

Raising Children in Islam – (A Practical Guide for Young Parents)

Parents hold enormous leverage in terms of what they teach their children and accordingly how their children grow up as adults. Islam, therefore, hold parents responsible for steering their children's upbringing according to the guidelines of the Quran and the Prophet's (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) traditions. The Prophet (s) said: **“Allah (SWT) will ask every caretaker about the people under his care, and the man will be asked about the people of his household”** (Nasa'i, Abu Da'ud). Allah (SWT) states in the [Quran](#) about the need to raise families in the light of their end destination, which may be translated in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ
غِلَاطٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

“O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded” ([Tahrim](#) 66:6).

Children have the right, therefore, to be raised as responsible [Muslim](#) adults and parents must ensure that right appropriately. Parents must be conscious and take an active role in guiding their children and families on the path of truth. The Prophet Muhammad (s) said:

“Every one of your (people) is responsible, and everyone is responsible for whatever falls under his responsibility. A man is like a shepherd of his own family, and he is responsible for them” (Bukhari and Muslim).

The following are some of the critical areas related to raising children into responsible Muslim adults:



Give the child a good name

Parents have the responsibility to provide the child with a good name which is in accordance with Islamic traditions. One of the [hadith](#) in this context is the one narrated by Naafi' that Ibn 'Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: **"The most beloved of your names to Allah are 'Abd-Allah and 'Abd al-Rahmaan"** (Narrated by Muslim, 2132).

Spend appropriately on your children

Parents, and especially fathers, have the responsibility to spend on their children in ways that can help their proper upbringing. It was narrated that 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr said: The Messenger of Allah (s) said: **"It is sufficient sin for a man if he neglects those on whom he is obliged to spend"** (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 1692; classed as sahan by Shaykh al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami', 4481). Another hadith in this context states that 'Aa'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (s), said: A woman came to me with two daughters and asked me for food, and I could not find anything except one date which I gave to her. She shared it between her two daughters, then she got up and went out. The Prophet (s) came in and I told him what had happened. He said: **"Whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against the Fire"** (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5649; Muslim, 2629).

All children within a family have their own rights to be treated fairly. This right was referred to by the Prophet (s) in the saheeh hadeeth: **"Fear Allah and treat your children fairly"** (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2447; Muslim, 1623).

Parents should not show undue preference to their children based on their gender or other criteria. Unfair treatment can arouse a feeling of jealousy and hatred in children that can continue for life and can also lead to bitterness in the child's [heart](#) toward the parents as well. The Prophet (s) referred to this in the hadeeth narrated by Muslim (1623) when he said to the father of al-Nu'maan, **"Would you like them to honor you**

equally?” He said, “Yes.” In other words, if you want them all to honor you equally, then be equally fair to all of them.

Even about the inheritance that children are bound to receive from parents, Allah (SWT) has made it clear that it does not depend on the parents’ wishes but has to be given according to the laws laid down in the [Quran](#):

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ فَإِن كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِن كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ وَلِأَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِن كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرِثَتْهُ أَبَوَاهُ فَلِأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلِأُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِمَّن بَعْدَ وَصِيَّةِ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنِ آبَائِكُمُ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُم لَآ تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُم أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفَعًا فَرِيضَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

“Allah commands you as regards your children’s (inheritance)...” ([Surah An-Nisa](#) 4:11).

Treat your children with love and mercy

Parents have the obligation to show love and mercy to their children. This will help children to develop normal and stable personalities and will also make it easier for children to love and respect their parents and elders when they grow up. Seeing the Prophet kissing his grandson, a person named Alaqr’a Ibn Habis found this behavior strange and said, “I have ten children, but I have never kissed any of them.” The Prophet (s) replied, **“The one who has no compassion will not be treated mercifully”** ([Sahih Bukhari](#) and At-Tirmidhi).

One of the most important facets of raising children is for the parents to provide them with the right training. According to Islamic traditions, the best gift that parents can provide to their children is training that can help them live as responsible Muslim adults fulfilling the rights of Allah and others. This, then, can lead them to succeed in the hereafter as well. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi va sallam) said, **“The best gift to children from parents is their correct training”** (Tirmizi).

Educating children in such a way that they can be successful both [in this life](#) and the hereafter should be the supreme responsibility of parents. In today’s world, while it is common to see parents focus on the kind of education that can help them toward building the right careers and in making a living, the focus on [Islamic education](#) rarely gets its due focus. Depriving children of proper Islamic teachings can prevent children from building a [close relationship with their creator Allah](#), which is the cornerstone of all success in this life and the hereafter. A good religious education grounded in love of their Lord, on the contrary, can help them live a more peaceful life, deal with life’s challenges easily and maturely, and fulfill the rights and obligations of all around them (including the parents themselves), leading the children to grow up as better citizens of their communities and making them an integral part of the overall Muslim Ummah.

