



Salaam Alaykum.

Salamun alaykum, Alhamdulillah with the grace of Allah swt, Muslim Mums has reached a milestone in it's tenth issue. With the help of supporters and contributors, what started as a simple conversation between friends has grown and materialised. More importantly though, is the month we are stepping into. For mums this holy month means long summer fasts with our children at home and under our feet! The challenge will be to keep our calm during the days and to attempt to gain closeness to the almighty during the nights. For the sake of all mums out there, we pray to Allah (swt) for his help in achieving these two lofty goals. Ilahi Ameen.

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TENTH ISSUE SPECIAL EDITION

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TAKING YOU THROUGH THE STAGES OF CHILDHOOD The Second Stage: 7 – 14 years

By Tahera Kassamali

From the ages of seven to fourteen, a child goes through systematic learning. During that stage, things become more serious, and the training of the child is intense. All aspects of training - religious teachings, academic education, Akhlaq, helping the parents - are taught during this time. A child learns the correct way of doing things, being organized, neat, orderly, punctual, regular, carrying out religious commandments, doing chores, socializing with others, and all the numerous everyday things which adults often take for granted.

The home is a mini society in which a child learns under the safe shelter of loving parents before he is exposed to the outer world. At home, during this stage, a child learns how to be an obedient servant of God, play his role in society, carry out his responsibilities, respect and serve others, and all the other duties that make a human being function.

The desires and emotions of a human being are very strong, and if left uncontrolled, can prove disastrous. The home teaches a child how to control and discipline himself, how to handle negative emotions. Parents show him the consequences

of negative behavior and the unpleasant results of shirking responsibilities. All this is done in a safe environment and the child is trained. When it is time for him to integrate into society, he is therefore prepared for it. He does not expect it to attend to his every whim, nor is he vulnerable to its dangers. The teaching of the home during the second seven years is a preparation for the real world that awaits him.

Parents are the teachers who make sure the child learns all that is necessary to learn at this stage. They may not do all the teaching themselves, and seek help of school and Madrasah teachers to also teach their child. But they are responsible for the type of teaching their child receives outside the home.

In today's modern age there are a lot of schooling options which parents need to carefully consider. Muslims schools, Public schools, French immersion, homeschooling . . . the choices are many. Parents need to consider what best fits the

need of their child, and the type of person they would like their child to become.

Dr. Ali Qaemi in his book *Khanwadeh wa Niyazmandihaye Kudakan* (The Family and the Needs of Children) writes that the child during this stage has the following unique traits:

1) Vulnerability to outside influences. The child during this time is in constant contact with the outside world. Because of this, he is going to be affected more easily. The parent has to be careful and look out for physical as well as emotional and spiritual effects of interaction with others.

2) Ability to plan and achieve. During this time the child begins to choose and make decisions. He is able to plan things and reach his goal. He is less under the force of impulse and can think out things better. When he wants something and understands its value, he can strive to achieve it.

3) Ability to accept Responsibility. The child at this stage likes respon-

sibility. Parents should make him responsible for certain things. They should try not to give him more duties than he can accomplish and at the same time not give him less than what he is capable of.

4) Seeking Independence. The seeds of independence and sometimes rebellion are planted during this stage. Children will question many things during this stage and will often not accept what the parents say. According to Dr. Ali Qaemi, this type of rebellion is not very strong at this stage and can be prevented from getting more intense. If it is not handled correctly however, it can lead to stronger rebellion during the third stage.

Parents need to be firm but also loving at the same time. They are in authority and should not be afraid of exercising their rights as parents. Sometimes a parent becomes afraid of the whining of the child, or the smart answers, the defiance, etc. At this stage however, that type of reaction is not hard set. Parents can counter it by holding their ground but also showing the child that they love them.

Common mistakes during this stage:

1) Use of Anger to discipline. Parents often assume that children should automatically know how to do things. If parents don't show them the correct way to do a particular chore, or the appropriate way to socialize with others, etc., a child may fail to do it right. Thus there can be no justification for anger, or for negative consequences. Children have to be taught the correct way of doing things and this should be done in a gentle manner, and when the child does not do things properly, parents should point that out and remind the child. If the parent becomes angry and resorts to scolding and labeling, the result is often negative. Resentment is created and the child learns to dislike the task. To encourage children towards an action it is necessary for parents to teach positively.



Imam Ali (a) has said: May Allah have mercy on the one who helps his child towards righteousness by being good to him, appealing to him, teaching him knowledge, and training him.

Then when a child fails to carry out the teachings and falls short in his duties, there should be consequences in place. A child needs to understand that negative behavior or slacking will have negative consequences. Parents need to choose appropriate consequences to deter a child from continuing such behavior.

2) Too many activities.

Some parents would like their children enrolled in various activities and do not allow the child to have much free time. Children are taken to school, Quran class after school, sports activities, tutoring, Madrasah, etc. There is a constant whirl of activities and children do not get time to unwind and relax. This type of stressful lifestyle is not beneficial for the children nor for the parents. It is necessary to cut down on activities and decide on what is best for the children. Parents should not attempt to compete with other parents in creating a 'busy' life for their children. Parents who wish their children to have calm temperaments and not be prone to outbursts of anger must make sure their children don't have harried lifestyles that are brewing grounds for stress and anger.

3) Giving in to children's demands.

In today's times parents are often soft with their children. They provide a lot of comforts and fulfill children's expectations – even unrealistic ones. During the first and second seven year stages, children are given a lot of material and secular advantages. Ranging from the latest toys, books, activities, television and computer time, few chores and duties, children have it all! They learn to be selfish and self centered and then fail to develop correctly into the third stage of being a deputy. Because during the second stage they have had all their needs met and wishes fulfilled



without much demanded from them, they cannot suddenly shoulder the responsibilities of being young adults when they reach the third stage. That is why it is necessary to be firm, even a little hard, during the second stage. There is no need to give everything to them; occasional disappointments help to harden the child and make him realize that the world does not cater to all his whims.

The second stage can be divided into two separate stages: the one between ages of 8-10 which is still a continuation of childhood, and that of 11-14 which is the beginning of maturity and youth.

During this second stage of maturity, the child becomes more sensitive and self conscious. He is affected by others opinions of him and is sometimes negative about himself. He compares himself to others and does not see many of his own positive qualities. This negativity can even be extended to his family. Parents can help the child overcome this and understand that constant reproaches from the parents and comparisons to other children, or unrealistic demands of the child, may result in low self-esteem and even anger and resentment towards the parents. It is necessary to build a healthy self confidence in the child, making him see his own positive side and allowing him to understand that he

can work on his negative qualities. This self confidence will allow him to have a strong sense of identity and will make him less vulnerable to outside influences, which may try to erode his identity as a Muslim. It is necessary for a child to feel good about himself, not have pride or self conceit, but a sense of confidence in the self. Only then can the child feel good about his family, his background, his religion, etc.

It is also during this second stage that children need to be taught about sensitive matters such as sexuality, hygiene, etc. Parents should be able to talk to the children about this. If they are not comfortable, they should make sure the child gets the information from a reliable source and has somewhere to turn to with questions. The second stage is an important bridge from childhood to youth. Many characteristics that bear fruit during the time of youth are planted during this stage. If nurtured correctly, this stage of youth will be easier and be a time for the child to blossom. The training that is done in the second stage must therefore be attended to carefully. Remember the words of Imam Zainul Abidin (a) who says: Therefore you should endeavor in his [the child's] training like the person who is going to be adorned by his good influence [upon his child] in this world and [wants to be] vindicated in the presence of his Lord concerning his responsibility about the child. (Imam Zaynul Abidin (a) in Risalatul Huqooq)



GROWING FEET

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

PREGNANCY – The Expectant Father

(Based on Conception, Pregnancy and Birth, By Dr. Miriam Stoppard)

Finding out you are going to be a father is one of the most exciting moments of your life. Allow the unborn baby to be as big a part of your life as you can – this, after all, is something that is happening to both of you, not just to your wife. This will be covered in 3 parts inshallah.

Part 2 – How You Can Participate

Being an expectant father is the one time in your life when you are quite likely to feel out of control. This feeling of being an outsider will not be helped by the way other

people treat you: well-meaning female friends and relatives may unconsciously push you out of what they see as their territory. You may also find that the professionals, such as obstetricians and midwives, direct their conversations at your wife more than at you.

Take the initiative. Don't just step back. Talk to your own friends and colleagues: you may be subject to a certain amount of teasing but, equally, you may find other fathers keen to share their experiences with you. Try to find out as much as you can about the pregnancy so that you can understand the changes taking place in your wife's body. If possible, go with her to the scans so that you can see your baby developing, talk about the fact that you are going to be a father, and ask as many questions as you want.

INFANCY (0-12 Months) – The Frequent Cold Programme

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

Does it seem as if your baby has enrolled in the frequent cold programme - catching every cold the older siblings come down with, or bringing one home from day care every other week? Don't worry. Though they'll try your patience and are rough on your baby's nose, such frequent mild illnesses won't do any harm – and can actually do some good.

The perks? Frequent colds (and ear infections and bouts with other bugs) boost your child's immune system, making your child less susceptible to infection later in life. In fact, babies in day care (who catch illnesses more often than those at home) are much less susceptible to colds and other infections as they get older and enter school.

Frequent colds also appear to have absolutely no effect on your baby's future development. Researchers have found that children who come down with multiple colds, ear infections

and diarrhoea are no less prepared for preschool and have just as many social skills as their peers who were sick less often. (Plus, these children are already good at sharing – their germs, at least.)

THE TODDLER YEARS – Hygiene Guide: Six Toy-Cleaning Tips

(By Lisa Murphy, <http://health.kaboose.com/kids-health/six-toy-cleaning-tips.html>)

There may be a few surprises lurking in your child's stuffed animal, bath toy or train set. Think dust mites and molds that can trigger allergies and asthma, and infectious germs that spread viral illnesses. "We know that the majority of cold viruses are transmitted on objects and hands, for instance," says Dr. Clifford Bassett, medical director of Allergy and Asthma Care of New York. "Your child can develop a rhinovirus within 12 to 24 hours of contact." Clearly, cleaning our kids' hands, house and toys is good for their health. Here's how to do it right and help keep allergies, asthma, colds and flus at bay:

Choose toys carefully. Look for washable toys and throw out items that won't come clean, says Dr. Bassett, who is also vice-chairman of public education for the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI). Where possible, avoid porous, stuffed or otherwise difficult-to-scrub items. Wash 'em regularly. You don't need to scrub toys weekly, as many daycares do, but perhaps once a month or at least when toys are visibly dirty. Throw toys into the top rack of a dishwasher or the washing machine, or hand wash them in dish soap and water. Not all toys indicate whether they're dishwasher safe, so use your judgment. If you're concerned that something might melt, wash it by hand.

Blast germs when required. Disinfect toys and other surfaces (say, toy boxes or crib rails) if you, your child or a visiting playmate has been ill. A bleach-water solution or non-aerosol disinfectant such as Lysol should do the trick, says Dr. Bassett. (Be sure to read ingredients and labels carefully.) Note that if your dishwasher or laundry machine uses 130-degree water, disinfectant is unnecessary.

Give stuffed toys the deep freeze. If your child has tested positive for dust-mite allergy, put their stuffed toys in a plastic covering and freeze them for three to five hours once a week. "This kills most living dust mites," says Dr. Bassett. These microscopic, spider-like mites are one of the most common allergy and asthma triggers. To find out if your child has a dust-mite allergy, ask your family doctor for a blood- or skin-prick allergy test.

