SHAPING EXCELLENT CHARACTER

A MANUAL FOR PARENTS

Dicetak oleh Bahagian Pembangunan Kesihatan Keluarga
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Dengan kerjasama
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SHAPING EXCELLENT CHARACTER:
A MANUAL FOR PARENTS
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bismillaahir rahmaanir rahiim
INTRODUCTION

Please do not think this is simply a book on how to be a more effective parent. This book is the first step on the way to a future much better than the world of today. In today's world we have war, murder, rape, illegal drug sale and use, robbery, violence of all kinds, exploitation, pollution, corruption, starvation, illiteracy, sexual immorality, addictions to various harmful substances, and many other social problems. Not only do these wrongs exist in our world, but these combined wrongs occur billions and billions of times every day. This is not the world Allah meant for us to have, and we have no intention of allowing these horrors, both great and small, to continue ruining the lives of our children.

The knowledge and techniques presented in this small booklet are very powerful; and, if correctly and consistently used, truly can aid parents in raising their children to become
good and true Muslims, who can succeed academically and professionally in the modern world without losing their belief in or their practice of traditional Islam. This is the first offering of the Khalifah Project.

The goal of this project is to offer the people of Malaysia viable means to improve the character of the nation's youth so significantly that Malaysia will come to be known as such an excellent example of what a good and right society should be that we will serve as a model of social development for all the world's nations. To achieve the fullness of its potential success this project must come to belong to all the people of Malaysia, regardless of race or religion.

(Note: Although this booklet has an Islamic orientation we think this information would be equally useful to parents of all religions. Future works of the Khalifah Project will be produced recognizing the diverse religious and cultural heritage which makes Malaysia unique.)
INTRODUCTION

Children are a sacred trust given by Allah to their parents. Abu Hurairah related that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“Every child is born in a state of Fitrah (Purity – as a Muslim). It is his parents who will turn him into a Jew, a Christian or a Magian (Sun worshipper).” – reported by Bukhari.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, a child is like an uncut diamond. The parent’s responsibility is to cut, shape, and polish their child’s soul until it becomes a glitteringly beautiful jewel, pleasing to the eye of Allah. Clearly, it is the parents who determine whether their children will become of fine character or not.
Every parent wishes to raise their children to become noble souls, good in every way; but, many do not know how to achieve that goal in an effective manner.

There are two primary requirements:

1. Parents have to know how a child’s character or personality is developed.

2. Parents must themselves possess right values that will act as the basis for shaping their children’s character; these right values are the traditional values of Islamic Character, and children must be raised to understand their role as Representative of Allah in this world (Khalifah Allah).
By combining these two necessary aspects of character development, parents will be able to shape their children to be excellent individuals in this world and the next.
THE PROCEDURE FOR SHAPING CHARACTER
The Procedure for Shaping Character

What are the factors that influence the shaping of character?

The primary factor that determines every person’s character is their environment.

The environment consists of three aspects that will influence an individual’s character:

1. Physical Environment
2. Social Environment
3. Inner Speech

Additionally, the effect of the environmental factors is coloured by the individual’s unique perception of their environment.
1. Physical Environment (the material world around us)

2. Social Environment (Interpersonal communication)
   a) Direct Human Interaction:
      - Parents
      - Family
      - Friends
      - Teachers
      - Surrounding people

   b) Indirect Human Interaction (Man-made communication media)
      - TV
      - Video
      - Internet
      - Music
3. Inner Speech

- Inner speech refers to the things that we say to ourselves with our thoughts and our feelings.

- Inner speech has an important role in determining our individual actions.

- Inner speech arises from the accumulated life experiences stored in our Total Past Learning History (TPLH), and is a big factor in how we perceive all things.

Inner speech plays a special role in our ability to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong, and in exercising the free will granted to us by Allah.
The Shaping of Character

Three Environmental Sources:

1. Physical Environment
2. Social Environment
3. Inner Speech

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PERCEPTION

- Perception interprets all information received by our five senses and acts as a filter. This filter is not objective, it is always coloured in some manner.

- Every individual's perception is different because it is influenced by unique environmental factors (physical, social and inner speech) and by the Total Past Learning History (TPLH) of that specific individual.

The following example illustrates different perceptions towards cigarette smoking:

- A smoker may see smoking as pleasurable, stylish and status enhancing.
- A non-smoker may see smoking as foul smelling, endangering health, and a waste of money.
Parents need to help their children develop an Islamic perception, so they see the world from an Islamic point of view no matter what the circumstances.
Parents have to ensure that their children's Total Past Learning History (TPLH) is positive.

