

Self-Care and Clarity of Mind...a weekly column by Princess Lakshman (Sister Iqra)



Welcome to my weekly column on **Self-Care and Clarity of Mind**. If you're taking time out to read this, pat yourself on the back because you have shown commitment to taking care of your mind and body.

Today, In Shaa ALLAH, we will explore the topic: **Pulling Out The Culture Card On Your Teenage Child?**

Culture, unlike religion, evolves. If you put several like-minded people together for a long period of time, their 'group thought' will become a paradigm within which they will operate in order to maintain harmony. Culture is a group thought paradigm. Muslims across the world are culturally diverse. Their group thought paradigms differ. Thankfully, following the Prophet's (SAW) sunnah has maintained consistency in the way we all pray, regardless of cultural differences.

Our teenage children, however, may be the ones going through the hardest test of time ever, bearing in mind the current climate where the only group thought paradigm is the INTERNET. While those born in the 70s and before grew up spending time listening to 'spoken stories' and used the power of visualisation to perceive these stories, our teenagers' extent of 'stories' go as far as SnapChat Streaks and Instagram. Their power of imagination and visualisation have been extensively diluted by continuous online streaming of all kinds of visuals.

Our teenage children are growing up in an '**online culture**'. Recently, my husband pulled out the culture card on our teenage daughter. He was annoyed that she was choosing to follow a certain trend rather than think critically and form her own opinion about something. She retaliated with her counter arguments. I watched them both as they debated. Finally, my husband decided to end the argument by throwing the ultimate defence line at her: "**We are not them. It's not in our culture to do this.**" He didn't wait for her response and simply left the room (hmmm, not a wise move). She looked at me and replied to his comment: "**I was born here. This is my culture. I wasn't born where you guys were born. I've never lived there. I live here. I don't connect with your culture.**"

She had a point. How can we expect our children to follow the culture of a certain place to which they feel no connection? Most of my clients are having this exact same issue with their teenagers. Parents are constantly pulling out the culture card on them. Teens are retaliating in the same way my daughter had. So how do we

resolve this? How can parents effectively communicate with their teenagers with the intention to understand and support them rather than shut them down by pulling out the culture card everytime a discussion starts to heat up? How can you, as a parent, empower your child with good values rather than give a culture-thumping session which will drive your child to rebel?

Six Strategies to Avoid Culture-Blackmail

1. **Focus on humanity, not culture.** Instil values in your children that help them become compassionate and empathetic towards all of ALLAH's creation. Focusing only on one culture is discriminatory and closes the mind.
2. **Reflect on your own cultural biases before you preach to your teenager.** Why do you feel that way? Who put those beliefs in your mind? Challenge your own biases and understand how they may be affecting your wellbeing and your relationships.
3. **Pray together with your teenager.** Read a surah together from the Holy Quran and ponder together about the beautiful message in the surah.
4. **Have a weekly family meeting and call it "I Understand You".** Create a weekly space for your family where you all can speak without interruption and voice your fears, concerns, compliments and expectations, without judgment or bullying. The idea is to let the speaker speak without interruption while the rest of the family listen without judgement.
5. **Share stories about your cultural heritage with your teenager in a gentle way, NOT in a condescending manner.**
6. **Be supportive, not critical.** As it is, the environment outside is quite challenging for our teenagers. Create a supportive environment in your home so that they feel safe to share their vulnerabilities with you and seek guidance from you, not Google. Foster this support by giving your teenage child a hug regularly. Tell them that he/she is your priority and you love them unconditionally. Love has to be expressed to them. They can't read your mind.

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In Shaa ALLAH, next week we will explore the topic: **The Danger Of Personalising Everything**

If you wish to know about a specific topic with regards to Self-Care and Clarity of Mind, please text or email me or visit www.muslimahmindmatters.com. If you wish to have a FREE one hour **Finding Clarity** telephone session, contact me on 0451977786



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