Ditch bath toys with holes. Sure, you can and should squeeze water out of tub toys, hang them to dry in a netting bag and wash and disinfect them as above. But bath toys with holes can become a breeding ground for mold, so why not avoid them altogether?

Keep washing those hands. This is important especially after school or visits to the playground. A recent University of Arizona study found that children's playground equipment and daycare centers were the most frequently contaminated public places of over 1,000 surfaces tested. Washing hands before kids play with their home toys can keep them from spreading bacteria around. "The average child has up to six colds a year, but regular hand washing can cut that in half," says Dr. Bassett. The good news? "People are more aware of environment and disease," he says. "We're all doing a better

job of fighting germs these days."

THE OLDER YEARS – Attachment Parenting

(By Dianna Griffis, http://attachment-parenting.suite101.com/article.cfm/attachment_parenting_methods_for_older_children)

Attachment parenting methods can be utilized in families with children of all ages. Affection, positive discipline, and mutual respect are ways to nurture attachment. Attachment parenting philosophies needn't stop as children get older. The same basic ideals of parent child interaction can still be applied to children of any age. Once the baby and toddler times have passed, other aspects of the parent child relationship begin to emerge.

Older Kids Need Physical Affection

One of the fundamentals of the attachment parenting philosophy is to give an abundance of physical affection and care. This holds true for older kids, as well. Although when approaching the teen years, kids may appear to feel slightly awkward with physical contact, they still need that kind of attention. Take cues from the child. Know when he needs a hug, a rustling of the hair, or a peck on the cheek. Although snuggle time is different for a two year old than it is for a 12 year old, for example, the same need for that time still exists. Simply sitting on the couch with legs draped over each other is a simple demonstration of casual touch. Arm in arm goofy walks together is another. Comfort hurts with a hug or a sympathetic caress on the back. Loving touch is a fundamental human need. Wise parents recognize this need and make sure to frequently offer it to their children.

Conscious Discipline

As children get older, new issues that require intelligent discipline arise. Time-outs and distraction techniques no longer work. It's a positive note, however, that natural consequences come more into play in later years. This makes for easier discipline. If the child doesn't do her homework, she gets a poor grade. If she does not save her money wisely, she may not be able to purchase a large item that she desires. These kinds of natural outcomes help a child develop an internal discipline, which is a high goal of many parents. Another aspect of discipline that deserves attention is that parents should make it a priority to try to uncover the reasons behind misbehaviour, instead of just reacting to the behaviour. If parents can work with their children and solve the underlying need or issue, the misbehaviour naturally ceases.

Showing Respect Towards Kids

One key attribute of parents who adhere to attachment parenting methods is that they recognize their children as actual human beings with similar needs of their own. Respect is to be valued throughout childhood and into adulthood. If parents make it a point to nurture respect for their children, then open communication will likely continue as the children move into the teen years and eventually into adulthood. Remaining calm and demonstrating good listening skills are very important to help kids feel appreciated and safe. Offering respect yields respect in return, and therefore creates strong bonds of trust.

Parents of older children can develop and maintain attachment techniques that build excellent relationships. Affection, positive discipline, and mutual respect are some of the ways to follow the attachment parenting path.

THE INDIAN SPICE BOX

Do you ever get confused between Garam Masala and Dhana Jeero? We're here to help decipher the jars!

Red Chili Powder (Lal Mirch): Indian chili powder which is made from ground chilies. It is much hotter than the chili powder commonly found in most Western stores which is mostly a blend of red peppers and cumin, coriander, etc. The ground product ranges from orange-red, to deep, dark red. Red pepper is a pungent, hot powder with a strong bite. Paprika is a mild form of the red chili powder.

Turmeric Powder (Haldi): This smooth bright yellow powder is mildly aromatic and has scents of ginger. It has a pungent, bitter flavour. Ground Turmeric comes from the dried, ground fingers which extend from the root. Though often called Indian saffron, it should never be confused with true saffron, and the two may not be used interchangeably. Be careful while handling Turmeric powder as it can stain plastic and wooden utensils. Therefore, it is wise to keep special wooden spoons for making Indian food.

Turmeric has been used medicinally throughout Asia to treat stomach and liver ailments. It also was used externally, to heal sores, and as a cosmetic. It is an excellent preservative and is therefore used extensively in pickles.

Cumin Seeds (Jeera): Cumin has a distinctive, slightly bitter flavour yet flavours any dish with a sweet aroma. These brown aromatic small seeds give out more aroma when roasted or added to hot oil. Cumin seeds do look a lot like caraway seeds, but the flavours are completely different.

Cumin Seed Powder (Jeera powder): Cumin seeds powder is very commonly used in Indian cooking. It lends a sweet and mild flavour to a dish. It is one of the main ingredients in preparing "Garam Masala." This spice is used more extensively in the cuisine of North India.

Coriander Seeds (Dhania): Coriander

seeds are not inter-changeable with cilantro, although they are from the same plant. These seeds are very light weight and mildly flavoured. Used in many spice mixtures, curries, vegetable dishes and pickles.

Coriander Seed Powder (Dhania powder): Roasted coriander powder is an indispensable item in the Indian spice box. The aromatic fragrance enhances the taste of the dish. Coriander powder is used a lot in South Indian cooking. Make your own coriander powder in a mortar or food processor after dry roasting them.

Dhania Jeera Powder: This is a mixture of "equal parts of Cumin and Coriander powder". This mixture is commonly used in Indian curries and masalas. You can make a mixture of this in your own kitchen using the freshly ground spices.

Garam Masala: a combination of cumin seeds, coriander seeds, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon and black pepper that can be used whole or in powdered form.

Bay Leaf-dried (Tej Patta): Bay Leaves come from the sweet bay or laurel tree. The dry light green coloured long aromatic leaves and have a sharp, bitter taste. Mostly used in flavouring pilaos and some curries. The whole leaves are used to impart a wonderful flavour only, and are bitter and hard to chew. Remove at the time of eating.

Green Cardamom (Choti Elaichi): Cardamom is sold whole or ground by Indian grocers. Ground cardamom is often used in Indian sweets. It is best to grind small quantities at home using a coffee mill. Ready-ground cardamom is not only expensive but because cardamom loses its natural oils quickly, it also loses its flavour. When a recipe calls for whole cardamom, the pods should always be opened up slightly to extract the full flavour of the cardamom, for it is the seeds that have the maximum flavour.

Black Cardamom (Badi Elaichi): This larger dark brown variety is used flavouring meat, poultry and rice dishes. The inner seeds are often used for making Garam Masala. This spice is coarser in flavour and larger in size than the green cardamom.

Cinnamon-sticks (Taj): The bark of the Cassia tree is used mostly in India. The real cinnamon sticks which are found in the form of a scroll, are available in most supermarkets and have a more delicate flavour than the Cassia bark. Cinnamon sticks lend a sweet and mellow flavour to a dish. Although it is generally used in many desserts in many of the World cuisines,

it is mostly used in many curries and Pilaos in Indian cooking. It gives a dish a very rich flavour.

Cloves-whole (Laving): Cloves are the dried flower buds of the clove tree. Cloves are strong, pungent, and sweet. Cloves are used in many meat dishes, marinades, pickles and in many Garam Masalas. It is used whole or in powder form.

Saffron : Saffron is the most expensive spice. Saffron threads, as they are also called, are orange-red dried stigmas of a small purple flower called the Crocus Sativus. It imparts a very pleasing flavour as well as a golden yellow colour. Saffron's aroma is unique and there is no substitute for it. It is used for colouring and flavouring Indian curries, Pilaos and Indian sweets.

Mango powder (Aamchur powder): Dried unripe mango used as a spice in India is known as amchur (sometimes spelled amchoor). Am is a Hindi word for Mango and aamchur is powder or extract of Mango.

Ajwain (Carom Seeds): It is the small seed-like fruit of the Bishop's Weed plant. It is egg-shaped and grayish in color. Raw ajwain smells almost exactly like thyme because it also contains thymol, but is more aromatic and less subtle in taste, as well as slightly bitter and pungent. It tastes like thyme or caraway, only stronger. Even a small amount of raw ajwain will completely dominate the flavour of a dish. It is called Omam in Tamil. In Indian cuisine, ajwain is almost never used raw, but either dry-roasted or fried in ghee. This develops a much more subtle and complex aroma, somewhat similar to caraway but "brighter". It is used for making a type of paratha, called 'ajwain ka paratha'.

Star anise (Chakra Phool): These are star shaped fruits. It is a major component of Garam Masala. It is used as a spice in preparation of Biryani - a delicious rice preparation.





When I first heard about homeschooling, I thought it was something that I would never do. Prior to that, I didn't even know there was such a thing as homeschooling and that it was legal! My initial thought was that I would be closing my children from the world outside and that they would not learn to socialize. I had imagined that their being with other children in school would prepare them to face the challenges in life as they grow. However, I decided to find out more about it. I spoke to other homeschooling parents, met homeschooled children and read a lot about it. Slowly, I began to think that it wasn't as bad as I had made it out to be. When I read 'The Well Trained Mind – A guide to classical education at home' (Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise), that was when I felt I wanted to try homeschooling for myself.

The more I researched into homeschooling, the more I realised that, for me and my children, the schooling system was inadequate in terms of the current environment. I felt I could have more control over the influence which may end up being more difficult to undo later. We could also be in a more Islamic environment while learning, have days off to suit our needs and also that I would be able to maximise time by giving one to one attention to the children and be in complete control. I decided to take it a step at a time and see how it went for a year.

'The Well Trained Mind is a parents' guide to a do-it-yourself, academically rigorous, comprehensive education – a classical education. 'What is classical education? It is language-intensive, not image focused. It demands that students use

Out of Interest

I HOME SCHOOL MY CHILDREN

By Arifa Davdani

and understand words, not video images. It is history-intensive, providing students with a comprehensive view of human endeavour from beginning until now. It trains the mind to analyze and draw conclusions. It demands self discipline. It produces literate, curious, intelligent students who have a wide range of interests and the ability to follow up on them.' (The Well Trained Mind)

My children are now aged 9, 8, 4 and 1 and we are still homeschooling. The books which we follow for Arithmetic, Phonics and Spellings have a teacher's lesson plan, written out like a script, which means there is little or no preparation required. A year has 170 lessons. As we do this 5 times a week, it allows for a 3 months break. We use this time off in Ramadhan, Muharram and other times around the year as just 'holidays'! There are 100 English language lessons through the year and Science and History is done about twice a week. Apart from that, the children do Arabic, Art, Swimming or Football, Stitching classes and Chatterbooks - sessions at the library.

"But what about socialisation?" I have been asked many times. In 'The Well Trained Mind' it says, "According to the dictionary, socialization is 'the process by which a human being, beginning in infancy, acquires the habits, beliefs and accumulated knowledge of his society.' Agents of socialization include the family (both immediate and extended), the religious community, neighbourhoods, tutors and mentors, the media (TV, radio, films books, magazines all tell the child what's expected of him, for better or worse), clubs (social or academic), the arts (both in observation and participation), travel, jobs, civic participation and formal schooling in an institution."

As my children are not in school and so do not have that 'agent of socialisation', we are always looking for ways to improve the social aspect for them.

