

Respect Obedience to PARENTS

By NAVIDA SAYED

Thy Lord has commanded, "Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech."

(The Holy Qur'an, Ch.17: V.24)

After Allah the Exalted and His Messenger the Holy Prophet^{saw}, human beings should prioritise their parents over all other things and return their love, affection and kindness, and always be on guard against using any harsh tone or words towards their parents. Islam teaches children from a very early age to become and remain faithful and obedient to parents, this process enables the development of strong parent and child relationships through to adulthood. Should any situation arise when the behaviour of one or both of the parents may become difficult, especially during old age, their children should never get offended and respond back rudely, nor express even the slightest bit of disgust or anger. Instead, the children should treat their parents with kindness and utmost respect; by doing so, not only will the children gain loving and affectionate prayers from their elderly parents, but they will also be reaping blessing by pleasing Allah for following his command.

"And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.'" (Surah Bani Isra'il: V.25)

When many children reach adulthood, they become very aware that they can never fully repay the love and affection their parents gave them during childhood, but Islam teaches that they can make up for that deficiency by praying for them as mentioned in the above verse. The meaning of this verse is not that if someone cannot look after their parents, they can make it up by praying for them, it instead means that one must try their best to serve their parents to their utmost capacity and pray for them at the same time. This verse also indicates how elderly parents need to be looked after with such love and tender care, in the same way that young children are looked after when they are young.

Regarding the status of mothers, the Holy Prophet^{saw} said: *"Paradise lies under the feet of the mother,"* (Nasai). Regarding the status of fathers, the Holy Prophet^{saw} said: *"The father is the most central door of all doors of Paradise, it is up to you that you may lose it or protect it."* (Tirmizi)ⁱ

Hazrat Abu Huraira narrates:

"Three times the Holy Prophet^{saw} declared, 'May his nose bite the dust, may his nose bite the dust.' (This is an Arabic phrase used to indicate that the person about whom one is talking has been disgraced and failed in his life.) The companions enquired, 'Messenger of Allah who is that person?' The Holy

Prophet^{saw} indicated in response that he is the one who found his parents in old age and failed to earn paradise by treating them with utmost kindness." (Sahi Muslim)

Emphasis on the Rights of Parents in Islam

It is very important to understand why Islam emphasises respect and obedience to parents, because Islam recognises the innumerable favours, sacrifices and hard work by parents to provide for their children's physical, emotional and financial needs in the best possible way. In return, Allah rewards parents by giving them a place with their families, not leaving them alone or abandoned in society.

This is why Islam places great emphasis on the duties, rights and obligations not only on the relationship between a husband and wife and their relationship with their children as parents, but their relationship with their own parents too. In this way, life can be made blissful and rewarding for children, their parents, grandparents and grandchildren and future generations too.

Parents raise and educate their children to become responsible citizens in society, at the same time they care for their own parents and often seek their guidance and prayers

The elderly parents / grandparents are looked after by their children, they offer countless prayers for their children and future generations

Children grow into adults, get married, have their own children, raise them and at the same time they look after their own parents

Respect for children

Whilst Islam emphasises on respect for parents, Islam also teaches that parents should treat their children with respect too.

Hazrat Anas bin Malik narrates that the Holy Prophet^{saw} said: "Respect your

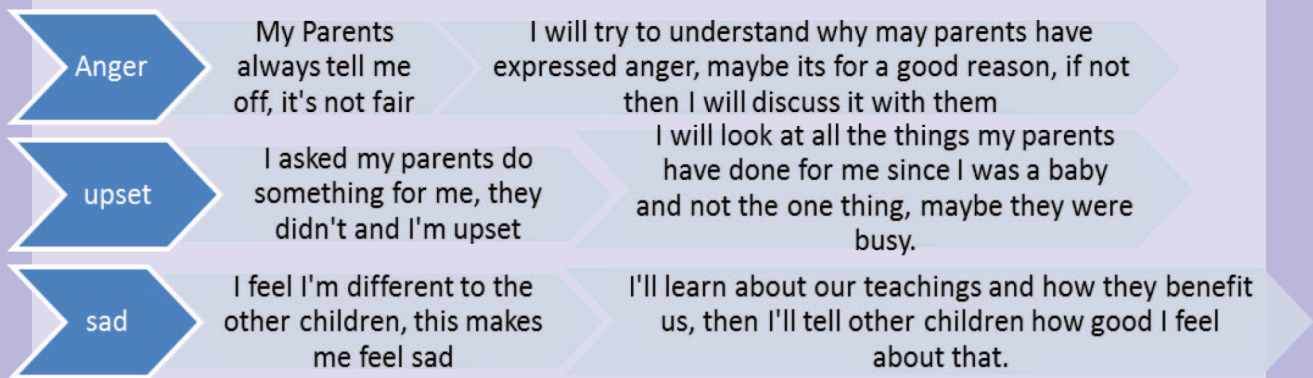
children and cultivate in them the best of manners." (Ibn Majah)