1. A child's character development depends on their exposure to either positive or negative influences.

2. All such exposure, whether positive or negative, will be imprinted in the child’s mind as part of their Total Past Learning History.

3. The Total Past Learning History determines a child's character and behaviour, and is influenced by the previously mentioned three environmental factors, of which social interaction and inner speech are the most important.
4. Our Total Past Learning History will determine our personality, thoughts, words, actions and everything else about who and what we are.

5. Our aim is to ensure only positive messages are written in our children's Total Past Learning History so that our children can become excellent individuals.
Our responsibility as parents is to mould positive characteristics/traits in our children.

Examples of positive traits are:

- Loving Allah
- Compassion towards our fellow men
- Mutual respect
- Consideration of others
- Courtesy and good manners
- Avoidance of conflict and aggression towards others
- Hardworking at their studies
- Perseverance in any endeavour
- Honesty in all matters
How should we act with our children in order to ensure positive messages are written in their Total Past Learning History?

1. By rewarding them for every positive (good) action that they do.

2. By rewarding them for refraining from every negative (bad) action.

3. By giving calm and gentle feedback about any wrong that is done and kind instruction on the right way to do things.

This procedure is called DIRECTED POSITIVE INFLUENCE!
3. Directed positive influence means ensuring children are rewarded every time they do something good or when they refrain from doing something prohibited, as well as pointing out their mistakes in a caring manner when they do something wrong.

4. In this way children will be encouraged to do more and more good things, and will leave the bad alone. They will do this because they will come to love what is good and despise what is bad.
What kinds of REWARDS are to be given?

- Attention
- Respect and Appreciation
- Words of praise
- Words of encouragement
- Words of thanks
- Mentioning the good deeds performed by our children
- Showing care and compassion in our words and actions
- Bringing our children along on walks or trips
- Giving presents (only occasionally)

Note: Children can be taught to reward themselves using their own inner speech (this is very important).
THE ROLE OF INNER SPEECH: THE STORY OF YUSUF

Yusuf came from a small village and was raised with lots of care, compassion and with strong religious teachings. While waiting for his final exam results from high school, he went to visit his aunt in Kuala Lumpur (but this could happen in almost any big city in the world) and was taken by his cousin to a birthday party. This party involved only teenagers, and there was loud rock music with dancing. Suddenly, a group of young men brought out a carton of beer, and started distributing bottles to all who were present. Yusuf was offered a bottle of beer which he refused, but his new found friends kept on offering it to him.
“Relax, man.... Just give it a taste. It’s not like we’re gonna get drunk. We’ve all tried it before, and nothing bad happened.”

Yusuf said to himself (with his inner speech), “Alcohol is definitely haram, and I must be strong in my stand on this. Let them call me old-fashioned if they want, but I will not let this offer of temporary pleasure shake my conviction. It doesn’t matter if they will not befriend me. Perhaps I should leave this party. Even before this, I was already uncomfortable with all the dancing and open flirting that’s going on here.”

Yusuf persuaded his cousin – who himself did not imagine that the party would be like this – to leave with him. On the way home, Yusuf said to himself with his thoughts, “I’m very proud of myself for not being easily influenced away from what I know is right. May Allah always keep me on the straight path.”
The Procedure for Shaping Character

Please notice from the example above that Yusuf used positive inner speech in two separate instances:

1. In assuring himself that he would not be pressured by his peers into doing something wrong.

2. In giving himself a reward in his mind after he had successfully refrained from committing any wrongs.

- Inner speech can influence someone's actions in either a positive or negative manner. It all depends on the Total Past Learning History and that individual's own perception of their circumstances.

- Educating children from an early age to be Allah's Representative on earth (Khalifah Allah) will ensure the development of positive inner speech.
LAWS OF LEARNING
Laws Of Learning

Just as Allah has made it His Law (Sunnatullah) that all events, natural phenomena, and creatures should obey the laws of physics, chemistry and biology, He has also made it His Law (Sunnatullah) that a child's character will be developed according to the Laws of Learning.

- The Laws of Learning explain how all learning takes place, including the development of character:

1. Every action or trait, whether good or bad, is developed through either the giving of reward or the applying of punishment.
2. Giving a reward after any action will increase the likelihood that the action will be repeated in the future. Both the frequency of the action, as well as the whole-hearted willingness to do that action, will increase. (This principle should be given much weight in the molding of a child's character.)

3. Applying punishment after any action will decrease the likelihood of that action being repeated in the future. (But, besides having serious negative side effects, punishment will often lose its effectiveness in the long run.)

4. Reward will thus shape an individual's positive character much better than punishment.
5. The best process for shaping character is through small rewarded steps that move progressively towards any goal (i.e. attaining good character). This is called the SHAPING PROCESS.