When I mention the fact that I home school to someone, and they look surprised or their jaw drops and they ask 'why would you want to do that?', I understand exactly how they feel as I once felt the same. There are many reasons why people choose to home school and many reasons why people feel homeschooling is not for them...it's an individual choice, and Alhamdulillah, it has proved to be the right choice for me.

Recently I have been asked about how we home school, so we have been keeping a blog about what we do so that visitors can get an idea of it. This is at www.ourhomeed.blogspot.com



THE SEASON TO INDULGE THE SPIRIT

By Nazmina Virjee

The felicitous time has arrived again, for us to be invited to that Grand Feast of the month of Ramadhan. The name itself stirs up nostalgic feelings in everyone, young and old, of every culture, with fond memories of laden tables, and special Ramadhan foods and customs. We look forward to it with fondness, savouring the culinary delights that it brings with it, of samosas, kebabs, and everything coconut. As we wait to dig into the feast, the scent of mandazis frying in hot oil wafts through the air, dancing with the cardamom-flavoured wisps of steam rising from the 'ukaareli chaay' on the stove, against the melodious recitation of Qur'an on TV, and the faint rumble in the pits of our stomachs. Allah (SWT) has indeed invited us to His feast in this month for us to indulge in – not with our physical senses, however, but with our starved and thirsting spirit. He invites us to enjoy the delight of coming back into unity with His will, to savour the taste of intimate conversation with Him in the darkness of the night, to be reminded of His Message of

love and partake in His Night of Decree and Power, to enjoy the sweet sound of the Qur'an on our lips and ears, to experience the descent of His Mercy upon us, and to accept His generosity and kindness with open arms.

This is the season of 'Ibada (worship), 'whose nights', in the Prophet (S)'s own words, 'are the best of nights, and whose hours are the best of hours. In it, your breaths are counted as tasbih (glorification), and your sleep as worship'. The Prophet (S) goes on to enumerate various rewards designated by Allah for those who keep away from sins, who offer iftaar to others, who desist from harming or annoying anybody, and who perform extra acts of worship, etc.

In our own lives, we see a definite progression and development in our relationship with the month of Ramadhan, from when we were children until maturity, for example in our motivation to fast. As children, our motivation to fast was the promise of tangible rewards

and an Eid gift at the end. As we grew older, it was the promises of rewards in the Hereafter, as we learnt to fast with our whole body, being more aware of how we could fast with our tongues and hands. As we mature further still, Allah's statement that He Himself is the reward for those who fast becomes clearer to us, and we strive to earn His pleasure, and the very wisdom behind the fast as being an action for our own good is highlighted to us. Where before we may have equated fasting with hardship, we now equate it with training, with character-building, with Allah's gentle but firm care, moulding us by instilling self-restraint, patience, temperance, moderation and all such beautiful qualities necessary for the perfection that He has created us for.

The very basis of Akhlaq and cultivating good moral ethics goes back to the restraint of one's stomach, tongue and private parts, according to an abundance of ahadith from our AImma (A). For example, holding our tongues and controlling our irritation in the midst of hunger, without an afternoon tea, is very very hard, but it is for our own good. There is nothing more effective for training and perfecting ourselves than that. The root word 'ra-ma-da' means to burn away our sins, lusts and anger. The fast

is designed to pacify us and bring us back to reality on every level – social and economical, physical, and especially spiritual. It helps to focus on one weakness or vice that irks us the most, and that is most prominent during the fast, be it a short fuse, or an inability to stay away from gossip, or wasting time. This is the time to spot-target it, so that by the end of the month, we can celebrate an actual achievement.

The spirit and secret nature of fasting is to weaken the forces that are Shaytan's means of leading us back to evil. Imam Sadiq (A) said, 'Shaytan courses in the blood of man, so block his pathways through hunger and thirst'. It is therefore essential to cut down one's intake of food from what one would consume on a normal night when not fasting. No benefit is derived from the fast if one consumes as much as one would usually eat during the day and night combined. The whole point of fasting, as mentioned in the Qur'an, is 'that you may attain piety'; but 'overeating spoils piety' as our Imam Ali (A) so eloquently points out. He (A) also said that, 'Nothing is more despised by Allah than a full stomach'. Overindulging our physical appetites after having starved them the

whole day not only defeats the whole purpose of fasting, but actually arouses dormant desires for those delicacies. Instead, we must strive to gradually reduce our intake of food in this month and be very conscious of the way in which we approach food. If we don't take care to watch our manner of consumption of food, the whole month may be futile, as the Prophet (S) has said, 'Many a fasting person is just hungry and thirsty', and we may actually do more harm than good.

This does not mean that we do not cook delicious foods or invite people over for iftaars and sahris. On the contrary, feeding others iftaar is highly recommended, but without the extravagance. All mothers have a right to want to spoil their families with delicious food after having fasted all day, and it is not for the cook to worry about the guests overindulging – each person is responsible for their own selves, especially at the time of iftaar. There is no better time to call upon Allah than at the time of opening the fast, for it is then that we are at our most impatient and yet have to be the most vigilant over ourselves. Allah addressed Prophet Musa (A), saying, 'Musa, how can you see My beauty

when there are seventy-thousand veils between us? You are incapable of seeing Me. But near the Resurrection I shall give a month as a gift to the Community of My beloved Muhammad. That month shall be called Ramadan. To the Community of Muhammad that fasts during that month, I shall so manifest Myself at the time of iftaar that, whereas between you and Me there are now seventy-thousand veils, there will be no veil at all between Me and the fasting Community of Muhammad at the time of iftaar.' Therefore the spiritual progress we make at iftaar time is unlike any other. The closeness we achieve to Allah at that time is unlike any other, and it may just pass us by if we're inattentive and preoccupied with stuffing ourselves. Religious experience must not be allowed to turn into mere culture otherwise we risk losing the spiritual significance of our beloved month of Ramadhan, the way that Lent has been reduced to Pancake day and festivals, Easter from a time of rebirth and renewal down to chocolates and bunnies, and Christmas to a celebration of pure, commercial gluttony.

We must constantly remind ourselves that there is only one month of Rama-

dhan – this one (which is flying by too fast). The next one we cannot count on, and from the previous one, we may have done so much in between to cancel out its good effects. There is only one performance, and only one attempt, and we are very fortunate to have been gifted the preceding months of Rajab and Sha'ban as practice runs to help give us a head start.

As endearing and evocative our cultural associations with the month of Ramadhan are, and there is nothing wrong in enjoying good food, the well-meaning mothers and cooks amongst us must remember not to busy ourselves too much in this month. We are guests of Allah, and in Islamic etiquette, guests do not work. He wants us to take it easy, sleep more if it keeps us away from sins, breathe more, spend time remembering him, and conserve our energy for night 'ibadaat, rather than expend it all slaving in front of the stove. Let's take the shortcuts available to us, prepare in advance, and cut back on the extra work we create for ourselves, so that we spend as little of our time and energy as possible feeding our desires (to the detriment of our spirit), and as much as possible feeding our spirit instead.

HIJAB TALK

Is your daughter going to be turning Baligh? Are you worried about how to tackle the hijab issue at school? Why not try the tips below:

Talk to your daughter on when she wants to start wearing hijab at school.

Talk to other mums and see how they tackled the issue, especially if they had any problems and how they overcame them.

Make sure you get involved in classroom activities at school early on. This is very helpful as the students will get used to seeing someone with hijab in the classroom and may also ask questions on why you wear hijab.

Speak to the school well in ad-

vance about your daughter's intention on wearing hijab and what it will involve.

Shortly before your daughter is due to start wearing hijab, it is very useful to go in and talk to the class about hijab. Have a word with the class teacher if that is possible. For ideas on how to give a talk on hijab please visit:

<http://www.madressa.net/presentations/429-hijab-talk>

Another useful thing to do is to invite a speaker to give a talk in assembly at school. If you are brave enough then why don't you give it a go!

Remember to do all this in consultation with your daughter. If she is not happy with it than let her suggest what the best way forward would be.



ASMAUL HUSNA

By Masuma and Muhaddisa Govani

We look forward to Wednesday mornings, our weekly dose of spirituality. While the kids are at school, instead of trying to be a domestic goddess and get the endless list of things to do finished on time, we head off to Stanmore, for the Asmaul Husna class - where we learn the sublime names of Allah and how to manifest these names through ourselves. These classes leave us feeling refreshed and rejuvenated, almost as if we have just bought a new pair of glasses and can see the world from a whole new perspective! Asmaul Husna names are already within us, buried inside deep down, but it is learning to recognize and manifest it which is important.

With the exception of the name ALLAH, all names that describe Allah in the Holy Quran are known as Asmaul Husna. "The most beautiful names belong to him (Allah)" (Sura Hashr, v24). The phrase Asmaul Husna, made up of the word "asma," the plural for "name" and "husna," meaning beautiful or most beautiful, means 'Allah's most beautiful names'. The knowledge of Asmaul Husna is important in that it allows servants to become acquainted with Allah and it sheds light on the realm of the relationship between Allah and the world.

There are enormous benefits in reciting each "ism" (theo-ethics) but to understand the "ism" (psycho-ethics) and try to emulate it (socio-ethics) is far more rewarding and necessary to reach our full potential.

This class has outlined 10 stages in total of a spiritual journey to follow in Asmaul Husna. In this article we will be focusing on the first stage of the journey which is the Aspiration to get closer to Allah. So to begin with, we all need to have an intention and focus on a goal. So for example, your goal might be to raise your child in preparation for the army of the 12th Imam. Therefore if we have this goal, that's all our focus is on, nothing and no one can stray us from this goal, and we endeavor to do everything we can and that is possible (without hurting anyone around us, but rather trying to take them with us) to reach

this. This means emptying the heart of everything except the intense need to get closer to Allah, and be the ultimate being he created us to be. So first, have a think and write your goal down, and the actions needed to reach it.

This is followed by Ar Rahman - the Merciful and Ar Raheem - the Compassionate. The first is Allah's mercy on all of his creation, followed by the mercy of Allah on those connected to him. So we need to ask ourselves if we are merciful in the treatment towards others. Do we punish our children too quickly, if they do not fit or behave in our expected standards? Do we get angry instead of showing compassion?

Aristotle said:

"Anybody can be angry, that is easy: but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the



right purpose, and in the right way, that is not within everybody's power, that is not easy."

So it is learning how to interact with others in a merciful way, forgiving their mistakes, accepting that they are different and being tolerant, all the attributes needed in being a good parent. Imam Ali has said "Someone who manifests Ar Rahman and Ar Raheem will be able to have empathy towards others and not impose their will on people around them."

We therefore need to take ownership of our anger by the third name of Allah, which is Al Malik, the Owner (Kingship). This means having confidence in ourselves and not worrying about others' opinions so much. We need to ensure our thoughts are in our control, as cultivating bad thoughts is a reflection on us rather than someone else! We as mothers worry too much about what others think of us, our children, how we behave with our children,

especially at mosque! We worry what others think of our clothes, our house, our car, etc. but really, who cares?! We make this mistake by then instilling this fear in our children. Rather, we need to raise them to be happy and confident individuals and not rely on what other people think of them - at the end of the day, everyone will have an opinion! It is not only taking ownership but training our children too. As Islam teaches us, as our children get older, we stop feeding them and teach them to feed themselves, we stop changing them as they are potty trained; this in essence is a natural cycle, and allowing them to think and feel for themselves is pertinent to raising a confident child. This then will instill having a sense of pride, the sort of pride that one who sees Allah as the king of the universe, takes pride in being a servant of Allah.

