam in the physical existence; and, through the right use of communication technology a unified ummah of 1.2 billion Muslims will be able to effectively offer the traditional scholarship and knowledge of Islam to all the people of the world.

In the coming years there will occur many new opportunities for all Muslims to take an active role in the creation of this truly and fully Islamic world of the future. As a most important beginning to this momentous task it is necessary for every Muslim parent to learn and practice the techniques of effective Islamic parenting. The path to effective Islamic parenting consists of two parts, necessarily inseparable. They are an objective, accurate and positive worldview, combined with a good understanding of the laws of learning by which all human characteristics develop. This is necessary because the laws of learning are much too powerful to be used without a clear positive direction in which to influence the child's development. Islam most certainly provides this clear, correct and positive direction, as Allah would never mislead us.

All laws in this physical universe belong to Allah, and the laws of learning, to the degree we correctly understand them, by which all human development takes place are created by Allah just as are the laws of physics which hold the moon, sun, and stars in place. These laws of learning provide the most powerful tool for directing the development of the individual or any social group that has ever existed. For a Muslim to be a truly effective Islamic parent it is necessary to understand Allah's laws of learning.

Just as Allah has made our religion easy for us, Allah has made the laws of learning easy for us to understand and use. Actually, these laws of learning in their entirety can be quite complex, and to fully comprehend these laws and understand their widest application can take many years of study. Nevertheless, all thanks to His Mercy, Allah has allowed anyone hearing a brief and simple explanation of these laws of learning to be able to use most of their incredible power. This easily understood knowledge of the laws of learning is more than enough to enable a parent to raise their child as a good and right human being.

It is important that knowledge of these laws of learning and their use should never be seen as somehow separate from the unity of Islamic life. To be most effective in helping you raise your children, these laws of learning are not to be 'applied' like some mechanical tool, but they must be incorporated deeply into the innermost reaches of your consciousness until they become a natural part of your unique style of interpersonal communication and interaction with your child.

In order to keep this explanation of the laws of learning both brief and simple it will be presented as a successive series of individual points, but made specific for use in effective Islamic parenting:

GENERAL LAWS OF DEVELOPMENT

1. Most basic premise - That any person or social group who possesses both a positive and accurate world view and an understanding of the laws of learning will move naturally and inevitably toward all things good and right.
2. An infant child comes into the world perfectly good and only becomes other than perfectly good while growing into adulthood due to the influences upon him/her during their years of development.
3. Human society is obviously not perfectly good at this point in history, in fact our world society has become so bad that some philosophers have made the claim that human nature is basically evil.
4. The reason so much evil exists in today's world is not because human nature is basically evil, but because the influences we naturally encounter as physical beings in a material world tend most often to direct our development away from Allah.
5. The influences upon us come from three sources in our environment, the physical, the social (any influence coming either directly or indirectly from other people), and from inner speech (the influence of our own thoughts and feelings).
6. Every influence upon us will have some effect greater than zero; and, while most of these will be very small, some can be so powerful as to be life changing.
7. The overall impact upon our development of any single influence from any of these three sources can be either negative or positive.
8. Every individual is subjected to many thousands of influences every day, some of these influences being directed toward evil and some being directed toward Allah.

9. To overcome the influence of evil (movement toward the material) and move toward Allah (the spiritual) takes consistent and concentrated effort.
10. If we do not recognize the affect of these influences upon our development we will go whichever way the influences take us, thereby too often moving away from Allah and toward evil.
11. If we can recognize the affect of these influences upon our development we can use the laws of learning to limit the affect of the negative influences upon us and to increase the affect of the positive influences upon us, thereby moving continuously away from evil and moving toward Allah.
12. When we see an influence upon us that we know would push us away from Allah we can say things to ourselves using inner speech that can take away the power of that negative influence.
13. When we see an influence upon us that we know would help us move toward Allah we can say things to ourselves using inner speech that can add greatly to the power of that positive influence.
14. As we learn to recognize all the influences upon us from the inner and outer realms of the environment, when we learn to correctly identify those influences as being either negative or positive upon our development, and when we learn to use our inner speech to say the correct things after each one of those negative or positive influences (which will reduce the power of the negative and increase the power of the positive), then we will begin naturally and inevitably to move away from all that is wrong and harmful, and we will begin to move naturally and inevitably toward all things good and right.
15. An individual who does these things cannot fail to become a good and right human being; and, a society that does these things cannot fail to become a good and right society.

