



Muslim Mums

Salaam Alaykum, in this issue we have focused on healthy eating for our children. Imam Ali (as)'s invaluable advice on this subject would certainly be of great benefit to them and to all of us:

Welcome!

'Do not eat unless you are hungry, stop eating whilst you are still a little hungry and chew your food well.'



Grandma's Corner

Raising Grandchildren By Mohadessa Virjee

There are times every parent has reminisced over, those precious and memorable moments when the children were small and growing up. I recollect almost nostalgically the time when Abbas was little and made a comment that almost stunned me. He was, perhaps three, when he responded to an instruction I was giving him:

"Now you are confusing me!" he said. "How did he know that word at this age?" I wonder.

Children surely listen and watch what you say and what you do. Now, that was a long time ago. Just when you thought you were beginning to forget all those details, the Almighty blesses you with grandchildren. And it's like re-living history again. Now, it's

Muhammad Jawad and Rahma Fatima, who do so many things like their parents do. I am talking to him, and he looks busy and serious, wearing a khazru and a white namaz cap, with a musalla all rolled up under one arm.

"I am going to give adhaan. It's namaz time. We'll talk afterwards," he says, that leaves me feeling a little embarrassed.

Grandparents, with a wealth of life's teachings and experiences from their own children's upbringing, are and should be a treasure house of fun and knowledge for the grandchildren too. Being a toy for the grandchildren, providing a horse's back, although with a not so supple a frame now as that of some years ago, reading and acting out characters from story books and simply telling stories, can be endless hours of fun for the grandchildren. They will never want to watch the TV in exchange, I can assure you.

Our maraja'e have stressed the need for us to teach our children our mother tongue, be it Gujarati, Urdu or whatever. And the best time for them to learn is now. Up to the age of 12, their brains are particularly receptive to language-learning. As grandparents, we should have more time than the employed or working parents, to teach the grandchildren our mother tongue. And it can be fun too, with colourful charts, story books, and stories from our own memory stores, stories which our own parents and elders used to tell us when we were kids. Yes, they may seem old and outdated

stories, but still they were good and juicy; that's why we have not forgotten them ourselves. Many of the stories that I tell my grandchildren, they relish joyously. They would even forego the call of dinner that mother frantically makes.

Examples of some lovely stories are, The Lion and the Mouse, in which the lion is freed from a net-trap by the little mouse and his friends in return for the sparing of its life by the lion one day. Then there is the one of Androcles and the Lion – the story about the lion who does not attack the man in an arena of death; the man who had previously eased the former's pain by bravely removing a massive thorn from its bleeding paw. From the Gujarati story books, there is the story of Watemaargu ane tera Paraakramo, and so on.

Such stories are a bundle of joy for the grandchildren. And then, of course, there are lovely and inspiring incidents in the lives of our Prophet (saw) and the Aamma (as). But tell all these stories in the mother tongue. Eventually, you will teach them the language. Although, one has to be aware of the strong, and overriding influence of English that comes in the montessori, nursery and primary school stages.

Having to raise grandchildren is almost like turning back the time, and making the nostalgia that you were going through a while ago, become a reality – a Grand Mercy of the Almighty.

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Feature Article
It's all about BALANCE.
 By Tehseen Mustafa

Healthy eating is a hot topic with a lot of press, especially with recent government initiatives to tackle obesity. What I should feed my child? is a question that every mother asks. Children need regular meals and snacks to get the energy and nutrients they need to grow and fight illness. Eating habits in our community have definitely changed over time. I can remember a time when my siblings were younger, sitting in the mother and toddler room and the types of snacks consumed were crisps and chocolates. I don't remember seeing much fruit (except maybe raisins) and penny sweets were the essential 'majalis' accompaniment for an older child.

Now, being a member of the mother and toddler area myself it seems things have changed, and definitely for the better! Cereal, breadsticks, sandwiches, pasta, fruits – dried and fresh, carrot and cucumber sticks, yogurt and cheese appear out of nappy bags. Packets of crisps are seen but not as often as previously and usually not as a first or sole offering. So the overall healthy eating message has seemed to come through – at least on the snack front – but what about meals? What are the important things to include as part of an every day diet? What foods are good and which ones are not so good – how do I check? Should junk food be banned completely – or should the odd biscuit, choc or lollipop be allowed

in small quantities? The above questions are often raised in gatherings that feature mums and babies! So what constitutes a healthy diet? And why is it important?

Including breakfast daily- Breakfast is one of the most important meals of the day; however recent research has found that between 30-35% of all children regularly skip breakfast. There is good evidence to show that kids that don't skip breakfast perform better at school. Younger children who miss this meal do not make up the nutrients missed over the day. Generally, including breakfast has been shown to improve health, mood and boost mental performance. If you find you are short of time in the morning keep things prepared from the night before or grab quick foods on the go like a banana and a wedge of cheese. I find left over 'rotli' and honey is popular with my little one and easy to eat on the go!

Include a cereal group at each meal- Foods from this group include bread, potatoes, breakfast cereals (avoid sugar coated ones!), pasta, rice, couscous, chapatti, pitta bread, plantain, maize and millet. With younger children keep the portions small so little tummies have room for other foods too! This group provides energy, various nutrients and some fibre. You can try wholemeal bread or pasta but NOT all of the time as this can interfere with absorption of essential minerals like Iron and Calcium.

Milk and dairy products should be included three times a day-



These provide calories, protein, vitamins and minerals and are important for providing energy for growth and calcium for strong bones and teeth. Foods in this group include milk, yogurt, cheese and fromage frais. I know that some mum's have said that they find it impossible to get this food group in once their child stops drinking milk out of a bottle. Foods like 'kahdi' (or other curries with yogurt in them!); cheesy pasta, custard, rice pudding and pizza are all ways of including this food group in the diet. In addition, fortified breakfast cereals, bread, green leafy vegetable (like spinach and methi), dried fruit, fish (sardines, whitebait and plaice tend to have higher concentrations) and of course baked bean will all provide some calcium.

