



Muslim Moms

Salaam Alaaykum

Amidst our increasingly busy lives, the holy month of Ramadhan comes as an opportunity, forcing us to slow down and take a moment to re-evaluate. This is the case both for our physical and spiritual selves. Take a look at the features on Optimum Living and Laws of Success for some inspiration.

THE TEAM:

Fatema Gulamhussein,
Fatema Haji, Sakina
Kermalli, Farhanaz
Merali, Mariam
Merali &
Shaheen
Merali



IN THIS ISSUE

- Introducing our Children to Wajibaat
- 'Family Night In'
- An African Rant
- Unsung Heroines
- Kids Corner
- Optimum Living
- Duas for Miqdad
- Laws of Success
- Recipes

FEATURE

Introducing our Children to Wajibaat

By Shaista Yusufali

As we welcomed the months of Rajab, Sha'ban and Ramadhan with anticipation, many of us may have been reflecting on ways of conveying the sanctity of these special months to our children. How can we encourage them to join us in our worship? Will they be able to fast in the summer? Or should they be doing so at

all? Raising our children in such a manner that they carry out the acts prescribed by their Creator with love and willingness is a concern for any Muslim parent, but often we don't know where to begin. The aim of this article is to share some of the basic principles we learn from traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (a) on the subject of introducing wajibaat, in particular prayer and fasting, to our children.

Introducing God and Islam: the responsibility of every Muslim parent

Imam al-Sajjad (a) says among the rights of a child on his parents are: ...*pointing him in the direction of his Lord and helping him to obey Him (Psalms of Islam, p. 288)*. All children are born with an innate inclination towards God and His worship. Among our responsibilities as parents is to provide a healthy and free environment that allows this inclination to flourish and protect them from influences that will mask their desire to worship.

In an increasingly materialistic world we see many parents place priority on the worldly well-being of their children. Muslim parents recognize that academic and financial success has its importance, but that the faith and practice of their children are what guarantee eternal success. The Prophet (s) once told his companions, "Woe be unto the children of the end of time, on account of their parents". When asked if it was on account of their polytheist parents, he replied "No, it is on account of their believing parents who do not teach any of the obligatory acts of religion to them, and if the children learn

[these acts] they [the parents] prevent them from doing so. While it is the case that if the children obtain [even] a small worldly acquisition they [the parents] are pleased and happy. So surely we disassociate from them, and they are disassociated from us." (Mustadrak al-Wasail, v 15, pg 164).

Teaching by example

"Be among those who invite [people to faith] with other than your tongues" (Al-Kafi v 2, pg 78). The first principle to keep in mind when introducing the practices of religion to our children is to practice what we preach. Children, especially young children, learn primarily by seeing and not by hearing. When a parent makes an effort to pray on time, whether at work, or the mall, on holiday, at a social gathering or in the midst of cooking, it is far more powerful to a child than telling her to pray. Furthermore, our behavior within the home has a profound effect on the feelings our children have towards these practices. If they see our behavior improve when we fast, they will then realize the power of the month of Ramadhan. On the other hand, if they see us place a great deal of emphasis on acts of worship, but see us gossip, lose our temper and generally lack good behavior, then they may call us on our hypocrisy and conclude that the outward acts of Islam are purposeless rituals.

Understanding the position of recommended actions

Imam al-Baqir (a): ... And at the age of 7, we tell our children to fast whatever portion of the day they can fast, either to midday or

beyond or prior to that, and if thirst or hunger overcomes them, they break their fast, until they become used to fasting. So you should train your [male] children to fast at the age of 9, whatever portion of the day they are able to do so, and if thirst [or hunger] overcomes them then let them break it. (Usul al-Kafi, v 3, Pg 409).

There are numerous traditions from the Imams (as) that talk about teaching children the practices of religion, and about training children to perform these actions at a certain age and in a certain way. We are right in taking these traditions seriously; children need to become comfortable with praying and fasting before they reach bulugh. However it is important to keep in mind that such traditions are *recommending* that parents carry out certain actions, such as encouraging young children to pray or fast. They are not commanding that *all* children carry out these actions at such an age. Parents need to look at the physical, emotional and spiritual capabilities of their children and accordingly encourage them to pray and fast.

In some communities there is sometimes a sincere, but misguided emphasis on mustahab acts performed by children. It is important to realize however, that while parents can invite their children to carry out recommended acts of worship, it is not alright to require these acts from them. Among certain circles, it has even become common to outdo the recommended age and moderation found in ahadith. For example, it is not unheard of to see a parent proudly announce that his 3 year old daughter fasted an entire day in the summer! This is despite the clear command of the Imam that children who are training to fast should be told to break the fast as soon as hunger and thirst overcome them.



Marhum Ayatullah Behjat, one of the greatest spiritual masters of our time, used to say that his father told him to only carry out the wajib actions of prayer as a child and young adult, but despite that he was able to attain extremely high levels of spirituality in his prayers. There may be times when young children show interest on their own in carrying out acts of worship, but allowing him to do so can cause physical and emotional harm that may not be apparent immediately. A parent with a young child who is keen on fasting, for example,

Teaching children gradually

Imam Sadiq (a): When a child reaches the age of 3 he should be told 7 times say 'laa ilaaha illallah'. Then leave him until he reaches the age of 3 years and 7 months and 20 days. At this time he should be told 7 times to say Muhammadur Rasulullah (s), then leave him to be free. When he turns 4 he should be told 7 times to say Salallahu 'alaa Muhammadin wa aali Muhammad. When he turns 5... (and he can distinguish his left hand from right), then turn

these actions. The Prophet (s) says: ...do not be like a stranded rider who has neither reached his destination nor has a mount left to ride [due to overworking his horse]. (Usul al-Kafi, v 2, pg 86-87).