6. Every small achievement should ideally be reinforced positively through the giving of reward.

7. This SHAPING PROCESS can be made even more effective by helping our children learn to reward themselves through their inner speech.
SHAPING PROCESS
AN EXAMPLE OF SHAPING

The Objective: Your child is to keep his bedroom neat and orderly. This objective can be achieved through the following small steps (rather than requiring it all at once) that the child is rewarded for performing:

- Step 1: Towels are to be hung up to dry and dirty clothes are to be put into a laundry basket; do not allow clothes to be scattered on the floor.
- Step 2: The bed is to be made up every morning and the floor swept.
- Step 3: Dust is wiped and the books are neatly stacked on the desk.
Step 4: The room is decorated

Finally, the whole room is always neat, clean, and orderly

When each step is successfully completed, the child is given a reward in the form of words of encouragement, appreciation and occasionally some little treat, such as an ice-cream.
SUMMARY FOR PARENTS

1. Parents should discuss the goals they are working toward with their children so that the goals may be clearly understood and agreed upon.

2. Involve the whole family in understanding the Laws of Learning so that they can be shared, practiced, and cooperation gained from all parties to help achieve the goals.

3. It is important for parents to reinforce these good behaviours and traits through directed positive influence.

4. Parents have to realize that good behaviour does not spontaneously happen but must be a continuous and carefully planned part of family life.
5. The continuous effort to develop good character in your child must be carried out through small rewarded steps (shaping) that lead towards the final objective.

6. The application of the Laws of Learning can be seen simply in the "Chicken Story".
APPLICATION OF THE LAWS OF LEARNING: CHICKEN STORY

This true story illustrates how the Laws of Learning can be applied to train a chicken.

Objective: To train a chicken to stand on its right leg only, turn a full circle hopping on that one leg to the right, peck a red button on the wall of the cage and have a bite of food.

Problem: It is difficult for us to train the chicken to do the above because we cannot communicate with it. But with knowledge of the Laws of Learning, this seemingly impossible task can be achieved in less than 10 minutes.

Situation: A hungry chicken, a cage, and a food tray with chicken feed that pops up when the chicken presses the red button or the trainer presses a separate button.
Method: In this experiment, REWARD is given in the form of food.

Stage 1:

At the beginning, we observe the chicken's behaviour. Usually a chicken will not stand still, and will be constantly lifting one foot or the other and pecking at random. The first time the chicken lifts its left foot up, we will reward it with food by raising the food tray. After that, if its left foot is lifted up, it will be rewarded with food only if its left foot is lifted higher than it was the time before. The chicken will quickly associate this action of lifting its left foot higher and higher with the availability of food. At the end of this stage, we will have a chicken that is standing constantly on its right leg. From this stage onwards, no more food is given until the chicken begins turning to the right as described in Stage 2.
Stage 2:
Now every time the chicken, while standing on its right leg, turns further to the right, it will be rewarded with food. It will be only a matter of time before the chicken, while standing on its right foot, will turn its head to the right, and be rewarded. When it can turn its head no further, it will begin hopping to the right until eventually its body has turned in a full circle and it is standing on one leg facing the red button on the cage wall.

Stage 3:
When the chicken then pecks at the red button it will cause the food tray to be raised so it is again rewarded by food. The objective has now been fully achieved. Now the chicken is only rewarded with food when it performs all the actions in sequence, i.e. standing on its right leg, making a full turn to the right, and pecking the red button. Because every time the chicken completes that series of actions it will be rewarded with food, the chicken will continue to perform those actions over and over again.
What can be learned from this experiment?

1. A task that is seemingly impossible in the beginning can be easily achieved by correctly using the knowledge of the Laws of Learning.

2. A complex task can be taught in small stages.

3. Every action that is followed by a reward will reinforce that action, and result in it occurring more often in the future.

4. At every stage we need a specific goal; completing all the small goals in each stage will lead towards successfully attaining the final, larger objective.
How do we apply these methods to our children?

1. Prepare a suitable objective.

2. If the objective is complex it has to be broken down into small stages.

3. A reward is given for every small step toward the goal that occurs in each of the stages.

4. When this procedure is carried out carefully, we can help our children achieve any positive goal; and, the positive traits learned will be permanently imprinted in our children.
Summary for Parents

1. Prepare a specific objective for whatever you wish to achieve.

2. Pay attention to the positive/good behavior exhibited by your children.

3. Don’t pay too much attention to the negative/bad behaviour exhibited by your children, but gently remind them of better ways to do things.

4. Give a reward for every positive act performed by your child that is a step along the path to the positive objective they are working toward, and continue doing this until that specific objective is achieved.