Children under the age of two are more active hence require full fat dairy and milk products. From two years old, you can start giving your child semi-skimmed milk. Lower fat varieties often have as much calcium, protein and most of the vitamins.

Fruits and Vegetables contain lots of vitamins, minerals and fibre as they liven up meals with a variety of colours, textures and flavours. Try to introduce lots of different types from an early age, whether fresh, frozen, canned or dried. Ideally your child should have 4 'tastes' of this group through the day. Fruit tend to be more popular with kids that vegetables so the best way to include these is probably in foods e.g. lasagne, pasta dishes, stir-fry chicken or in sandwiches. If your child flatly refuses to eat vegetables (as may well be!)

WHY NOT TRY:

- Baked potato with baked beans and cheese
- Chapattis and dhal
- Pitta bread filled with shredded chicken and sweetcorn
- Couscous mixed with flaked fish and peas
- Pasta with vegetables and meat/fish/or cheese sauce
- Pilau or kitchri with yogurt
- Noodles or rice with shredded omelette and vegetables



keep offering them but also offer more fruit. Make sure you show them that you like eating them. Don't make a big fuss, if they refuse, but you may want to consider supplementing their diet with vitamin drops A, D and C.

Protein sources – This group consists of meat, fish eggs, nuts, pulses (beans, lentils and peas), foods that are made from pulses e.g. tofu, hummus and soya mince and Quorn. This tends to be an easier food group to include however I did find that with my little one it took time for him to get use to the texture of meat! If you find this is problem keep offering meat but also ensure that they eat a variety of other foods from the list mentioned above. At least two portions from this group should be offered daily as they are needed for adequate growth and development.

Fats and Sugars- Children under the age of two have a higher energy requirement so need a concentrated

keep your family healthy. They can be offered as 'extras' once your child has eaten well from the four other main groups. Try and include these types of foods with or just after meals as opposed to in between meals. It is important that foods should not be labelled as 'bad' as no food is 'bad'. It is the quantities and frequency of consumption of these types of food that can have long term effects on health. It is important to educate your child about choosing sensibly as opposed to forbidding consumption of these foods. The key element to eating healthy is 'balance' and moderation.

Healthy Drinks- The best drinks for children are milk and water. Questions have been raised as to whether the popular pull up fruit juice bottles are fine to include. These are fruit juices with no added sugar and contain vitamin C (which assists absorption of Iron). They do however contain 'natural sugar' so can contribute to tooth decay. If you are going to offer fruit juice try and offer it with meals or snacks and dilute them down with water. Avoid giving sugary drinks of any kind in a bottle or giving them on a regular basis to your child. Consuming cheese with or after eating sugary foods changes the pH of the mouth and reduces the risk of tooth decay – so a good snack all round!

What about salt? With salt I think the problems arise when children start eating family meals. From the ages

cooking and use herbs or lemon juice to add flavour. Indian food is great in that we have a wide range of other spices to choose from instead! If you are buying processed foods, even those aimed at children, remember to check the information given on the labels to choose those with less salt. Examples of foods high in salt include crisps, jarred cooking sauces, Bombay mix and ready-meals. Eating healthy is important from an early age to set up good long term eating habits.



The manner of food consumption in Islam is a topic that we are taught very early on in life. Islam encourages the consumption of nutritious foods without over indulgence. It also encourages us to listen to the bodies own satiety centre and stop before we are overfull. Over eating over a long period of time leads to weight gain which puts additional stress on the body. Meals are encouraged to be taken with the family to establish a strong family structure. This is usually the one time in the day that the whole family are able to sit, interact and share information. For parents, it is an important time to learn about our child's thoughts and feelings, discuss any problems and impart knowledge. It is important to remember that ALL foods can be included as part of a healthy diet however it is the frequency and quantities of certain foods that needs to be limited. All of these are important behavioural aspects of consuming a health diet and are all part of the Islamic etiquette for food consumption. **HAPPY EATING!**

WHY NOT TRY:

- Pizza topped with colourful vegetables and canned pineapple – (Pizza made by them may make it all the more appealing!)
- Carrot sticks, slices apples or grapes for snacks
- Mixed chopped or mashed vegetables with rice (like pilau!), mashed potatoes (e.g. bateta wara), meat sauces or dhal
- Mixed fruit, fresh, canned or stewed with yogurt or fromage frais
- Noodles or rice with shredded omelette and vegetables

source of energy. These can easily be provided by foods such as full fat butter, yogurt and cheese. Foods high in fat and sugar such as cakes, biscuits, chocolate and ice-cream and savoury snacks like fried foods, and crisps provide extra energy but few nutrients. These foods are popular with children and adults alike but should be limited at all ages to

of one to three children should be having no more than 2g a day – but I think many of our kids probably exceed this amount! Too much salt can lead to a liking of salty foods and contribute towards high blood pressure in later life. The best way to get round this problem is to gradually reduce the amount of salt in your

Get your child involved in shopping and food preparation. This is a great way to spend time and get the healthy eating message across too!

Growing Feet

Providing parents with "Pearls of Wisdom" (Islamic and Secular) through the growing years
By Shaheen Merali

PREGNANCY: Fatigue

(Based on "What to Expect when You're Expecting" by Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway)

A common complaint during pregnancy, and especially the first and last trimester, is that you feel tired all the time. In fact, it would be surprising if you weren't tired. In some ways, your pregnant body is working harder even when you're working than a non-pregnant body is when mountain-climbing; you just can't see its efforts. Since your fatigue is legitimate, don't fight it. Consider it a signal from your body that you need more rest. That, of course, is more easily suggested than done. But it is worth a try.

1. Baby Yourself. If you're a first time expectant mom, enjoy what will be the last chance for a while to focus on yourself without feeling guilty. If you already have children at home, you will have to divide your focus. But either way, remember that getting adequate rest is more important than keeping your house white-glove-test clean. Keep evenings free of unessential activities. But don't necessarily wait until nightfall to take it easy – if you

can afford the luxury of an afternoon nap, by all means indulge. If you can't sleep, lie down with a good book. Napping when you're mothering may also be difficult, but if you can time your rest with your children's nap-time, you may be able to get away with it- assuming you can tolerate the unwashed dishes and the dust balls under the bed.

