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# parents and children

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Al Balagh Foundation

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# Chapter 1

## Child's Wishes

I am hoping that my father will not interfere in my affairs.... I want him to give some kind of freedom to me.

I hope he will discuss with me on some important issues...not command me to do something with the sense of command...rather in a fatherly and kindly manner.

I hope he will remember his youth, while he is interrogating me or putting an eye on me.

I hope he will respect me in front of my friends and mates, as I used to respect him in front of his friends and relatives.

I hope he will understand that I have my condition and power, as he has his own condition and power, so that he will forgive me of the unintentional mistake I made.

I hope he will understand that I was created for a particular time, not his time; he should not make me his copy in everything.

I hope he will be just between me and my other brothers.

I hope he will take care of me, but without interfering in my personal affairs, he should be decisive to me without cruelty... he should be my adviser not my dictator... and that he should not regard my effort as nothing.

### **Among the Mistakes of the Parents**

It might be possible that some will put all the blame on the parents alone, because of the fact that they have much experience in life and that they were expected to be forgiven and possess a wider heart and mind.

Based on these, we will not forgive children, upholding blames on them, when they go against the advice of their parents, especially if they know that they are not suppose to do what they did.

However, because the responsibilities of parents are great, we will look into the mistakes of parents, which if it is treated well, the gap between children and parents will be filled.

Some parents treat their children very harshly, the way they were treated by their parents as if they inherited this harshness. Here we are not going to discuss this matter and study the effect of our relationships for the future of the family's relationship. Rather, we want to tell these parents, who are fond of dealing with such negative relationships that: Remember the effect and your hatred of the harsh treatment your parents used on you? How can a father, who lived in such a harsh condition and treatment, feel good to see his son in such a situation?

Is it good for a father to always shout and beat his children for a minor mistake, and to be talking in a wild and horrible voice in the house as if he is a small executioner?

It is narrated that one day the governor of a province visited one of the caliphs and found him playing with his child. The child was climbing up the back of his father, the caliph. The governor was surprised at what he saw, to the extent that he couldn't hide his surprise, so, he asked the caliph: "Why are you doing so, Oh my lord?!"

Then, the caliph asked him, knowing that the governor was not treating his children in like manner, "How are you treating your children, my dear?" The governor answered: "If I enter my house, the one standing will sit down and the one talking will keep quiet." Then, the caliph said: "You are not illegible to be a governor, because by these actions, you are hurting your subjects."

Indeed, if one of the parents recorded his behavior and wild condition when he is upset, on a video cassette and watch it when he cools down, he will feel ashamed at seeing himself in such a situation. He will refute the image in front of him, because he lost control of himself at that time. Thus, we must not do something, which we will be ashamed of, or it will make us seek an apology.

Is it that all ways are closed to us - that - we can't find a suitable method of controlling our children without using force or abusive language? Wise people say: "The last medicine is force." Why is it that our first medicine is force?! Why can't we use the steps before it, may be it will bring the required result? Why are we using force first? Did we exhaust all the other simple methods? It might be possible that looking at (the children) with the sense of showing disability with their action might prevent them from committing mistakes in the future. And maybe talking to them with a soft voice might make them refrain from exceeding limits in the future.

Why are we dragging our children to be angry with us always due to our bad relationship with them? Why are we training them to be harsh with others without their will? This may have an effect in their relationship with their children in the future. Have we ever perceived the outcome of all these?

However, the hegemony of parents can take a different shape, that their word is final without any consideration to the family's opinion. This can be best seen through imposing the mood and desire of a father on his family; for example, he may impose the kind of food he likes on the rest of the family even if they didn't like it.

It is narrated in one hadith that: "He is cursed who feeds his family with his appetite without paying due respect to the appetite of the family". The first is egoist and the second self-sacrificing, because whoever eats with the appetite of his family, is planting love and respect of him in their hearts and minds. Even if he doesn't see it presently, however, he will leave his effects on them and in the future

they will be egoistic.

There are some parents who became angry, beat and abuse their children when they disturb their sleep or rest, even though they don't care about the resting period of their children, as if they are slaves, who don't have any rights in their home.

Among the biggest mistakes of the parents that has a negative effect on the children, is duality in their sayings and actions, because a child is looking at their parent as a pacesetter in their life. When they realize that their parents are not practicing what they are saying or what they ought to have done, the consequences of this will be bad, it may result in the disobeying of their command in the future. Otherwise, how can a father who is smoking order his children not to smoke? Even if he is smoking secretly, they may detect it one day, and his respect, in their sight, may fall.