"All that is in the heavens and earth magnify Al Malik, Al Quddus", (62:1). This is the Holy, the Quddus within ourselves, so purifying our hearts of pre-judgments. When we look at others we should look past their outer appearance and not make hasty judgments on a situation. Instead we should be able to look or recognise the person's positive qualities. Every single individual has a positive attribute. When we meet people do we see that? Or do we start judging? In particular, it is necessary not to criticize our children so much: "Oh, she is such a whiner," "She is so stubborn!" "He isn't very good at socialising."

By finding faults in those around us we are reflecting the faults within, so As Salaam - Peace can only come when we have empathy, ownership over our mind and by cleansing our heart of hatred and anger to achieve flawlessness. This is intelligent peace = lasting peace.

It is not enough to achieve peace within ourselves but we need to help others to achieve the same. This is by being Al Mu'min - the Helper, the Giver of faith. Therefore be a candle, burn yourself and give light to others. This needs to be done alongside with being Al Muhaymin - A Guardian and protector of others' rights. However it needs to be pointed out that you can only help and protect others and be a supportive member of the family if you have the ability to first protect your own nafs. We cannot expect our children not do Gheebat if that is all they hear us do when we are on the phone talking to our Mums! We need to show them that we have self control so they will also learn to guard their nafs.

We must remember that there is a fine line between helping others and controlling others, as you then risk of pushing

everyone away from you. As mothers, we often say “Do this, I am your mother!” or if you do that then I will...” We have to be careful not to become dictatorial. Ask yourself, do you have the inner strength to be incomparable, Al – Azeez? Do you sometimes think of yourself as holier than thou? As it is only Allah who has all the Honour and Power, he is the Azeez.

We can only develop these attributes if we have the will power to submit to Allah alone. Allah is the one who is Al Jabbar – The One who Mends. He is the one who can give us the strength to mend our hearts and we have to

make an active effort to come closer to him. By applying Al Jabbar in to our lives, we learn to accept what we have been given and make the most of what we have. In relation to those around us, we should help them to mend their ways and bring about an environment that is conducive for them to grow as better Mu'mins without belittling them. This can be difficult to achieve unless we recognise the Mutakabbir - Pride belongs only to Allah as he is the greatest. As a result we need to humble ourselves in the way we walk, talk and behave, and change our outlook on life. Without humility, our journey cannot

proceed and can be a barrier in our ability to develop further.

The human soul seeks perfection; when it learns of the perfection of something, it is drawn there and experiences joy parallel to the level of perfection found. Just as knowing Allah is possible through learning His name and attributes, loving Him is only possible through knowing that all perfection lies with him.

We can't wait till next week!

For more information on Asmaul Husna, you can visit www.qfatima.org.

Benefits of recitation of Allah's names

Allah	“Say! He Allah is One; Allah is He on whom all depend; HE begets not nor is He begotten, and none is like Him” 112:1-4	Striving towards perfection. “Faj'alniy kamaa tuhibb...”“Make me as You would love me to be” Imam Ali (A.S.)	“Takhallaqu biakhlaqillah” “Adopt in yourself the akhlaq of Allah” Prophet (S.A.W.)	Recite it as many times as possible for fulfilment of a hajaat.
Ar-Rahmaan	He wills mercy (Rahma) for all His creation. “My Mercy encompasses everything...” 7:156	Compassion /Empathy	Mercy to precede anger towards all of Allah's creation.	Recite 100x after every wajib salaa to cure forgetfulness, increase awareness, lighten a heavy heart and instil rahma in a hard heart.
Ar-Raheem	This denotes exclusive mercy to those who voluntarily believe in Him... “He is kind & merciful to the mu'mineen” 33:43	Compassion	Compassion towards mu'mineen	Recite 100x after Salatul Fajr to receive compassion from all creatures.
Al-Malik	The Owner/King of the universe. “So, High exalted be Allah, the King...” 20:114	Control over nafs and therefore life and actions (kingship over desires)	'Pride' in being an abd of Allah and encouragement to others in being the same	Recite frequently to be independent of creation.
Al-Quddoos	He is the most pure (Holy). “All that is in the heavens and earth magnify the Malik, the Quddoos” 62:1	Purification of nafs by ridding it of bad habits. “The heavens and the earth cannot contain Me but the heart of a mu'min contains Me” Hadith Qudsi	No pre-judgement of others.	Recite 100 xs for a heart free of troubles, worry and pain.
As-Salaam	He is flawless and thus the author of Peace. “... He is the Malik, Quddoos, and Salaam.” 59:23	Cleanse heart of hatred, anger vengeance, deceit, jealousy...	No negativity towards others.	Recite 160 xs over sick person for shifaa. Recite frequently for peace of mind.
Al-Mu'min	He is the giver of safety and security – eiman. “...the Mu'min...” 59:23	Eiman in Allah reflected by words, acts and thoughts.	Provide security and refuge for others.	Recite 36x when face with hostility and danger. Recite frequently for safety from ego.
Al-Muhayminu	He is the Protector and Guardian. “...The Muhaymin.”59:23	Protection of nafs.	Guarding against wronging others.	Recite 115 xs in state of wudhoo for inner enlightenment.



READERS ARE LEADERS

By Alia Merali

Reading to me is about letting your imagination flow. It is about inspiring you to think of weird and wonderful things and to think in colour! A good book should have you cuddling up and eagerly turning pages to find out what happens next. I remember when I was young and wanting to read until the book was finished, often reading until the early hours of the morning. This is what reading should be like but how do we get there? Keep reading...

We're often worried about the children in our lives succeeding and doing their best, whether we're parents, teachers, aunts or grandmothers, and we all know that reading is an important skill. Encouraging a love of reading not only inspires children to develop their imagination but also provides them with the materials needed to write. "Research has shown that children who hear stories before going to school are the most likely to succeed. Storytelling helps children internalise language patterns, as well as providing them with a rucksack of imaginative possibilities to draw upon when creating. It is worth noting that the most proficient writers in any class are readers." (Pie Corbett) This shows the importance of reading to your child from an early age and providing them

with bucket loads of ideas to use, as well as encouraging skills which will be invaluable to them.

Islam has always encouraged us to read, write and gain knowledge in general; in fact, the very first verse revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) was "Iqra – Read." Allah (SWT) has blessed us with many faculties, among them is the ability to read, write and to acquire knowledge and therefore we have a responsibility to develop these skills in ourselves and in our children. Surah Alaq talks about developing such skills and using them in the way of Allah (SWT). It refers to the growth of knowledge in man, who learns and grows day by day. We have all heard of the famous saying "seek knowledge even if it means travelling to China," or "seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave". Reading is a way of seeking knowledge of the world.

You may be thinking, how does developing your imagination and reading fiction encourage our children to gain knowledge? Reading fiction will encourage a love of reading in children and allow young children to develop the skills to recognise symbols and link them to specific sounds. It will also give them the chance to understand the meanings of words and phrases in the English language and become used to the nature of them. These skills will all be of help when it comes to reading books without illustrations or with non-fictional books.

Tips:

Read yourself! Children copy what adults do, so pick up a book, a magazine or newspaper and set an example... It is also helpful if boys see the men in their lives reading so they have a role model too!

Begin by choosing books that you really enjoy. When adults love a book they tend to read it with more enthusiasm.

Next, pick your child's favourite book. Reading a favourite book will encourage your child to begin to pretend to read and recognise words, which will boost their self-esteem.

Reading the Quran also has its benefits. The Holy Book is the best intellectual treasure a student can have. Prophet Muhammad (saw) has said "Whoever reads the Qur'an before becoming Baaligh, has indeed been given wisdom as a child". (Source: <http://www.al-islam.org/short/quraan-lessons.htm>)

Make time to read - read a bedtime story every night or chat about what your kids are reading. Make it part of the routine - bath, story, surah's and bed or Quran, story, homework and play.

A good way to include our mother tongue is to read in any language you speak at home. The important thing is that your child reads.

When reading, run your finger under the words so your child can see that the print runs from left to right (or right to left in Quran).

Use books throughout your house - don't restrict them to bedtime or book areas. Use newspapers, recipe books, shopping catalogues and even Auto Trader!

Have story props and use different voices to help younger children to engage.

Read while waiting - pop a book in your bag for a visit to the doctor and read while in the waiting area.

Join your local library to stock up on books and also take part in free activities.

DEALING WITH EMOTIONS

By Farzana Karawalli

In our culture we don't like children to show anger or express emotion. We want our children to listen to us and give into our expectations and desires. However, expression of negative behaviour allows children to understand what is going on inside them. It allows them to be more aware of who they are, what their needs are, and what their wishes are.

In Islam, we have been taught to guide and teach our children and be a model of perfection for them to learn from. Rather than telling them what we expect, we need to show them how to be. We need to learn to listen to our children express their negative emotions, not to give in, but to guide them through this process rather than cut them off as this will help the child to realise the need and benefit of having their parents, and eventually influence them to be more co-operative.

We need to allow our children to feel their emotions in a controlled safe manner, rather than overpower them with our own. This demonstration of emotion could be that of crying, talking or even a little moan. This will give us time to feel what they are feeling before we go in and react, and thus will enable us to react in a more appropriate manner. It will also teach the child that feeling different emotions is part of life but that eventually we will get over it and get on with life. For example, if a child feels sad, we need to show them that we understand what they are feeling and that we also are sad for them. They will soon learn that this is a natural and normal feeling, and things do not always go well in life. If we react to our children's emotions in a manner in which we put them down or deny them (e.g. "You can't be sad, you had a great time."), we give them the message that their problem is insignificant; the child then begins to feel inadequate and starts feeling further negative emo-

tions. So first we need to empathise, and then once the child has calmed down and understood their emotions themselves, we can go in and give solutions.

Sometimes, we are aware of our child's feelings, but at the time don't do anything about it or openly dismiss their problem. There after, these emotions become stronger, and there is nothing we can do to gain control over them. It may be better to distract the child by doing a positive task, such as helping someone. This will enable the child to feel positive and make them realise there is more to life. The initial negative feeling is then put into context rather than exaggerated until we see an outburst.

Allah talks in the Holy Quran about "those who restrain (their anger) and pardon men." He also says "and do not make your own hands contribute to your destruction". When putting this into context, we can understand that emotions, if not controlled, can be destructive and will cause us, and eventually others, harm.

We should teach our children to use all our Islamic resources from a young age, so it becomes inbuilt within them. Imam Ali (as) has shown us ways to reduce the effect of our emotions and deal with them before they become stronger. He has advised that if we are standing we should sit down, if we are sitting we should lie down and finally, if this doesn't work, we should drink a glass of water. These actions should distract us and slow us down, giving us enough time to reflect during the process. The Holy Prophet (saw) has also recommended performing wudhoo to calm down.

The name of Allah, Al Quddus - The Holy should be said a hundred times when emotions begin to strengthen and God will inshallah make these emotions disappear. However to start with, one simple thing we can teach our children to say is Aud-hubillah..., seeking protection from Shaytan.

As we all live fast moving lives,

and don't always have time to keep in tune with what our children are feeling, or perhaps are too preoccupied in our own feelings. It would be useful to take one minute a day to do relaxation activities with our children. This can be before we eat or before bed, after which we can then talk about our feelings of the day, making sure that we emphasise on positive feelings but not dismiss negative feelings as they are part of life.



QUICK RELAXATION

Find a comfortable space, for you and your child and lie on the floor.

Push your arms out in front of you as far as you can, reaching up to the ceiling.