5. Children need lots of attention from their parents.
5. At every moment, our children's development is being shaped by their environment, including what they are learning from their parents.
a. What are the different kinds of Rewards?

- Words of praise.
- Words of encouragement.
- Giving children attention and acknowledgement for the good things that they have done, and expressing your appreciation.
- Rewards can sometimes (but not too often) be in the form of gifts or presents.
b. What is the best time to give rewards?

Rewards are best given immediately after any response by your child that you consider to be good, and one that you would like to see happening more often in the future. Therefore, you should always pay attention to every good thing that your children do.
c. In what manner do we give the reward?

1. Tell your child what good thing they have done (with lots of detail).

2. Praise your child with sincerity and gentleness.

3. Use different words of praise every time. Try to avoid using the same phrases over and over.
Examples of words of praise that can be used:

"It's nice that Nadia did not scream..."

"Doesn't it feel good when everybody likes us..."

"Mommy is pleased to see that you're studying so hard..."

"Daddy likes it when Omar is always so neat..."

"Thanks for not teasing your little sister..."

"Mommy is fortunate to have a son who doesn't waste his time..."

"Allah loves those who tell the truth..."
THE STORY OF OMAR AND HIS LITTLE SISTER: HOW TO GIVE REWARDS

Your little daughter, Fatimah, fell down while playing, hurting her knee. She starts crying. Your son, Omar, saw her fall and immediately went to pick her up and soothe her. You saw what happened and you should therefore tell Omar immediately:

"Omar, you did such a good thing by helping your sister. Mommy is so lucky to have a son who loves his sister so much. Allah will reward you for helping Fatimah like that."
Things to remember........

1. Give words of praise the moment you see your child do something good.
2. Tell your child exactly what good deed he has performed.
3. Say it with full sincerity and love.
4. Vary the way you phrase your words. Do not keep using the same words every time you praise your child.
Please note five things from the example above:

1. The mother tells her child that what he has done is something good.
2. The mother explained exactly what that good thing was.
3. The mother expressed that she was proud of her son.
4. The mother took this opportunity to make her son aware of how much he loves his sister.
5. The mother took this opportunity to foster the love of Allah in her child by telling him how much Allah loves those who do good.
CHILDREN NEED ATTENTION:

1. Every child seeks attention.

2. Our children will do almost anything to gain our attention.

3. Given a choice, our children would definitely want attention in a positive manner, for example, words of appreciation, praise, or love.
4. If your children do not receive any attention from you, then they will do anything that they can to capture your attention, even if it is negative in nature; for example, getting scolded, punished or even beaten.

5. Children would rather be scolded than to receive no attention at all.

6. Parents frequently forget to express their appreciation when their children are behaving well.
Example:

Our teenage son does not smoke, even when many of his peers do so. We, as his parents, know this but we never mention it, always forgetting to praise him. We should tell him how much it means to us that he does not smoke, and that he is strong enough to resist the negative influence of his friends. This will help encourage him to keep away from smoking in the future.
Eastern Culture

1. In our eastern culture, specifically in the Malay culture, we seldom give acknowledgment when our child has done something good.

2. Usually we keep quiet, giving no praise, and this sometimes causes our children to feel unappreciated.

3. We always assume (wrongly) that our children will understand - that when we keep quiet it means that we are pleased, and are satisfied with their behaviour.
4. On the other hand, when we find our children doing something wrong, it is so easy for us to scold them, raising our voices at them, and punishing them.

5. Indirectly, our children are concluding that many things that they do are not right, and that they might incur our anger no matter what they do.

6. In the Malay culture (and probably other cultures too), parents seldom or never praise their children, especially after they have started schooling, and this lack of praise gets even worse when our children become teenagers.

7. Sometimes we feel awkward and embarrassed to tell our children that we appreciate them, and how much we love them.
8. This problem is compounded by the fact that the vocabulary for expressing praise in the Malay language (and perhaps other languages) is poorer compared to that of the English language.

9. To overcome this problem, we need to be creative and invent our own phrases to express appreciation and give praise for our children's good behaviour or positive traits.

10. These words of appreciation and praise, after frequent expression, will come to flow out naturally in due time.

11. We need to remind ourselves to constantly praise our children, but praise them only at the right time and only for the right reasons.
HOW GOOD BEHAVIOUR IS OFTEN IGNORED: THE STORY OF AHMAD AT THE CANTEEN

On the first day of school after the semester holidays, Ahmad, a kindergarten student, was yelling, disturbing other kids, and throwing his food around during recess. The teacher who was monitoring the children scolded Ahmad with a raised voice.