Another mistake of the parent is enlarging the mistakes of the children, considering something small to be big, as if the mistakes are not forgivable or there is no way of correcting them, to the extent that some parents, because of their impatience, say: The children have changed...they no more respect us...now, they are not as they were yesterday. There is a way they can be changed, even though there is every possibility that most of the so called problems can be solved through love, wisdom and understanding. Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) said: "If a young fellow reprove you, leave him maybe he will be embarrassed with what he did."

Another mistake of the parent is that some of them deal with their children as if they are small kids by imposing their wills on them. This may cause unhappiness and discomfort in the young boy or girl who expects to be respected, being that he is coming out of the children's world into the world of the adults.

Up till today there are some parents who are fond of cautioning their children, even when they grow up, for example, to be careful of cars on the road when they want to go out to their work places or other places. Such advices are good for children but they are not good for the grown up who know how to take care of themselves.

Another mistake is to enforce on our children a certain work or profession that we like, but that they don't like. This is because a young boy or girl is an independent personality, which has his/her own opinion. He/she likes a particular work, and dislikes another kind of work. Thus, if you enforce a certain path of work or life, for instance to be a businessman like you or doctor or lawyer or an engineer, it means you want a copy of yourself, while he/she wants to be an original copy of himself/herself. No doubt parent has a right to discuss with him/her his/her choice, but he doesn't have the right to force a certain thing on them.

This mistake comes from interference into children's activities, which naturally causes a grave mistake, that is, in the personal affairs of the children. Later on we will differentiate between interference and advice, as well as, between interference and support.

Naturally, direct parent interference into their grown up children's affairs harms the relationship between both parties. And, likewise, spying on their activities damages the bridge of children's truth and confidence in their parents, which results in hiding their activities to the parent even on some matters that don't deserve it.



Therefore, as we hate to be under someone's scrutiny and spying, likewise, our children don't like this, because the prohibition of spying in this phrase ( (ولا تجسسوا) Do not spy) is a general term, later on we will differentiate between "spying" and "monitoring".

At times, some parents interfere even into the issues of marriage of their children by forcing a partner (a wife or a husband) on their son or daughter, whom they didn't like; this adds water to clay. Sometimes the children will be forced to do a certain action not commonly accepted; crisis may continue to occur between them, which ends of in divorce.

Abu Ya'afur said; "One day I told Abu Abdullah (Ja'far al-Sadiq) (a.s.) that I wanted to marry one woman, but, my parents wanted me to marry another one, then he said: "Marry the one you like and leave the one which your parents like". This is because the one who wants to marry is the son or daughter, not the father or mother, and whom don't have any part in this except the right of advice and guidance.

Among the mistakes committed by the parents are the material and emotional differentiation they make between their children or between the sons and the daughters, which cause spiritual harm between those favored and those that are dumped. Some parents show love and affection to some and deprive some from it, or they didn't show equality between them.

One day the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) saw a man who has two children, kissing one of them and leaving the other, then he (s.a.w.) said to him: "Why shouldn't you do equality between them."

If kissing one of the children portrays differentiation between the children, then what of the other favors given to one of them and depriving the other from it? The issue is more complicated in terms of girls, because they are more nervous and emotional. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Make equality between your children in terms of favor. If I prefer one over the other, surely, I will prefer the girls.

" Indeed, this is not from the chapter of differentiation; rather it is in the chapter of spiritual feeling and Islamic feeling and respect for women. Here, we ought to point out that these mistakes - and many others - may end up in crisis and have other negative impact.

# Chapter 2

## Father's Wishes

I hope that my son will be better than me, and not only be my continuation.

I hope my son will achieve what I was not able to achieve in my life, and that his ambition and aspiration should be better than mine.

I hope he will use my experiences, and not fall into the mistakes I did, and that he will accept my advices.

I hope he will regard me as a sincere friend, so that he will reveal some of his secrets and problems to me... I hope I will be sincere and frank to him and likewise he.

I hope he will understand that my anger at him - when he makes mistakes - is love, not retaliation or dictatorship.

I hope he will understand that my children are all equal in my sight and that I love them all, but it might be possible that I hate some habits in some of them and love some habits in others.

I hope I will gain the confidence of my sons and daughters, so as to open for me their hearts and tell me their problems... and that they will follow my guidelines because it is for their own good and interest.