Gentleness in education

Lastly, it is our challenge as parents to teach our children to pray and fast in a way which is pleasurable and fun. We want our children to have pleasant associations with Islamic places of worship and religious activities. If we are harsh in our methods of teaching, lack patience, or force our children when they are not ready, those ill-feelings may carry on into adulthood, and affect their faith when it really matters. We can use stories to encourage children, give them examples of individuals, and use creative methods such as one Islamic school which started a salat club to increase enthusiasm for prayer among their students. The Prophet (s) has said, "Indeed this religion is firm so enter into it with gentleness and moderation, and do not cause the servants of Allah to dislike His worship." (Usul al-kafi, v 2, pg 86).



can ask him or her to fast for certain hours of the morning, have lunch, and then continue the fast. Even the the Imams (a) used to encourage their children to maintain balance and moderation in worship. The 6th Imam says: When I was a youth, I was once intensely engaged in worship. My father told me, "O my son, carry out less than this, for surely, when Allah the Mighty loves a servant, He is happy with a small amount of his worship" (Usul al-Kafi, v 2, pg 87).

his face towards Qiblah and tell him to do sajdah. And at the age of 6 teach him ruku', sujud and other parts of prayer... (Wasail ush-Shia, v 21, pg 474).

From the above hadith we learn a number of things, among which is that we must introduce religion to our children early. Even as toddlers their belief in God can be awoken. As they grow and show interest, we can invite them to join us as we do wudhu, pray and fast. However we want to do so gradually, and to not ask them to carry out too much too quickly, lest our haste in pressuring them to pray and fast turn them away from

We ask the Almighty for wisdom and strength to raise children who have love for the faith and who show interest in praying and fasting not only as children, but when they are adults away from our eyes and facing the pressures of society. Let us be among the true followers of the Ahlul Bayt (a) and not those who belong to the two categories mentioned in the special salawat for the month of Sha'ban: "those who Those who went ahead of them were misled and those legged behind them were ruined..."

GROWING FEET

Providing parents with “Pearls of Wisdom” (Islamic and Secular) through the growing years

PREGNANCY – Advice

(Extracted mainly from Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway, What to Expect when You're Expecting)

Short of taking up a reclusive existence on a desert island, there's no way for a pregnant woman to escape the unsolicited advice of those around her. There's just something about a bulging belly that brings out the “expert” in all of us. Take your morning jog around the park and someone is sure to chide; “You shouldn't be running in your condition!” Lug home two bags of groceries from the supermarket and you're bound to hear: “Do you think you ought to be carrying such heavy bundles?”

Between such gratuitous advice and the inevitable predictions about the sex of the baby, what's an expectant mother to do? First of all, keep in mind that most of what you hear is probably nonsense. Old wives' tales that do have foundation in fact have been scientifically substantiated and have become part of standard medical practice. Those that do not, though still tightly woven into the tapestry of pregnancy methodology, can be confidently dismissed. Those recommendations that leave you with a nagging doubt – “What if they are right?” – and are therefore impossible to dismiss are best checked with your doctor, nurse-midwife, or childbirth educator.

Whether it's possibly plausible or obviously ridiculous, however, don't let unwanted advice get your dander up. Neither you nor your baby will profit from the added tension. Instead, keep your sense of humour handy, you can take one of two approaches: politely inform the well-meaning stranger, friend, or relative that you have a trusted physician who counsels you on your pregnancy and that you can't accept advice from anyone else. Or, just as politely, smile, say thank you, and go on your way, letting their comments go in one ear and out the other – without making any stops in between.

But no matter how you choose to handle unwanted advice, you'd also do well to get used to it. If there's anyone who attracts a crowd of advice-givers faster than a pregnant woman, it's a woman with a new baby.

INFANCY (0-24 Months) AND THE TODDLER YEARS – Attachment Parenting

(Extracted from <http://www.ivillage.com/what-attachment-parenting/6-a-127876>)

The term, “attachment parenting” was conceived by pediatrician William Sears and his wife Martha, to describe a highly responsive, attentive style of caring

for a child. Attachment parenting promotes physical and emotional closeness between parent and child through what the Sears refer to as the “Baby Bs.” The Baby Bs are bonding, breastfeeding, babywearing, bedsharing and boundary building. While some people might see the Baby B's as a set of rules they must follow, they are just recommended tools that can and should be individualized for each family and parenting situation.

Attachment style parents generally watch the baby, not the clock or calendar, for signs of their baby's readiness to eat, sleep, be put down, stay with a sitter, sleep alone, or cultivate any new behavior. To understand a baby's signs of readiness, you need to know your baby intimately. These parents learn about their baby by keeping him close and devoting lots of time and attention to him. Attachment style parents believe that when they make mistakes, they will know to change their direction because their knowledge of their child includes evaluation of the child's reaction to parenting approaches.

Those practicing attachment-style parenting are not likely to let their baby “cry it out.” They respond to their infant's cries despite the still popularly held belief of many that always responding to a baby's cries will “spoil” their baby. They understand that an infant's cry is a very powerful survival tool meant to elicit a response. They believe that responding to the infant's cry builds trust, teaches the parents to “listen” to their child, and is the beginning step in the development of good, parent-child communication. Human biology seems to support this philosophy by giving the mother a strong hormonal response to her baby's cries that makes it very uncomfortable for her to ignore. Attachment parenting advocates encourage parents to hold their baby often in the early sensitive weeks of life to foster bonding.

Attachment style parents understand the importance of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding provides optimal nutrition and promotes a healthy immune system. In addition, because breastmilk digests quickly it ensures that the baby will be held frequently for feedings, and near mom almost continuously when breastfeeding is exclusive. Attachment parents believe that exclusive breastfeeding demonstrates the biological need of the infant to have almost continuous contact with his mother as a natural transition from life in the womb.

Babywearing and bedsharing is a natural extension of meeting your baby's need for continuous close contact. But there are a wide variety of ways that attachment parents address these issues. While one parent might carry her baby almost always in a baby sling, another might “know” that her baby loves the stroller when outside in the park. Some attachment style parents never use a crib but arrange mattresses on the bedroom floor to accommodate bedsharing, while others may start the baby in the crib and bring him into their king sized bed after the first night waking.