This Hadith further shows that cultivating good manners in children from an early age helps the child to develop good morals. This means that parents and children should have a loving relationship with respect for one another. This does not mean children can be rude or disrespectful if their parents do not speak to them with respect, but children should politely request their parents to have better communication.

From the viewpoint of children

Sometimes, children may feel that they are being treated unfairly in comparison to other children in society because they have to respect and obey their parents. However, those children may be completely unaware of the fact that even childcare experts have identified and respect the vital relationship that parents share with their children. Childcare experts believe that positive and effective parenting enables children to build and develop positive behaviours. Islamic teachings enable parents to develop good parenting skills to raise, educate and guide their children into adulthood in a loving and balanced way.

Islam teaches us to be positive, so try and do a little exercise for yourself, write down your feelings or your thoughts, then think about how you can turn your negatives into positives, you can do this with any thought or feeling. Not only will this exercise be fun, but you will work out how to solve something out and you will feel better overall. The lists below are only examples.



What the childcare experts say:

The following quotes will show the importance of the role of parents in all cultures:

- 'Parents play a vital role as their children's first and most important teachers.' Dr. Lillian Katz, a professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois, describes four important areas of learning that are heavily influenced by parents: 'Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes about learning, learned feelings.'ⁱⁱ

- 'Life begins in the family, and from a child's point of view, a loving family is the key to a good start in life. Families vary greatly in their structure but the principles of loving care are the same in any culture – good physical care, unconditional love and clear boundaries for behaviour.'ⁱⁱⁱ

- 'Some parenting styles are more positive and successful than others... Researchers have studied the effects of each style of parenting upon the way in which children develop. They agree that the style of parenting that is loving and yet firm – now known in jargon as authoritative – is the most effective in terms of children's outcomes and well-being. In this approach, boundaries are explained, in the context of a warm, loving relationship.'^{iv}

- 'The more fathers and mothers converse with their children and the better they set limits, the better their children will do in school.'^v

- 'The impact of fathers shows up especially in adolescence. For example, in a classic German study, the children's relationship with their fathers while they were toddlers predicted their sense of self-worth as teenagers.'^{vi}

- 'And the child's outcome at secondary school is linked especially to the father's in-put.'^{vii}

- If we follow teenagers into adult life, one study finds that their wellbeing as adults is more closely associated with their teenage relationship with their father than with their mother.'^{viii}

- 'Of course fathers are more likely to be involved with their children if mothers are also highly involved with the children.'^{ix}

- 'Parents and teachers should respond positively to children's interest in values. They should exemplify and teach children the importance of key values, like respect, honesty and kindness.'^x

- 'As parents we want the best for our children, we are constantly striving to develop a good balance of self and

social capability and responsibility in our children. But the dilemmas of parenthood are ever-present. Are we over or under protecting? Are we directing or over directing and shaping without dictating or suffocating? Are we encouraging or over-encouraging our children?'^{xi}

- 'What will work for one family, parent or child will not necessarily suit another.'^{xii}

- 'Furthermore, all these parenting dilemmas are set against the background of the twenty first century westerns social climate, which is increasingly seen as deteriorating. The fragment of our modern culture put strains and stresses on the family unit – and particularly on our children.'^{xiii}

Parenting advice sought in the 21st Century:

Sue Palmer, Educational Consultant and author of Toxic Childhood says: *"There is no right way to bring up children... so it's impossible to provide some sort of recipe for child-rearing that will work for everyone, and parenting manuals are eventually doomed to failure. But in a fast-moving, market driven, screen based culture, there are problems to face and questions to answer that no previous generation of parents has ever had to deal with. Recent research from UNICEF, the Good Childhood enquiry, the National Consumer Council and many other organisations makes it clear that parents can't just sit back and hand their children over to the media and marketers. There's plenty of evidence that constant exposure to a vacuous celebrity culture and the message that being 'cool' depends on endless mindless consumption aren't good for children's mental health. So while there's no point in seeking a recipe, there are plenty of reasons for listening to good advice and ideas from people who've already negotiated the difficult path of twenty-first century child-rearing. Most parents today have little experience of children until they take their*

firstborn home from the hospital, and very few have access to the traditional support system of extended family and close-knit community – the people who, in the past handed on ancient wisdom about how best to bring up a child."^{xiv}

