SHAPING EXCELLENT CHARACTER
A MANUAL FOR PARENTS

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Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia
Dengan kerjasama
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FOREWORD

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 God 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 members of human society, who can succeed academically and professionally in the modern world without losing their belief in or their practice of traditionally held moral values. This is the first offering of the Khalifah Institute.

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.
INTRODUCTION

Children are a sacred trust given by God to their parents. We believe that every child is born in a state of purity. It is his parents, and later other social influences, that will largely determine what kind of person the child will become as an adult.

It has been said that, 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 in the sight of God. Clearly, it is mainly the parents who determine whether their children will become of excellent 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 need to know the laws of learning by which 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 all the world's religions, and children must be raised to understand their responsibility to God in this world to grow into adults who are good and right in every way.
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
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 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 us by God.
The Shaping of Character
Three Environmental Sources:

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

TOTAL PAST LEARNING HISTORY (TPLH)

Inner speech

PERCEPTION
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 a God centered perception, so that they see the world the way God would want them to, 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.
The Procedure for Shaping Character

Our responsibility as parents is to mould positive characteristics/traits in our children.

Examples of positive traits are:

- Loving God
- 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 doing things that are wrong.

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

This procedure is called DIRECTED POSITIVE INFLUENCE!
4. 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.

5. 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 Procedure for Shaping Character

THE ROLE OF INNER SPEECH: THE STORY OF JASON

Jason came from a small village and was raised with lots of care, love, 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 beer to all who were present. Jason was offered a can 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."

Jason said to himself (with his inner speech), “Alcohol is definitely not good for me, 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 sexy dancing and open flirting that’s going on here.”

Jason persuaded his cousin – who himself did not imagine that the party would be like this – to leave with him. On the way home, Jason 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 God always keep me on the straight path.”
Please notice from the example above that Jason 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 understand their responsibility to God to do what is right will ensure the development of positive inner speech.
LAWS OF LEARNING
Just as God has made it His Law that all events, all natural phenomena, and all creatures should obey the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology, God has also made it His Law 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

Step 1

Baseline

GOAL

REWARD

TIME

27
AN EXAMPLE OF SHAPING

Goal: Your child is to keep his bedroom neat and orderly. This goal 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 goal.

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 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.
Making these methods applicable 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 that you would like to see happen 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…”

“Mommy is pleased to see that you’re studying so hard…”

“Thanks for not teasing your little sister…”

“Allah loves those who tell the truth…”

“Doesn’t it feel good when everybody likes us…”

“Daddy likes it when Omar is always so neat…”

“Mommy is fortunate to have a son who doesn’t waste his time…”
THE STORY OF ADAM AND HIS LITTLE SISTER: HOW TO GIVE REWARDS

Your little daughter, Sarah, fell down while playing, hurting her knee. She started crying. Your son, Adam, saw her fall and immediately went to pick her up and soothed her. You saw what happened and you should therefore tell Adam immediately:

“Adam, you did such a good thing by helping your sister. Mommy is so lucky to have a son who loves his sister so much. God will reward you for helping Sarah like that.”
Things to remember

1. Give words of praise the moment you see your child does 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 God in her child by telling him how much God 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 (true):

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 Malaysian culture, we seldom give acknowledgment when our children do 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 will conclude that many things they do are not right, and that they might incur our anger no matter what they do.

6. In the Malayian 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 made worse by the fact that the vocabulary for expressing praise in the Malayian language (and perhaps other languages) is very limited 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 reason.
HOW GOOD BEHAVIOUR IS OFTEN IGNORED: THE STORY OF DAVID AT THE CANTEEN

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

The next day, David 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, David 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 David ignored him as if she didn't even notice he was there.

Try to imagine how David will behave on the fourth day... It is almost certain that David 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 David when he behaved well.