Some use specialized cribs that attach to the side of the parent's bed. Each family decides what will meet their needs and the needs of their baby best while promoting closeness.

Gentle discipline is common for attachment parents using age-appropriate expectations. For example, parents might decide to put breakables out of reach rather than trying to teach their toddler not to touch them because they understand it would be unrealistic to expect the baby to resist touching enticing objects. Yet the same parents would have no trouble restricting their school-aged child from tossing a ball in the living room to protect the same breakables because this is a realistic, age appropriate limit. Attachment parents generally would not use corporal punishment but rather provide guidance, role modeling, rewards for good behavior, and gentle punishments such as timeouts or loss of privileges, always keeping the child's developmental stage in mind.

Misconceptions about attachment parenting are plenty. Those who practice attachment style parenting do not always wear their baby, share sleep or breastfeed. Though most attachment parents have adopted a life style that includes a stay-at-home mom, at least while the babies are young, extended breastfeeding, co-sleeping, and the use of baby carriers, these are not "requirements." Attachment parenting is about knowing your baby and responding to what your instincts and knowledge of your family tell you is right. Dr. Sears Baby Bs are just his recommended way to help you get

to know your baby better. There are as many variations on the methods of implementing attachment parenting as there are parents and babies. Attachment parenting is a vehicle to get to know your baby and develop your own unique and sensitive parenting style.

THE OLDER YEARS – 8 Tips for Parenting Older Children (Adolescents and Teenagers)

(Based on <http://www.vainnavafamilyresources.org/content/8-tips-parenting-older-children>)

You've heard it before and may be experiencing it now: Parenting an adolescent or older child can be tough. Frequently, older children can shock you with their self-centered, rude, irrational, ungrateful, lazy and defiant behavior. Believe it or not, these characteristics are not rare in the confusing and uncertain period of adolescent growth and development. Here are some thoughts to help you on this journey. (In two parts.)

Part 2:

- Realize that this stage, this teenage phase, shall pass away. Pray for patience and more patience. As your adolescent strains to become independent, grapples with choices and begins to think that he or she "knows much more than you" about everything, be patient. Sometimes teenagers just need to vent. Even though as parents, we wish that we had a mystical remote control to fast forward past the challenging time of adolescence to a more mature, considerate young adult, there is no such magical remote.
- Re-create your relationship with your teenager periodically. Do some fun things with your adolescent/older children. Often parents are so stressed with their older child that the thought of spending recreational time with them is not at all appealing. Additionally, older children often want to be far away from their parents and prefer the company of their peers. While peer association is important and should be allowed (although screened), parents should gently but firmly insist that once a week they play a game, watch a movie, cook, walk, shop, or engage in a hobby with their older child. Give the child the opportunity to choose the activity when possible.
- Practice the communication technique of respectful speaking/reflective listening with your adolescent. This invaluable technique will counteract one of the most common complaints of teenagers: "parents don't listen to them." This technique, although perhaps initially awkward, really works. You listen to your children and they listen to you. As parents, the Reflective listening/Respectful speaking technique can and should be learned. Attend a communication workshop or order a DVD from a family program that will show parents how to implement the technique. Parents will learn how to "talk so that their child will listen and listen so that their child will talk".



- Let your children understand that there are consequences for every choice they make. Sometimes, we're tempted to shield them from these consequences, to bail them out of a difficult situation they have created. Try to avoid doing this because such shielding or bailing out can tremendously interfere with their sense of responsibility and their mature learning. Remember, as the philosopher Kahlil Gibran has stated, "Your children are not your children; they are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for Itself." At worst, we become weak or negligent caretakers. At best, we can become good stewards, taking excellent care of Life's children by imparting the necessary love, character and environment for the healthy growth and development of these interesting children called adolescents or teenagers.



I must say that seeing my four year old son beating me at a game of UNO is a wonderful sight-the sheer delight on his face reflecting his sense of achievement. I wish I could say that I let him win, but although it may have started out that way when we began playing, this is no longer the case! Children relish the time that parents spend with them, whether it's an attentive conversation about their day or just taking the time to sit with them and focus on them rather than multi-task with all the other daily chores.

The increasing pace of daily life makes it difficult, particularly in families with more than one child, to find a time when we can give our complete attention to each of them and with each one having varied interests it truly is a challenge to entertain each one to the same level.

Finding that 'common ground' is important and playing games is an easy and excellent way to spend, enjoyable time together. Console games have their own excitement, however a lot of time goes in waiting for your turn making it

tedious and often the younger members of the family find the games that their older siblings are interested in too challenging!

Board games however are fun for all the family, and choosing the right game is important when accommodating all ages to ensure that everyone has a good time.

In order to be beneficial, the games don't have to be too academic or educational. Just by playing them, the child can learn important social skills, such as communicating verbally, sharing, waiting, taking turns, and enjoying interaction with others. In addition, board games can help in lengthening your child's attention span as the child is encouraged to complete the game. Just as important is learning never to give up, as your 'luck' can always change!

We are fortunate that there is now a vast range of Islamic games available allowing us to incorporate religious values and increase our knowledge (both children and parents!) in a fun-filled way.

Lifestyle

Family Night In

by Farhanaz Merali

Below are a list of popular Islamic and secular favourites covering different categories. Though the selection available on the internet and shops is endless, the aim is to find one that the whole family can enjoy together.

Board games review

UNO (Mattel): The classic card game, which is quick to learn, easy to play and fun for all the family. The aim of the game is to be the first player to get rid of all the cards in your hand before your opponents by matching the appropriate number and/or colour to the one on the discard pile. A great family game for all ages and upto ten players can play!

Hajj Fun Game (Saniyasnain Khan): The Hajj Fun Game gives the opportunity for children to learn the meaning and message of Hajj helping them to acquire a knowledge of the important historical places associated with it. The Hajj Fun Game will bring alive the annual pilgrimage of Hajj for all the family.

