On Being the Best Muslim Parent:
How to Connect with Your Kids

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Objectives

• Understanding the Problem Today
• Understanding the Importance of the Home
• Strategies for Raising a Righteous Generation
• How to Reconnect if You Got Lost
Muslim Americans: A National Portrait

• 2009 Gallup Poll
• Only 40% of Muslim youth surveyed by Gallup considered themselves to be "thriving" as compared to 61% of Protestants and 53% of the general U.S. population.
• 47% of college-going Muslims drink alcohol, while 16% engage in binge drinking; 29% of Muslim students in NYPS sometimes use a non-Muslim name to get by.
• A small number have joined urban gangs. Some have left Islam and some have become more religious.
How Are We Managing Resources?

- The Muslim community in the United States is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars every year into Islamic education; primarily Islamic schools. However, these institutions educate $<1\%$ of Muslim students.
- Our community needs to reallocate resources to reaching out to its youth in public schools and campuses for supplemental education, moral support and counseling.
- Just looking at five campuses in Chicago . . . Hillel chapters, which represent Jewish students, have **more than 30 full-time staff including rabbis**. However, there is not a single full-time or part-time staff member at Muslim organizations on campus, much less an Islamic scholar.
The Importance of the Home

قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَاراً

• From the Tafseer of Ibn Kathir: ‘Ali bin Abi Talhah reported from Ibn `Abbas - (Protect yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell)) [66:6]

• He said, "Work in the obedience of Allah, avoid disobedience of Allah and order your families to remember Allah, then Allah will save you from the Fire."

• Mujahid also commented on this ayah by saying, "Have Taqwa of Allah and order your family to have Taqwa of Him." Qatadah said, "He commands obedience to Allah, to not disobey Allah, he orders his family to obey His orders and helps them to act upon His orders. When one sees disobedience, he stops them and forbids them from doing it."
Home – the Child’s Primary School

• Most of the brain's cells are formed before birth, but most of the connections among cells are made during infancy and early childhood.

• Early experience and interaction with the environment are most critical in a child’s brain development.

• What children need most is loving care and new experiences, not special attention or costly toys. Talking, singing, playing and reading are some of the key activities that build a child’s brain.
Stepping Up to the Responsibility

• A child who is held and nurtured in a time of stress is less likely to respond with violence later.
• A child who is read to has a much better chance of becoming a reader.
• A child whose curiosity is encouraged has a better chance to become a lifetime learner.
• Children learn during everyday moments, thus it is important that adults be aware of what they say and do.
Good Manners Start at Home

- Ibn Rajab said in Jaami' al-'Uloom wa'l-Hikam:
- Abu Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, the imam of the Maalikis of his time, said: All good manners are based on four ahaadeeth:
  - The words of the Prophet (saas): "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or else keep silent."
  - And the words of the Prophet (saas): "Part of a person's being a good Muslim is leaving alone that which does not concern him."
  - And the words of the Prophet (saas): "Do not get angry."
  - And the words of the Prophet (saas): "The believer loves for his brother what he loves for himself."
Secure P-C Relationships

• Strongest type of attachment.
• A child in this category feels he can depend on his parent or provider. He knows that person will be there when he needs support; knows what to expect.
• The securely attached child has learned that he can rely on parents to be there for him. He knows that, if he ever needs something, someone will be there to help. A child who believes this can then learn other things.
• He will use parents as a secure base. He will smile at the adult and come to her to get a hug. Then he will move out and explore his world.
Developing a Secure Relationship

- Adults are consistent when they respond to the child’s needs.
- When a child cries, the adult responds with love and caring.
- When a child is hungry, the adult feeds her fairly soon.
- When a child is afraid, the adult is there to take care of her.
- When the child is excited about something, the adults are excited about it, too.
It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (saas) kissed al-Hasan ibn 'Ali when al-Aqra' ibn Haabis al-Tamimi was sitting with him. Al-Aqra' said: I have 10 children and I have never kissed one of them. The Messenger of Allaah (saas) said: "The one who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy." (Bukhari and Muslim)
Praising & Respecting Them In Public

- Sahl ibn Sa‘d said that the Prophet (saas) was brought a cup and he drank from it. There was a boy, the youngest of all the people, on his right and some elders on his left. He said, “O young boy, will you allow me to give this to these elders?” The boy said, “I will not give away my share of your blessings to anyone, O Messenger of Allah,” so he gave the cup to him. (Bukhari)
Avoiding Humiliating Them ...