2. David 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 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 God's use of reward and punishment, we would recommend a ratio of about 350 times as much reward as punishment (350:1) as the ideal.
Leaders of the world’s religions, Buddha, Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad, as best we know, almost never raised their voice or beat children when disciplining them. They were almost always gentle when talking to children. An example from Muhammad, Prophet of the Muslim religion, shows this gentle way of correcting children’s wrong behaviour.

A companion of Prophet Muhammad once related this incident, “When I was little, I loved to throw stones at date trees so that the date fruit would fall down. One day, the Prophet Muhammad 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 because it harms the tree. He then ruffled my hair and invoked a blessing on me.”

We are told Prophet Muhammad was always light-hearted and tender with children, and never hit or even scolded any child in his entire life. Prophet Muhammad always practiced the concept of giving reward and not punishment in the matter of raising children to grow up to be good and right 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 becomes 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 while it is allowed it is certainly 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 acceptable limits in administering punishment.

Do not hit your child's face, chest, or stomach.

Do not hit your child more than about three times.

Do not hit your child so hard that there are wounds, swellings, or marks on the body.

A beating has a largely symbolic effect and should not cause great 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.
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 carry out some household chores before they can go.
- 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 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 very definitely 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 God 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. Ultimately, the limits to every person's freedom of action are determined by God. Permissiveness will lead children towards breaking the limits of freedom set out for us by God.
9. Giving freedom without limits will have a negative affect 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 between 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 God 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 for fear that they will be hated by them, but parents must remember that this permissiveness will only cause their children to do more wrong things.
EXAMPLE OF PERMISSIVENESS: THE STORY OF THE GRANDFATHER AND HIS GRANDSON

One day, a grandfather and his grandson were on their way to church. While resting outside the church waiting for the service to begin, 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 push 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 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.
EFFECTIVE PARENTING
Prof. Dr. Muhammad al’Mahdi
Effective Parenting

FACTS ABOUT EFFECTIVE PARENTING

The soul of your child is like an uncut precious jewel entrusted into your care by God. To you is given the awesome responsibility of shaping that precious jewel into a beautiful form, pleasing to God. It is your sacred duty to ensure your child grows up to be a good and right human being. Raising your children to be good is a necessary requirement to have a good world society. The simple fact is that it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to raise your children to be truly good and right human beings in the world as it is at present.
Only in a fully right world will the conditions exist where children will naturally develop into good human beings desired by God. That is the beautiful future we can offer our children, but to do this we must do battle with the influences of the present wrong world as we create that promised future for our children. We do this by learning the knowledge and skills it takes to be an effective parent and developing in our hearts the unstoppable desire to put these skills and knowledge into practice in our everyday life as we aid our children in their development.

Actually, these laws of learning in their entirety can be quite complex and to fully comprehend these laws, understand these laws, and utilize their widest application can take years of learning. Nevertheless, anyone hearing a brief and simple explanation of these laws of learning will be able to use most of their incredible power. These easily understood laws of learning are more than enough to enable a parent to raise their child as a good and right human being.
Effective Parenting

It is important that knowledge of these laws of learning and their use should never be seen as somehow separate from the ongoing activities of daily life. To be most effective in helping to raise your children, these laws of learning are not to be ‘applied’ like some mechanical tool, but they must be incorporated deeply into the innermost reaches of your consciousness until they become a natural part of your unique style of interpersonal communication and interaction with your child.

In order to keep this explanation of the laws of learning both brief and simple it will be presented as successive series of individual points, but made specific for use in effective parenting.
9. The alternative to punishment in raising a child is called directed positive influence.

10. Directed positive influence means to reward (with praise, attention, or an occasional small gift) your child after they do things that are good and right while gently providing correction when your child does wrong.

11. The younger you start using directed positive influence with your child the easier it will be for you and the more effective it will be in helping your child develop into a good and right human being.