With your arms by your side, push your toes down and try to extend your legs. Do this as far as you can until you feel the muscles in your bottom squeeze.

Then sit up and squeeze your shoulders, as tight as you can and relax them. Do this three times after which stretch your arms in the air as far as you can.

With your arms by your side, push your head as far back as you can looking up. Then push your head as far into your chest as you can. Move your head to one side until you feel a stretch and do the same with the other.

Then screw up your face, tightening your eyelids, lips, and hold for a second, then release.

This initially may take a few minutes but after practice can be done in one minute.

MEAT VERSES MILK

Are we getting the
balance right?

Micronutrients – How
much do our little ones
need?

Calcium, Iron and
Vitamin D - How much
do our little ones need?

By Tehseen Mustafa,
State Registered Dietitian

Calcium is important for all ages, for strong bones and teeth. During childhood and adolescence, there is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build strong bones and teeth, but how do we go about doing this without compromising nutrients from other food groups and maximizing absorption, when low Vitamin D status in the South-Asian ethnic group is a constant worry?!

Well let's start with the facts. Calcium requirements vary as children grow. When a child is born the 'Recommended Nutrient Intake' (RNI) for Calcium is 525 mg which is usually obtained solely from breast or formula milk (refer to table 1). As an infant progresses and passes the first milestone of a year, there is a sudden drop in the RNI value down to 350mg. This is because the child's diet is gradually changing to include a larger variety of foods from the other food groups and is moving away from a diet solely based on milk.

At around the age of 6 months, iron stores deplete. When weaning begins between 4-6 months, evidence

has found that the iron content of weaning diets is often poor. Mum's worry that meat is too rich to include when weaning, or that it's tough texture makes it difficult to chew.

So how and why are these 2 nutrients linked? Evidence shows that Iron deficiency anaemia is a common problem highlighted in communities of South-Asian origin. One of the reasons is as stated above, but what are the other reasons? There is an ingrained belief that milk is a vital part of the diet - which it is, but in excess can also be detrimental. Studies of South-Asian communities have found that prolonged breast feeding or bottle use over the age of 12 months where milk makes up the majority of the diet, combined with inadequate Iron intake from food sources, can contribute to this problem. Some communities are also likely to introduce cow's milk as a drink before the age of one. Cow's milk in itself is low in Iron, and if introduced as drink before the age of one, does not allow Iron stores to be replenished. Some signs of Iron deficiency include feeling tired and

weak, pale skin, breathlessness, difficulty in maintaining body temperature, and decreased immune function.

Excessive milk intake also effects appetite, and often if a child doesn't eat, sometimes the easiest form of nourishment is milk. It also provides comfort and is a quick and easy way to pacify a grizzly child. For the odd bout of teething, flu or illness this can be a short term fix, but a long-term poor appetite requires a closer look. So what does an RNI of 350mg translate into? Table 1 provides a list of foods that can be mixed and matched to provide this requirement. Table 2 provides information on Calcium rich foods from the non-dairy group. As you can see the portion sizes for milk and its alternate counterparts are not huge for children aged 1-3.

Some studies have also found that excessive milk intake may interfere with the absorption of Iron, so even if Iron rich foods are included as part of the diet, it may not actually be taken in by the gut; the evidence for this however is not conclusive.



In addition to Calcium, Vitamin D is also vital to ensure healthy bones and teeth. Vitamin D is made by the action of sunlight on skin; however it is also present in some foods such as oily fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring etc), egg yolks and breakfast cereals. In the UK we can make Vitamin D between the months of May to September. Health care professionals are now reporting a higher incidence of the child form of osteoporosis, 'rickets' in South-Asian children. Reasons for this include low maternal levels of Vitamin D during pregnancy and then during lactation; prolonged lactation without supplements for both mother and child, and that Vitamin D is not manufactured as well in South-Asian's when compared to those of Caucasian origin.

So what can be done to prevent this problem in our community? It is important to have a diet rich in sources of Vitamin D during pregnancy. It may also be worth getting a blood test to check Vitamin D status and/or take a supplement. As is encouraged in Islam, many of us continue to breast feed our children above the age of 6 months, so ideally it is better for both mum and baby to supplement with Vitamin D. Healthy start Vitamin drops for children will provide adequate Vitamin D for children. Recommendations for healthy

start Vitamins are from the ages of 1 month in breast fed infants if they are of African, Asian or Middle Eastern origin. All other babies should have Vitamin drops from 6 months if they are breastfed or are having less than 500mls a day of infant formula. If you are formula feeding your child completely, you do not have to supplement with additional Vitamins as formula milk contains sufficient amounts.

For pregnant or lactating mums 'Healthy Start' provides Vitamins supplements for women which are available from health clinics, children's centres or health care professionals.

So what is the verdict? Milk and dairy products are an important part of the diet. This combined with Vitamin D will ensure that our children will have healthy bones and teeth. Care needs to be taken that our children are not excessively consuming milk in place of other foods as this can be detrimental. Iron rich foods such as meat can be included as part of a healthy balanced diet and are important for replenishing Iron stores.

If you have any questions about the issues discussed in the article, please contact Tehseen at tehseenmustafa@hotmail.com

Age	RNI* for calcium mg/d	Dairy portion sizes
0-12months	525	No cows' milk as a drink for babies under 12 months. Breastfeeding is best, followed by cows' milk formula. Soya formula should be used only under medical advice. Cheese and yogurt can be given from 6 months.
1-3years	350	100ml whole/semi-skimmed milk, 80g yogurt, 15g cheese or approximately 350mls of milk. Max upper limit ~ 1 pint.
4-6years	450	130ml semi-skimmed milk, 100g yogurt, 20g cheese.
7-10years	550	150ml semi-skimmed milk, 125g yogurt, 25g cheese.

ART IDEAS

Looking for Islamic Arts and Crafts Ideas for your child(ren)?

Want to test your family's Islamic knowledge with a fun game show?

Find all this and more Creative Islamic ideas such as plays and posters on <http://www.madressa.net/resources/creative-resources>.

TABLE 2

Whitebait 60g	300mg
Sardines (1/2 tin)	180mg
Pilchards 100g	240mg
Prawns 80g (3 tbsp)	180mg
Salmon, tinned 115g	120mg
Baked beans 220g (small tin)	120mg
1 Naan 170g	240mg
2 slices white or brown bread	120mg
White flour (self-raising) 50g	180mg
Spinach, boiled 120g	180mg
Okra 70g	120mg
Spring Greens 75g	60mg
4 Dried figs 60g	180mg
1 Orange	60mg
Sultanas 30g	60mg
Fortified breakfast bar 37g	180mg



EIDS AROUND THE WORLD



The new clothes have been bought. The children's presents have been hidden. The feast is in preparation. But for Capetonians, the Eid preparation includes a unique event. On the first possible night before Eid, cars and crowds begin their journey to Mouille Point. Flanked by a red and white striped lighthouse, Muslims gather on this grassy piece of land overlooking the Atlantic ocean on the Atlantic Seaboard part of Cape Town. They come with their families, food for breaking fast, and their prayer mats. It is the eve of the Moon Sighting event. As the sun goes down, the call to prayer is heard, the fast is broken and Maghrib salaah starts. Following this, the search for the new moon begins. Within a short window of time, the moon is either seen or not. Officials including Aalims and designated individuals use technology around the country to communicate whether the moon has been seen anywhere in the country, if not obvious at Mouille Point. The event is broadcast live on Radio 786. While families and friends eat and enjoy each other's company, the officials make a decision and broadcast live to the gathering crowds. There is either celebration or contemplative resignation, but whatever the outcome of the evening, the spirit of togetherness, friendship, and community endures throughout the day of Eid itself.

Sukaina Walji, Cape Town



There are about 15 mosques in Greater Orlando with people from various cultures around the world. A massive congregation Eid Salaah is held outdoors to accommodate all believers at the Orlando Fairgrounds, and is occasionally covered in the media. There are a few mosques who hold Eid Salaah indoors in the mosques as well. The salaah is followed by brunches and picnics all over town.

Traditionally, one of the larger mosques hosts a carnival on location with rides, food and various stalls, and even a fireworks display the night before Eid. United Muslim Foundation takes Eid ul Adha up a notch, renting out a major theme park like Universal Studios or Islands of Adventure exclusively for Muslim Entertainment, to gather Muslims from far and wide who are able to enjoy and celebrate in a spirit of unity.

Masuma Kermalli-Virji, Orlando

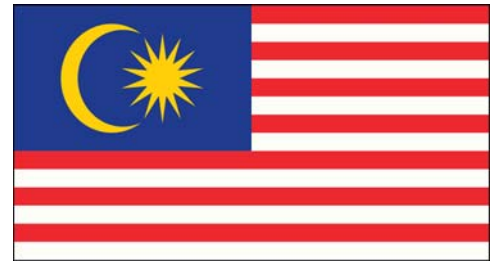


An eve everyone looks forward to is when most men are out and most women are up on their terraces, all trying to sight the thin silver crescent in the sky's horizon. The lucky ones who live in and around the vicinity of 'kibokoni' town area await the firing of the ancient canon from the historic 'Fort Jesus', declaring EID!!!

Then follows Eid night prayers in respective mosques after iftaar and individual preparation for the busy yet eagerly awaited Eid day. Having said that, most of the people do make the most of the last ever so lively Ramadan nights offering freshly made juices, barfi, bbq, ice cream and deserts and last minute shopping! Every household has their own preference regarding the routine for the day which starts with the men going for Eid amals in the morning.

The day in general includes lunch at mosque for all, ladies majalis in the evening, sending meat and gifts/food plates to family and friends, visiting all the elderly in the family and the best part of all, collecting the 'special envelopes as you go on :-)

Sajeda Gulamhusein, Mombasa



Eid in Kuala Lumpur is amazing and is commonly known as Hari Raya Aidilfitri or Hari Raya Puasa. Hari Raya literally means 'Grand Day'. It is the biggest holiday in Malaysia and is the most awaited one. Shopping malls and bazaars are filled with people days ahead of Hari Raya, causing a distinctive festive atmosphere throughout the country. Many banks, government and private offices are closed for this holiday, which usually lasts a week.

The night before Eid is with the takbir,, which is held in the mosques or musallas. In many parts of Malaysia, especially in rural areas, pelita or panjut (oil lamps) are lit up in house compounds. Eid also witnesses a huge migratory pattern of Muslims, from big metropolitan cities to rural areas. This is known as balik kampung — literally going back to home town to celebrate Eid with one's parents. Special dishes like ketupat, dodol, lemang (a type of glutinous rice cake cooked in bamboo) and other Malay delicacies are served during this day.

At the night of the last day of Ramadan, Indonesians usually do 'Takbiran'. Takbiran is a big celebration where people, from little children to old men, recite the takbir with a microphone in a parade. They travel around the town and usually they hit 'beduk', a large drum, as a background music of the takbir. Zareena, Kuala Lumpur



Generally in Dubai, in the last couple of days before Eid, the roads become totally chaotic after iftar. The mosque becomes empty, funny, because they say the last few nights of Ramadan are supposed to be the most special and can elevate a person. This is all in preparation for the Eid DAY...

After the breakfast, it becomes a mad rush to go visiting the relatives and exchanging "Sanis" (Plates to goodies), that we have been preparing from the night before. The children are all excited as they look forward to their Eid gifts which are normally cash.