2. Let Others Baby You.

Accept your mother-in-law's offer to vacuum and dust the house. Let your dad take the older kids to the zoo on Sunday. Enlist your husband for chores like laundry and marketing.

3. Get an Hour or Two More Sleep Each Night. Skip the 11 o'clock news and turn in earlier; ask your husband to fix breakfast so you can turn out later.

4. Be Sure that Your Diet isn't Deficient. First-trimester fatigue is often aggravated by a deficiency in iron, protein, or just plain calories. Double-check to make certain you're filling all of your requirements. And no matter how tired you're feeling, don't be tempted to rev up your body with caffeine, chocolate bars, and cake. It won't be fooled for long, and after the temporary lift, your blood sugar will plummet, leaving you more fatigued than ever.

5. Check Your Environment. Inadequate lighting, poor air quality, or excessive noise in your home or workplace can contribute to fatigue. Be alert to these problems and try to get them corrected.

6. Take a hike. Or a slow jog. Or a stroll to the shops. Or the time to do a pregnancy exercise routine. Paradoxically, fatigue can be heightened by too much rest and not enough activity. But don't overdo the exercise. Stop before that exercise high dissolves into a low, and be sure to be aware of and follow the precautions of exercising during pregnancy.



INFANCY (0-12 Months) – It's All in the Timing

(Extracted mainly from "What to Expect - the First Year" by Murkoff, Eisenberg and Hathaway)

There are different ways that have been recommended to teach your baby to sleep through the night, including 'cold turkey' and 'gradual withdrawal'. Whichever method you choose, remember to keep timing in mind. One major change or stress in your baby's life at a time is plenty. If your baby's already dealing with one such disruption – whether it's teething, mum going back to work, a new baby-sitter, or a bout with an ear infection – wait until he or she is feeling settled again before launching any sleep-through-the-night campaigns. It makes sense to wait, also, if you're planning a family trip in the near future (travel is almost certain to derail your efforts). Keep in mind that even babies who have mastered sleeping through the night may begin waking anew during times of stress (it would be smart to offer comfort again only for as long as the issue continues, otherwise baby will continue waking long after it has ended). Night waking may also start up again when a baby has just passed a major developmental milestone – such as learning to crawl or walk – since baby's compulsion to practise the new skill may interfere temporarily with sleep.

THE TODDLER YEARS – Search for the Truth

(Based on "The Codes of Training" by Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini)

After birth, a child soon begins to use as senses and because of an instinct to learn, will continuously acquire knowledge about the surroundings. Allah says in the Holy Quran: "Allah has delivered you from the wombs of your mother in a condition that you knew nothing. He has

given to you ears, eyes and the heart that you identify Allah's bounties and become grateful." (27:78). The age of two years and above is when the questions will start!

Some parents consider the childish questions unnecessary and a waste of time, even to the extent of stopping them from asking, thus silencing their thirst for knowledge. At a later stage they complain that their child is not able to cope with their studies. Some parents do reply but never bother to ensure the veracity of the answers as they only want to quieten the child with some answer. When the child learns later that the parent has given wrong information they will feel bad and it will make them suspicious of others.

Thoughtful and responsible parents appreciate their duty to provide the right answers and encourage this instinct. They prepare for this task by visualising the questions the child might ask and explore the possible replies to the queries. They never tell the child anything contrary to the truth. If they don't have the right answer, they admit this and try to find the answer, thus teaching the child to be honest when faced with a similar situation. Some parents go into unnecessary detail; this too is undesirable and will tire the child.

Imam Ali (as) said: "One who asks questions in his childhood will be capable of replying to questions when he is grown up." He also said: "The child's heart is like the soft soil. Whatever you put into it

will be accepted."

THE OLDER YEARS

– Homework (Part 2)

(Extracted from "Raising Happy Children" by Jan Parker and Jan Stimpson)

Homework varies hugely between schools, children and families. The following suggestions help in most circumstances:

1. Check your child gets the sleep and exercise they need to sit down and concentrate.

2. Encourage your child to note homework instructions: what is the task? when is it to be handed in?

3. Explain how they could best organise and present their work if they seem unsure. Uncertainty of what is expected creates unnecessary pressures and the child has enough of these already.

4. If a young child does not want to do homework, why not switch roles and play schools, with the child playing 'teacher' and you being the 'pupil'? This can ease tensions, enables the parent to discover what the child knows, and allows the child to learn and have fun.

5. Show an interest. If you don't know much about the subject, ask questions.

Try not to bombard them with questions, however, especially straight after school. Allow them some 'down time'.

6. If your child is struggling or skipping work, let the teachers know so they can provide appropriate support and encouragement.

7. Let older children take responsibility for their homework. Encourage, take an interest, provide an environment in which they can work, then let them get on with it. If they don't, let them take the consequences.

8. Keep homework in perspective. Other activities matter too, especially playing with family and friends. Homework shouldn't soak up too much of children's free time in the primary school years.



Childrens Book Review The BFF Sisters – Jennah's new Friends by Suzy Ismail



Ideal for teenagers, this novel by Suzy Ismail is one of a growing number of Islamic stories aimed at the older crowd. Covering common worries for all girls, but especially those that live in the West, the book follows the main character Jennah as she deals with coping with a younger sister who wants to do everything with her, making friends with people outside her culture and keeping her faith strong during everything.

Jennah talks about her new found friends from different lands and cultures. At first she is hesitant and uneasy about their loyalty and friendliness and prefers to

keep them out of her circle of close friends. However, after interacting with them, she realizes that her new friends are trustworthy and it is her own selfish attitude and jealousy that is hampering their friendship from blossoming.

Once these wrong assumptions are overcome, Jennah along with her friends, both old and new, form a Teenage Girls Club, naming it The BFF Sisters. The objective of the Club being to allow its members to share and develop their personal experiences and exchanges their knowledge about religion and worldly affairs.



