

**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: **Raising Sons**

I don't have sons, however, over the years I have observed my closest friends raise their boys into men who have grown up to choose paths that most times serve them well and sometimes lead them astray. So I can safely conclude that raising sons is just as challenging as raising daughters. I have a teenage daughter, I should know! The main difference would be that one must acknowledge that boys are wired differently to girls with respect to their hormones, physical growth, and emotional expressions.

As a society, we tend to place immense expectations on our sons. Often, these expectations are drilled into them from childhood and hinder them from embracing and processing their emotions. Expectations such as, 'boys don't cry', 'boys must always provide for the family', 'boys get priority over their sisters', 'boys aren't supposed to express their sensitive side', 'boys must be loyal to the family,' and so on.

How we raise our sons will have a direct impact on how he will behave with his wife and children and the community at large. Having experienced domestic violence in my previous marriage, and now being married to a peaceful man, I have come to understand one thing very clearly...that both of these men were raised differently and both were raised to adopt certain values and virtues that determined their choices in life and how they behave with women, children and elders. I often say to my husband that his peaceful nature is a credit to his parents. Alhumdolillah.

We expect our sons to respect us. The real question is: Do we respect our sons? Are we constantly expecting them to toughen up, or soften down, or do as we say? As parents, we tend to lecture more and do less. The golden rule to remember is kids do as we do, not as we say. So lecture less and do more.

What strategies do you use to cope with your son's mood swings, tantrums, demands and emotional outbursts? Our sons are future leaders of this world. We need to put our egos aside and raise them with sensitivity, compassion, empathy, respect and understanding. There is no doubt that you love your son unconditionally. However, the following strategies, when implemented appropriately, may strengthen your relationship with him. Do try them.

## **Strategies to Strengthen Your Relationship With Your Son**

1. Talk to him. Put away your gadgets, look him in the eye and soulfully connect with him. A great way to start is to ask an open-ended question which invites an elaborate answer. For example, "What did some of the things that you did or that happen today that made it a wonderful day for you?"
2. Listen to his reply. LISTEN. Do not formulate a response while he is speaking. Do not cut him off while he is speaking. Become fully engaged. Observe his body language. A lot is communicated through body language.
3. Always compliment a good behaviour. If the behaviour has been negative, look for moments when he is silent and compliment on his efforts. For example, "I am very pleased with you that you are trying your best to respect our agreement on internet use."
4. Speak well about those he loves. For example, you may not be close to your in-laws but that does not mean your son has to inherit your opinions about them. Respect his love for them. Speak well about those he loves.
5. Respect his fears and sentiments. Fear is very real to the person experiencing it. You do not have to encourage it but you need to show the sensitivity that it is real to him. For example, "I know it makes you fearful when you think about your exams. I used to be the same. I know how you feel. I understand. I am so pleased that you are trying your very best. That is all that matters. Allah rewards efforts, not results. Keep doing your best."
6. Do not bring up past behavioural issues when addressing a new issue. Telling him you can no longer trust him because he lied to you last year is NOT going to resolve anything. Instead, have a respectful discussion about having boundaries.
7. Show good manners so that he emulates good manners. Saying "Please", "Thank you", "I'm sorry" to your son does not mean you are weak. In fact, it displays good manners and your son will learn to treat you and others with the same manners.
8. NEVER laugh at his mistakes, NEVER belittle him and NEVER insult him. Doing these will hurt him and scar him for life. You only have to access your own unhealed childhood pain to realise that somewhere deep inside you is a memory of an adult who may have laughed at your mistakes or insulted or belittled you.
9. "I am big, you're small...I'm right, you're wrong" - NEVER imply or say this. Your son is a human being created by ALLAH and deserves the same respect and joy as you or any other human being does.
10. Explain yourself clearly when you set boundaries. If you need to prohibit something, get him to sit and discuss the best strategies that will benefit the entire family. Show him that you treat him with fairness and that your home is a home with love and understanding, not a house with a "dictator".

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