The next day, Ahmad continued to behave badly in the canteen, yelling, disturbing other kids, and spilling his drink. The same teacher, losing her temper, scolded and pinched him.
The third day, Ahmad behaved very well in the canteen during recess, neither yelling nor disturbing his other schoolmates, and he finished his meal politely – but, the same teacher who had previously punished Ahmad ignored him as if she didn’t even notice he was there.

Try to imagine how Ahmad will behave on the fourth day....It is almost certain that Ahmad will start yelling and behaving badly again because it is only by behaving badly that he was able to gain anyone’s attention, especially that of his teacher.
The Moral of the story:

1. The teacher paid attention to negative behaviour but ignored Ahmad when he behaved well.

2. Ahmad discovered that he will not be acknowledged when he behaves well. Therefore, he will likely behave badly in the future so as to gain his teacher’s attention.
3. This kind of scenario is often played out at home. Therefore, parents need to be constantly sensitive and observant, so that their children get the acknowledgement that they deserve for their positive behaviour. In this way, children are guided to always act in a positive manner, and do not need to do negative things to get attention.

4. Be sure to pay less attention to your children when they are behaving in a negative manner than when they are doing something positive.
PUNISHMENT
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PUNISHMENT?

1. Punishment is the most common method used by parents to control their children.

2. But using punishment has serious negative side effects, and we do not recommend using punishment even though it often seems to be an effective way to stop or reduce a child's negative behaviour.

3. Nevertheless, sometimes (but very rarely) applying punishment is necessary when a child exceeds certain limits of behaviour.
4. Punishment generally causes more harm than good and should only be used as a last resort after all other positive approaches have failed, and the gain is considered to be worth the harm that will be caused.

5. Ideally, a child ought to be raised using positive influence, which means giving many more rewards than punishments. From an understanding of the Islamic use of reward and punishment, we would recommend a ratio of about 350 times (350:1) as much reward as punishment as the ideal.
The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) never scolded or raised his voice with children when he was advising them. He was always gentle when talking to children. A hadith from Sunan Abu Dawud relates:

A companion of the Prophet once said, “When I was little, I loved to throw stones at date trees so that the date fruit would fall down. One day, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) came upon me doing this and advised me to just pick up the date fruit that had already fallen from the tree, and not throw stones at the tree to make them fall. He then ruffled my hair and invoked a blessing on me.”

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was always light-hearted and tender with children, and never hit any child (or woman) in his entire life. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) always practiced the concept of giving reward and not punishment in the matter of raising children to be right Muslim adults.
Why is punishment not effective when used to shape positive traits?

1. Punishment is only effective when children feel threatened by it. Once the punishment no longer threatens them, they will continue with their negative behaviour.

2. Punishment causes children to feel anger and hatred towards those who punish them.
3. Children will try to hide their negative actions to avoid getting punished. They will still do the wrong things, but they will hide it from their parents.

4. Punishment most often only satisfies the anger of the one doing the punishing, and is not used to help the child learn right from wrong.

5. Children will learn that punishment is the way to get what they want and this will affect the way they interact with other people. Children who grow up with this concept will raise their children the same way.
There are two kinds of punishment:

1. Doing something to children that they do not like (for example, scolding or hitting them).

2. Taking something away from children that they do like (for example, not letting them watch TV).

- Although punishment is not recommended, this does not mean that parents should be permissive with their children. Being permissive means allowing children to do anything they want, virtually without limits. Permissiveness is even more harmful to a child’s positive development than the use of punishment.

- Punishment is sometimes necessary (if there aren’t any successful positive ways) to stop or reduce serious negative behaviour.
What is the best way to carry out punishment (if there aren’t any positive alternatives)?

1. Explain to your child in a gentle manner how what they have done is wrong, how that wrong behaviour exceeded important limits, and explain the harm that might have come from doing that wrong thing.
It is not always necessary to point out your child's bad behaviour to them; sometimes we can instead just explain to them how much we like the good behaviour that is the opposite of what they did wrong.

Do not pay too much attention to your children's bad behaviour lest it become a way for them to get your attention.

Do not embarrass or shame your child in public. It is best to advise children privately of what they have done wrong, and to do so in a warm and caring manner.
2. When good advice does not seem to affect any positive change, you can take the next step of denying your child the activities that they like. For example, if your child likes to go bicycling in the afternoon, you could perhaps prohibit him from doing so for a week starting from the day he did wrong and explain to him why you did this. This is an example of the second type of punishment - i.e. taking away from your child the opportunity to do something that they like doing.