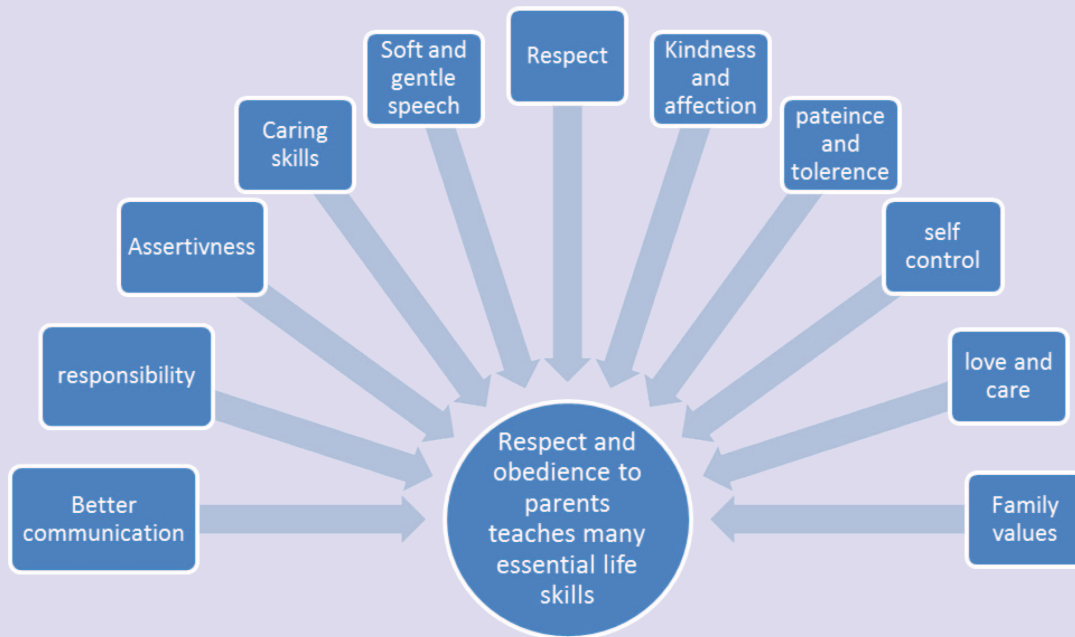
Parenting in Islam compared to other cultures

Sharing the views of parents and experts from other cultures is an insight into how the concept of parenting and parenthood can vary from culture to culture and region to region, however, Islam provides holistic teachings relating to the parent child relationship.

Parenting, being one of the most important and responsible roles one faces in a lifetime, is not an easy task. Parenting concepts are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings in the form of a code of life, such teachings which enable effective parenting, helping children to build and develop positive behaviours and good, solid self-concepts that are important to functioning fully as a healthy adult. However, Islam does not restrict parents to learn about the stages of child development, it can in fact help parents understand about their ever-changing roles in the lives of their children and also what is expected of a parent at each stage, which can be combined with the Islamic/Qur'anic teachings.

Obedience and respect to parents teaches very good life skills

You may now have a better understanding that respect and



obedience towards parents is not a bad thing, in fact it is a blessing in disguise, which teaches children and adults so many essential life skills while growing up.

Attitudes to life and personal identity

Children are encouraged to explore and learn about the world. Even the main influence of western society focuses on freedom and independence, which is a part of growing up, and as Muslims it is important to remain within the boundaries of Islam. This does not mean that Islam is about suppression and oppression. If freedom and independence is about being disrespectful, disobedient and showing a negative attitude to parents, that surely cannot be a good thing to imitate. Islam encourages healthy and loving relationships within families.

A childcare expert asserts: *“From an early age, children begin to tease out what is appropriate behaviour in one cultural setting is not for another. For some children the difference between school culture and home culture is slight, for others it is huge. This is important because the ‘fitting in’ is part of moral development. It partly involves being able to be sensitive to those you are with, but it*

also involves remaining who you are.”^{xv}

Therefore, it is vital to learn about Islam, be strong enough to stand up for our beliefs and always keep our identity. It is important to remember who we are and pray that Allah enables us to grow up to be good and humble human beings.