Orchard Toys have an excellent array of games for younger children that encourage skills such as number and shape recognition, grouping and counting, letter recognition and reading, eye-hand coordination and manual dexterity. Shopping List, Bus Stop, Pop to the Shops are just a few.

Boggle Junior (Parker Brothers): One of the best learning games for older kids is Boggle Junior, in which players link pictures to letters and words. The game comes with 6-sided letter cubes and numerous picture cards that have the name of the object spelled below. Players place a card on a blue tray and use 3- or 4-letter cubes to copy the item's spelling. Older children can hide the written words and spell the word just using the picture.

Zingo (Think Fun Company): A Bingo-style matching game using words and pictures. A great family game which younger children love!

Journey through the life of the Holy Prophet SAW (Kidsinislam): A challenging, colourful and exciting board game which takes children through the life of

the Holy Prophet (saw), answering questions and moving towards Masjide Nabawi. First to reach is the winner!

Yaseer and Zahra's Heroes of Kerbala: A matching 2-1 card game based on the book "Yaseer & Zahra Meet The Heroes of Kerbala". The game consists of basic knowledge and picture cards on the Tragedy of Kerbala. There are 2 ways to play this game: "Memory: Finding the Pairs" and "Got Heroes" played like "Go Fish." The object of the game is to collect as many pairs as you can.



Pictureka (Hasbro): Pictureka is an exciting game of visual hide & seek. Played on a 3x3 double sided gameboard, finding anything in this crazy jumble of random objects seems virtually impossible. In this game it's finders keepers: you get the card if you find the object(s) fast or first. Collect enough cards to win, and you're the Pictureka champ!

Books for Adults

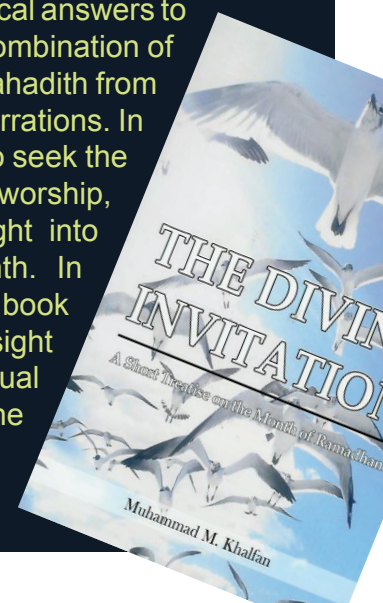
The Divine Invitation

A short treatise on the Holy Month of Ramadhan

By Muhammad M Khalfan

Each year during the month of Ramadhan we are considered as the special guests of Allah. What does it mean to be a special guest of Allah and why does our Holy Prophet refer to this month as The Banquet of Allah?

This short book provides logical answers to these questions through a combination of Ayats from the Holy Quran, ahadith from the A'immah and mystical narrations. In a time when we are driven to seek the spiritual dimension in our worship, it allows us a deeper insight into the sanctity of the Holy month. In under 50 pages this concise book gives us an in depth insight into topics such as spiritual food, the general fast and the specific fast.



I Want to Fast

Translated and Adapted by Rasheeda Haneef

Available at www.salaambooks.com

Available in both hard and paper back, 'I want to fast' comprises of fourteen short stories covering the key concepts of fasting during the month of Ramadhan. The first story begins with the intention to fast during the month. The next few stories go through the different concepts of how long we fast, the things that invalidate a fast, and the last story covers Eid-UI-Fitr.

By basing the stories around a family, the author has cleverly portrayed fasting from a child's point of view and the questions that often arise. These questions are balanced with well explained answers from their supportive parents and elders.

The book is filled with brightly coloured yet clear illustrations, attractive to children. This, coupled with the straightforward text makes it a highly recommended book for parents to share with their young children.

Also, in the same series is the book, 'I want to pray'.



BLOG SPOT

An African Rant

By Azra Sheriff

I'm often asked about the differences between life in the UK and life in East Africa . It's a bit like comparing Mars and Venus, night and day, chalk and cheese, and well... you get the point.

I think the main difference can be summed up in my sister's succinct expression of exasperation after a few weeks of trying to figure out Dar Life... "Didi, you just can't be ORGANIZED here!" And that, in simple terms, is life in DaresSalaam.

You might plan your day to the minute, only to find that there's no electricity. The water pump is connected to the mains so halfway into breakfast, the taps are running dry too. You decide to cook on the gas stove and lo and behold, the blue flame flickers and dies - the cylinder is over. Last but not least, the maid calls to tell you that her husband's sister's second cousin's friend has passed away and she won't be coming to work for a week. Just to make a point, can I just affirm that all of the above once happened to me... on the same day.

Of course, above is an extreme example, but Dar life generally is about 100 times less predictable than UK life. With kids around, you can multiply that

exponentially.

Just as they're dropping off for their morning nap, an unexpected visitor rings the doorbell (loudly), construction work across the road suddenly starts full swing, or the vegetable seller shouts 'DUNGRI BATETAAAA!!!' right under the nursery window.

So you go with the flow. You keep a jug of juice in the fridge in anticipation of the visitor, pick your baby up and tell yourself he'll sleep better after lunch, buy your potatoes (door to door service – and they're organic!), and don't do anything about the construction, simply because you can't.

It's a simple, complicated, predictably unpredictable life, and however exasperating it may be, something tells me that this interdependent, interactive existence is very natural, and learning to expect the unexpected means you're just about ready for anything. How about that – Hakuna Matata!



Unsung Heroines

Muawiya: Ah the daughter of Ashtar! Aren't you the one who was encouraging her brother to fight against us in Siffin, saying, "Make your father proud. Support Ali and Hasnain. Strike hard against the son of Hind. The brother of the Prophet is the true Imam and Leader of the believers. Grab your sword and your spear and run towards the battle!"?

Sauda: Yes I am the one. I am proud to be with the truth and I shall not pretend to be remorseful.

Muawiya: What compelled you to be that way?

Sauda: The love of Ali and obedience to the truth.

Muawiya: How did that benefit you?