The following provide some of the key responsibilities of the parents in terms of raising and training their children:

Inculcating the concept of “La Ilaha Illa-Allah” and Huquq Allah (Rights of Allah)

Parents should inculcate in their children the correct ‘aqeedah of the oneness of Allah followed by all religious acts of worship that are needed for them to get close to Allah. This involves teaching children all rights of Allah, which can come by children fully understanding the concepts of Tawheed. The principles of Tawheed should never be taken lightly because they mark the boundaries of entering [Islam](#). Mu`âdh bin Jabal relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: **“O Mu`âdh! Do you know what is Allah’s right over His servants and what their right is over Him?” I said: “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said: “Allah’s right over His servants is that they worship Him without associating any partner with Him in worship, and their right over Him is that He does not punish anyone who worships Him without associating any partner with Him in worship”** [Sahîh al-Bukhârî and Sahîh Muslim].

Eeman (belief/faith) in Allah comprises of the following distinct concepts that parents must strive to teach their children:

1. **Faith (Eeman) in the Existence of Allah:** This refers to believing in Allah – not just any God – but specifically Allah as the supreme being of this universe and all that exists in this universe.
2. **Faith (Eeman) in the Rububiyah (Lordship) of Allah** – This refers to believing in Allah as the true Lord of this universe and as the controller of all aspects of this universe.
3. **Faith (Eeman) in the Uluhiyyah (Worship) of Allah** – This refers to singling out only Allah as the one who is worthy of any worship.
4. **Faith (Eeman) in al-Asma was-Sifat (the names and attributes) of Allah** – This refers to belief in [Allah’s names and attributes](#).

Teaching Allah’s rights to children

Believing and living life on the [concepts of Tawheed](#) not only can lead to ultimate salvation, it can also nurture the love of Allah in the children’s hearts at an early age, which is the essence of our relationship with Allah. The [Quran also gives us examples where prophets and the righteous](#) stressed the importance of fulfilling the rights of Allah to their children. As an example, [Luqman](#) (alaihis’salam) provided the following instructions to his son as mentioned in the Quran by Allah:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ
“And (remember) when Luqmaan said to his son when he was advising him: “O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily, joining others in worship with Allah is a great Zulm (wrong) indeed” [Surah Luqman 31:13].

As part of this training, parents should also ensure that they train their children on all the rituals of worship including the five times obligatory [prayers](#), fasting, charity, Hajj, reciting Quran, and so on. A hadith in this context clarifies this concept where Mu’adh ibn Jabal narrated that, “I said to Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him): Inform me about an act which would entitle me to get into Paradise, and remove me away from Hell-Fire. He (the Prophet) said: **You have asked me about a matter (which ostensibly appears to be) difficult but it is easy to those for whom Allah, the Exalted, has made it easy. Worship Allah and do not associate anything with him, establish prayer, pay the Zakat, observe the fast of Ramadan and perform Hajj to the (sacred) House (Ka’bah).**”

Teaching children about Huqul-Ibad (Rights of other fellow beings)

Huqul-Ibad is about respecting the rights of others and especially understanding others’ rights from an Islamic standpoint. A concise description of fulfilling both Huqooq Allah and Huqooq Ibaad is found in the following verse:

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ
 وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

“Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masakin (the poor), the neighbor who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful (An-Nisa 4:36).”

For example, children raised in certain non-Muslim cultures may not develop the same respect for parents and elders as mandated in Islam. Children should, therefore, be taught to be respectful and dutiful to their parents, maintain good relations with relatives, and neighbors. Children should also be warned against picking up habits that can lead to disrespecting others. These include backbiting, slandering, lying and abusing others.

Helping children to choose their role models

Role models help people to model their behavior and character after those personalities. Parents should, therefore, help their children choose their role models wisely. When teaching about Islam and its teachings, parents should help their children learn about the lives of the prophets, especially Prophet Muhammad (s), sahaba (prophet’s companions such as Abu Bakar, Umar, and so on), tabieen (the ones who

followed the sahaba), other salaf (the likes of Hassan al-Basri, Muhammad ibn Sirin, Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz, Ahmad bin Hanbal, etc.), and early Islamic scholars such as Ibne-Taymiyyah, [Ibn Al-Qayyim](#), Ibn Katheer, and so on. Learning about these personalities of Islam who actualized the teachings of Islam can help children [learn from](#) their knowledge and appreciate the relationship that those individuals developed with Allah and how they lived exemplary lives. While it may be difficult to teach children about each one of them, parents should at a minimum introduce these personalities to their children and how such personalities achieved high status within Islamic circles. Planting the seeds of respect for such personalities at an early age in your children's hearts will make it easier for them to seek out more knowledge [about these personalities of Islam](#) when they get older.