These are hopes and ambitions of both the parent and the child, which explain the sincere hopes of understanding, reconciliation and building a strong relationship between the children, who love their parents and respect them, and the parents, who love their children and want good for them. But, it is compulsory for both sides to study the hopes and likes of the other side, in order to reach a good family relation, even though, not all these hopes represent all the children's hope....and, likewise, also not all the likes of the parent. It represents the key hopes, which if preserved by both sides, the relationship will be good and acceptable by both the children and parents.

The question here is that: Why is it that all these valuable comments remain only hopes? Why didn't the parent try to fill the empty gap? And why are the children not helping their parents in building the bridge? ... or why won't both sides open the door of dialogue in order to realize the hopes of the other side? Stopping the factors that prevent the achievement of these hopes, which if given much consideration by both sides, their goals will be achieved. Indeed, it is something practicable, it is not a miracle or something impossible.

Therefore, there is the need for both sides to understand the reality and the nature of the other sides feelings, his likes and dislikes. This is what we will discuss now:



# Chapter 3

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# Chapter 4

## Essential Differences

It is compulsory to define the real meanings of some concepts and words used in the family's circle in order not to misunderstand them or use them in an opposite way, and also not to intermingle terms thereby the guide -the father or mother - should not think that he/she doesn't breach the right of their children. Even though they make mistakes unintentionally.

## 1- Obedience and Good Deeds

Many parents talk about the obedience of their children toward them and the necessity of obeying all their commands; this is their responsibility. And they didn't obey such orders, even if it be abnormal or against the law, they term them as sinners and disobedient, even though the Almighty Allah wants children to be obedient to their parents, but he didn't command them to obey them except of those things that doing them is an obedience to Him. The Almighty Allah said:

"And command your Lord has commanded that you shall worship not (any one) but Him, and goodness to parents;..." Holy Qur'an (17:23)

Therefore, worship and obedience are for Allah and good manners are for the parents. The word "good deed" is more inclined to the side of good morals rather than the side of necessity, or even there is no place of compulsion in it, because a kind person is the one who does good or the one who is obliged.

Thus, if the parents want to compel one of their children to do something, which is against the law, then it is the right of the children not to obey them, based on the saying of the Almighty Allah: "...and if they (either of them) strive (to force) you to associate (others) with Me (in worship) of which you have no knowledge, then you obey them not;..." Holy Qur'an (29: 8) This is goodness in return for goodness, the parents had done good at the time of childhood, thus, it is the duty of the children to do the same thing in old age.

Therefore, repaying of good - as is well known - is good. It is the duty of the children to repay the goodness of their parents toward them with equal or more than that, even, however, the amount of the children's goodness to their parents can never be compared with that of the parents. This is the saying of the Almighty Allah:

"...if either or both of them reach old age with you, utter not unto them (even so much as) "Fie" nor chide them, and speak unto them a generous word. And lower unto them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say you: 'O My Lord! Have mercy on them as they cherished me when I was little.'" Holy Qur'an (17:23-24)

Some parents deal with their children in the light of the necessity of repaying good in order to force their children to obey them. Maybe we may hear them saying: We had spent the flower of our youth for their sake, and is this our reward?! The reality of the matter is that we, as one of the wise men said: "They sow, we harvest and we sow, they harvest".

So this is the behavior of life of those who have passed and those who will come after us. Therefore, the matter is between good manners in supporting morals and good words, and relating with people with what is best. Because the prophetic narration is clear on calling not to obey any command that is against Allah's law: "There is no obedience in a creature who disobeys the Creator."

However, the command to obey Allah, His Messenger and the laws of the religion (Islam), as well as, refraining from sins, is not a parental command, rather it is obeying the commands of Allah. So this kind of command is compulsory on the parents and the children, equally.

In conclusion, what is required from the children is "good manners" toward their parents, but not "obedience" which is only for Allah. The parents are not legislators, thus, it is not their duty to force any obedience that is not declared by Islam. But, what was reported in some prophetic narrations about the obedience to the parents is obeying them in what Allah prescribed and not what is against the law. Maybe the meaning of obedience, here, is good manners and abiding by the law which strengthens good manners and is not opposite to Allah's commands.

However, the parent's consent is not contradictory with Allah's consent. If the children's relationship with their parent is based on good manners - as Allah wishes - then, definitely it will make them happy and this will attract Allah's consent and satisfaction. It is narrated in a Prophetic narration that: "Allah's consent is in the parent's consent and Allah's wrath is in the parent's wrath".

Thus, consent and wrath, here, are supported by obedience and disobedience, even if the parents are polytheists, it is necessary to have a good relation and show kindness to them "Obey them not, and consort kindly with them in the world." Holy Qur'an (31: 15), this will make them be satisfied with their children, and it may be a source of their guidance.

