

Muslim boy, sent this message to his father. "I had fun the other day when we went to the fair," he began. "When we went on the bumper cars I was scared, because everyone was bumping into us. The Waltzer was screaming. When we got off you were OK, but I was really dizzy. After we'd had a drink I had a go on Hook the Duck. It was easy. Thank you for taking me to the fair. I am excited about visiting Bangladesh with you soon. I am excited about going on an airplane." The message offers an insight into how children value their fathers & time with them. And when fathers are not there, dead or separated from the family, children go on longing for them. When a little kid says, "I love you, Daddy," or cries & you comfort her or him, life becomes a richer experience.

In the same competition an 11-year old Muslim girl recorded her feelings at the loss of her dad. "If you look at the sky at night you will see that there are no more stars," starts her message. "And it's all your fault because every time I miss you a star falls from the sky. And I have missed you so much that there are no more stars in the sky & soon no moon." **Many dads are lost not through death but from indifference to their children.** Dads who give love and strong leadership to their children are powerful weapons against many of society's problems. Dads would do well to remember that they represent the model for their children. That they are the first source from which their children derive their opinions & principles. **The dad's heart is the child's schoolroom.**

The Moral Revolution: Let's take the problem from its roots. In society, the people's modus operandi in their thinking, outlook & moral values has gone through a metamorphosis in order to adopt a course of escape from the responsibilities of raising children, providing for their families & the inconveniences involved in procreation. Their aberration from the Divine Laws may seem attractive; the fact is deviation from the straight path & violating the Divine demarcates leads to destruction.

This world is where honesty & responsibility are undervalued, or a thing of the past. The Moral Revolution is an ominous anomaly. In this revolution, lying, stealing, dishonesty & deception have been accepted & encouraged. From an early age children are being taught the art of dishonesty & the unimportance of good moral values. Young minds are being distorted by an educational system that is bereft of religious/ moral values. Young persons seem keenly aware that the future is bereft of conventional expectations.

Things seem upside down. Fraud is not fraud as long as it is called inflation. Theft is not theft as long as it is called welfare. Lying is nothing as long as it is called business. Illicit sex is not fornication as long as you use a

condom & practice "safe sex." Many societies have actually dogmatized all immoral values. Islam has developed the path which leads to a higher level of moral values and understanding. This path is accessible to anyone at anytime. Islam has mapped the path to total freedom and peace and made it available to all. The struggle goes on all the time...so what's your role...live the Godly message...

The Goodly Seed: [46:15] We enjoined the human being to honour its parents. His mother bore him arduously, gave birth to him arduously, and took intimate care of him for thirty months. When he reaches maturity & reaches the age of forty, he should say, "My Lord, direct me to appreciate the blessings You have bestowed upon me & upon my parents & to do the righteous works that please You. Let my children be righteous as well. I have repented to You; I am a submitter."

The Evil Seed: [46:17-18] Then there is the one who says to his parents, "Woe to you; are you telling me that I will come back to life? How come those who died before us never come back?" The parents would cry for God's help and say, "Woe to you; please believe! God's promise is the truth." He would say, "Tales from the past!" Such are the ones stamped as disbelievers among every generation of jinns and humans; they are losers.

The Parent's Wish: When Prophet Yaqub (p) was on the point of death, he held conversation with his sons. It is mentioned in these verses of the Quran: "The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons, and also Yaqub saying: O my sons! Lo! Allah has chosen for you the true religion, therefore die not save as men who have surrendered unto Him or were you present when death came to Yaqub when he said to his sons: What will you worship after me? They said: We shall worship your God, God of your fathers, Abraham & Ishaq, One God and unto Him we have surrendered." (2:132-133)

And that wonderful poet from Lebanon, Gibran, stated it this way: **Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, For they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday. You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far. Let our bending in the Archer's Hand be for gladness; For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.**

Parenting is **frustrating & agonizing**, but also **gratifying & enjoyable**...in the most intense way.

The Good Shadow

Parental Love vs. Peer Pressure

The family, despite its defining role early in life, **cannot** match the peer group in shaping values. The peer world is a tremendously important source of attitude, the **inhibitor** as well as the **initiator** of actions, the **arbiter** of right & wrong, and the **dispenser** of acceptance & rejection. Peer pressure starts from innocent demands about dresses & shoes, imitation of manners & choice of words. TV/Internet adds fuel to the fire. Yesterday's neat & orderly child who took pride in their achievements & pleasant manners turns into a slob, whining brute, sulking all the time about how miserable their life is. A parent's resolve to punish often dissipates when they hear the child say "Sorry." Stick to your guns or you have lost the chance to control the child's **slide into a moral, intellectual & emotional abyss.**

The Prophet (p) said: "Each one of you is a caretaker & is **responsible** for those under **their care.**" Children learn to care by experiencing good care. They come to know the blessings of gentleness, or sympathy, of patience & kindness, of support & backing first through the way in which they themselves are treated.

Muslim communities fail to provide a peer culture to their youth... And then wonder what went so terribly wrong.

O Child: Walk before God in simplicity, and not in devilish subtleties of the mind. Simplicity brings faith; but subtle & intricate speculations bring conceit; and conceit brings withdrawal from God. The world is in need of Yusufs (kind, noble, gentle); Maryams (obedient, chaste, truthful) – traits that made them “famous” forever. Be guided by the light of the Quran & you too will cast a good shadow.