Teach your children skills that lead to earning only Halal (legal)

Parents should spend their time, effort, and resources to help their children make the right choices for earning a living. In doing so, parents should stress the need for their children to pursue career paths that can provide them solely with Halal (legal) living. Islam places enormous emphasis on this subject and these teachings are clearly stated both in the Quran and hadith. In one case, the prophet (s) said:

“...Purify your food, your [supplication](#) will be accepted. By the one in whose hand lays the life of Muhammad, verily a servant places a morsel of Haram in his stomach (and as a result) forty days of worship will not be accepted from him.” (Recorded by Imam Tabrani). In another narration, it is narrated that an angel at Bayt al-Maqdis proclaims every day and night: ***“Whosoever consumes unlawful (haram) food, Allah Most High will not accept his obligatory (fard) and voluntary worship.”*** (See: al-Kaba'ir of Imam Dhahabi).

Teaching children knowledge of the Quran

In addition to teaching your children recitation of the Quran, knowledge of the Quran will help your children to think beyond the mundane matters of this life and instead develop elevated [thinking](#) that can enable them to ponder about critical issues that can help them reconcile the many confusing ideologies that the world will throw at them as they grow up. Getting them to start [thinking](#) about the reasons of their existence, their day to day struggles, and where the world is heading to will make them become more prudent in terms of their life's priorities.

Consider that once when in Madinah, the prophet (s) had to send a group to Yemen for teaching new Muslims there about Islam. The prophet picked Mu'adh bin Jabal as their leader (even though Muadh was very young – perhaps in his early twenties). The prophet said, “The most knowledgeable of my ummah [community] in matters of Halal [permitted, allowed, lawful or legal] and Haram [forbidden] is Mu'adh bin Jabal.” This shows that knowledge of Quran had expanded the horizons of Muadh to such an extent that the prophet (s) himself picked him as a leader for an important expedition.

Teaching children Islamic morals and characters

Besides teaching children the rituals of worship and the rights of individuals, children should be taught Islamic morals, characters, and etiquette from an early age so that it becomes part of their habits. Children should be taught the principles of humility, tolerance, patience, and other such behavioral traits. These personality traits can help any individual tremendously in their lives. For example, teach them about patience and tolerance and dealing with tough situations, and they will be thankful to you for the rest of their lives. Those of us who struggle in life by not having properly learned such conduct may also very well know their value. Children can learn such conduct by learning hadith as well as learning about the lives of the prophet (s) and his companions.

PROVIDE YOUR CHILDREN A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR THEIR UPBRINGING

Training children so that they can grow up to become responsible citizens requires that parents actively maintain an atmosphere at home that is conducive to positive learning and upbringing. This, therefore, requires that parents, too, model their lives according to the Islamic way of life. Children can get conflicting messages and thus can get confused when they do not see parents and elders following the instructions that they give to them, or when out of excessive love for them, parents become so indulgent that they turn a blind eye to their sins and fail in checking them.

It is well known that children who are raised in households where argumentation, fighting, and abuse abound, not only learn less but are more prone to develop personality disorders. There is plenty of research that shows that the serious problems of adolescents, including drug abuse, school failure, delinquency and violence, have grown to tragic proportions in part because of the deteriorating environments in which young people are raised.

Conclusion

Parents should put in their best efforts to ensure that their children become true inheritors of Islam, and to keep Islam alive in their lives and their families' lives after their death. Parental efforts are, therefore, quite instrumental in inculcating the love of Islam and the desire to worship in the right manner. Parents should also recognize that raising good children can be a source of their salvation in the hereafter. This is because if parents raise good Allah-fearing children, those children can constantly pray to Allah for their parents after their death. The Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

“Upon death, man’s deeds will stop except for three deeds, namely: a continuous charitable fund, endowment or goodwill; knowledge left for people to benefit from; and a pious righteous and God-fearing child who continuously prays to Allah, for the souls of his parents” (Muslim).

Finally, let’s not forget that fulfilling the rights of the individuals prescribed by Allah is part of the limits set by Allah that should be taken seriously. Allah states thus in the Quran:

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا
تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوعًا
وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ لِيُعْظَمَ بِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

And treat not the Verses (Laws) of Allah as a jest, but remember Allah's favors on you (i.e. Islam), and that which He has sent down to you of the Book (i.e. the Qur'an) and Al-Hikmah (the Prophet's Sunnah – legal ways – Islamic jurisprudence) whereby He instructs you. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is all-aware of everything Quran (2:231).