Indeed, in a narration of Zakariyya bin Ibrahim - a Christian who converted to Islam- there are lessons and teachings. He requested of Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (a.s.) to stay with his parents who were Christians, because his mother was a half-blind woman. Then, the Imam (a.s.) answered him saying: "There is no problem, look after your mum and obey her, if she dies do not assign anybody to her, take care of her burial procedures yourself."

Zakariyya did what the Imam (a.s.) told him to do; he used to take care of her with kindness even more than before. Then, one day she asked him: "Oh my son! Why are you doing such good things to me now more than the way you used to do when we are in the same religion (Christianity). What am I seeing from you since you left our religion and accepted Islam?" Then he narrated to her the advice given to him by Imam Al-Sadiq (a.s.). She said:

"Your religion is the best religion, give it to me. He told her about Islam and she accepted it...and she died that night." And it is also narrated in one Prophetic narration that: 'Obedience to parents is among the best impression on the mind', and it is said in another that: 'Obey your parents, your children will obey you.'"



## 2- Determination and Strictness

Some parents are very strict and hard in their treatment with their children to the extent of restriction and harassment. And if you ask one of them: "Why are you doing so?" He/she will say: "It is necessary for a father to be determined...or it is necessary for a mother to be hard, if not, the children will not be under their control."

Yes, we agreed that control should not be out of the hand and that the family affairs should be arranged in a wise way, but there is a great difference between 'strictness' and 'determination'. We will underline it based on the psychological point of view, under the following points:

A- It is said that perceptive determination is the one attesting to the condition of the children and their environment, as well as, their psychological being, thus, it is moving under certain limits. But strictness is ignorance, which doesn't have any regard, that is why it doesn't have any limit.

B- Determination is the echo of wisdom and intellect, as well as, gives much consideration to the interest of youth, but strictness is the echo of emotion, which has the scent of anger and going out of hand.

C- Determination is meant for helping the youth to reform himself. It is a tool that helps a true love, whereas strictness is meant for taking away the will of the youth and making him unable to reform himself, because it is full of emotion. Thus, determination is a tool of development, while strictness is the tool of destruction.

D- Determination helps in attaining a sequential independence and extreme power, while strictness is nothing but slavery and lack of responsibility. In our relationship, if we cannot differentiate between strictness, as a negative tool, and determination, as a positive tool, then we don't need to emphasize on the necessity of determination.

### 3- Spying and Monitoring

The moment a boy or a girl reaches the stage of puberty, the parents will put them under surveillance and monitoring; at this stage, doubt overcomes certainty. But why is it so?

In the puberty stage, the young boy or girl will be living in a kind of independence from the parents, and this is natural. Because living on one's own self is a thing that the parents must encourage their children to do. This is a sign of sound health in the personality of the children, rather it will be of great concern to the parent if at this stage the children are directly under their care like the time of their childhood. Thus, it is the duty of the parents to try and remove them from such a situation.

Naturally, independence calls on the youth to have certain dealings that are related to his stage. They may not like anyone to know about this, but when they find out that their parents are searching their books and bags or their locker, it will be of great pain and anger to them, because they may regard this as a source of breaking their dignity and infringing on their rights.

And what happens if one the children faces his parents with this Qur'anic verse: "O you who believe! Avoid such suspicion, for verily suspicions (in) some (cases) is a sin, and spy you not..." Holy Qur'an (31: 12) Can they answer them that this is not spying? Then what is the meaning of spying if this is not one of them? Or would they say that they are his parents and they have the right to search and look into his personal belongings,

while he has no right to show his discontent? Wouldn't this thing make the children put more emphasis on hiding their affairs and committing bad actions out of the sight of their parents, which will not give the parents the chance for surveillance and monitoring?

Why do we do some things that will make them run away from us and go to some people who are not more than us in kindness and loving them? Is our action of searching books, albums, diaries, taping the telephone of our children not a method of dragging our children away from us and making our children fear us just the way they are fearing intelligence officers?

Maybe some parents may say: Can we leave them to do whatever they like and they are still children who don't know anything from life? Is not leaving them a means of encouraging them to do more crimes and bad things or even having bad relationships with others?

The answer is: We agree monitoring, but we oppose spying. Then, what is the difference between the two? Some parents may say what we are doing is 'monitoring', without differentiating between this positive condition and 'spying' as a negative condition. We will define what 'monitoring' is so as to become acquainted with it.