After Dhuhr prayers, families prepare to go for a Biryani lunch at Satwa's Imambargha. Here they meet and greet each other with mixed feeling; happiness due to the day of Eid and sadness because their daily meets for Dua-e-Iftitah have come to an end.

After an afternoon siesta, families will either go out with friends or do more family visits. Just in case you are wondering, in Dubai we get a 5 day holiday for Eid-ul-Fitr and a 3 day holiday for Eid-ul-Adhaa.

Fatemah Hassan, Dubai

BLOG SPOT

A place for mums to air their thoughts!



TGI FRIDAY

By Fatema Haji

Aren't we stay-at-home mums the envy of our husbands? How

many tasks do they shove our way because, as they question, "what else do you do staying at home all day"? Well this blog is dedicated those hubbys who think their stay-at-home wives/mums really have nothing better to do! This was a particularly interesting week for me to say the least. After a long and busy weekend, Monday morning came and the list came pouring out. "I can't believe the car is so filthy, why do you let the child eat in the car!" Hmmm, perhaps because she's hungry? "OK so this week, could you wash the car - it's my pride and joy, could you chase up the people who smashed into the car last week and get their details and could you chase up the...oh.... and drop this off to the shops, and oh no the dry cleaning needs picking too, I've been waiting for the jacket all week, the trousers are just sitting in the cupboard!"

Ok, I'm wading through the list slowly but surely, and I decide to have a midweek coffee morning. "A coffee morning," he says. "But what about the" It's time to switch off now! The irony of the matter is, I went to pick up a friend to go visit a new born baby and she got into the car all flustered and hot with her 6 month old and said: "My husband's been complaining the cars too dirty. I really should go and wash it." I'm sure you can tell how that conversation started and finished! But the only comfort we have for all these extra chores is that Allah is blessing us with his bounties and thawaab. As a wise woman once said, "If Allah didn't give us thawab for cooking and cleaning, my house would be dirty and we wouldn't have any meals on the table." As women, we always rise to the tasks and challenges and still have time for a friendly cuppa.

PRODUCT REVIEW By AZMINA MAWJEE



THE WEAN MACHINE

This hand held little gadget is brilliant. No messing around getting a hand blender out and plugging it in. The wean machine is so quick and neat, and even better, so easy to wash and keep ready for the next time too. I used this for all sorts of boiled fruit and vegetables, also pasta and rice and curry! It's so quick and easy, when you have done your food in the wean machine, you can feed your child straight out of it, no need for another bowl, so less dishes to wash! It's not tricky to take apart and put together again after washing, very straight forward. Perfect for the mosque! The only down side is that it does not puree the food, it makes it a bit lumpy so I would not recommend it from day 1 of weaning, maybe when you are starting to introduce textures to your child. Available at Mothercare for £19.99



LEAPFROG FRIDGE PHONICS

One of the best gifts I was given for my son's 2nd birthday. It has taken a permanent fixture on the fridge and the kids love it. It is a fun way of having them close by and entertained. Not only does it sound out phonetically but it also gives the name of the letter and has a function where it will sing out the whole alphabet too. A worthwhile investment; my fridge phonics has lasted me 5 years so far and is still going strong. I would say it's suitable for all ages as my elder two aged 6 & 7 use the letters to make words now, and if a letter is needed twice in a word they use their imagination and turn letters to their side or upside down to replicate the missing letter! Available at Argos for £14.99



SMALL THINGS

Source: www.Qfatima.com

This issue, we take a closer look at the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), with the aim of Inshallah putting into practise the small things we can learn from him!

40 AHADITH

The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“One who protects my forty ahadith*, so that people may benefit from them, will be amongst those of wisdom and learning on the day of Resurrection”.

*A hadith is a report of the sayings or actions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).”

When he spoke he would smile.

He would always sit in a circle with his companions.

He used to mend his shoes, patch his clothes, and grind the wheat.

His hands were like those of a perfume seller, always with a beautiful fragrance. He used to love perfume.

He would always wear his rings on his right hand.

He always sat facing qibla especially when he went to the mosque.

When he entered the mosque he would sit at the first available space.

He would drink water in sips and not gulp it down all together.

He said: “Food that is hot does not have blessings so let it cool”.

“Olive oil and vinegar are the food of the Prophets”.

He would have dates and raisins for breakfast.

There was no fruit more liked by him than pomegranates.

“The one who brushes his teeth twice a day has kept alive the sunna of the Prophets”.

“Cleanliness is half of faith”.

“Wear the right shoe before the left shoe and take off the left shoe before the right shoe”.

“One of the qualities of the Prophets is to know the times of salaa”.

When the time of salaa came he would tell Bilal to call out the adhan loudly.

He would place a staff in front of him when he prayed.

In Salatul Jama’a he would say “Stand in a straight line and do not differ for if you do your hearts will disagree”.

Nothing would distract him from the Maghrib salaa when the sun had set.

“If you have a pearl in your hands and people call it a peanut it will not cease to be a pearl”.

“There are 5 things I will not give up until death – eating with slaves on the ground, riding a donkey without a saddle, milking goats with my hands, wearing coarse clothes and greeting children”.

No honour is nobler than humility and kindness”.

“Human beings from Adam to this day are like the teeth of a comb, there is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for one colour over another except with God awareness”.

He was always first to greet others.

Imam Ali (AS) “In the past I had a brother in God. The insignificance of the world in his eyes made him great in my eyes. He was not ruled by his stomach. He used to keep silent most of the time – yet when he spoke he silenced all speakers and quenched the thirst of all questioners. He was more eager to listen than to speak. He was considered

weak, yet in an emergency he was a lion of the forest. He would not advance an argument unless it was decisive, and he would not censure anyone for what could be excused until he had heard the excuse. He would say what he would do and not say what he would not do. When two things came to him, he would see which was more emotionally desirable and then do the contrary”.

He spoke in short, meaningful sentences and was never heard to interrupt anybody’s speech.

He never spoke with a sad or frowned face.

”The character of Rasulullah (SAW) was the Qur’an”.

The one who recites the Qur’an and the one who listens have an equal share of the reward”.

“We forgive those who wrong us and give those who deprive us”.

He travelled on Thursdays.

When something made him sad he would turn to prayer.

He used to recite Istighfar all the time.

He used to fast in Rajab and Sha’ban saying they were the months of Allah where all sins would be forgiven.

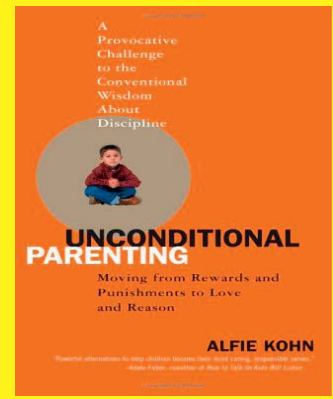
“The weapon of the Prophets is du’a”.

“Masajid are the gathering places of the Prophets”.

He would not sleep until he had recited one of the Musabbihaat. The suwer of the Qur’an beginning with ‘Sabbaha’.

When he congratulated someone he said “Baarakallahu lakum wa baarakallahu alaykum” May Allah bless you and keep you blessed.

When he gave condolences he would say: “Ajarakumullahu wa rahi-makum” May Allah recompense you and have mercy on you.



BOOK REVIEW

Unconditional Parenting By Alfie Kohn ISBN 978-0743487481 Atria Books Publishers

Star charts, stickers, time outs, naughty steps – who hasn’t used them, right? The only problem is, these teach your children that you love them ‘conditionally,’ that is, only when they achieve or behave.

A thought provoking challenge to ‘mainstream’ parenting manuals, Alfie Kohn, author of nine books including the controversial “Punished by Rewards”, expands upon the theme of what’s wrong with our society’s emphasis on punishments and rewards with regards to raising children.

Kohn, the father of young children himself, sprinkles his text with anecdotes that shore up his well-researched hypothesis that children do best with unconditional love, respect and the opportunity to make their own choices. Kohn questions why parents and parenting literature focus on compliance and quick fixes, and points out that docility and short-term obedience are not what most parents desire of their children in the long run. He insists that “controlling parents” are actually conveying to their kids that they love them conditionally - that is, only when they achieve or behave. Tactics like time-outs, bribes and threats, Kohn claims, just worsen matters.

Caustic, witty and thought-provoking, Kohn’s arguments challenge much of today’s parenting wisdom, yet his assertion that “the way kids learn to make good decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions” rings true. Kohn suggests parents help kids solve problems; provide them with choices; and use reason, humour and, as a last resort, a restorative time away (not a punitive time-out).



★ Exclusive Collection

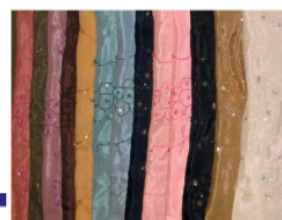
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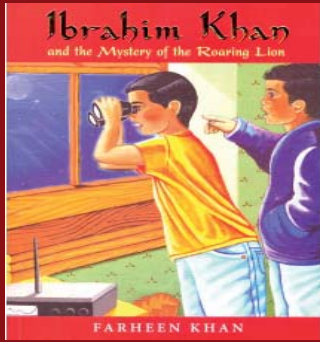
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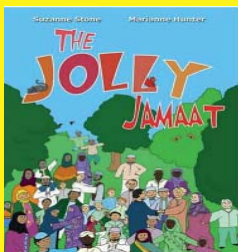
CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEWS



Ibrahim Khan and the Mystery of the Roaring Lion By Farheen Khan

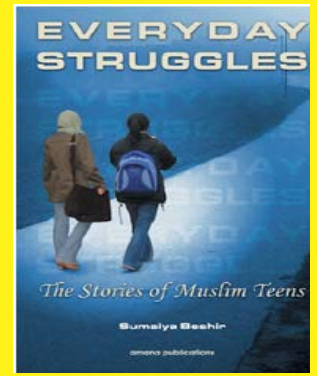
Tree forts, maple trees and roaring lions? When their classmate Yusuf hears ferocious roaring lions and creepy laughing hyenas in his backyard, he calls the best detectives he knows, Ibrahim and Zayn Khan! With the help of their trusty brown sack, they search for clues and bit by bit piece together this extraordinary mystery. Join the 3rd grade detective duo as they solve the thrilling case of The Roaring Lion!

“It was almost midnight when Ibrahim first heard the sounds of hyenas in the backyard and they were laughing! He quietly slipped out of his sleeping bag and peered into the yard. Less than a minute later he heard a loud thunderous roar! He grabbed his binoculars and held them against the window. There was definitely something out there, something big!”



The Jolly Jamaat By Suzanne Stone and Marianne Hunter

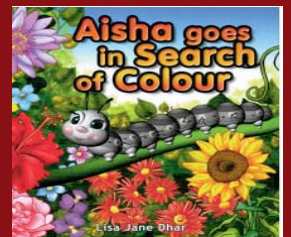
It's Eid, and the residents of Ummah Street are on their way to the park to pray. There are Muslims from all over the world living here. Will there be space for them all? The Jolly Jamaat is a great rhyming and counting tale that shows anyone can be a Muslim. The residents come from countries all over the world, but are united in Islam.



Everyday Struggles By Sumaiya Beshir

Everyday Struggles is a collection of short stories written by Muslim teenage girls for their peers. Life is a series of trials and tribulations. Teenage life sometimes feels like a crash course. Muslim teens face unique struggles due to their identity. In this book, real Muslim teens have shared their innermost thoughts and feelings about their teenage years. They've invited us in to take a peek at the wild roller coaster ride that is high school, to join them on this journey of incredible highs and discouraging lows, to feel their happiness, sadness, determination, confusion, pride, anxiety and excitement. To join them in their struggles, their everyday struggles.