Personal & Spiritual
Development
Time Management
By Fehmida Merali

Great **time management** is one of the most vital skills one can develop. All of us have the same number of hours in a day, and no amount of effort can change that. What we can influence is how we spend those hours.

A quote from Stephen Covey sums up how we can best use our time:

"I am personally persuaded that the best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in a single phrase: Organize and execute around priorities."

To focus your time on that which is truly important, i.e. in line with your goals, you will need to consciously become aware of what you are trying to achieve across the key roles and different parts of your life. Time management is important because time is the foundation of everything you do. Every time you decide to do something, you are subconsciously also deciding not to do everything else in the world. The essence of time management is to work out what is important and then spend as much time as you can on these important things. If you have a clear objective that you are excited by, and determined



to achieve, then you'll have the necessary edge required to make it happen. Most people drift through life.

Time management strategies are often associated with the recommendation to set goals. These goals are recorded and may be broken down into a **project**, an **action plan**, or a

simple **task list**. For individual tasks or for goals, an importance rating may be established, deadlines may be set, and priorities assigned. If you have both goals and an efficient system for managing your day to day time then you will see great results. Goals without a system will lead to disappointment. A system without goals is of no use either.

The three essential parts of any organised life:

1) A master list of everything you have got to do, all written down in one place. It could be on a computer, on paper, in your diary, on the wall, on a whiteboard, in the head, it doesn't matter, but it should contain all the big things/set goals/targets/career which you are going to do, at time unknown.

2) A daily to-do list. It could be all the kids' chores, house management, family commitments etc. This could be a small bit of paper, or written in your diary, or perhaps using Outlook on your computer. These are the small tasks that you are going to do today.

3) Leisure time for yourself – you need to wind down, relax and enjoy your life without having to do too much at one time and also with no tension of undone jobs. This could be

shopping/self grooming/watching a favourite show/reading a book/socialising etc.

Having 3 kids under the age of 12, with their heavy academic schedules, their sports activities outside school hours and living in an extended family is quite hectic as it is. With my husband's busy work schedule, I cannot rely on him to help me during the week with school runs or with their chores in the house. In order to maintain the system and routine in my life and attain my goal, I organise my day/week well in advance.

For my leisure time I took up Arabic 4 years ago and it needs dedication also. Arabic is a language where you need practice and commitment regularly. To give full concentration on the previous lesson I have to work on it twice a week for 2-3 hours each time. Qualified as a Montessori teacher, I always wanted to work with children but having my own kids one after the other, I never got a chance to work for a long period of time, so I started teaching in Sunday madressa and today Allah (swt) has given me the opportunity to help the students of our community to be amongst the Ansar of Imam al Mahdi (atf). It is a very time consuming task and needs almost everyday to work upon and not only Sundays, but it is a challenge how I fit it in my full plate.

Kids are my top priority and I would not take up anything if the kids have to suffer. If there was no organisation/planning in advance, I would not have been able to achieve everything and of course without my family support, I would not have moved forward. All Praise and Thanks to Allah (swt) for giving me all these wonderful Na'imat of my life. May He give us all the strength and ability to manage our time to the fullest and achieve all our goals in life Inshallah!

Out of interest...

Buloogh Parties

By Sukaina Panju

A muslim girl becomes baligh at the age of 9 lunar years. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate this coming of age so that the girl realizes the significance of this new beginning in her life. It is also important to have fun and enjoy this occasion. If one only focuses on all the new responsibilities and changes, the girl may feel overwhelmed thinking that being baligh has no advantages. Allowing her to share this time with her friends and family will make her feel confident and responsible.

Nowadays many Muslim parents hold Buloogh Parties to celebrate this special time in a girl's life. There



Small Things Make Big Muslims - Tips for instilling Islam in your children

This edition, we have focused on small things we can do at home to encourage dhikr (remembrance of Allah) from a young age.

1. Make some common substitutions in your everyday language:

- Mashallah instead of Good Work!
- Subhanallah instead of Wow! (When admiring the creation of Allah, e.g. sunset)
- Jazakallah instead of Thank You.
- Fee-Amanillah instead of Khudafis.
- Alhamdulillah when you sneeze instead of Excuse Me.
- Yarhamakullah when someone else sneezes instead of Bless You.
- Ya Allah! Instead of

Jesus Christ!

- Recite a Salawat instead of clapping.

2. Make it a habit to say Bismillah when starting anything, be it a meal or a project, and Alhamdulillah when you finish.

3. Have a special Khaak-e-Shafaa tasbih for them to hold at special times, for example when they are scared at night, or are sick, or are nervous before a test. Teach older children to then recite Bibi Fatima's Tasbih at these times, or any other dhikr of Allah.

4. To teach them the

their creations.

5. The girls can be put in pairs with each pair given a variety of hijabs and pins. Their task would be to come up with new ideas and ways to wear hijabs. One partner would be the model. The best ideas would get a prize. Or you can show them how to wear hijab in different ways and then get them to experiment themselves. There are many 'how to' tutorials and videos on the internet.

6. You could also do some henna, arts and crafts etc. Some ideas for crafts would be to give each child a plain hijab or long sleeved plain t-shirt and get them to personalize it with gems, beads or fabric paint. Girls can also be taught how to make their own scarf pins with beads and findings. These crafts can also be their going home present.

7. Another idea for a going home present could be to sit with your child before the party and make a small booklet together about becoming baligh that she can give to her friends. An example of this can be downloaded from www.hujjat-workshop.org. Other going home presents can include: hijabs, hijab pins, prayer bags (these may include a prayer mat, chador, moor, thasbi and dua book), etc...

recommended names of Allah for each day, make a poster and stick it by the door, then start the habit of looking up the name of the day before you go out. Explanation or recitation of the name can then pass time in the car!

5. Use the names of Allah to solve the problems that come up in a child's life on a day-to-day basis. For example, when your child is sick, recite Ya-Shafi loudly as you comfort them; when they are upset, recite Ya Lateefu, etc.

Mashallah!

Fee-Amanillah!

Jazakallah!

Alhamdulillah!