GENERAL LAWS OF LEARNING

1. Basically, all laws of learning involve what is commonly called reward and punishment.
2. Any behaviour that is followed by reward (reinforcement) will tend to increase in the future.
3. There are two classes of reward: when something that is desired is given after a behaviour, that is reward (for example, if you were to smile at your child after he/she says something nice); and, when something that is disliked is removed after a behaviour, that is reward (for example, when your feeling of shame for some wrong you have done is removed by offering sincere repentance and seeking forgiveness from Allah).
4. Any behaviour that is followed by punishment will tend to decrease in the future.
5. There are two classes of punishment: when something that is disliked occurs after a behaviour, that is punishment (for example, if you were to hit your child after he/she says something rude); and, when something that is liked is removed after a behaviour, that is punishment (for example, if your child is not allowed to continue playing after hitting a playmate).
6. Punishment is always harmful to the child even if it seems to achieve the parent's goal.
7. The undesirable side effects of punishment are: the child will sometimes try to escape from or retaliate (fight) against the punishing situation; the child will sometimes have negative feelings toward whoever punishes him/her; and, punishment usually remains effective only when the possibility of punishment is clearly present.

8. The alternative to punishment should not be permissiveness (meaning to let your child do anything they want), if there is anything more harmful to the child's development than punishment it is permissiveness.
9. The right alternative to punishment in raising a child is called directed positive influence.
10. Directed positive influence means to reward (with praise, attention or an occasional small gift) your child after they do things that are good and right, while gently providing correction when your child does wrong.
11. The younger you start using directed positive influence with your child the easier it will be for you and the more effective it will be in helping your child develop into a good and right human being.
12. To provide effective Islamic parenting you must understand the concept of 'shaping'.
13. Shaping is the consistent rewarding of successive small steps toward any desired goal for your child.
14. With the shaping process correctly and consistently in effect there is no positive goal that cannot be achieved.
15. Set every goal at perfection, being rewarding of successful steps along that unending path but never punishing the non-arrival at that perfect goal.
16. The beginning steps in the shaping process should be kept small so they are easily accomplished successfully.
17. If during the shaping process you make any step so large that it cannot be accomplished then the progress toward the desired goal will come to a stop, and often revert back to a much less desired level.

18. Lots of reward should be given at the beginning of the shaping process and then should be gradually reduced in the later stages.
19. If reward is given after every behaviour in the shaping process this is called 'continuous reinforcement'.
20. Continuous reinforcement is very good for getting progress toward some desired goal underway.
21. The problem with continuous reinforcement is that the behaviour can become too dependent on the reward, and could stop quickly if the reward stops.
22. If reward is given not after every behaviour in the shaping process but after only some behaviours this is called 'variable reinforcement'.
23. Variable reinforcement is a good way to maintain progress toward a desired goal without the behaviour becoming too dependent on the reward, so that your child does not always expect to be rewarded for their right behaviour.
24. To make the shaping process most effective you should teach your child how to reward their successful progress with inner speech, their own thoughts and feelings, so reward from others is no longer necessary to maintain good and right behaviour.
25. It is good to always discuss your goals for your child with him/her so that you are consciously working together to achieve goals you both desire.
26. It will help your child greatly in their development if you can teach him/her the specifics of the laws of learning that you are using to help them become good and right human beings.
27. For most effective parenting everyone in the family group should be made aware of and helped to understand these laws of learning, should

try to relate to each other on the basis of these laws of learning, and should share, appreciate and work together to achieve the desired goals.

SPECIFICS OF EFFECTIVE ISLAMIC PARENTING

1. For Islamic parenting to be most effective there must be a truly Islamic society, so part of your responsibility as Muslim parents is to help recreate a right Islamic world.
2. Parental love for their children is a Mercy from Allah, not only in humans but even in animals.
3. In Islam the love of a parent for their child is so taken for granted that it is not even thought necessary to state this as a requirement for parents.
4. In Islam the main responsibility the parent has to their child is to provide for their education (this is to be understood in the broadest possible sense, including all things that assist the child to become a good and right human being).
5. The Qur'an also places great responsibility on the child in regard to their parents, requiring the child to be kind to the parents, to help their parents in their old age, to never speak to their parents with contempt, to never reject their parents, to honour their parents, and to fulfil all these responsibilities with humility.
6. Every child should be taught from their earliest years about their responsibility as a vicegerent(khalifah) of Allah; that it is their duty as vicegerent to transform themselves into Muslims living in true submission to the Will of Allah, that it is their duty to transform all of human society into an Islamic society living in true submission to the Will of Allah, and that it their duty to transform the physical world of space and time into a garden paradise for Allah.
7. Raise your child to be a courageous Muslim, willing to struggle against evil in the greater and lesser jihad, as this will be necessary to create a right Islamic world for the future.