Aisha Goes in Search of Colour by Lisa Jane Dhar



Bubblesville is the capital of Nectarland. It is known to be the most colourful place in the whole world. It is home to the worlds most special and unusual insects, and Aisha is one of them! Come and discover how Aisha learns to live with being different in this charming tale set amongst the world of insects.

PERSONAL MOMENTS

My Baby Girl

By Fatim Dossa

One of the first things a couple plans when they get married is how many children they want to have. My husband and I were no different. We talked of having at least 4 as we both come from big families and wanted the same for our children. After my 2 sons (both pregnancies concluded without any incidents), I had a miscarriage. With the grace of Allah, within three months I was expecting again. Because of the miscarriage, I made a conscious effort to take extra care of the baby and myself during the gestation period. The 12 week and 20 week scans revealed that the pregnancy was progressing well.

Engrossed with the challenges of caring for 2 young boys (and not to mention their father!), before I knew it 9 months had passed and I realised I was experiencing contractions. Since I had had long labour periods in the past, I decided to stay at home as long as possible. It was later that night when the contractions became severe that we made our way to the hospital. In the past, both my deliveries had progressed without any complications, which meant I was home with the new baby not more than a day after delivery. We went to the hospital with this expectation. However, it was not to be the case.

The labour ward was buzzing with activity that night. It seemed that everyone had decided to have their baby then. I was not concerned as it was the half term and so there was no school run in the morning to be anxious about. We were taken to a delivery suite and I was hooked up to the foetal monitor for a while. Everything seemed OK. The midwife told us that as this was my 3rd "normal" pregnancy, I didn't



need her there all the time and to call her when I could feel the baby coming. It was not long before my husband went to find the midwife. We assumed it would be minutes before the baby was born. The midwife then informed us that the baby was in a breech position and called for the registrar. This was the first time the term "breech" had been mentioned to us and we were taken aback. Subsequently, she went on to inform us that the hospital policy was to deliver breech babies by caesarean section. This scenario was something my husband and I were totally unprepared for. As I was rushed into theatre, I thought "nothing else can go wrong now". It was when I couldn't hear the baby's cries that I realised something was amiss. My husband wouldn't look at me when I asked him why the baby wasn't crying. I think he was afraid to tell me. It didn't even occur to me to ask whether it was a boy or a girl. My husband then told me it was a girl but she wasn't breathing. I was later informed that the doctors spent half an hour trying to revive Khadija but she was stillborn. I kept on telling myself that this was just a nightmare and that I "would wake up soon". We were

taken to the recovery room while the doctors tried to find an explanation for the stillbirth. They suggested a post mortem but we opposed this; nothing would ever bring her back, even finding out how she died. This is something we still don't know the answer to and will probably never know. While the nurses came to monitor me after the surgery, my husband was left with the dreadful task of informing our relatives. Both our parents were devastated as were the rest of the family. To say that this had come as a shock was an understatement.

My husband and I had come to hospital to take a new born baby home, not to make arrangements for a burial. My husband contacted the relevant people in the ghusl/kafan committee and the burial committee was informed. We needed to get a still-birth certificate issued, before the burial could go ahead. I recall looking at her and thinking that this time yesterday, she was still inside me and we were getting excited about the birth. How things change in a few hours. Due to various reasons, we were unable to have her buried the same day. For me, this meant I could keep her with me for longer. I didn't want to let her go.

My request for Khadija to remain in my room for the night was granted. I was able to hold and kiss her. She was so beautiful and looked like she was just sleeping. I remember looking at her and silently willing her to open her eyes. She looked so peaceful. This was the only time I spent with her and I cherish every minute she was with me.

The hours flew by and as dawn broke, so too came the time for her to be taken to her final resting place. Letting her go was one of the toughest things I have ever had to face. My older son Ahmed came to the hospital with my husband. We realised we had to somehow explain to him what had occurred. He was nearly 5 years old and knew that I had come to hospital to “get the baby”. We told him that his baby sister had died and was now in Jannah. Although it was difficult at the time, we are glad that he did get the opportunity to see Khadija. Later on, we explained this to our younger son. We regularly visit her grave as a reminder to all of us that although she was with us for such a short time, she will always be a daughter and a sister.

Due to the c-section, I was unable to leave the hospital and attend her burial. My aunt came to keep me company while the rest of the family were at the cemetery. She was amazing. I was incoherent and upset about Khadija and the c-section. She gave me the strength to go on and get better, reminding me that this was a test from Allah. I told myself I had to pull myself together for the sake of my 2 other children who needed me. I was grateful to Him for blessing me with children. There are many women who do not get the chance to experience motherhood at all. I will always be thankful that Allah gave me the chance to carry her for the nine months, and to be her mother. Nonetheless, going home “empty handed” was not easy. My in-laws were extremely supportive, in particular my mother-in-law. She handled the running of the house, whilst my husband took care of the boys. I was given time and space to grieve in my own way. I literally cut myself off from the outside world, not speaking to anyone apart from my immediate family. My mother-in-law told those who wished to come and visit that I was not ready for company. I didn't answer the phone or attend any functions at the mosque, choosing instead to spend this time with my husband and my sons. It was a diffi-

cult time for all of us, having to come to terms with there being no baby to take care of.

A couple of months later, we decided to try again for another baby. I had mixed feelings when I got pregnant once more. I felt we prayed to Allah to do what He thought was best for us. It was the longest nine months of my life, in contrast to my previous pregnancy. I was monitored throughout and was induced for the birth. Alhamdulillah, a year later, I gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Hearing him cry was a relief for both of us. It didn't matter to us that it was a boy, the fact that the baby was healthy was far more important. We will never forget our little girl, but having Hassan has filled the void we felt after Khadija. Hassan's birth allowed us to move on in many respects.

Nothing can prepare you for the loss of a baby. Everyone grieves in their own way, including my husband and I. My initial feelings were “why me” and “what did I do” for this to have happened to me. I also felt a sense of guilt - had I done, or failed to do, something which caused this? Should I have realised something was wrong earlier on? A plethora of such thoughts went through my mind. The doctors notified us that according to the medical records, she had died 36 hours before. I recall going over my actions during these 36 hours, minute by minute to try and pin point a time when I stopped feeling her movements. I blamed myself for a long time, even though I knew that life and death are in Allah's hands. I have come to realise that if she was meant to have survived then she would have. There is nothing I could have done to change the outcome. It has taken both of us a long time to accept her death and come to terms with what transpired. The grieving process in the immediate aftermath greatly assisted in allowing each of us to mourn for her in our own way. They say time heals, but the pain of a loss of a child is still very intense at time. When I hear of another couple losing their baby, it brings back painful memories. Allah, however, gives the strength to continue. Allah says in the Holy Quran in Surah Ash-Shura, Verse 49, “To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan)”.



How to deal with losing your baby - An Islamic perspective

By Fatema Dhala

Losing a child can be a very devastating experience for a mother, especially after all the months of excitement, anticipation and expectation. After carrying your child inside you and counting the days until you meet this wonderful gift from Allah swt, the sadness and knowledge that comes with losing your child can leave a mother feeling many emotions that she may not know how to deal with. Islam being the beautiful complete religion has given us guidance on how we should deal with these emotions.

Dealing with the initial emotions

One of the most common responses to such an experience is for a mother to ask herself, ‘WHY ME?’ Let us look at the answer that Islam gives to this question.

Firstly, this world is a temporary abode for all of us and it is without doubt filled with difficulties and trials. No one's life is free from distress as the Holy Qur'an tells us in Sura 90 verse 4: ‘Certainly We have created

man to be in distress'. Our goal in this life is to achieve everlasting happiness in the eternal life and to do this, our faith will be tested in several different ways. Allah swt reminds us of this fact in Sura 29 verse 2: 'Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe", and that they will not be tested?'

Losing your child is certainly a very big test, but we have to remember that as obedient servants of the Almighty we must accept His will. If Allah has ordained that we go through such an experience, then our faith must rise to the challenge and become stronger as a result. A person who has true faith in Allah swt will not ask 'WHY ME?', instead they will say 'TRY ME, for I have Allah swt, by my side.'

Another thought that keeps going through the mind of a mother who has just lost her child is 'How am I ever going to get through this?' Again Allah swt answers us in the Holy Qur'an where he tells us in Sura 65 verse 7: 'Allah does not lay on any soul a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it; Allah brings about ease after difficulty'. Allah swt is All Compassionate and All Merciful and does not test us with difficulties that we can not bear – in fact Allah swt gives us the strength to deal with the difficulties before we even experience them. As if that was not enough, He also grants us ease after the difficulty. This is very evident as with any difficulty such as the loss of a loved one, somehow it becomes easier to bear with as time passes, and the emotions do not feel so raw.

If we put all our faith in Allah swt, that He will help us get through the tests, He will indeed help us, for there is no one else that can help us the way our creator can.

Using the experience to gain closeness to Allah

When Allah swt tests us with difficulties and loss, we all look for a way to 'come to terms with what has happened' and find acceptance and closure. We can react in two ways. We can either be very negative and let our problems overtake everything in our lives, or we can look at the experience in a positive way - that Allah swt is giving us an opportunity

to raise our status in the Hereafter.

If we take the latter approach, we will find that acceptance and peace of mind that our hearts are looking for as Allah swt tells us in the Holy Qur'an in Sura 13 verse 28: 'And with the remembrance of Allah do the hearts gain contentment'. So if we want to gain closeness to Allah swt and at the same time achieve the contentment of the heart, one way to go about it is to increase the amount of 'Dhikr' that we perform. Dhikr here refers to all forms of the remembrance of Allah, including Salaa, Tasbeeh, Reciting Dua and reading Quran. If we incorporate the Dhikr of Allah swt into our day and make it part of our routine, it will give us such peace that cannot be achieved through anything else.

If we keep in our minds that Allah swt has promised us that any suffering in this life will be compensated with such great rewards in the hereafter, then the grief and pain that we are suffering in this temporary life will then in turn seem less important.

In our Ahlulbayt we have many examples of suffering and loss and this can serve to give us solace and guide us. For the Ahlulbayt suffered so much, yet this never affected their faith in Allah swt and their bond with the Almighty.

Let us take the example of the Lady of Light – Lady Fatema Zahra as, and the suffering she had to experience. Very shortly after the death of her beloved father, the Holy Prophet, the enemies of Islam set fire to the door of her house and injured her so severely between the door and the wall that her unborn son Mohsin was martyred instantly. What great suffering, that when we think back to these horrific incidents, our problems seem by contrast very small.

There is a beautiful and very famous tradition of our Holy Prophet that is often recited at weddings where he says: 'Marry, procreate and multiply, for indeed I shall take pride in the number of my followers on the Day of Judgment, even if it be a miscarriage' (Safinatul Bihaar Vol 1 P561). The Holy Prophet states here that he will count our child that we have lost as part of his Ummah – what great solace these words can give us.

The role of family, friends and the wider community

Allah swt has created us to be social beings. We cannot survive without the company of human beings and this is especially the case when we are experiencing grief and sorrow. It is very important to understand the importance that family, friends and even the wider community play in helping a woman come to terms with the grief of losing her child.

We find that some of our friends and even family members do not really know how to convey their sympathy to a mother bereaved of her child. Some just avoid the subject completely and act as if nothing has happened and others just avoid talking to the mother at all as they feel they do not know what to say.