Appreciate and pray for your parents because they are Irreplaceable

Parents love their children unconditionally, their parental love encompasses setting up safe boundaries, appreciating and caring about their child. Parental love can be so powerful and strong, because it means never giving up, never losing hope and never abandoning children regardless of any disappointments, trials and tribulations. Most importantly, remember that parents are irreplaceable. At this point, I would like to share something with you. Only a few weeks ago, my mother passed away. On the day we were visiting our mother because she was unwell like a lot of people were at the time with coughs and

colds. All I can remember is her last breath, which she took in my arms. She looked at me, closed her eyes and returned to our Lord within a matter of a few seconds. She was surrounded by all six of her children at the time who were desperately trying to resuscitate her. This happened so unexpectedly, without any warning and without any illness. Upon arrival at the hospital, we were told that our mother had a Cardiac arrest (her heart had stopped) at home, where she breathed her last very peacefully.

It was very shocking and traumatic; the way in which our mother left this earth so quickly, we did not have any warning or indication in the slightest that she was going to leave us and we miss her deeply. But the one thing that all of us brothers and sisters are so grateful to Allah is that we were ever obedient and respectful to our mother in every way until her last breath.

I am thankful to my parents and continue to pray for them every day. I also pray for those who guided me along the way. I am ever thankful to Allah for guiding me along the way to remain ever obedient and respectful to my parents. I hope and pray that may Allah also show others the way to always be respectful, loving and obedient to their parents too. May Allah grant them long and healthy lives. Ameen.

References:

ⁱ Accessed at: <http://www.alislam.org/library/articles/Muhammad-the-Messenger-of-Peace-and-Reconciliation-WCISUSA2012.pdf>

ⁱⁱ "Parents Are First Teachers." Supporting Family Learning. Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community. HHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 1998. English.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dunn, (2009) p.13

^{iv} Ibid, at p.17

^v Scott, (2004)

^{vi} Grossman, (2002)

^{vii} Lewis and Lamb, (2006)

^{viii} Buchanan and Flouri, (2002)

^{ix} Dunn, (2009) p.19

^x Ibid, at p.85

^{xi} Steve Bowkett, Tim Harding, Trisha Lee and Roy Leighton, (2008)

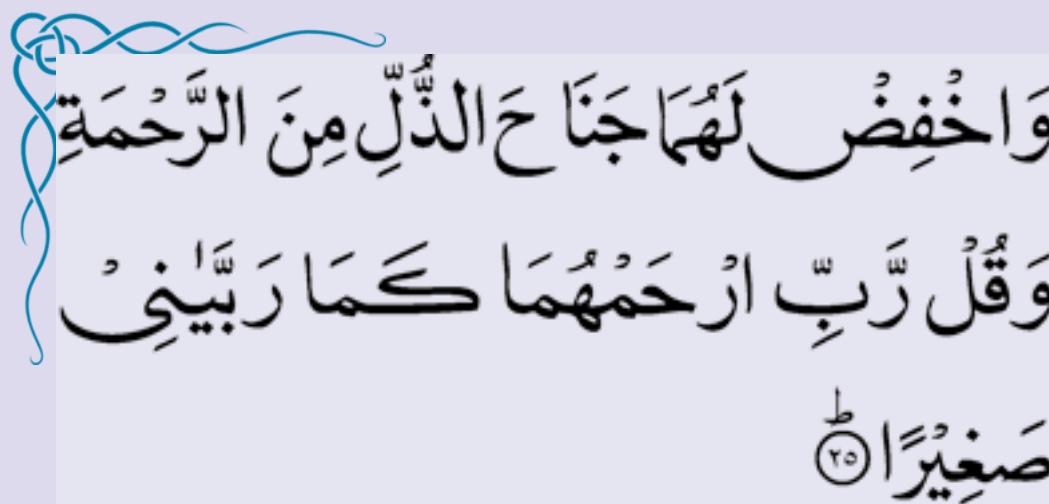
^{xii} Ibid

^{xiii} Ibid

^{xiv} Steve Bowkett, Tim Harding, Trisha Lee and Roy Leighton, (2008)

^{xv} Bruce, (2001) p.141

Prayer for Parents in the Holy Qur'an



"And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.'"

(Surah Bani Isra'il: V.25)