Sauda: Let bygones be bygones. I am not here to discuss the past.

Muawiya: What brings you here, then?

Sauda: Today you occupy the seat of government, and you will be held accountable by God. Every time you appoint a ruler for our town, it is a man of arrogance, who beheads us and usurps our wealth. Bishr bin Artat has killed our men and seized our assets and has ignored our pleas. Dismiss him and we will be grateful, and if you choose not to, then prepare yourself for its consequences.

Muawiya: You threaten me! Why don't I just send you back to him, giving him full authority to do with you as he pleases?

Sauda (with tears in her eyes): May Allah have mercy on the body concealed in the grave with whom Justice is also buried! He had sworn to live by Haqq and did so for his entire life.

Muawiya: Who are you talking about?

Sauda: Ali bin Abi Talib AS.

Muawiya: What has Ali done for you?

Sauda: I went to see Ali AS once, with a complaint about the man he had appointed over us. He AS

SAUDA

PROUD TO BE WITH THE TRUTH

She was the daughter of Amara bin Ashtar, from the tribe of Hamdan.

She travelled to Damascus to see Muawiya at his court.

by Mahjabeen Dhala

had prepared himself for salat, but when he saw me, he did not proceed with salat, rather, he turned towards me with kindness and asked if I had some work with him. I presented my grievance. This brought him to tears and he said, "O Allah, bear witness that I have not commanded them to abandon Haqq and to resort to oppression." Then he wrote a letter for this ruler.

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent Has descended upon the Heavenly Book from God, with His injunctions; give full measure, do not take from the properties of others, do not spread corruption in the land, what is with God shall remain, this is better for you if you believe. I am not a protector over you. Get your affairs together until the one who will replace you reaches you, so you may hand over the charge to him."

Muawiya: Ali bin Abi Talib has made you daring enough to speak in such a manner in front of the ruler.

Then Muawiya ordered someone to write to Bishr to return Sauda's assets to her and to be kind to her.

Sauda: Is this order just for me or for all my fellow citizens?

Muawiya: Why do you care about the others?

Sauda: I consider myself one of my people, I will only accept this benefit if it is for all.

Muawiya then ordered the entire city to be dealt with justice and said: Ali bin Abi Talib has made you too confident by saying such things about your tribe- If I would be the door keeper of paradise I would call out to the people of Hamdan to enter it in peace.

The Holy Month of Ramadhan is here, just in time for the holidays! Looking for ways to keep your children entertained? There are so many websites filled with fun activities and ideas that teach children all about this blessed month.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Word Search

D W R G N R X I S M M Z D F P
 D F A F T A R E A E W O P D V
 O I M Z A H S G G I V C O M O
 M V A I E J H S D A T E S N L
 Q E D S W R I B A H L X O M J
 B N H N I N A A V H G P H N W
 X Y A B Y L P A D I C W T J O
 C P N H I P T H O Z X W F L T
 T J O X H J Y T Q K F H L Y A
 Q H W X F W K N Z K K R N V I
 R P W T C S L I I V B T P P M
 T D O D K J N N J L J J N J B
 R A A T F I L G N N L G S S Q
 R W I Y L V Z S I T M M P O O
 A R L V S F A U E I L F X F X

- Muslims fast during the month of _____. It is the _____ month of the Islamic calendar.
- The beginning and end of the month is determined by the sighting of the _____.
- The meal we wake up for before starting a fast is called _____.
- It is good to break our fasts with _____.
- We break our fast at _____ time.
- The meal we eat to break our fast is known as _____.
- The 15th of ramadhan is the wilaadat (birthday) of Imam _____ (a.s)
- The 21st of ramadhan is the wafaat (death day) of Imam _____ (a.s)
- There are _____ takbeers in the first rakaat of Eid namaz.
- There are _____ takbeers in the second rakaat of Eid namaaz.



ANSWERS

1. RAMADHAN, NINTH, 2. MOON, 3. SEHRI, 4. DATES, 5. MAGHRIB, 6. IFTAR, 7. HASSAN, 8. ALI, 9. SIX, 10. FIVE

Ramadan Calendar Chain

Cut coloured strips of construction paper into approx. 8" lengths.

(30 strips for each child) • Glue or staple strips of construction paper into a chain.

-You will need 30 links (rings) in your chain. One for each day of the month.

-Make a pretty pattern; alternating the colours of the rings.

-Hang it on a wall or in a doorway.

-Everyday, neatly tear off one of the rings all the way to the end of Ramadan.

Remind the children that Ramadan can be either 29 or 30 days.

Some useful websites

<http://tj-ramadan.tripod.com/ramadanlearning.htm>
www.primarygames.com/holidays/ramadan/ramadan.htm

<http://ourseeds.tripod.com/activities.html>



Healthy shouldn't be seen as meaning 'being on a diet'. Being healthy is about eating sensibly and exercising, to treat your body well. Healthy should also not be seen as merely the absence of disease - being healthy is a complete state of mental, physical and social well being. Your body is very precious and it needs to be treated well. Unfortunately, we always put ourselves last and do not think about the future. Common excuses include: 'I don't have the time', or 'I don't have the willpower to lose weight as I love my food too much'.

Health Focus

Optimum Living

by Soraya Janmohamed



Actually positive attitude is more important than 'willpower'. To lose weight and make real, lasting changes to your diet and lifestyle, you must be in a positive frame of mind and look on your achievements as steps towards your final goals. By focusing on negative actions and outcomes, such as succumbing to a chocolate éclair, or not making your weekly weight loss target, you are treating yourself as a failure and are more likely to abandon the weight loss programme altogether.

If you remain focused and concentrate on the successes you will be able to overcome the obstacles much more easily. Just thinking about why you are about to tuck into an unnecessary cake or biscuit can actually trigger a breakthrough.

Rather than automatically eating it, you are questioning your behaviour and giving yourself the opportunity to say 'no'. This in itself can often be exhilarating and the more times you say 'no', the more likely you are to break the cycle and become more successful in your weight loss.

