

## **GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS (PART 2)**

**BY**

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April 26, 2010

Jumada Al – Awwal 12, 1431 H.

### **4) KIDS ARE DIFFERENT, DON'T COMPARE.**

The science of psychology studies people at three levels of focus captured by the well known quote: "Every man is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like no other man." [Wikipedia] The individual differences are a fact and should be taken into account by parents.

Children are unique individuals and should be treated as such. It is not fair to compare two brothers in the area of academic performance if they are born with different levels of intelligence. "How come your brother memorizes more Quran than you?" is familiar question we hear in Muslim homes. "When I was your age, I used to be more responsible than you, what is wrong with you?" is another familiar question with destructive consequences. A wrong word or a wrong question may insult your children and may injure their pride; it may cause them to have a low self – esteem with psychological consequences which might be difficult to fix later in life even by experienced psychiatrists. As a parent, please don't break what you can't fix.



Instead of comparing your children to each other or to the neighbor's children or to yourself, ask them to compare themselves to themselves. You can teach them to make smart comparisons that are beneficial to them. When the comparison is made with more pious people, it may lead them to do more work to catch up; and this is good for them. According to Quran 83:26, competition in the area of "taqwa" is not only allowed but it is encouraged. However, when the comparison is made with less fortunate people in earthly affairs, children may feel good about His blessings and they express their gratitude to Allah, the Provider – Ar Razaq.

## **5) SHAPE WHILE HOT.**



When the opportunity presents itself to educate your children, take it and deal with it while hot. You remember that it is easier to shape steel when it is hot. Steel producers dump iron ore, coal and limestone into the cooking furnace to melt every thing together and then cool the molten steel as it comes out of the furnace to shape it into bars or sheets or whatever form they want. We know that your children are humans not steel, but the rules still applies at least in general terms.



When your child needs to hear a word of encouragement or a word of discouragement, you should talk about it, positive or negative as soon as conveniently possible. It is your duty to react. Your child is waiting for response. Your child needs to learn about boundaries. If you want to deliver, don't postpone your reaction until you have time. You will never do. Going to the office for few minutes, talking with your neighbors about something for five minutes, responding to the crazy telephone which never stop ringing or combing your hair are not more important than talking to your children. Talk to him the same day if you can't talk the same hour. Talk to the child while it is fresh (hot) in his mind.

When you talk, don't give long lectures. Make it brief and to the point. "I noticed that you don't flush the toilet after use, this is against house rules; don't expect any body to do it for you. What do you think?" is an example. Another example: "I notice that you turn the lights out every time you leave the room; I just want to tell you that I appreciate it." Talking is not yelling or screaming.

## **6) LEARN FROM THE LOCK SMITH.**

Under normal conditions, the lock smith can open any lock. In his attempt to open a given lock, he does not hesitate to try different keys. He usually carries a large ring of small keys and he shows patience in trying them, one after another. He does not give up until he opens the lock. You notice that he does not try the same key twice; if a key fails once, it will likely fail again. He is the first one to tell us that locks are different because they were meant to be different.



Think of yourself as a locksmith and think of your children as locks; each one needs his own key. Think of parental problems as locks; try different keys to open them, understand them and solve them. Don't give up; if the lock does not open, blame the key. You can blame the lock and even insult it as many times as you want but it will not open until you use the right key. Before you give up, consult the people who know. The Glorious Quran (16:43) requires us to ask those who know, if we don't know.

Part three follows in the next issue insha Allah.