Personal Moments

Compassion, Love & Mercy

By Benazir Merali

As the tell tale blue line appeared on the pregnancy test, my husband and I couldn't believe that we were going to have a baby! Having thought about it through the years of studying and working we couldn't believe how fast we had got pregnant. We were ecstatic and started making plans as excited parents-to-be do. We were young, healthy and had the world at our feet- what could go wrong? Everything was going according 'to plan'.

As the weeks went by, busy in preparations for my brother-in-law's wedding in Canada, my mind continually wandered to this little being inside of me and the pregnancy ahead. I didn't mind the getting fat bit just yet (it meant I could eat as much as I wanted without anyone raising an eyebrow) and I wasn't getting morning sickness. Then one morning a few days before the wedding, I started to bleed lightly. Being a novice at all of this, I wasn't sure if it was normal but as it persisted I began to worry, particularly as I had no access to my midwife or familiarity with local healthcare options. Luckily my husband's cousin, also a GP, was attending the wedding and staying in the same hotel. He immediately ordered complete rest and monitored my condition regularly. Being in the first trimester no one outside the

immediate family was aware of the pregnancy and assumed I had come down with a bug.

On the day of the wedding the bleeding got considerably worse and fears of an ectopic pregnancy, which can be quite serious and fatal, grew. I was rushed to a clinic for an ultrasound scan and as the doctor proceeded, his face betrayed that all was not well but didn't say anything till my husband was with me back at the hotel. According to the scans, the foetus had stopped growing at 5 weeks and I was in my 8th week. It felt like someone had just punched me in the gut. I didn't cry straight away - I didn't know what to feel and the gravity of those words had not sunk in immediately. Seeing my husband's sorrow was achingly painful. I was told to rest as much as possible before reviewing the situation after the eve of the wedding. Nonetheless, I attended the wedding with a smile, masking the physical and heart ache within.

We were due to leave Canada a few days after the wedding but those days passed like an eternity as I longed to be back home in London, where I would have to have another ultrasound to make sure that the foetus and placenta had cleared. In the meantime my body was going through the natural but painful process of aborting. My journey back was nightmarish and I was in considerable agony. As we waited to board the flight, I had to use the toilet and that's when I knew without any ultrasound that I had lost the baby we so badly wanted and loved already.

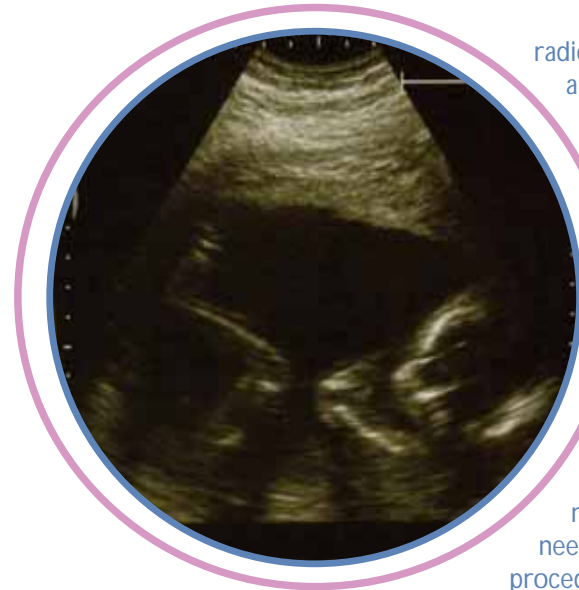
It is incredible that in those few weeks, I had somehow bonded with this being that I had neither seen nor held and as the weeks went by I began to realise the extent of my feelings.

The most common thing that women who have miscarriages feel is 'why me'? I don't know if I ever felt

this way but suddenly all around me my friends were celebrating being pregnant or having babies. Every time I saw pregnant women and heard newborn babies on the streets or in the shops, I thought that someone was kind of 'rubbing it in'. Inevitably, we had subconsciously made plans for the future, thought of how things would change but suddenly there was nothing to look forward to, a vacuum, nil - all those plans were incompatible with the new reality. We struggled to comprehend why it had happened, at had I or we done wrong...

In fact the statistics say that one in four pregnancies and one in three first time pregnancies end in miscarriage. Did you know that? I didn't. Miscarriage is not a subject discussed openly, especially so in our community where it is advised to keep it 'hush hush'. This seems to be driven by a cultural stigma where women who have miscarried are seen to be infertile and unable to carry a child due to some sort of physical or emotional deficiency. Family, friends and members of the community who are concerned provide advice but end up saying weird and insensitive things. But we have to remember that most are just trying to help in their own way and out of the goodness of their hearts. What's more, as time passed I began to hear from people who were close to me that had also been through the same experience. Looking back I do wish that I knew this then so that I could have had someone to talk to who also shared this painful experience. I guess this stigma is one of the main reasons people who share our cultural background keep their pregnancy quiet until after the first 3 months have passed, when the risk of miscarriage is highest.

In the past, when a woman had a miscarriage she was taken care of by the family and tended to because it was believed that the trauma of miscarriage was worse than childbirth on the body. This went hand in hand with the constant emotional support



from family and friends which was a by-product of living in a joint family and a close-knit community structure. This is key to coping with the emotional rollercoaster and more so in this day and age where families are scattered and nuclear families are prevalent.

After the first miscarriage I was told that I was young, healthy and physically there was nothing to prevent me getting pregnant again. (Some doctors even say that miscarriage is a natural way for the body to prepare itself). We were advised to wait at least 6 months before trying again to give my body time to recover. Alhamdulillah after 9 months we once again found out that I was pregnant. I was overjoyed but understandably apprehensive. We both tried not to get our hopes up too much, be realistic and pray for the best. With one miscarriage under my belt, the elders of the family advised me to get proper bed rest and to be extremely cautious. To reassure me, the doctors were going to do regular check ups and carry out an early ultrasound to give me peace of mind. In the run up to the ultrasound scan, I prayed for the best and was told it was routine with nothing to worry about since I felt fine and there had been no bleeding. I got onto the radiographers table and as soon as she started the ultrasound I saw the image on the screen- a baby! Suddenly the

radiographer's demeanour changed and she went very quiet. She said she was just going to get a second opinion about something. My mind went completely still and I had this sense of déjà vu - it couldn't be happening again. The radiographer confirmed that the baby had been developing as expected but that there was no sign of a heart beat. We both left the hospital numb and in shock. This time I needed to have a D&C (a surgical procedure to evacuate the womb of any remaining foetal tissue), which was arranged within days followed by a few weeks of rest and recuperation.