Monitoring is the condition of feeling from a distant place and observing, but not directing the movement of the young boy or girl in order to know that they are following the right path. This includes the places they are going, their friends and their staying alone, which if it is lost, it will cause misguidance or madness, God forbid. Based on this, it is possible to draw a line of relationship with reality and new things, and to rescue the youth from slipping at the right time.

Here, it is necessary to say that excess freedom or unaccounted freedom can turn into chaos, and likewise, total suppression...all these two have a negative impact on the youth without any difference.

However, the more the parents do a good monitoring, the best its outcome may be, is not the way some think. When you discuss with your son concerning his friends, or when a mother talks to her daughter concerning her friends, in such state, the relationship by the parents should be open and visible. But, the question that requires more explanation is this: Where did you go? What did you do? Who was with you? What was your discussion all about? This may lead to more stories than the parents would like to hear, naturally.

No doubt practical methods have a positive effect on the youth, thus, the parents who are talking with all sincerity about where they went, when they came back home and what goes on there with their friends, may encourage the children to copy their example.

At last, however, the condition that forces us to monitor (our children), must not put them under siege unless we know their life or morals are in danger due to some condition, keeping in mind that a wise monitoring and observation will never give chance to such a state. Educating the children on the basis of self-monitoring, make them monitor their own actions and relationships in a good manner; this is of great importance and a source of power in the mind of the youth. If they feel that they are responsible for their own actions, morals and mistakes, then they will be more careful and responsible.

Teaching children, at an earlier stage, that the Almighty Allah has assigned two angels, who write down all our deeds: One of them writes good deeds and the other writes bad deeds. They always monitor and record all our actions and sayings, and the Almighty Allah after that witnesses all these and even what stays hidden from those angels. Also, knowing that the society is responsible for observing the enjoinder of good deeds and the proscribing of evil, will make the youth feel that they are under two observers: internal and external, which helps in controlling their actions based on the fact that it is in the interest of a Muslim, not against him.

## **4- Guardianship and Protection**

Parents are directly responsible for the protection and education of their children until they reach the age of puberty. But, if they reach such a stage, then the parents don't have the right to enforce their will and guardianship on them. Because they are now legal personalities that are responsible for their own civic action at the hand of the government and responsible personalities who bear their legal duty before the Almighty Allah.

There is no guardianship on the head of a rational and sane girl that can govern her own affair, and likewise, on a sane and rational boy, because a person who reaches a stage of puberty, is the possessor of his affairs. This is the saying of the Almighty Allah: "And test the orphans until they reach (marriageable age) if you find in them maturity, then make over to them their property." Holy Qur'an (4: 6) It is clear that, the freedom of spending wealth will give a sane and rational person the power of not using his wealth extravagantly as an insane person might do.

However, the precautionary measures prescribed by the jurists on the young girl at the time of her marriage, and which give her guardian - father or grandfather - the right to advise and consult, because the experience of the girl in evaluating the young boy who wants to marry her, is not enough, and which may cause the girl to be a victim of the society that is full of corruption and cheating. This, - as explained by the jurists- is not a shortcoming in her ability; rather it is a precautionary measure for her future.

Here, it is not good to abandon the guardianship and protection of our parents even at the later stage, because they are the most sincere persons towards us and their experience is much more than ours. The parents who respect their children will never practice guardianship power over them, rather they will act as guiders in their affairs and like helpers in solving their problems, that is, they may be the first resort to them. Indeed, there is a great difference between an 'adviser' and a 'guardian', guardianship is needed before maturity, but after that advice is needed.

In the short term, the 'guardianship' practiced by some parents, towards their children, will force hardship and interference into their minor and major affairs, whereas, 'advice' will put them at the point of counseling and correcting mistakes in their major affairs, and they will be able to take care of the minor ones, themselves.

## 5- Independence and Separation

In western countries, when a child reaches the puberty stage, the local authorities and environment allow him to be separated from his parents due to his/her being an independent personality, using the example of a ripe fruit that must fall down from the tree.

Indeed, the example here is not full and correct, because a young boy is not like a fruit. The relationship between the fruit and the tree ends when the fruit falls, but the relationship of a young boy and his family - as it is the educative method in Islam - will remain firm even at the time of his independence from them in two phases; practically and legislatively. That is he will continue to be with his family, not even when they are alive, even after their death. It is narrated in a du'a (supplication): "Oh Allah! Forgive the believing men and the believing women, the Muslim men and the Muslim women, those who are alive and those who are not, Oh Allah! Extend between us and them goodness."