Fad diets vs Healthy eating plan

Fad diets can help you lose weight, but they are only temporary solutions. As soon as you go back to eating normally the weight goes back on. Although

many of us have a short-term goal as our target – eg a wedding, we should always look at being healthy as a lifestyle change rather than a short-term goal.

Following a healthy eating plan can help you lose weight and you can continue for years on the same healthy eating plan, without feeling deprived. Always look for a plan that is sensible and can fit around what the rest of the family eat without you having to cook different foods for yourselves.

If you are used to eating a diet high in sugar or fat, then you will simply go through a period of unsustainable change, but if you are committed to changing your lifestyle for the better, then your new eating plan will become a habit that you won't regret.



Generally low fat and low sugar diets are recommended and that doesn't mean you can't eat delicious food. Making your own food will mean you control what ingredients are used and you can ensure no hidden sugars or artificial flavourings are present.

Why cooking is important

It is important on so many levels, but the most important reason is that you are in control of what goes in every dish. It can be quite difficult to be healthy without some fresh cooking happening in the kitchen. Ready meals, processed or convenience foods are all inferior to homemade foods when it comes to nutritional impact, as in order to preserve the shelf-life or to enhance the taste these meals have added salt or flavourings. Neither of which are good for your body.

Portion Control

Controlling the amount of food you eat is key to a healthy, balanced diet. It's also an important factor in weight management. Whether you want to slim down or maintain your current weight, if your portion



sizes are too big it will lead to weight gain, even if the food you eat is 'healthy'.

5 ways to keep control

- Avoid distractions at meal times and take your time to eat. By reading the paper or watching TV you are likely to eat more without realising. If you do want a snack whilst watching TV, then take a measured amount, thereby avoiding excessive eating.
- Keep an eye on food labels – go for foods that display green/amber traffic light symbols and avoid any food items that have red traffic lights. The 'traffic light' labels can help you make healthier choices, as they tell you whether the food has low (green), medium (amber) or high (red) amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt.
- Never let yourself get to the point of starvation – it will usually lead to overeating and bad food choices – as you will eat anything and everything in sight!
- When eating out, don't feel you have to finish everything you have ordered. Portion sizes can be large and so just ask the staff to pack it up for you to take back.
- Occasionally, write down everything you eat, this will increase your awareness of how much you are eating and by being more aware you will be able to see where you need to cut back.

Move more

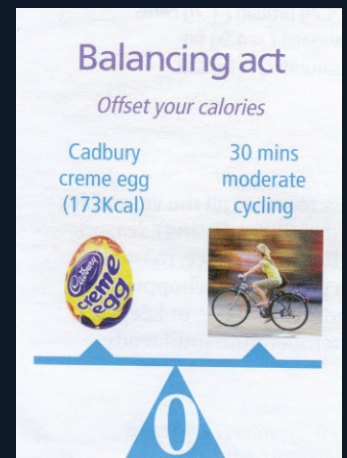
There is good medical evidence that walking improves your health and fitness and boosts your mood. As it requires little more than warm clothing and a good pair of shoes, it's one of the easiest forms of exercise to take up.

Spring is a great time of the year to start getting out and about – the weather is better and you will be able to enjoy nature at its most beautiful. It's cheering to think that something as simple as putting one foot in front of the other can yield such huge payback.

Contrary to popular belief walking won't make you eat more - in fact, it should help you stick to your healthy eating plan. Research shows that in the hours after exercising your appetite actually decreases because your body produces an increased number of hormones that send 'full' signals to the brain. Also, your metabolic rate remains elevated for a short

period of time after each period of exercise so you'll continue to burn calories even when you stop.

The recommended minimum amount of physical activity for adults is 30 minutes, five days a week. I believe the best way of doing this is by having a fixed time every day. Whether it is a walk at 9am or going to an aerobics class at 10am, if you plan your exercise programme you are more likely to stick to it. And when you get to the point when that 30mins isn't challenging enough you know it's time to change your programme!!



Let's Get Healthy Now Instilling good habits for life

For further information please email Soraya on info@letsgethealthynow.co.uk or **07956808632**

Would you like to have more energy, get toned and lose weight without feeling like you are on a diet?

I am running an 8 week course especially tailored to Asian women. Weekly weigh-in, group discussion followed by 45mins exercise.

Wednesday evening:

8.00 - 9.15pm

St Lawrence Church, St Lawrence Close Edgware, HA8 6RB

Thursday morning (Exercise only) - 10-11am

King George's Recreational Park, Bushey

Friday morning - 9.30-10.45am

Bernays Memorial Hall, 25 The Broadway, Stanmore HA7 4DA



Duas for Miqdad

By Nusrat Somji

We all go through times in our lives that are sometimes difficult and we feel that nothing will ever get resolved. We forget that it is Allah swt who tests us and He is the one who helps us get through these difficult times. My family and I recently went through a tough time and are grateful to the Almighty for getting us through it and helping us keep our Imaan strong.

Miqdad is 12 years old and like all boys, has had his fair share of bumps, cuts, bruises and fractures, but one Monday after school, unexpected things started to happen. As we walked around Staples, he came and told me that his feet and ankles hurt and that he could not bear any weight on them. His exact words were "Mummy, my legs feel like they're giving way, like jelly". I told him to find a chair and sit down and rest it out. While we were on our way home he was in tears because of the pain and he was acting out of character, removing his shoes and socks in the car because by then his feet felt like they were squeezing. We decided to take him to A&E and after a few hours and a good dose of codeine we were sent home with him on crutches. Diagnosis

unknown, we were told to give him pain relief and to go to the GP if it continued. By Wednesday there was no improvement and so we were back at the surgery and from there, referred back to the hospital. It was a very hard time, not knowing what was going on. Seeing your child in any sort of pain is hard, but not knowing why he was in so much pain and not able to bear his weight on his feet was difficult to deal with. This time round at the hospital we were very lucky as Miqdad was under the care of a very good Paediatrician. She was very thorough and made sure she did as many tests as possible to try and find out what was causing the pain. After a very long day and lots of tests, we were told that if there were no reoccurrences, the diagnosis was Reactive Arthritis. Alhamdulillah, with strong pain relief and determination on Miqdad's side, he started to get better and from using two crutches went to one and then using walls and furniture as support, and by the end of the week was walking again without support.