As we consulted with the doctors on the possible causes we discovered that they would not undertake an investigation until after a third miscarriage. Even though we were devastated that we wouldn't know the reasons, we were surprised to learn that two miscarriages were not uncommon nor out of the ordinary. This didn't do anything to reduce the anguish and the only bit of good news was that at least I was able to get pregnant and for that I was so grateful. We carried on with our lives and the pain was slowly replaced with the realisation that despite the best laid plans, ultimate control lay with HIM. With this realisation our mindset switched from one of self-doubt to faith that our experiences were part of a bigger plan that we could not fully understand. This realization was the most effective antidote to the raw pain and helped us come to terms with our loss quicker than we could imagine.

In April the following year, while in the Haram of Imam Ridha (as), I was overcome by dizziness

and put it down to the crush of the crowds but soon found out that I was pregnant for a third time. I couldn't help feeling that through the wasilah of this Holy Imam, everything was Insh'allah going to go smoothly. I stayed in Dubai with my parents till the end of the first trimester before returning to London. As the crucial 8 and 10-week stages passed, I began to relax, constantly thanking Allah and continued to balloon in size. On the 26th of December, we were blessed with a beautiful baby girl - to say we were overjoyed is an understatement. Everything that we had hoped and prayed for had come true. We decided to give her a name that captures the essence of compassion, love and mercy of Allah.

In hindsight, we strongly feel that these experiences were designed to help us grow both as individuals and as a couple to face the trials and tribulations that are a natural part of life. A year on as we get on with the mundane day-to-day aspects of parenthood, we often reflect on how blessed we are with the gift that Allah has given us. However, in all honesty, it is easy sometimes to forget these blessings and take it for granted, despite having prayed so hard not so long ago. We pray that we don't fall into the trap often quoted in the stories of the Holy Quran of those who forgot Allah once he had granted what they desired most.

And no female
conceives or delivers except
with His knowledge.

Sura al-Fatir, Verse 11



Product Reviews
Out 'n' about with Multiples

With a new addition to the family, mums are always looking for the easiest and most practical ways of enjoying trips out with their troops. There are many different options now available.

Buggy board:

Buggy board: suitable for toddlers from around 2-5 years.

This consists of a sturdy board with wheels that clips on to adaptors fixed to your pushchair. Buggy boards are very popular. Toddlers love the ride and it allows them the option of walking or jumping on when their little legs get weary. It also means you can have them safe and secure between your arms and more importantly allows you to walk faster.



The boards are easy to clip on and off, light and portable.

Most boards will attach to most pushchairs, but it is worthwhile to do some research beforehand. You may find pushing a buggy with a board attached a little awkward at first. The main drawback of the buggy board is that it may not be suitable for the younger toddlers who still need to sit and nap in comfort. However if your toddler is hyper active and difficult to restrain in a pushchair then this would be ideal.

Lascal Buggyboard

Practicality ★★★★★☆

Value for Money ★★★★★☆

Double Buggies (side by side):

Out nAbout Nipper double 360

Sometimes with a small age gap between siblings you just have to buy a double buggy.

The nipper 360 is light but strong. It has the obvious advantage of two reclining seats allowing both to nap in peace hence making it suitable for two newborns. Also both children have perfect views of the world and more importantly are in clear view of mummy! The big terrain wheels make it very easy to move around and provide a comfortable ride. It is narrow enough to fit through most single doorways and looks great!

The trade off is that it is bulky when folded and therefore may not fit into many car boots. However the wheels can be removed. The width of the buggy is also an obvious drawback. Side by side also means that squabbling siblings fail to keep their arms in their seats!!!! Despite the drawbacks the comfort and reassurance of side by side buggies still make them a popular choice.

Weight: 10kgs and width: 77cms

Practicality ★★★★★☆

Value for Money ★★★★★☆



Phil and Teds

A new and innovative three wheel pushchair that boasts to grow with your child and family. It has four modes making it suitable for a newborn, a toddler, a toddler and newborn and 2 toddlers. So it is very adaptable.

The single pushchair is a sturdy light three wheeler that folds well. The doubles seat, sold separately, is very easy to add and transforms your pushchair into a double buggy within seconds!



Main advantages of the phil and teds is that it gives you so many options depending on how old your little ones are and who is out with you. It is probably also the only double buggy you can go out with anywhere just like a single.

The disadvantages are: like a tandem double buggy one child is always behind the other. Also when in newborn and toddler mode the newborn is difficult to access and some may feel a little squashed and hidden! The phil and teds can also seem to be a bit pricey for a buggy!!!

Overall a good concept and worthwhile if you are planning on, or have two children with a small age gap that you will be out and about with a lot!

Weight: 10.5kgs and width: 62cms

Practicality ★★★★★☆

Value for Money ★★★★★☆

Food Focus

Food Labels – What do they mean?

by Tehseen Mustafa

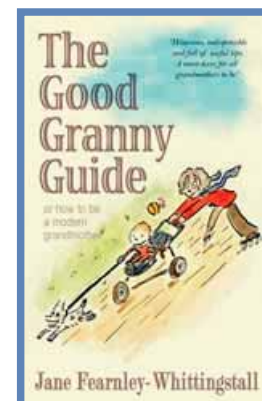
When you are out shopping it is always a good idea to check food labels and claims. This will give you a good idea as to how much sugar or fat is in a particular food or drink. As a quick guide, use this rule of thumb to help you work out whether the amount of fat, sugar, saturated fat and salt listed on food labels is a little or a lot.