We are advocating independence, not separation in the western meaning, where a child will be stranger to his family and they also be strangers to him. A sane and reasonable father and mother are those who can help their children to be independent from them. This is what the psychologists call social and spiritual weaning, which builds a state of self-reliance and brotherly relation-ship.

Financial independence - for example - is an ambition that every youth aspires for, because it is part of his personality and self-reliance. Then, it is from here that the role of the parent, in pointing out a suitable thing to be done, will come. Based on this, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported to have said: "The right of a child on his father is to give him a suitable name, educate him and put him in a sound condition". Therefore, guidance toward sound action and gaining lawful things is the responsibility of the parents, who help their children in order to be free from them financially, but they should not force a certain work or profession on their children.

Some psychologists differentiate between guardianship as a direct interference and protection as an indirect interference, with the following points:

- 1- 'Protection' requires help in work and conviction and contentment, while 'guardianship' requires force and obedience.
- 2- 'Protection' depends on certain used tools based on the place and condition, but guardianship, as a direct interference, doesn't believe in anything rather than force.
- 3- 'Protection' gives a developing understanding to man and requires partnership activities between the parents and their children, while guardianship opposes that.
- 4- Protection paves the way for certainty, but guardianship seizes personality and brings anxiety. This is because protection encourages the saying of opinions, but guardianship deprives man from this freedom.

In conclusion, one of the features of protection is that it secures the reality of personality, and the morals and activities of man come from himself, that is, the personality of a young boy or girl

chooses its own way of life free from any external force. No doubt this will give the chance of development and growth, as well as, the feeling of responsibility.

# Chapter 5

## Points of Differences Between the Two Generations

In order to reach a common understanding and a sound atmosphere of respect, love and cooperation, we -as parents and children- must understand the main point of difference and disagreement between the two generations, for each generation to understand the culture of the other. But not to contradict or to deprive it or to play with it, rather it is to understand the point of natural differences of every stage of life.

Some researchers have mentioned various differences, among them are:

- Youth always moves toward new things, whereas elders oppose new things holding the older ones dear.
- Youth have the revolutionary spirit full of courage and force, whereas the elders have the spirit of imitation, that is, they are hardliners.
- Most of the time, youths are imaginary and theoretical, and elders - naturally- believe in the practical.
- Youths -most of the time - are emotional, but elders -generally- believe in seriousness and trial.
- Youths are hasty while elders are slow.
- Youths deeply think of their future, while elders always think about their past.
- Youths -many a times- have little experience, while elders' experiences -naturally- are many.
- Youths always try to make the condition march with them, but the elders march to the condition.

All these differences are not final, however, and it is not only for a certain generation and not another. You may find a slow young fellow and a fast elderly one, as you may find an old man who is ambitious and a young man who is not, thus, the issue is related to how a person was brought up and the kind of education he acquired. It is a difference that can be seen generally or individually.

One of the most important things in understanding these natural differences is that it helps in reducing the power of accusation towards each other.

As it is the duty of the elders to respect the love of the youth toward new things, likewise the youth, also, must respect the love of the elders toward old things. Because this is natural, being that there is no generality in favoring new things over the old ones, or favoring the old one over the new, both have a positive, as well as, negative side. It is the intellect of both the youth and the older ones that determine things.

Understanding these differences requires the understanding of the psychological condition of both generations. Youth are fast because their blood circulates fast in the body; they want to reach their destination fast. Maybe they may think of following the steps; and this order is not always negative and not always positive. Some stages need fast and hasty conditions, especially if there is will and



spirit of reality and capability, as the case may be in some learning stages.

But jumping the gum without thinking of the end result sometimes brings about accident and danger.

However, an old father may live quietly and with patience, and this situation may not be due to his physical or health condition, rather it may be because of the experiences he has had. It might be due to his understanding that it is possible to perceive some ambition, but it must be based on giving the most important issue its due respect first, followed by the others.

There is no harm in the haste of the youth except in skipping steps of the proverbial ladder, as the slow movement of the older ones is not harmful, especially if it is asceticism against the ambitious part of the world life. Therefore, both generations must reach a conclusion that there is good and evil in all stages of life, and, also, generations are growing. Life requires both the generation of youth and the generation of the elders, because nature has made it a law as 'hot' and 'cold' stay in one place in an electrical current so that we have light.

A researcher in the field of education conducted a discussion on the comparison between the roots of a tree and its branches, referring to the parents and grandparents as roots and the children and grandchildren as branches. In the beginning of the discussion he shows the adhesive of the roots with their values and the dependency of the branches.