Thanking Allah swt that Miqdad was back on his feet, running track for school and doing the things he likes to do, we decided to take a holiday. He was able to enjoy it and we all relaxed after all the uncertainties of that past week. However, on the 22nd of May: "Mummy, it's the same pain again, my legs feel like jelly and mummy this time the pain is even more." My heart hurt, and I thought no not again! As we were out and about, Ali my 9 year old son and I supported Miqdad back to the car. We kept him as comfortable as possible but the worries were there, what is going to happen? Is it going to last a week again or longer? Will he be on crutches again? How are we going to deal with it?



We were referred back to A&E Paediatrics and Miqdad was put on some strong pain relief. Lots more tests were done to check for the most common illnesses. We were in and out of hospital for a whole week. Miqdad's condition worsened by the day; by now he wasn't even able to walk with crutches, there was a lot of swelling and sensitivity on his feet. We could not even touch his skin to apply medicine as the pain would increase at touch. My husband Hasnain had to carry him in and out of the car, to the washroom, and otherwise; while at the hospital he would use the wheelchair. This was a very difficult time, it was very hard for all of us to see him this way; the bubbly, chatty, lively and so full of energy Miqdad just laying on the sofa, with his feet propped up on pillows, with tears, pain and fear in his eyes.

By mid-week we still didn't know what was going on; all we could do was have faith that Allah swt would in his merciful way guide us and help us. Miqdad was admitted into hospital on Wednesday night. This was better for him as they were able to dispense more medicine to help him and the main aim at this point was to maintain the pain. Over the next two days he was seen by many specialists from neurologists to foot specialists, but still no results. The doctors were brilliant - they tried everything they could to help and when there were no answers with the MRI, it was decided that we would be referred to GOSH (Great

Ormond Street Hospital). We were very worried as the next available appointment was in mid June. How could we deal with not knowing what was happening? The medication would reduce the pain but he was still unable to bear the weight. The doctors were trying everything they could to get an appointment for him. Here is where we believe Imaan is tested. After doing amaals and having lots of family and friends doing du'a, by the help of Allah swt, we were able to be seen on the following Tuesday 31st of May.

It was a very difficult time waiting for the day of the appointment. On the day Alhamdulillah we were very lucky to be seen by the paediatric rheumatologist who checked him over and then referred us to see the head of children's physiotherapist, Sue. She diagnosed him with a condition called HYPERMOBILITY SYNDROME. It means being double jointed. It is a genetic condition and can affect some more than others. It is a condition that affects more Asians. Supposedly a very common condition only that it is not diagnosed as early as this. Some people suffer from it for years and then get to Great Ormond Hospital. For that we are grateful to the Almighty Allah swt that we got the appointment so quickly.

In Miqdad's case, she explained that what could have happened is that one of his little bones in his feet may have dislocated for a little while (yes both feet simultaneously is rare but possible) sending messages up the leg to the spine. Here messages are transferred from one nerve to another, the other being the one to the brain. At this point for reasons unknown it amplifies the strength of pain, meaning if his dislocation pain was 2/10, by the time the message reaches the brain it is a 10/10. Now this

is not just a thought, but in reality the pain is increased to that level, hence the sensitivity of all the nerves around the ankle and knees. By this point the dislocation is already in the right place but the pain remains. It has nothing to do with his nerves being damaged or anything to do with the brain as such; it is just a real condition with real pain.

The treatment is physiotherapy – usually when we have pain we try and rest, but in this case you have to do the opposite, which is to move. Walking was very painful and fear of that made it even more difficult, but if he stayed sitting and resting, the condition would worsen. His condition is ongoing and there can be reoccurrences again but they have taught us how to deal with it. Basically you have to distract him in conversation and get him to walk.

While we were there for that first appointment, Miqdad started to wiggle his toes, then his feet and then we were able to see him stand up. Alhamdulillah it was the du'as of family and friends all around the world that this miracle happened. To see him stand up was very overwhelming and we can never be grateful enough to the Almighty. He was very scared himself but was being very brave. Sue then told him he had to walk and that was when he was unsure the fear that the pain would increase was very overwhelming but with a lot of encouragement he was walking. The joy in our hearts cannot be written in words. Alhamdulillah he is now up and about. He is still under the care of GOSH and physio is ongoing.

We are grateful to Allah swt, family and friends. The support of family & friends was amazing, from prayers, amaals, tawiz & food being sent home for many days and we as a family can never show and say how grateful we are, our dua's will always be for all who have been our support - physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Jazakallah Khair.

Question and answers

Mothers have started to write to us with questions, so each issue we will feature some of them.

QUESTION:

Should you fast if you are breastfeeding, even if you think you won't be able to manage it?



ANSWER:

(According to Ayatollah al Uzama Syed Ali as-Hussaini Seestani in his book Islamic Laws)

Law number 1737 and 1738

Fasting is not obligatory on a woman in advanced stages of pregnancy, for whom fasting is harmful or for the child she carries. For everyday, however, she should give one mudd of food to poor. In both cases, she has to give qadha for the fasts which are left out.

If a woman is suckling a child, whether she is the mother or a nurse, or suckles it free, and the quantity of her milk is small, and if fasting is harmful to her or to the child, it will not be obligatory on her to fast. And she should give one mudd of food per day to poor. In both the cases, she will later give qadha for the fasts left out. But this rule is specifically applicable in a circumstance where this is the only way of feeding milk to the child – (as an obligatory precaution). But if there is an alternative, like, when more than one woman offer to suckle the child, then establishing this rule is a matter of Ishkal.

If you would like your questions answered (fiqh or otherwise!), or for general comments and suggestions, please e-mail us at muslimmums@madressa.net

Caketastic
Taste it and you'll Love it!