3. If all else fails and your child still persists in behaving badly, physical punishment may be necessary. (Remember! This is to be the absolute last resort, and is allowed in Islam but not recommended). Among the things that should be noted when administering physical punishment are:
Do not hit your child when you are angry. Anger causes us to exceed the limits in administering punishment. Do not hit your child's face, chest or stomach. Do not hit your child more than three times. Do not hit your child so hard that there are wounds, swellings or marks on the body. Caning is to be only symbolic and should not cause pain or injury.

To summarise, punishment should be avoided as much as possible, and love for your child should be unconditional, although expressed at the most appropriate times. Importantly, giving lots of sincere love will create a harmonious family environment that will contribute to healthier overall development for your child.
Punishment

Do not confuse PUNISHMENT with FIRMNESS

We need to be firm with our children. If you say something, then you need to stand by it and not waver. Our children need to know that we are serious and that we will carry out what we have said. But we must be realistic with what we expect from our children. Do not be excessive in the matters on which you wish to be firm.

Examples of such excessiveness:

- Totally banned from watching TV.
- Totally banned from going shopping.
- Totally forbidden from going out with friends.
Examples of more realistic approaches:

- Give your child a choice of only one or two TV programmes that they can watch.

- If they wish to go out shopping, they must first agree to pray at any available prayer room (sura) whenever time for prayer arrives.

- They can go out with friends but they must be at home by 6.00 p.m.
Freedom has its limits. Do not be PERMISSIVE!

1. In the previous chapters, we have seen the advantages of educating children in a soft and gentle manner; that giving rewards has a better effect than chastising or punishing them.

2. This does not mean pampering them.

3. Children need to be told what is right and what is wrong. They should not be allowed to do whatever they like.

4. Every child must have limits to their freedom in everything they do; this is how Allah guides us all.
5. The younger the child, the greater the limits to their freedom.

6. Parents have to tell their children clearly about the limits to their freedom.

7. Permissiveness means parents let their children do whatever they like.

8. The limits to every person’s freedom of action are determined by Allah. Permissiveness will lead children towards breaking the limits of freedom set out for us by Allah.
9. Giving freedom without limits will have a negative effect on your child's development, even more so than administering punishment.

10. Parents should not pamper their children so much that they avoid being firm with their children, or fear to point out their child's bad behaviour.

11. Children raised permissively will grow up doing whatever they feel like doing because they have never learned the difference being right and wrong.

12. Raising children permissively will result in a permissive society, which also cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Such a society is characterised by free mixing between sexes, moral decay, drug abuse, dishonesty and everything else that is concerned purely with pleasure while ignoring that which Allah has made lawful for us.
13. Parents should never forget their responsibility to correct their children's wrong behaviour just because they love their children so much.

14. Forbid your children from doing wrong things with gentle firmness. Your children need to know that you really mean what you say.

15. Sometimes parents will be permissive and afraid to correct their children in fear that they will be hated by them, but parents must remember that this will only cause their children to do more wrong things.
EXAMPLE OF THE SHAPING PROCESS: THE STORY OF THE GRANDFATHER AND HIS GRANDSON

One day, a grandfather and his grandson were on their way to the mosque. While resting outside the mosque awaiting the call to prayer, a small kitten approached the little boy. At first the little boy just pushed the kitten away with his foot. He looked at this grandfather to find out his reaction. The grandfather just smiled when seeing his beloved grandchild pushed the kitten away with his foot. The starving kitten approached the little boy again, and this time the boy kicked at the kitten. The grandfather, seeing this, just smiled at his grandson again. When the kitten approached for the third time, the little boy now tried to kick the kitten as hard he could; but he miscued his kick and fell down on his bottom.
This story illustrates how even bad acts can be caused to happen more often by being rewarded. A bad act that is not corrected immediately will only make the child brave enough to do something worse, particularly if it is rewarded.

1. The grandfather should have corrected his grandson and forbidden him from hurting animals with gentle words right from the start.

2. Because the grandfather loved his grandson so much, he helped develop a negative trait in his grandson even without realizing he was doing so.

3. It is generally true that if a child's negative behaviour is not corrected immediately, that behaviour will become worse.

4. There are parents who will just smile if their young child does something wrong. These parents do not understand that this encourages their child to repeat that wrong action again.
5. It would not be surprising if a child raised permissively, without positive attention for their good behaviour, and without firm guidelines as to what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, grew up to be self-centred, arrogant, rude and disrespectful of his elders.
ISLAMIC CHARACTER
Man as Khalifah (Allah’s Representative)
The Concept of Khalifah (Allah’s Representative)

Allah created human beings with two roles:

* As a humble servant who worships Allah.
* To be Allah’s Khalifah on this earth.

“Remember when your Lord said to the angels ‘Verily I have created a Khalifah on the earth’... And He taught Adam the names of all things...” (Al-Baqarah 30-31)
We can build a world of Islam that is characterized by everything that is good and beautiful if all Muslims educate each future generation to fulfill their role as Allah’s Khalifah.