Among the criticisms meted out to the roots, by the branches is that they are living under the ground and inside darkness, whereas they (the branches) are living in light and fresh air. The wise answer of the roots to the branches is that their food comes from them (the roots), as the roots also remain alive due to the sunlight and fresh air they get from the branches. They are the increasing and decreasing sap; the tree can never live without them.

So this is how the tree of life is. It can never stay and remain alive unless with parents and grandparents on one side, and the children and grandchildren on the other. If this cooperation between the two generations continues, the youth will be able to overcome most of their problems related to their stage, and, likewise, the parents will have use of the fresh blood in the youth's vein to move forward.

# Chapter 6

## Parents and Educational Affairs of Children

Due to their utmost concern about the future of their children, the parents always ask and encourage them to give more effort towards their lessons. This is a good approach and it shows a real concern to the interest of the student (a boy or a girl).

But, what happens in most houses is insistence -at a right or wrong time - on reading and revising, most especially at the time of examinations and tests. Sometimes, parents forget that the student has his own spiritual condition that may not encourage him to read. And maybe the environmental condition is not suitable for him due to noises of children or due to visitors, or because of the smallness of the house, or other conditions of disturbance in the house.

In such a situation, the problems can be solved through the following:

- Some family cannot change their house to a better one due to their financial condition, but they can change their daily programs, or restrict them during the time of examinations.
- Remembering negative results due to negligence and laziness will force the youth to take a glance at his self, and remembering positive results, due to revision and planning for the future, will encourage him to work harder.
- A problem of the student may be due to the scheduling he did for his studies, Here, it is possible to guide him with the experiences of the parents or others in the field of studies. For example, guiding him to write and summarize his lessons, or writing for him some explanations, presented in class by the teacher, in his book. Perhaps he could ask his fellow classmate, whose grades are higher than his, to explain some topics to him, or allow someone to ask him questions in order to check his understanding of the topic, etc.

Here, the issue arises again of giving too much concern to hobbies and their opposition to the lessons. The position of most parents, towards the hobbies of their children, is negative. This is because they are regarding hobbies, whatever their value might be, as a waste of time. They are thinking that the time given to them must be given to lessons and revisions.

However, the fact is that we must find a solution to the rivalry between lessons and hobbies, in order to stop any negative results that occur by delaying what we are not to delay and presenting what we are not suppose to present. In addition, we must find a correct method of dealing with those who were left behind in their lessons due to their hobbies. This can be done by emphasizing that the next holiday will be enough time for him to exercise his hobbies freely and that everything is done in order to help him to achieve, or by explaining to him that hobbies can be left behind till another time, but lessons can never be delayed till another time.

This method can make a student to rethink his position, but the opposite is the case when the parents hide the tools of his hobbies or destroy them, which will cause him to have a greater attachment to those things, because "man is desirous of what is prohibited to him". Thus, one of the reasons for a student's reluctance in his lessons is the constraint meted out to him, causing him a spiritual unnerving.

### **Family's Council:**

We will discuss the solution to the problems arising between the parents and their children, because it is clear to us that there are many ways of mutual understanding between the two parties; we have mentioned some of them in the previous pages. Here, we will bring a plan for mutual understanding and cooperation, leaving each family to test it based on the nature of its members.

What if we arrange for a "Family Council" in the house?

There is not much problem in this, like the problems that occur in the national assemblies...it is enough just to have a consensus that a weekly or monthly meeting between all the members of the family be conducted.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "A boy is a leader for seven years, a slave for seven years and a minister (adviser) for seven years". Our main concern in this narration is the last part of it, that is: "a minister for seven years", that is there is a situation in the life of a youth that he may become an adviser to his parents.

He will be advising them and presenting his own opinion on a particular issue. He has the right to bring forth his opinion -whether it is right or wrong - and they must respect his opinion in both instances, to praise him when he is right and correct him when he is wrong. But some words like "Obey before arguing" or "Obey, don't complain", is dictatorship, which will make the youth oppose.

There is no doubt that the most important source of harmony and mutual understanding is respecting opinions from every member of the family. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "The heart is attracted to who does good to it, and hates who does evil to it", and he also said: "If you all gather together on good things, surely you will be loved."

Indeed, there is nothing more effective than educating children and giving them the right to forward their opinion and respecting their personality. This is what the Prophet's word "minister" means, which encourages the social activities that will boost the morals of the youth and raise them from the stage of a small boy to the stage of a full grown individual, capable of having a positive approach.