While it is very hard to give condolences and express sympathy in such a situation, it is very important that we do try to convey our feelings as it will help the mother through her grief. The more support she receives, the more her faith will remain steadfast during this time and this will eventually lead to her having a closer relationship with Allah swt. If we can be part of this good act we will too receive a great reward from the Almighty.

In addition there are many ahadith which encourage us to comfort others:

The Prophet (SAW) said, 'Whoever consoles with a grief-stricken person receives the same reward as him [The reward of the grief-stricken is for their endurance of their pain].' [Bihar al-Anwar, v. 82, p. 94, no. 46]

Imam Ali (AS) said, 'Whoever consoles with a mother bereaved of her child will be shaded by Allah by the shade of His Throne on the Day when no other shade will avail.' [al-Kafi, v. 3, p. 227, no. 3]

In conclusion, we must remember that any suffering in this world is temporary and if we face it with patience, Allah swt will reward us beyond our expectations. Ilahi Ameen.

HEALTH FOCUS

INSIDE YOUR MOUTH

By Imran Gulamhussein



“Dental care begins before a baby’s first tooth appears. In fact, it begins during pregnancy.”

Why is Dental Care Important?

Establishing good dental care habits early in life can put your child on the road to a lifetime of good oral health. For a healthy start, children need supervision and help with their daily dental care.

How do cavities and gum disease develop?

The foods we eat leave residue on our teeth. Bacteria that live in our mouths thrive on these food deposits. Cavities can form when the bacteria break up food sugars into acids. The acids can make the teeth decay, and the decay forms cavities. When cavities are left untreated, they can cause pain and infections. Gum disease begins with plaque, a thin film on the teeth formed by bacteria and food sugars. Plaque on the teeth attracts more bacteria. This can lead to gum disease, which can make the gums swollen and sore.

Food and Drink

Does your baby ever fall asleep with a bottle? Try to encourage other ways of falling asleep. If you must put your baby to sleep with a bottle, use only water. Children who fall asleep with a bottle containing milk, formula, juice, or sugary drinks are at risk of getting numerous cavities. It is the exposure to sugar that increases incidence of dental decay.

Before birth

How well a mum takes care of herself during pregnancy will affect the health of the baby. Some nutrients are especially important for dental health. For example,

fruits and vegetables with vitamin C help mother and baby have healthy gums. Milk, cheese, and yogurt provide the calcium that mothers and babies need for strong bones and teeth.

First Year

Daily brushing should begin even before the first tooth appears. Clean your baby’s gums twice a day with a soft cloth or a baby toothbrush and water. When your baby starts to get teeth, brush them with a soft baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoridated toothpaste.

It is recommended you take your child to the dentist when the first tooth appears—usually when a baby is about 6 months old.

At the first visit, the dentist can offer helpful information and guidance on what to expect. During this visit, you and the dentist will talk about your child’s eating and drinking habits. The dentist will also review the daily dental care routine for your child. Also these early age visits will ensure your child will be familiarized with the dental setting and the dentist.

Sometimes children who do not get enough fluoride from drinking tap water may need a fluoride supplement. The dentist might also recommend giving a fluoride treatment during your child’s dental checkup.

TOP TIP

Developing good brushing habits at an early age is important for your child’s dental health and overall health.

Life is busy, but you need to find time to supervise and assist with your child’s brushing.

After the first year

For children under age 2, brush teeth with a smear of fluoridated toothpaste. For children over age 2,

use a pea-size amount of toothpaste and encourage your child to spit it out after you brush.

When your child can hold a toothbrush, it’s time to start learning how to brush. Let your child watch you brush your own teeth. Children enjoy trying to do what their parents do. You might even want to let your child try brushing your teeth—or a favorite doll’s teeth. Be sure to monitor your young child’s brushing. After your child practices brushing his or her own teeth, finish the job by brushing your child’s teeth.

To give your young child a healthy start, take time to brush his or her teeth twice a day. The best times to brush are after breakfast and at night before bed.”

Children like to brush on their own, and they often want to brush without a parent’s help before they are mature enough to do it well.

Therefore, continue to brush your child’s teeth after he or she brushes. Do this until your child can brush effectively without your help. By age 7 or 8, most kids are ready to brush independently.

How to Brush

Brushing should last for at least two minutes. You can make it a fun time together. For example, you may want to play a favorite nursery rhyme while brushing or tell jokes with your child before and after you brush.

Using a timer can help kids brush longer. Some of the newer electric toothbrushes for kids have a built-in timer.

If you are using a manual toothbrush, brush in a circular motion or in lines moving away from the gums. Electric toothbrushes are very useful but need to be positioned correctly on the gum line (where the gums meet the teeth)

The brush head moves automatically to clean your child’s teeth and

gums. Using an electric toothbrush can make it easier for a child to transition from having a parent brush to brushing independently.

Which is the best type of brush for kids?

It is recommended to use a toothbrush with a small head and soft-bristles. Throw out the brush or brush head every three months and use a new one. Replace the brush sooner if the bristles start fraying.

Taking Your Child to the Dentist

Some parents put off taking their children to the dentist if it seems as if everything is fine. The trouble is, it takes a trained eye to see cavities and other problems. Furthermore, dentists don't just fix problems; they help to prevent future trouble. Over time, getting regular dental checkups will ensure health teeth and gums and lead to a lifetime of healthy smiles.

BRUSHING HADEETH

Enjoyment of Brushing One's Teeth

The Prophet (SAW) also said in his advice to Imam Ali (AS), 'O Ali, you must brush your teeth as frequently as possible, for verily a single prayer that you perform after having brushed your teeth is better than forty days worth of prayers performed without doing so.' [Bihar al-Anwar, v. 76, p. 137, no. 48]

The Prophet (SAW) said, 'Gabriel continuously advises me about brushing teeth, that I really thought he would lay it down as an obligation.' [Bihar al-Anwar, v. 76, p. 126, no. 2]

The Benefits of Brushing One's Teeth

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, 'There are twelve distinctive features to brushing one's teeth: it is a recommended prophetic practice, it purifies one's mouth, brightens one's eyesight, pleases the Beneficent Lord, whitens the teeth, does away with wretchedness, strengthens one's gums, whets one's appetite for food, takes away phlegm, improves one's memory, multiplies one's rewards for good deeds, and gives pleasure to the angels.' [al-Khisal, p. 481, no. 53]



YOGA FOR CHILDREN

By Shamim Walji

Why do children need Yoga?

Children today often experience stress when dealing with the pressures in their young life, such as school workloads, after school activities, exams, parents and peer expectations, competitive sports, games and so on. Yoga provides an alternative – driven environment in which many children live and offers them a safe haven where they do not feel pressured to perform or succeed. It is non-competitive activity that fosters self-esteem, cooperation and compassion, all of which can help children to face life's challenges and to deal with difficult situations and resolve them. Yoga gives children a good exercise, develops body awareness and helps them to achieve a relaxed state of mind. Yoga has also known to help many medical conditions such as asthma, ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), eating disorders, diabetes and other learning disabilities. We can clearly see the evidence of Western cultural influences on children's physical and mental health. The stresses of our modern world affect muscle tension (by the age of three children can already begin to lose their physical flexibility) and breathing (childhood asthma is at an all time high). Childhood obesity is on the increase as less nutritious food choices are made and sedentary lifestyles affects growing bodies.

What Is Children's Yoga?

Children's Yoga is essentially filled with fun; it is more spontaneous, more creative and much noisier! It is a world apart from adult yoga classes. It is taught in a different way, using a multi-disciplinary approach that provides learning opportunities to sharpen children's minds, develop their concentration and extend their attention span. Yogic principles are

absorbed through group activities and a session may incorporate storytelling, singing, movement/dancing, counting, repetition, drawing, games as well as postures, relaxation and the beginnings of meditation. Even the names of poses are different, often deriving their inspiration from animals and plants.

For children approaching or going through puberty and adolescence, yoga remains of great importance. This can be a traumatic time for both girls and boys as their body metamorphoses into something new and different.

An added bonus is that yoga practice increases the flow of endorphins (nature's own anti-depressant) in the body. The stretches and asanas (postures) also burn calories. These factors can help youngsters to appreciate the benefits of healthy lifestyle and avoid the dangers of the eating disorders or addictions that ensnare many. For this age group, yoga helps to increase body awareness and acceptance, encouraging youngsters to be proud of their bodies, not ashamed of them, and to enjoy what their bodies can do, rather than shy away from physical exercise. Yoga fosters the ability to look within, building self confidence and trust in oneself. Breathing and relaxation techniques can help to reduce anxiety and even improve memory, so that the adolescent can feel more peaceful and positive during the period of rapid change.

Introducing Yoga At Home

Adults can set children a good example by showing that they take their physical and spiritual health seriously. Cultivate a healthy lifestyle and reinforce the bonds between family members by making yoga part of your daily routine. Set aside a room or space and make it special with pictures and objects which have a special meaning for your child. For relaxation/ meditation time, have some relaxing nature sounds (waterfalls or birds chirping) to listen to and some candles to light.

Some easy stretches, abdominal or alternative breathing or a simple sun-salutation before breakfast can help you and your children to feel relaxed and yet mentally alert. Instead of watching TV in the afternoon, have some fun with imaginative games - moving or stretching like a cat or hopping like a rabbit. Try some postures that release general muscular tension and do some relaxation or some simple meditation practice in the evening before going to bed, and everyone will sleep better.

Start simply and build up gradually, according to each child's interest and ability.

KIDS PAGES - RAMADHAN CALENDAR

1. Cut/score along the White line of the number boxes using scissors or a Stanley knife. This will create the 'doors'. 2. Stick 'number box' page on top of the 'written box' page. 2. Ensure the boxes are aligned in such a way that when the 'doors' are opened they reveal the text. 3. If the doors don't remain closed use blue tack to keep them in place. 4. Open a door a day in ramadhan!!!

Ask your Mum
if you can
have a sehri
party tonight!!

When we break
our fast we should
say "Thank you"
to Allah for
giving us food
to break our fast

Tonight is Bibi
Khadijah's (AS)
wafaat

Don't forget to
remind your Mum
and Dad to give
your fitr on Eid!!

Try extra hard to
listen to your
Mum and Dad

It is good to
give sadaqa
in Ramadhan

Why not have an
iftar party
tonight?

Eid Mubarak!!

Qur'an was
revealed on
one of the
nights of Qadr

Fasting means
no eating
and drinking

We should read
lots of dua'
in Ramadhan

Tonight is the
Wafaat of Imam
Ali (AS)

Tonight is Imam
Hassan's (AS)
birthday!

It is recommended
to break your fast
with a date

Look out for the
crescent moon
to find out
when it's Eid!!

The fast starts
at sunrise

If you're old
enough see if you
can fast, or try
to do a half fast!!

New moon tells
us it is
Ramadhan

Ramadhan is the
ninth month in the
Islamic calendar

Go to mosque as
much as you can

When we break
our fast it
is called 'iftar'

Why not go Eid
shopping and buy
presents for your
friends!

Fast with your
whole body
(explain to
children what
this means)

Try to pray
namaz on time

Try to read
Qur'an every day

Laylatul qadr:
1 night is
greater than
1000 months!!

The fast ends
at sunset

We should try
extra hard to be
good Muslims
as shaitan
is locked up

Imam Ali (AS) got
struck today by
ibn Mujjim

Try to be nice
to other people





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