This role and responsibility of being Allah’s Khalifah has to be effectively taught to our children from a very early age.

Every parent must understand the concept of Khalifah and then instill this pure and noble value in their children.
The Meaning of Khalifah

A Khalifah is someone who carries out their role as the representative of Allah on earth, carrying out the Will of Allah using the powers and abilities Allah has in His Mercy endowed us with. It is a special honor for us to be chosen as Allah’s Khalifah. As a Khalifah of Allah, we must:

1. **Make ourselves good** - to be a Muslim who obeys Allah’s injunctions.

2. **Help others become good** - establish a life for all that is based on Islam, and which gains Allah’s pleasure.

3. **Make the physical world around us good** - to be a garden paradise which will please Allah greatly.

The role of Khalifah of Allah is to be fulfilled by JIHAD.
The Meaning of Jihad

★ Jihad means to strive towards everything good and to avoid all that is evil.
★ Jihad does not mean Holy War.
★ Jihad is a continuous struggle to defeat our inner desires and to overcome the influence of Satan, in order to attain Allah's pleasure.
★ Jihad is to be carried out by commanding the right and forbidding the wrong.
★ Jihad is best done through beautiful words and wise actions.
PARENTS must fully understand the meaning of Khalifah in order to teach their children, so that their children will come to clearly understand their role as Allah’s Khalifah.

★ Parents must help their children understand that it is a great honor and privilege for us to be chosen by Allah to be his representatives on earth.

★ Children must come to understand that true victory in life means success in defeating our wrong desires and overcoming the evil influence of Satan, who is always tempting us in our daily lives.

★ We can not afford to lose to Satan in the battle of good against evil; we must continually struggle against our earthly desires and want only what Allah has made right for us.
Parents can explain the meaning of khalifah even to very young children. Tell them....

1. Before Allah created us, He created all other things.

2. Allah created the sun, the moon, the stars and the earth.

3. Allah created the air that we breathe and the water that we drink.

4. Allah created all the plants and all the animals.
5. Allah created all this so that when He created Adam (peace be upon him) and all of mankind, including us, we would have a beautiful place to live.

6. Allah created us to be different from all other things in His creation by giving us a wonderful and brilliant mind to think with.

7. Allah made us special because He loves us very much.

8. Allah made us special because He has a very important task for us to perform

9. Allah made us His Khalifah and this means that it is our responsibility to fully carry out His commands.
10. Allah knows better than anybody else, all that is good and all that is bad.

11. Allah wants us to learn from Him and His Messengers about what is good and what is bad.

12. Allah wants us to love everything good and keep away from everything bad.

13. Allah wants every person to do lots of good things and not do anything bad.

14. Allah wants mothers and fathers to help their children understand what is good and what is bad.
15. Allah wants us to help other people close to us understand what is good and what is bad.

16. Allah wants us to take good care of this world so that it will always remain healthy and beautiful.

17. We feel very happy that Allah has chosen us to fulfill this most important responsibility as His Khalifah.

18. Although we may sometimes feel that fulfilling this awesome responsibility is difficult, we must always remember that to be Allah’s Khalifah is the highest honour and the greatest pleasure possible.

19. If we perform our work well as Khalifah of Allah, this world will become a very special place for us, it will become a paradise beyond our fondest dreams.
For older children, we can say...

1. As Allah’s Khalifah, it is important that we carry out all our duties correctly; therefore, Allah has shown us the right way to do all things.

2. Allah is Most Beneficent to us so that we can be His successful Khalifah.

3. The way to fulfill our role as Allah’s Khalifah is through Jihad.

4. Jihad means to do all that is good and to keep from doing anything that is bad.
5. Allah loves all good deeds and dislikes all bad deeds.

6. Satan will oppose all things loved by Allah.

7. Satan wants us to do all those things that are bad and he dislikes us doing any good thing.


9. We are all warriors of Allah who do battle against Satan.
10. Even young boys and girls are Allah’s warriors who must battle against Satan.

11. We will win in our battle against Satan if we love Allah and do not do bad things.

12. Sometimes Satan influences our thoughts and tries to make us do bad things.

13. Satan can influence us to do bad deeds through our actions, our speech and our thoughts.
14. We must fight hard against Satan so that he will not succeed in making us do bad things.

15. Allah wants us to only do good things, and because we hope for Allah’s pleasure, we need to try very hard to do good.

16. Satan will always tempt people to do bad things and to rebel against Allah’s commands. Therefore we must strive to help other people stop obeying Satan and doing bad things.