12. To provide effective parenting you must understand the concept of shaping.

13. Shaping is the consistent rewarding of small successive steps toward any desired goal for your child.

14. Set positive goals that can be achieved through small steps.

15. Set every goal at perfection, being rewarding of successful steps along that unending path but never punishing the non-arrival at that perfect goal.
Effective Parenting

3. Human society is obviously not perfectly good at this point in history, in fact our world society has become so bad that some philosophers have (I believe wrongly) made the claim that human nature is basically evil.

4. The reason so much evil exist in this world is not because human nature is basically evil, but because the influences we naturally encounter as physical beings in a material world tend most often to direct our development away from that which is good and right.

5. The influences upon us come from three sources in our environment, the physical, the social (any influence coming directly or indirectly from other people), and from inner speech (the influence of our own thoughts and feelings).

6. Every influence upon us will have some effect greater than zero; and, while most of these effects will be very small, some can be so powerful as to be life changing.
7. The overall impact upon our development of any single influence from any of these three sources can be either negative or positive.

8. Every individual is subjected to many thousands of influences every day, some of these influences being directed toward evil and some being directed toward God (goodness).

9. To overcome the influence of evil (movement toward the material) and move toward God (the spiritual) takes consistent and concentrated effort.

10. If we do not recognize the affect of these influences upon our development we will go whichever way the influences take us, thereby too often moving away from God and toward evil.

11. If we can recognize the affect of these influences upon our development we can use the laws of learning to limit the affect of the negative influences upon us and to increase the affect of the positive influences upon us, thereby moving continuously away from evil and moving always toward God.
12. When we see an influence upon us that we know would push us away from God we can say things to ourselves using inner speech that can take away the power of that negative influence.

13. When we see an influence upon us that we know would help us move toward God we can say things to ourselves using inner speech that can add greatly to the power of that positive influence.

14. As we learn to recognize all the influences upon us from the inner and outer realms of the environment, when we learn to correctly identify those influences as being either negative or positive upon our development, and when we learn to use our inner speech to say the correct things after each one of those negative or positive influences (which will reduce the power of the negative and increase the power of the positive), then we will begin naturally and inevitably to move away from all that is wrong and harmful, and we will begin to move naturally and inevitably toward all things good and right.
15. An individual who does these things cannot fail to become a good and right human being; and, a society that does these things cannot fail to become a good and right society.
Effective Parenting

GENERAL LAWS OF LEARNING

1. Basically, all laws of learning involve what is commonly called reward and punishment.

2. Any behaviour that is followed by reward (reinforcement) will tend to increase in rate and magnitude in the future, it will happen more often.

3. There are two classes of reward: when something that is desired is given after a behaviour, that is reward (for example, if you were to smile at your child after he/she says something nice); and, when something that is disliked is removed after a behaviour, that is also reward (for example, when your feeling of shame for some wrong you have done is removed by offering sincere repentance and seeking forgiveness from God).

4. Any behaviour that is followed by punishment will tend to decrease in rate and magnitude in the future, it will happen less often.
5. There are two classes of punishment: when something that is disliked occurs after a behaviour, that is punishment (for example, if you were to hit your child after he/she says something rude); and, when something that is liked is removed after a behaviour, that is punishment (for example, if your child is not allowed to continue playing after hitting a playmate).

6. Punishment is always harmful to the child even if it seems to achieve the parent’s goal.

7. The undesirable effects of punishment are: the child will sometimes try to escape from or retaliate (fight) against the punishing situation; the child will sometimes have negative feelings toward whoever punishes him/her; and, punishment usually remains effective only when the possibility of punishment is clearly present.

8. The alternative to punishment should not be permissiveness (meaning to let the child do anything they want), if there is anything more harmful to the child’s development than punishment it is permissiveness.
Effective Parenting

9. The alternative to punishment in raising a child is called directed positive influence.

10. Directed positive influence means to reward (with praise, attention, or an occasional small gift) your child after they do things that are good and right while gently providing correction when your child does wrong.

11. The younger you start using directed positive influence with your child the easier it will be for you and the more effective it will be in helping your child develop into a good and right human being.