It is possible to arrange for a suitable method for every family. The family council should be an open council for discussing family affairs. Those who run the affairs of such council can be chosen by selection or election, so as to follow the issues presented during any one of the meetings. We cannot talk much on the method, but the main aim of any method selected must be to push the family forward and to achieve a mutual understanding and cooperation between members of the family. In the meeting, the opinions of the parents and children must be brought to the table for discussion in order to select the most important ones without any partiality or favoring of one side.

One of the most important issues here is that the purity of self and heart of the children which might help in a great way in family affairs, that might even be hiding in the hearts of the elders.

But what can be achieved in such a council, are as follows:

- 1- The family will change from a small gathering of individuals to a state where different people will be bringing their own opinions and experiences.
- 2- Achieving a considerable extent of the feeling of collective and cooperative responsibility, and every one's slogan should be "the administering of the house and its happiness our responsibility, altogether."
- 3- The process of distributing work and responsibilities among the members will be easier and accepted by all who feel the responsibility on their shoulders.
- 4- The discussion, debate and respect for others opinion is a process of preparing a better future for the family and the generations to come, who will copy the method and solve their problems, and may use it also to train their children.
- 5- One of the main jobs of the council is to fight separation, backbiting and unnecessary accusation, rather there must be understanding and cooperation between the members.

Even though some will think that the plan is an easy one, it is a plan that requires sufficient time in order to achieve the goal. It also requires a suitable condition. The father (or head of the family), as the head of the meeting, must have the following features:

- 1- He must have the capability of favoring the more important issues above the less important ones.
- 2- He must be acquainted with the present development and conditions, because he is dealing with a new generation created for a time not his own. And he must have the capability of convincing others on issues related to them.
- 3- He must be well versed in the law and the limits that differentiate between lawful and unlawful matters.
- 4- He must be open and ready to accept all opinions, even those that can be regarded as unfair and unreasonable, and he must debate with other members of the family in a good way and manner. He must give advice to those who needs it, and he must know how to separate disputes between others.
- 5- He must have a good relationship with all and he must not be dictatorial as the head of the meeting. He must give the right to talk to everyone in the meeting, and give the right to reply or defend of one's own opinion or against an accusation directed to him. And, likewise, he should exercise calm and respect. All these are some of the sources of success for the family.

Another issue that ought to be given much consideration is the secrecy of the meeting; the secrecy of the meeting must not be taken out to others. It is unlawful to bring out the issues that are termed

internal issues of the family, especially if the issues concern one of the known members of the family which the hearing of this by others may harm his feelings.

In short, the most important things that can be achieved are developing the family and obtaining a mutual understanding between its members, solving their problems and paving the way for a good and sound future.

### **Testimonies:**

In conclusion, we will bring two real testimonies: The first one is of a father who deal with his children in a wise manner, and the other of a son narrating the method used by his father in dealing with him and his other brothers and sisters. This is to show that what we have discussed is not something theoretical. We hope both the parents and the children will be able to benefit from the experiences of others.

#### **Testimony of a Father:**

"I tried to be honest with them...I tried not to enforce myself on everyone of my children... whenever I witnessed a mistake from one of them I didn't call his attention to it in a harsh manner or by beating, rather with a soft voice that could not harm them.

I wanted them to live their lives...I helped them in choosing their way of life...I used to leave them free in their work, without interfering in their work; in order to utilize from their mistakes, I tried to talk with them in a positive not negative sense.

I tried, most of the time to educate them in an open way based on their ability; not above their capability...I lived with them and I am still living with them like a friend...I obtained their confidence by this relation, I am living, in my house, with love and affection for my small and big children who discuss with me without any hesitation; I tried to remove any block between me and them.

I am thinking that a father must know the secrets of his children, but not to go and relate them to others...he should open a way for them to be his friends."

#### **Testimony of a Son:**

"My father is my friend, guide and pacesetter in this world...he acts in a way where the friendship will continue. Whenever I have a problem in my studies or work, he will tell me: "We should be friends...open your heart to me so we can solve the problem together, to think about the solution," he never tries to impose himself on me...he avoids telling me: "I want this from you, or you must do this, he always paves a way for freedom to all of us to choose whatever we deem good, but it must be under the limits of the lawful and unlawful....if we did something unlawful, he acts decisively ...he monitors us from a distance in order not to create bad conditions in our morals; he doesn't force himself on us even while talking...

There is no duality between inside and outside...whatever he says outside he practices it inside... He doesn't direct my future more than the choice and capability that he has given me...

He teaches us to be more ambitious and to attend that which he has attended; he teaches us hope to be perfect and reach where he didn't reach."

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

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"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer, let him claim it wherever he finds it" - Imam Ali (as)