For a complete meal or 100g of a snack item (such as biscuits or crisps)			
A LITTLE means:	2g sugars	A LOT means:	10g sugars
	3g fat		20g fat
	1g saturated fat or LESS		5g saturated fat or MORE
	0.25g salt or LESS		1.25g salt or MORE
	0.1g sodium or LESS		0.5g sodium or MORE

NO ADDED SUGAR	No sugars from any source have been added. May still contain a lot of natural sugar e.g. fruit sugar in fruit juice.
LOWSUGAR	Contains no more than 5g of sugar per 100g/100ml of food.
REDUCED SUGAR	Must contain 25% less sugar than the regular product.
LOW FAT	Indicates the food contains less than 3g per 100g or 100ml of food
REDUCED FAT	The food must contain 25% less fat than a similar standard product. It does not mean that the food is low fat.
LESS THAN 5% FAT (95% FAT FREE)	Indicates the food contains less than 5g fat per 100g, for example if you bought a ready meal which had this claim and serving size was 400g than the whole meal would contain 20g fat. Use these claims as a guide and always check the nutrition panel for the total amount of fat in a serving and compare this with the guideline daily amount.
X% LESS FAT THAN THE STANDARD PRODUCT	Shows the fat reduction made to a product compared to a standard named product e.g. 20% less fat than a comparable product. This type of claim can help you choose lower fat options, however, always check to see how much fat the product contributes to your guideline daily amount - it may still be high in fat.
LITE OR LIGHT	The law doesn't say what 'light' or 'lite' means, and so manufacturers may use these terms to give the impression that a food has less fat or fewer calories than similar foods. Always check the food labels for the fat and caloric content and compare to a regular product. You maybe surprised to find very little difference between the two.

Adults Book Review

Spoiling You Grandchildren the Right Way
Good Granny Guide by Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall



If you're a grandmother wanting to spoil your grandchildren without spoiling relationships with their mum and dad, then this is definitely a must read. It's a witty and hilarious compilation of first hand advice written by a well know grandmother to five grandchildren, Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall.

The book takes you through how to get to know your grandchildren as individuals, forming strong relations with them and their parents, ideas on what activities to

do at home, outside and in the garden, disciplining your grandchildren and what to do when things go wrong.

By now many of you are probably thinking that's easy, I don't need a book to tell me that - but give this illustrated book a go and you may surprise your grandchildren with a few activities they never dreamed you'd carry out. You may even surprise yourself and find out what a 'cool' grandma you really can be.

Travel Focus Holiday Planning

When they say the world is your oyster - it really is. Finding a holiday destination that's not too far to fly, won't leave you jet lagged when you're back home, and provides child friendly accommodation is an arduous task.

But holidays don't have to be a stressful time for families. Booking a holiday doesn't mean that you have to spend thousands of pounds travelling half way across the world. Think of a holiday as a way of creating a bank of happy memories, providing the chance to spend time together, away from the daily grind of work, school, homework and chores and you've won half the holiday finding battle.

Involving the children in the holiday negotiations is important - surprising them with a desert safari in Dubai only to discover that your youngest forgot to mention his/her phobia of driving fast and furiously is not going to fill the memory with positive events.

The skill, as with so many family

communications, is to be able to hear each person's point of view, distinguish between desires and needs and find some compromise acceptable to all.

Once you've decided on a destination take some time out to look for child friendly airlines. **Some airlines do offer more for families than others - check out our list of the major airlines that do offer on-board amenities for infants, toddlers, older children - and their frazzled parents. And if you are travelling on a no frills airlines then pre book your seats.**

When making your hotel booking, you may want to find out if the property is located near a hospital, chemist, police station etc. These services are great in an emergency, and it's always good to know your way around before you arrive. You will find that most owners will have some literature about local doctors, chemists etc.; you never know what



may happen whilst on holiday. Get yourself some travel books to know all the best spots, cheapest restaurants, best food, and hundreds of insights about your destination.

Finally, enjoy your holiday and before leaving on holiday, make sure that you give all travel information to your family and close friends. Incase anything should happen while travelling, more than one person knows where you are and has a better chance of getting a hold of you.

Useful websites

www.special-escapes.co.uk

One of the Observer's 50 essential travel websites, this website provides quirky and independent run holiday places in Britain.

www.mrandmrsmith.com

If grandma is looking after the children for a few days this website offers city chic, coastal cool or contemporary retreats for couples.

www.bigdomain.com

Start here if you're fed up trawling through the usual travel websites like Lastminute.com, expedia.co.uk and Travelocity.co.uk

www.vacationvillas.net

Tired of the hotel atmosphere with no baby bottle warming facilities or private splash pools then try this website for holiday villas around the globe.

www.babyfriendlyboltholes.co.uk

Baby-Friendly Boltholes is a collection of stylish and child friendly holiday accommodation. All claim to be run by people who know it takes more than a cot and a highchair to make a baby-friendly holiday, and ensure that kids have fun whilst parents feel special.

www.holidaysuncovered.com

Check out what other travellers say about the hotel you're about to book.



Kids Corner

Islamic Dates To Add To My Diary

Here's a look ahead at the next three months of our Islamic calendar. It is just a little reminder of some birth and death dates of important Islamic personalities, with a brief look at who they were and what they taught us.

Rabi ul Aakher 1429 / April / May 2008

10th Rabi ul Aakher 1429/17th April 2008 – Wilaadat (birthday) of Imam Hassan Askari (a.s)

Our 11th Imam was born in Medinah and later lived in Saamarah in Iraq. He was 22 years old when his father died and his Imamate lasted seven years. During the time of Imam Hassan Askari's (a.s) Imamate, an Abbaside Caliph (leader) called Motamid was in power. He was an enemy of the Ahlul bayt and didn't want the imam spreading Islam. He kept a very close eye on the Imams activities especially because everybody knew the Shias believed that the Imam would have a son Mahdi who was the awaited one. Despite this our Imam was known to the people for his great spiritual knowledge and generosity and they had a lot of respect for him. Even an enemy of the Ahlul bayt called Ahmed bin Khaqan said, "I have not seen anybody in Saamarah more pious and virtuous than Imam Hassan Askari."