12. To provide effective parenting you must understand the concept of shaping.

13. Shaping is the consistent rewarding of small successive steps toward any desired goal for your child.

14. Set positive goals that can be achieved through small steps.

15. Set every goal at perfection, being rewarding of successful steps along that unending path but never punishing the non-arrival at that perfect goal.
16. The beginning steps in the shaping process should be kept small so that they are easily accomplished.

17. If during the shaping process you make any step so large that it cannot be accomplished then the progress towards the desired goal will come to a stop, and often revert back to a much less desired level.

18. Lots of reward should be given at the beginning of the shaping process and then should be gradually reduced in later stages.

19. If reward is given after every behaviour in the shaping process this is called 'continuous reinforcement'.

20. Continuous reinforcement is very good for getting progress toward a desired goal underway.

21. The problem with continuous reinforcement is that behaviour can become too dependent on reward and could quickly stop if the reward stops.
22. If reward is given not after every behaviour in the shaping process but after only some behaviours this is called ‘variable reinforcement’.

23. Variable reinforcement is a good way to maintain progress towards a desired goal without the behaviour becoming too dependent on the reward, so that your child does not always depend on being rewarded for their right behaviour.

24. To make the shaping process most effective you should teach your child how to reward their successful progress with inner speech, their own thoughts and feelings, so reward from others is no longer necessary to maintain good and right behaviour.

25. As you teach your child you can learn from the experience. What she/he says or does may be instructive to you.

26. It is good to always discuss your goals for your child with him/her so that you are consciously working together to achieve the goals you both desire.
27. It will help your child greatly in their development if you can teach him/her the specifics of laws of learning that you are using to help them become good and right human beings.

28. For most effective parenting everyone in the family group should be made aware of and help to understand these laws of learning, should try to relate to each other on the basis of these laws of learning, and should share, appreciate, and work together to achieve the desired goals.
Effective Parenting

SPECIFICS OF EFFECTIVE PARENTING

1. For your parenting to be most effective there must be a truly good and right society, so part of your responsibility as caring parents is to help recreate a right world for your child to go out into.

2. Right parenting assumes you have a right marriage.

3. Parental love for their children is a mercy from God not only in humans but also even for animals.

4. The love of a parent for their child should be so deep that it is often not even thought necessary to state this as a requirement.

5. The main responsibility the parent has to their child is to provide for their education (this is to be understood in the broadest possible sense including all things that assist the child to become a right and good human being).
6. There is also a great responsibility on the child regarding their parents requiring the child be kind to their parents, to help their parents in their old age, to never speak to their parents with contempt, to never reject their parents, to honour their parents, and to fulfill all these responsibilities with humility.

7. Every child should be taught from their earliest years about responsibility to God; that is their duty to transform themselves into people living in accord with that which God has said is good and right, that it is their duty to transform all of human society into an right society living in true submission to God, and it is their duty to transform the physical world of space and time into a garden paradise for God.

8. Raise your child to be a courageous adult, willing to struggle against evil in the great battle of good against evil as this will be necessary to create a good and right world for the future.
Effective Parenting

9. Raise your child to fully believe they will successfully create and live in a truly good and right world, because positive beliefs are critical to successfully achieve any goal.

10. Anything that you believe will happen is more likely to happen because you will find ways (both consciously and unconsciously) to make sure it happens, and anything that you don’t believe will happen is less likely to happen because you will find ways to make sure it doesn’t happen. This fact is known as the ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’.

11. The parent should never let their love for their child prevent them from doing what is right for the child (for example neglecting to correct the child when he/she does wrong).

12. If there is a conflict of interest, the requirements of a right spiritual life have priority over the desires of the child (for example, if the child would rather play than pray).
13. Teach your child to love God, and all that God has said is right for us.