When they begin thinking, as they will, as they all will, thinking in particular about “life & stuff,” **learn**, yes, you the parent, patience & communication. Remember those days yourself. Life & stuff, sometimes tingling, sometimes crashing down hard & confusing. Imagine looking out & seeing this secular madhouse for the first time...It is a daunting thought. Be like a tree for them, support & buttress them. Tomorrow they will be leaders, the new guides, the moral vanguard in the world. Today, they are still children.

They are stepping into the world & **the world is not kind**. And it will not be, just because you love them, and protected them. Has it ever been?

Blink your eyes, and they are grown. Out there. You have done your best. If you have given them time, **more** instead of **less**, if you have led them to recognize, to absorb the good values, the – dare we use the battered word! – **the fundamental** values, you have done your best. These will see your youngsters through, come rain or high water. And they will come. Rising tides are likely to swamp them, but they will not flinch. The Muslim youth today are fearless: they have seen and heard and read a lot, often a lot more than you, their parents. To shut out reality is unworkable; your children do not do so, you cannot afford to do so. The modern Muslim parent must learn alongside the growing child, how to fulfill Islam in realistic assessment of the forces at play in the world today and in shared communion within the Islamic family, the tree & the source.

The Muslim youth is vibrant & ready & eager to live & spread Islam: there are enthusiastic young

boys/girls all around, who have been taught well or who have learnt well the pitfalls of a deregulated society & seen the finely-tuned wisdom of the Din of Islam. Do not judge them too quickly if their Islam may seem “incorrect.” They are learning still, navigating stormy waters. Help them. Teach them the right Islam, the right way. The easy way. Not the **ugly rigidity** that showcases itself as “Islam.” Let them avoid those who suffer from “**religious rigor mortis**.” Those whose “pious” language revolves around “do not.” Lots of “do not” do this or that. Maybe they should take a break, try some donuts...for a change!

For Islam has the advantage over Western “teenage crisis management.” There is no (accepted) double standard in Islam. **Adults must abide by the same moral constants which toddlers begin to imbibe, and teenagers must begin to practice:** restraint, discipline, good will & respect for oneself & others. This is not sloganeering pasted up hastily to patch up alarming social studies. This is the actual directive for society in its entirety. **One standard, for all.** Take that great eighties’ “invention,” that silly thing called “quality time” (a sort of perverse “less is more” hogwash to wash away separation-guilt: fever-pitch and intense family sessions but carefully parceled out). If ever there was an **artificial American cultural imposition**, and we have often enough decried the latter in Muslim situations, it must in fairness be denounced here, in secular humanism’s coy self-delusions. **Families are not social experiments.** Islam is a continuum.

Into the continuum of Islam they go now, soon. They are bursting with ideas/proposals, far-fetched or genial: adults & results will decide; contrary to the abdicated society, the Islamic guidelines are clear enough to guide the right-minded youth. We know the evils roaming the plain. But Muslim youth have a formidable evil-buster on their side. They must be made to feel the strength & pride of this.

Many teens think of themselves as Generation X, to define their inner void. We are **empty**, they whine. We are **lost**, they complain. They blame reduced expectations and opportunities. They are correct, but no more so than any generation as it comes of age since mankind was put on earth. Each new generation faces the challenge of facing the world, like it or not. It is the same challenge endlessly recycled. Growing up, leaving home.

Sure it is hard. It was hard for the 17-year-olds who crossed oceans to immigrate to lands they could not even imagine; hard for the young brides in new surroundings; hard for teenage soldiers everywhere at any time, for freedom

fighters from Palestine to Bosnia to Kashmir. **It is hard to grow up. It is hard to be good.**

Muslim teens, Islamic teens must be Generation S, the Salaam team of Islam. The greater the challenge, the deeper the rewards which await them. If you have shown them the real Islam, applied in real knowledge, context and constancy, at the crossroads of life, at the fork in their road, they look back at your good shadow on them still, and forward, where they must go alone, with Allah.

The Halfway Generation: The TV culture, a secular **zero-value** system of education, an **uncontrolled** Internet, parent’s lack of interest in the Islamic upbringing of their children, and a distorted prism of Muslim cultures have taken a heavy toll on Muslim youth. It is not uncommon to see many Muslim adolescents living in “punk” lifestyles. Living in a tension between two conflicting systems of meaning/values. They master dual personality traits. One with Muslim friends & family & the other “outside & beyond.”

Primarily, parents are responsible for the development and maintenance of a strong line of communication with their children. Parents have an obligation to guide & inspire them to truly reverence their Creator, **without** pushing them hard. Communication with a child begins in the wombs of the mothers. The mother at that point should dedicate the new life to Allah. The mother should begin to feed the forming baby with the spirit of Allah’s word. What a lovely way to shape the human potential! Do we have such quality spiritual mothers? As children grow, the goal for parents is to encourage them to listen to the quiet voice within. To hear Allah’s word & stand firm against the call of the world’s evils.

Truth is powerful and only truth will stand. Children respect, appreciate & can build on truth. Their healthy growth requires direct & totally honest interchanges. An open, trusting & compassionate relation between parents & children is vital to youths’ learning to reverence Allah. This establishes their connection with the Saving Force they can call on in all situations.

It’s also important that there’s a two-way flow of communication. The elders can pass on their wisdom & understanding of the Quran & Sunnah. But let the young ones use their own minds. Their interpretation & solutions may bring a **fresh breeze** to the already **stifling air**.

Dads are VERY Important : In a **Message to Dad** competition run by British schools, a 10-year old

WE ENJOINED THE HUMAN BEING TO

HONOUR ITS PARENTS

QURAN 46:15

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