8. Raise your child to fully believe they will successfully create and live in a truly Islamic world, because belief is critical to successfully achieving any goal.
9. Anything that you believe will happen is more likely to happen because you will find ways (both consciously and unconsciously) to make sure it happens, and anything that you don't believe will happen is less likely to happen because you will find ways to make sure it doesn't happen; this fact is known as the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.
10. The parent should never let their love for their child prevent them from doing what is right for their child (for example neglecting to correct the child when he/she does wrong).
11. If there is a conflict of interests, the requirements of Islam have priority over the desires of the child (for example, if the child would rather play than pray).
12. Teach your child to love Allah, The Prophet, Islam, and Islamic values.
13. Teach your child to see all things and understand all things from the perspective of Islam.
14. In Islam if it becomes necessary to correct your child for some wrongdoing this must be done according to a certain hierarchy: first, explain to your child in a gentle way how they have overstepped some limit from rightness into wrong; second, if the gentle instruction does not result in the child correcting that wrong behaviour, you should indicate your disapproval of that wrong behaviour by withdrawing your favour (for example, do not give smiles, hugs or kind words to your child at such times); and third, only as a last resort, your child can be physically punished (beaten) if they do not correct the wrong behaviour.
15. In Islam if it becomes necessary for you to beat your child there are specific rules and limitations: you may not hit your child on the face or stomach, you may not hit your child more than a maximum of three

- times, and you may not hit your child hard enough to leave a cut or bruise on the skin.
16. You should never hit your child when you are angry, not only are you then more likely to become excessive in your punishment but doing so will teach your child that it is right to hit people when they are angry.
 17. It is important to realize that if you reach a point where you feel it is necessary to beat your child then something has gone badly wrong, and you previously have not done all you could have done to avoid this becoming necessary.
 18. It is a fact of learning that you cannot punish a child without harming him/her, so punishment can only become necessary if you have no positive alternative, and the good that comes from being punished will outweigh the harm you do to your child.
 19. Remember, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) never once hit a child, a woman or a servant.
 20. Do not argue with your child, as there is almost never any benefit in doing so.
 21. Although your child might well choose to pray at a younger age, at seven years of age your child should be required to pray through gentle encouragement; and, at ten years of age your child can be beaten for not praying, although this circumstance should never arise with correct Islamic parenting.
 22. Your child should be taught to memorize the Qur'an, the benefits are many and much wider in scope than is often believed in these modern times.
 23. At every age there must be appropriate rights given to your child and necessary limits set upon your child's behaviour, which will allow your

child to fully explore their human potential while not causing harm to themselves, harm to others or damage to their surroundings.

24. If you see your child doing something wrong it is usually not even necessary to mention the thing that is wrong, instead, it is often sufficient (and always more desirable) only to say how much you like the right thing which is the opposite of the wrong being done.
25. You should not expose your child's failings or wrongdoings in front of others, if this must be done it is best if it be done privately.
26. Don't give much attention to the bad or wrong things your child does and says, but give lots of attention to the good or right things your child does and says.
27. You should, of course, always love your child unconditionally, but you should only express that love at times which are most beneficial to your child.
28. You should at all times be a model of a good and right human being (Muslim) for your child.

Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Rahiim

EFFECTIVE ISLAMIC PARENTING

(Read each morning!!!)

1. I am raising my child to be a successful vicegerent (khalifah) of Allah, who will help create a truly Islamic World.
2. Today I will try my best to know and understand all the influences upon my child's development.
3. Today I will try my best to help my child understand the power of negative influences to take him/her away from Allah, and the power of positive influences to take him/her to Allah.
4. Today I will try my best to shield my child from the power of the negative influences to take him/her away from Allah.
5. Today I will try my best to enhance (increase) the power of the positive influences upon my child to take him/her toward Allah.
6. Today I will try my best to notice some positive things my child does or says, and tell him/her how much those things are appreciated by me and by Allah.
7. Today I will try my best to say nothing negative to my child. Even if I have to correct my child's wrong behaviour I will try my best to find some positive way to do so.
8. Today I will love my child unconditionally, but I will try my best to express that love at times which are most beneficial to my child.

9. Today I will try my best to be an example of a good and right human being (Muslim) for my child.

10. Today I will pray for Allah's help that I can be a good parent for my child.