14. Teach your child to see all things and understand all things from a right spiritual perspective.

15. If it becomes necessary to correct your child from some wrongdoing this must be done according to a certain hierarchy; first explain to your child in a gentle way how they have overstepped the limit from rightness into wrong; second if the gentle instruction does not result in the child correcting his/her wrong behaviour you should indicate disapproval of the wrong behaviour by withdrawing your attention (for example do not show affection with smiles, hugs, or kind words at such times). Finally, but only as a last resort, you can physically punish your child if they still do not correct their behaviour.

16. If it becomes necessary for you to beat your child there are specific rules and limitations; you may not hit your child on the face or the stomach; you may not hit your child more than a maximum of three times, and you may not hit your child hard enough to leave a cut or bruise.
17. You should never hit your child when you are angry. Not only are you then more likely to become excessive in your punishment, but doing so will teach your child that it is right to hit others when they are angry.

18. It is important to realize if you reach a point where you feel it is necessary to beat your child then something has gone badly wrong and you previously have not done all you could have done to avoid this becoming necessary.

19. It is a fact of learning that you cannot punish a child without harming him/her, so punishment can only become necessary if you have no positive alternative and the good that comes from the punishment will outweigh the harm you do to the child.

20. Do not argue with your child as there is almost never any benefit in doing so.
21. At every age there must be appropriate rights given to your child and necessary limits set upon a child’s behaviour. This allows a child to fully explore their human potential while not causing harm to themselves, harm to others, or harm to their surroundings.

22. If you see your child doing something wrong it is usually not even necessary to mention the thing that is wrong instead it is often sufficient (and always more desirable) only to say how much you like the right thing which is the opposite of the wrong thing being done.

23. You should not expose your child’s failings or wrongdoings in front of others; if this must be done it is best done privately.

24. Don't give too much attention to the bad or wrongdoings your child does and says, but give more attention to the good things your child does or says.
25. You should always, of course, love your child unconditionally but you should express that love at times when it is most beneficial to his/her development.

26. You should at all times be a model of a good and right human being for your child.
EFFECTIVE PARENTING PLAN (READ EACH MORNING!!)

1. I am raising my child to be a good person in all ways, who will help create a truly right world.

2. Today I will try my best to know and understand all the influences upon my children’s development.

3. Today I will try my best to help my child to understand the power of negative influences to take him/her away from all that is good and right, and the power of positive influences to take him/her closer to all that is good and right.
Effective Parenting

4. Today I will try my best to shield my child from the power of the negative influences to take him/her away from all that is good and right.

5. Today I will try my best to enhance/increase the power of the positive influences upon my child to take him/her toward all that is good and right.

6. Today I will try my best to notice some positive things my child does or says, and tell him/her how much those things are appreciated by me and by God.
7. Today I will try my best to say nothing negative to my child. Even if I have to correct my child's wrong behaviour I will try my best to find some positive way to do so.

8. Today I will love my child unconditionally, but will try my best to express that love at times which are most beneficial to my child.

9. Today I will try my best to be an example of a good and right human being for my child.

10. Today I will pray for God's help that I can be a good parent for my child.
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 God.

- We need to be consistent in encouraging positive values at every time and in every place. The application of good moral values in raising our children is the best way to encourage the development of positive character.
Summary

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.
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 faith in God, do good deeds, and strive hard to educate our children to be successful and good human beings (responsible to God).
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Effective Parents Skills

The Soul of your child is like an uncut precious jewel entrusted into your care by God. To you is given the awesome responsibility of shaping that precious jewel into a beautiful form, pleasing to God. It is your sacred duty to ensure your child grows up to be an adult of excellent character. In today’s world the beauty, wonder, and reward of living in accord with the traditional beliefs and practices of humanity are fast being lost to our youth. The youth of today are quickly succumbing to the influences of the decadent West, which bases its science, its philosophies and its culture on the false beliefs of secular materialism. The plan of Effective Parenting presented here, using techniques based on a new model of psychology, provides you with an easy and effective method to help raise children to be good adults, who have a great love for God, and who will be able to succeed academically and professionally in the modern world without losing their belief in or their practice of traditional moral rightness.