Jamaadi ul Awwal 1429 / May / June 2008

5th Jamaadi ul Awwal 1429/11th May 2008 - Wilaadat (birthday) of Bibi Zainab (a.s)

Bibi Zainab (a.s) is the daughter of Imam Ali (a.s) and Bibi Fatimah Zahra (a.s). She was born in Medinah. At the time of her birth, the holy Prophet (s.a.w) was away. On his return he was overjoyed when he saw this new baby and he named her "Zainab" which means fathers ornament. She was so much like her father that when she would speak everybody thought it was as though Imam Ali (a.s) was speaking.

Bibi Zainab (a.s) was an amazing lady. She was married to her cousin Abdullah-ibn-Jafar-ibn-Abi Talib who described her as the best wife.

She was also very knowledgeable and this was known to all. So much so that during the time of Imam Ali (a.s), a group of learned women from Kufa sent their husbands to Imam Ali (a.s) with a message saying they had heard that Bibi Zainab (a.s) like her mother Bibi Fatimah (a.s) possessed plentiful knowledge and that they would like to meet her: Imam Ali (a.s) agreed. The women of Kufa attended her classes and learned a lot from her including tafsir of Quran. Bibi Zainab (a.s) also played a key role in spreading the message of Islam after Kerbala through her speeches in the darbars of Kufa and Shaam.



The haram of Bibi Zainab a.s. in Shaam

Jamaadi ul Aakher 1429 / June / July 2008

This month marks both the Wilaadat (birthday) and Shahaadat (death day) of Bibi Fatima (a.s).

3rd Jamadi ul Aakher 1429 / 7th June 2008 – Shahaadat (death day) of Bibi Fatimah (a.s)

20th Jamadi ul Aakher 1429 / 24th June 2008 – Wilaadat day of Bibi Fatimah (a.s)

Bibi Fatimah was the daughter of our holy prophet and Bibi Khadija (a.s). She was named Fatimah because her and her followers are protected from the fire of hell. She is one of the four women of paradise.

Bibi Khadija (a.s) died when Bibi Fatimah (a.s) was only seven or eight years old after which our holy prophet brought her up. They were very close and loved each other dearly. The prophet had so much love and respect for Bibi Fatimah (a.s) that he would stand up whenever she walked into the room. And Bibi Fatimah (a.s) used to become very hurt when the people of Medinah used to throw things at the prophet and she would clean and comfort him.

She was married to Imam Ali (a.s) and they had four children; Imam Hassan (a.s), Imam Hussein (a.s), Bibi Zainab and Bibi Kulthum.

The death of her father was one of the saddest moments of her life and she cried a lot. She faced many hardships after that. During his lifetime the prophet had gifted Bibi Fatimah (a.s) a piece of land known as 'Fadak'. After his death the government snatched the land from her. They also refused to accept her husband Imam Ali (a.s) as the prophet's successor.

Once the door of her house was pushed on her while she was pregnant. She was hurt and she lost her baby boy, Hazarat Mohsin (a.s).

Bibi Fatimah (a.s) remained alive only a short while after the death of her father. Before her death she had asked Imam Ali (a.s) to make sure that none of the people with whom she was displeased to be present at her funeral. She also asked to be buried in the night so no one would know the location of her grave. The exact spot is not known but it is believed that she is buried in Jannatul Baqi in Medinah.



A short story

One day the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) was sitting in the house of his daughter Bibi Fatimah (a.s) when they heard a knock on the door. The housemaid comes to the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) and says: "Oh! Prophet of Allah (s.a.w) your companion Abdullah ibn Umme Maqdoom (who was blind) has come to visit you." The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) immediately told the housemaid to let him in. In the mean time his Bibi Fatimah Zahra (a.s), gets up to go to her room. The Prophet questions her "Oh! My daughter Fatimah, where are you going?" Bibi Fatimah (a.s) replies: "Since your companion is coming to see you I am going to my room to observe my hijab from him." The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) replies: "But my daughter Fatimah the companion of mine is blind and cannot see you." Bibi Fatimah (a.s) replies: "My father, he cannot see me but I can see him thus I must go inside." This was how careful Bibi Fatimah (a.s) was about observing her hijab. In it is a lesson for us.

Let us remember and think about how our Ahlul bayt lived their lives and pray to Allah (s.w.t) to help us follow in their footsteps.

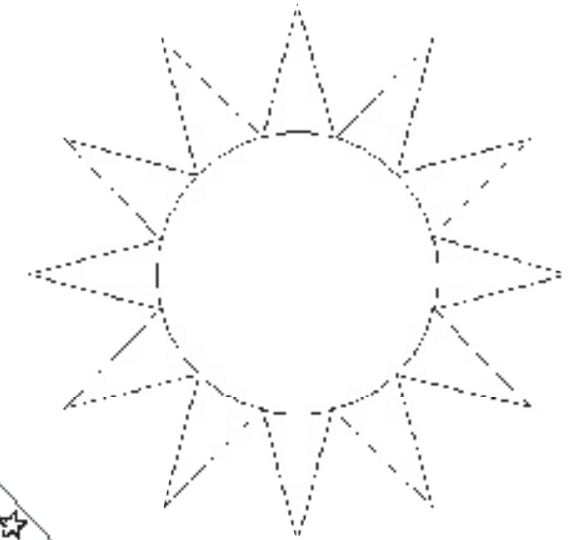
You will need:

- Wire coat hanger
- Card/Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Hole punch
- String or ribbon
- Coloured pens
- Glitter



What to do:

To make a hanging mobile, colour in the pictures and decorate them with glitter. Stick the pictures onto card or construction paper and then cut them out. Punch one hole near an edge of each picture. Cut string or ribbon into different lengths, and tie to the shapes. Hang up the coat hanger. Tie items on the hanger one at a time, deciding how to shift their weight until the mobile is balanced.



Allah's Creation



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A stage 2 maxi cosy car seat, reclining. In good condition. (Blue and green stripes) - £50

A Mamas and Papas stage 2, reclining. In good condition. (Black and white circles) - £50

Three-way pine cube highchair - £15

If you are interested in this item or have any to sell or swap please email us at: muslimmums@madressa.net



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