

Nurturing Believers

Parenting Advice for Muslim Mothers

Part 4 - Love as the Basis for *Tarbiyah*

Since the feelings of the heart are the very foundation on which thoughts, desires and actions are based, our *tarbiyah* efforts will only be successful if our children are emotionally secure and sound.

First, **children who are emotionally hurt or disturbed or harbor resentments, unfulfilled longings and insecurities in their hearts, will have thought processes, desires and behavior that reflect this distortion.** For example, a child who feels neglected by his parents will resort to attention-seeking behavior when he is small, and as he grows older, he will develop low self-esteem (*"my parents don't love me because I am not worth it"*), and may seek approval and attention elsewhere, perhaps even from the "wrong" kind of friends.

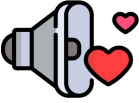








Second, **if we teach *deen* to children with emotional issues, their adoption and interpretation of it will be distorted by their own emotional imbalances, and will not be a true reflection of the teachings of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ.** A child with low self-esteem and lack of confidence, for example, is likely to abandon those commandments of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ that make him stand out among the others. Also, for example, children who have resentment in their hearts and feel hurt and wronged, might develop harshness that contradict the message of mercy and kindness exemplified by the Beloved of Allah ﷺ.

Third, **our ability to transfer our values to our children is directly linked with the quality of our relationship with them.** For example, if our child resents us for neglecting him, or favoring his brother over him, not only is he unlikely to accept our guidance, but is likely to go against it just to spite us. On the other hand, if our emotional bond with our child is strong, and he trusts our judgement, he is more likely to take our guidance seriously, and more likely to follow in our footsteps.

Since parents, particularly mothers, are the center of a child's universe, they have the strongest and deepest impact on their children's emotional development.



What are some ways in which we can fulfil the emotional needs of our children?

| What you need to do... | How you can do it... | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Express your love for your children |  | Express it verbally, for example by saying, "I love you," and "You are the light of my life" "I don't know what I would do without you," etc. |
| |  | Use terms of endearment to address them, maybe having special nicknames for each of them. |
| |  | Hug and kiss them often, specially when sending them off to school, when they return from school, and before they go to sleep. |
| |  | Take out time for a cuddle, just running your fingers through their hair as they put their head in your lap, or lying next to them and holding them tight. |
| |  | Occasionally, make or buy your child's favorite meal or dessert, or give him something you know he wants (like a book or toy), and tell him that it's just because you love him. |
| Pay attention to them |  | When they come home from school, be available to greet them and ask them about their day. If they don't volunteer details, prompt them with questions to show you are interested. |
| |  | When they say they want to talk to you, make yourself available for them. If you are busy at the time, instead of shooing them away, explain that you are busy and will revert back to them in a while; then make sure you actually do go back to them for the chat once you are free. |
| |  | Listen to your children. Let them talk without interjecting with questions, comments, expressions of disapproval and "lectures." Make your children feel that you are interested in what <i>they</i> have to say, not only in what <i>you</i> want to say to them. |
| |  | Spend some time in the day with each child <i>individually</i> , even if it is a few minutes. Talk to them, play with them, or go out with them, but in this time focus completely on that child. |

We see many examples in the blessed sunnah of how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would be particularly affectionate towards children. Whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by children, he would greet them, stroke their heads out of love and pick up the small ones in his arms. We can multiply the goodness in our attempts to fulfil the emotional needs of our children by adding to it the intention of following the blessed sunnah of the Beloved of Allah ﷺ.

To be continued in Part 5...