Quality handcrafted cakes tailored for any occasion

www.caketastic.net

Direct Line : 01923 468377

Mobile Phones

Hasnain : 07737025800

Nusrat : 07855264806



حلال


Islamic Swimwear

Nusrat Samji

Tel: 01923468377

Mob: 07855264806

nsomji786@hotmail.com

www.islamicswimwear.net

sizes available for all ages

The Laws of Success

By Sheila Tejani

Many mums after attending the classes held on Monday mornings in Harrow, which started as a parenting class, have requested me to share their experiences in the form of articles. The classes led to discussions around self development and self realisation, as we are only able to bring up respectable, responsible and successful kids when we realise the qualities in ourselves, i.e. the parents.

Parenting is the most important, the most influential and valuable job one will ever do – as it plays an important role in one's life. It is one of the factors for the upbringing but not the only factor.

The deepest desire in a parent's heart is to see one's child achieve success in life, but many a times the parent defines success as what they themselves have not achieved or have missed out in life, therefore looking at their child from their perspective rather than that of the child.

We teach our children how to survive, how to behave in order to earn our approval, how to defend themselves, how to compete, how to persist against disappointments, obstacles and setbacks.

Many people assume without question that success is essentially material, that it can be measured in money, prestige, or an abundance of possessions. These can certainly play a role, but having such things is no guarantee of success. The success we want our children to achieve has to be defined in many non-material ways as well.

It should include:

- the ability to love and have compassion;
- the capacity to feel joy and spread it to others;
- the security of knowing that one's life serves a purpose;
- and finally a sense of connection to the creator - God, the Almighty.

Although we emphasise on believing in God, which makes us spiritual, spirit has been set apart from success in daily life. This is a mistake and it has a profound effect on all our lives, from childhood on; despite the success we achieve on the basis of strain and struggle, we lack the inner fulfilment.

Our responsibility as parents is therefore to gear our children on the spiritual journey, and the spirit needs to be cultivated, nourished and encouraged, by practicing the principles in order to teach our children.

Our life has two aspects – physical (khalq) and spiritual (khulq). As for the physical; we have no choice, we are created beings, therefore we have no control over the race, colour, height, shape of our features, etc. If we don't like it then we are fighting God. However, how much of our time of our life do we spend in altering and beautifying the physical side?

As for the spiritual side; i.e. building our character; this is in our control. We can have a good character (khulqun hasanah) or a bad character (khulqun sayyiah). The Holy Quran states: "The one who purifies has indeed succeeded." We have been provided with all the

means and tools to purify ourselves. God the Almighty wanted to create the credibility of the Prophet (SAW) for 40 years, before he preached the Message. He was known as a trust worthy and truthful person. The Holy Quran states: "Indeed (O Prophet), you are the best in Ethics (morals)."

True ethics (Akhlaq) is not necessarily outward conduct, behaviour & mannerism; rather, it is our immediate response to a situation. We need to improve our subconscious – if we take long to react in the correct manner then we need to improve our Akhlaq.

How do we improve our Akhlaq? The overall concept of ethics and morals is accountability. At the end of the day we must take account of our good deeds and wrong deeds. Thinking about them on a daily basis helps to improve our morals. We need to start learning that every deed has a consequence - good or bad. We also need to create an atmosphere of trust, openness, non-judgementalness, and acceptance. In simple words: show only love, be only love.



Recipes

by Zahra Yusufali

This salad is the perfect bbq day salad



Ingredients:

- 6 cups torn romaine lettuce
- 1 can of drained black beans
- 1 can of drained corn
- 1/2 cup Chunky salsa (medium to hot depending on preference)
- 1/2 cup Crumble or Shredded cheese (I like to use the 4 Mexican cheese)
- 1/2 cup Ranch Dressing
- 1 cup Tortilla Chips-Crushed

Start layering a deep dish with cut up pieces of romaine lettuce, then pour a can of drained black beans on top. Next pour a can of drained corn and the chunk salsa (any kind you want but I get the hot so that it adds a 'kick' to it). Next, take your crumble/shredded cheese and cover the top layer with it. Last, pour ranch dressing, and finish with crushed tortilla chips on top right before serving.

Chicken wings:

Wings batter:

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 10 chicken wings
- oil for deep frying

Sauce:

- 1-2 tbl butter
- 1/3 cup hot pepper sauce (buffalo wings hot sauce is good)
- 1/3 cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons honey

Combine batter in a big gallon sized bag and pour in chicken wings in bag and shake. Then remove and place in a large container in fridge for 1 1/2 hours.

Then fry. If you want to do it healthier like I did, I baked it on a wire rack for 45 mins on 350 degrees (F) and then pan sprayed it and let it bake 10 minutes more on 375 degrees.

For sauce, 10 minutes before your wings are ready, combine the butter, hot pepper sauce, and ketchup in a large saucepan and let it simmer for 10 minutes. Then add the 2 tbs of honey and mix well. Then add your wings and toss with the sauce.



Chocolate cake

(A very simple recipe that is surprisingly impressive.)

- 1 (18.25 ounce) package devil's food cake mix (or any similar cake mix)
- 1 (5.9 ounce) package instant chocolate pudding mix
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. In a large bowl, mix together the cake and pudding mixes, sour cream, oil, beaten eggs and water. Stir in the chocolate chips and pour batter into a well greased 12 cup Bundt pan.
3. Bake for 50 to 55 minutes, or until top is springy to the touch and a wooden toothpick inserted comes out clean. Cool cake thoroughly in pan at least an hour and a half before inverting onto a plate. If desired, dust the cake with powdered sugar or use frosting recipe below. Cake is also just as good alone.

Frosting:

- 1/2 cup choco chips
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- 1 tbl corn syrup or honey
- 3 tbl butter

Put it all in a Pyrex measuring cup and microwave for 45 seconds, and stir, and then 15 sec intervals stirring each time. Pour on top of your cooled cake.

