

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS (PART 1)

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1) Build strong foundations. Congratulations for becoming a parent. The parenting contract never expires; you will always be a parent as long as you have children. You are the first person your children will know and your impact on their lives will be profound. They are spending their formative years with you and that is why you may be called the foundation builder. If you want your children to stand the ups-and-downs of life, you need to build a strong foundation. Foundations of skyscrapers are far deeper and stronger, quantitatively and qualitatively, than the foundations of single-family homes. The stage of foundation building is both challenging and rewarding; parenting could be the most colorful and enjoyable job. As a parent, don't delegate parenting to others and don't leave your children alone with electronic babysitters.

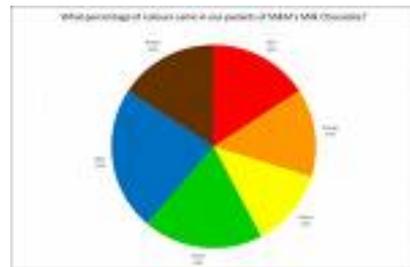


The Quran and Hadith require Muslims to protect their children and to raise them upright. When you do this, you are killing two birds with one stone: raising good children and worshipping Allah simultaneously. According to Quran (9:109), Allah has asked us a question: [Which is better: 1) Laying foundation on Taqwa and pleasure of Allah or 2) Laying foundation on undermined crumbling sand – cliff?] You have the choice.

2) Taqwa should be the core of the foundation. Taqwa is defined differently by different people but the most accepted definition is that Allah does not find you where He ordered you not to be and He does not lose sight of you where He ordered you to be. Link your children to the ropes of Allah according to their ages and their individual circumstances. You can take them with you to the masjid;

this requires you to brief them about the adab (etiquette) of going to masjid. Take them with you when you visit a sick person at home or in hospital. Ask them to call or visit their relatives and grandparents; draw the family tree and have fun together when you enrich them with stories about family members. You may wish to focus not only on how great they were, but also on problems they faced and how they solved them. This way, you combine the fun of story telling with the seriousness of foundation building.

3) Develop the whole child. It means that you cater to all needs of your children. Some parents think of their children only as bodies to house and feed. When the children or the mother of the children complain, the father usually replies: “I don’t understand it, I built for you the best house and the kitchen is full of food. Why do you keep complaining? What else do you want me to do?” Well, they are complaining because some other needs are not met. They are giving you signals that you refuse to pick up. They are saying to you: please look at all our needs: 1) physical, 2) mental, 3) social, 4) emotional and spiritual. They are not telling you that you are a bad parent; they are just expressing their feelings out loud. In healthy homes, all family members should be able to express their feelings without fears. When feelings are kept in side, they may turn into active volcanoes, spouting fire at unexpected times.



4) Support your children to grow straight. Your children need help to grow in the right direction just like young plants. To achieve this objective you don’t have to be their best friend; but you have to be their best parent. Best friends give each other pleasure by sharing similar activities while parents may give pain to their children. We are talking about the “growing pain” where children have to move from stage to stage in their lives learning newer life rules. For the children, these rules are difficult to understand; some are rejected from the beginning; some are puzzling to them. In all cases, however, they have to learn coping skills and that rules are made to be respected not violated. It is your responsibility as parents to encourage your children to be “pain embracers” not “pain avoiders.”

The Glorious Quran (2: 155) says: "Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere," Muslim should welcome the guiding lights radiating from this verse. Children of palaces are usually less successful than their counterparts who grew in more challenging environments. The first are softer and more fragile.

We should never harm or hurt our children. This is not to be confused with holding them responsible for their actions. If you have an agreement with your son or daughter to be ready in the car at a given time to get a ride to school and the agreement is broken. You have the option of holding him or her responsible by not giving him or her ride. So, you are holding them responsible and making them face the natural consequences of their behavior. When you do this, you will feel the pain because blood is heavier than water. To raise your children properly, you need not to separate your pain from their pain. Giving pain is painful.

Like young tender plants which needs physical support, young children need guiding support. In new neighborhoods with young tender trees, we often see the trees tied by straps to stronger wooden or steel poles. Gardeners wrap the tie around the stake and then form a loose figure eight around the plant stem. They do not use bare wire as this will damage the stem. This is the way to guide them to grow in the right direction. Now, you can see that putting a little pressure while young, guarantees healthy growth for life. This is true for plants and it is also true for children.