17. We must strive hard to be good ourselves so that we can help to defeat Satan when he tries to influence other people to do things that are wrong.
18. We must strive hard to become strong in our belief and practice of Islam so that we cannot be influenced by those people who obey Satan.

19. Satan will never stop trying to make us do bad things, therefore we must always be vigilant against wrong influences, and always remember Allah.

20. We must restrain ourselves from doing bad things no matter how small or trivial they may seem, because if we do even small bad things, this means that Satan would have won and we have lost in the battle of good against evil.
21. If Satan wins by making us do small bad things, it will become easier for him to make us do bad things that are bigger in the future.

22. If we love Allah and we do what is good and right as Allah has commanded, we will enter Paradise and this is what every Muslim most desires.
SUMMARY
Summary

🔹 It is best to shape your children's good character from an early age, but it is still not too late to correct the character of children of any age group.

🔹 Children should be encouraged to be well behaved through directed positive influence. Reward them immediately when they do good. Gently admonish them immediately when they do wrong. Explain to them what they have done wrong, and clarify why it should not be repeated.

🔹 Children need to be educated to observe certain limits in their freedom of action, and these are the limits that have been clearly set out for us by Allah when he gave us Islam as our perfect plan for a right life.

🔹 We need to be consistent in encouraging positive values at every time and in every place.

🔹 The application of Islamic values in raising our children is the best way to encourage the development of positive character.
Good behaviour can best be developed through directed positive influence.

1. For young children:
   
a. Parents need to focus on the establishment of good behaviour through the use of positive influence (reward).

b. Restrain yourself from punishing children.

c. Gently remind children of what is right and what is wrong.

d. Be firm, but kind, with children.
2. For problem children:

a. Punishment at an early stage might be needed to stop some bad behaviour, but we must ensure that this punishment will not destroy the good relationship between parent and child.

b. The preferred punishment is to deny the child something that they like.

c. Try to never shout, nag or hit your children.

d. At the same time, it is important to start strengthening good behaviour, through directed positive influence by using reward.

e. Gradually, more focus should be given to strengthening good behaviour using reward, and eventually punishment can be discontinued.
f. Always explain to your children what the good behaviours are that you want them to have, and what benefit they will gain from those behaviours.

g. Have warm, sincere, heart-to-heart conversations with your children to help solve any problems.

3. For teenagers:

   a. Be very close to them.
   b. Love them lots and lots.
   c. Don’t condemn them.
   d. Converse with them.
   e. Value them.
   f. Don’t belittle them.
   g. Respect them and show your care for them.
   h. Clarify the difference between right and wrong for them.
   i. Strengthen positive behaviour through directed positive influence.
Summary

When children are young, we care much for them, and show them many outward signs of our affection. When they become teenagers, they still need our attention and many outward signs of affection.

Let us together increase our Islamic faith, do good deeds and strive hard to educate our children to be successful Khalifah of Allah. For our mutual reflection, let’s give some thought to the following verses of the Qur’an and hadith:
Allah (SWT) says:

"O my son! Establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong; and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs."
Luqman: 17

"Oh, you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones...."
At-Tahrim: 6
Summary

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“When someone dies, all his deeds will come to an end except in three instances: charity, knowledge that is of benefit, and pious children who will make supplications for him.” (Muslim)

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), narrates:

The Messenger of Allah (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) kissed his little grandson, Hassan bin Ali. At that moment, Aqra’ bin Habis who was sitting next to him said, “I have ten children. I have not kissed any one of them.” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) looked at him, and then said: “Whoever is not compassionate, nobody will feel compassion for him!” (Bukhari)
The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

"Every one of you is a leader. And every leader will be responsible for his leadership. The Imam is a leader, responsible for his leadership. The man is a leader in his family, responsible for his leadership. The woman is a leader in her household, and responsible for her leadership. Even the servant is a leader, given charge of his master's property, responsible for his leadership." (Bukhari dan Muslim)
Human beings are endowed with the ability to acquire knowledge equivalent to several Phd degrees at a young age. This can be achieved by understanding the Laws of Learning and applying them in raising children. As parents we desire our children to grow up in a positive enviroment and to mould them to be good and righteous human beings who practice the Islamic way of life.

Our children live in a very challenging borderless world. As a result of globalization, moral values are distorted and confusing to such an extent that they cannot differentiate the right from wrong. Therefore of the Law of Learning combined with an objective, scientifically correct understanding of traditional Islam, written in a clear and easy to follow manner.

Important concepts covered in the book include:

- Understanding the Laws of Learning and how personality is shaped
- Instilling positive values in raising children based on the concept of Khalifah of Allah
- Using directed positive influence in bring up children

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