• Never belittling their ideas or questions

خَدِمْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَشْرَ سِنِينَ وَاللَّهِ مَا قَالَ لِي أَفَأَقَطْ؟ وَلَا قَالَ لِي لِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ أَفَأَقَطْ؟ وَلَا قَالَ لِي لِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ أَفَأَقَطْ؟ وَلَا قَالَ لِي لِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ أَفَأَقَطْ؟ وَلَا قَالَ لِي لِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ أَفَأَقَطْ؟ وَلَا قَالَ لِي لِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ أَفَأَقَطْ؟

• It was narrated that Anas said: I served the Messenger of Allah (saas) for ten years and he never said to me "Uff!" (a word of contempt) or "Why did you do such and such?" or "Why did you not do such and such?" (Bukhari; Muslim)
Anas ibn Malik said: "Allah's Messenger (saas) had the best disposition amongst people. He sent me (when I was a child) on an errand one day, and I said: By Allah, I would not go. I had, however, this idea in my mind that I would do as Allah's Messenger (saas) had commanded me to do. I went out until I happened to come across children who had been playing in the marketplace. Meanwhile, Allah's Messenger (saas) came there and he caught me by the back of my neck from behind me. As I looked towards him I found him smiling and he said: O' Unays, did you go where I told you to go? I said: Allah's Messenger, yes, I am going. Anas further said: I served him for nine years but I know not that he ever chastised me about a thing which I had done why I did that, or about a thing I had left as to why I had not done that." (Muslim)
Special Alone Time

• Spend some "special time" with each child often.

• "Special time" can be a conversation, play-time, a story, feeding, changing, or getting ready for a nap. The important thing is that the child has your full and undivided attention, and that you are completely accepting of the child and their feelings.

• Those who rode with the Prophet (saas) – Ibn 'Abbaas, Ibn Mas’ood, Mu’aath, etc.
Be a Good Listener

• Not just words they use, but also feelings under the words.

• "One study at UCLA indicated that up to 93% of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues. (7% by the words used, 38% by voice quality, and 55% by the nonverbal communication)."

• Reflect your understanding of the child’s words and feelings, and check with the child to see if you are right.
Consulting Them & Asking Their Opinions

• Umar ibnul Khattab consulting with Ibn Abbaas
Giving Them Responsibilities

• In accordance with their age and abilities
• Ali ibn Abi Taalib in the early years of Prophethood
• Usama ibnu Zayd as Commander at the age of 19
Modest Clothing

• Making sure their clothes are modest and good
• Protecting them from inappropriate clothing, hairstyles, movements and ways of walking
• Not waiting until the girl is 13 to tell her to stop wearing shorts and to now wear hijab.
• Remembering that modesty is a command for boys as well as girls – remembering your own dress code as you are the model
جاءتني امرأة معها ابنتان تسألني فلم تجد عنيدي غير تمرة واحده فأعطيتها فقسمتموها بين ابنتيهما ثم قامته فخرجت فدخل النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فحدثته فقال من يلي من هذه البنات شيئنا فأحسن إليهن كن له ستر مت النار

• 'Aisha the wife of the Prophet (saas) said: A woman came to me with two daughters and asked me for food, and I could not find anything except one date which I gave to her. She shared it between her two daughters, then she got up and went out. The Prophet (saas) came in and I told him what had happened. He said: "Whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against the Fire." (Bukhari and Muslim)
Taking them to Gatherings and Letting them Sit with Adults

- Will increase their understanding and wisdom, and make them try to imitate adults, as well as keeping them from spending too much time on idle entertainment.

- Sahaabah used to bring their children with them when they went and sat with the Prophet (saas). Narrated Mu'aawiyah ibn Qurrah from his father, who said: "The Prophet (saas) used to sit with a group of his Companions. One man had his little son with him; he would bring him from behind and make him sit in front of him..." (al-Nisaa'i)

- Imam Maalik and Ahmad
Rebuilding Broken Relationships

• Applies to both Parents and to the Children
• No respect
• No interest in spending time together (too busy with work)
  • Statement of Sufyaan ath-Thawri ***
• Repeated disobedience
• Failures in school and life
• Divorce
Stop Judging so Harshly

• You can love your parent/child without loving every aspect of his/her life. Imam Shafi'ee stated to one of his companions who was often very loud, "If you could take care to lower your voice that would be good, and if you have trouble with that then our good manners will tolerate it."

• Need to show practicality in school performance . . . we will not all be doctors, engineers, professors, etc.
Be Honest

• Tell the truth or don't say anything at all. You can be honest while retaining a boundary of respect. If discussing certain topics leads to arguments, you can simply say, "I don't want to talk about that."
Don’t Save Talking for Arguments

• If all you ever talk about in a relationship are problems, you have a problem relationship. Start talking about things that aren’t crucial and don’t cause conflict so that the two of you can get used to talking on a regular basis without arguing. This way, when you do have something important to talk about, the lines of communication will be open.
Be Forgiving

• There comes a time when you have to leave the past in the past and stop reminding the other about it

• The Reward is of the same type as the deed

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمْ الرَّحْمَنُ ارْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمُكُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ

• Narrated 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr that the Messenger of Allah (saas) said, "The merciful are shown mercy by the All-Merciful. Have mercy to those on earth, and the Lord of the Heavens will have mercy upon you." (Tirmithi)
Take it Slow

• Don't expect your relationship to change overnight. Move forward together at a pace that is comfortable for both of you. If you take three steps forward and run into a problem, allow yourself to take a step back. When you are ready, take a step forward again.
Choose your Battles

• Not born with a beard or Hijab
• Islam is a step-wise process (Sunnah of Allah and Hadith of Mu‘aath going to Yemen)
Other Thoughts

• Marriage – understanding the environment your children are living in properly (the Muslim-Halal circle of the older generation)