

What We Should Be Teaching Our Children	
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Objective	The objective of an Islamic education is nurturing balanced, wholesome, honest human beings who live lives based on principle and who exemplify good character
Hadith	<p>“Be mindful of God wherever you are, and follow up any misdeed you might do with a good deed that will wipe it out. And deal with people on the basis of good character”</p> <p>أَتَى اللَّهَ حَبِيبًا كُنْتُ ، وَأَتَّبِعَ السَّبِيلَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمَحُّهَا ، وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This tradition mentions three very important things that should be fundamental to our educational endeavor: fear of God, repentance, and good character
Fear of God	<p>Endeavor to instill a healthy fear of God in the child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revolves around the awareness that God’s punishment is real, Hell and its torments are real - We can forget this while engrossed with intellectualized discussions of our religion
Qur’an	<p>Fear is one of the keys to Paradise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “As for one who fears the station of his Lord, and guards his soul against the things it inclines towards, Paradise will be his refuge”
Example teaching lesson	<p>We might tell our children “Don’t touch that stove! You’re going to burn your hand.” Despite this warning they touch it. We follow up, “See? You disobeyed me, and you burned your hand.” We can then suggest, “One day, if we disobey God in this world, we’re going to burn our entire body”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Someone might consider such a warning harsh or inappropriate. However, this is one of the essential messages of the Qur’an: disobedience can have painful consequences
Consequences	<p>By using situations we find everyday, we can emphasize that we will suffer or enjoy the negative or positive consequences of the actions we did in this world</p>
Repentance	<p>Emphasizing God’s mercy provides a balance that mitigates the harshness that might accrue by focusing on the reality of divine retribution and punishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God is most willing to accept repentance <p>If children lie you can say, “You are going to have to ask God to forgive you”</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Situations such as this introduce the child to the idea of repentance and encourages them to get in the habit of communion with God <p>An advantage in using everyday situations to convey meaningful lessons to our children is that they allow us opportunities for informal lessons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children generally dislike being lectured to
Activities	<p>Activities provide a setting where children can interact with community elders in an informal, nonreligious setting which opens up doors for a deeper personal relationship that will facilitate their subsequent willingness to benefit from their religious knowledge and experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activities are very positive because they allow children to see that they have an Islamic identity group that is larger than their individual and possibly isolated family. They are with fifty Muslims trekking through the woods, calling cadences, singing songs, telling stories - Such activities can leave an indelible, positive mark on a child's life
Good character	<p>We have to constantly encourage good character and manners in our children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our Prophet ﷺ said, "I have only been sent to perfect good character" <p>Repetition in many situations is a great pedagogical tool, however, constantly repeated instructions also have to be diligently reinforced by good adult examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Did you say please?" "You didn't say thank you." "You should have held the door for the lady coming into the store after you." - We should convey messages such as those mentioned above in a subtle, gentle way without raising our voices and nagging <p>Contemporary youth culture, conveyed through television, is one of the greatest threats to Islamic character and manners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main thing to avoid is commercialized network television with its overt and subliminal messages involving everything from the glorification of criminality, to the belittling disrespect of elders, crass sexual exploitation, blatant inducements to become involved in a destructive consumer culture, and the irreverent denigration of religious themes - Families can gather their children to watch documentaries, nature shows, and other commercial-free fare that is controlled by the adults <p>Television reinforces the false idea that between childhood and adulthood there is an increasingly longer adolescent phase, during which what are functionally adults are permitted to continue to act</p>

	<p>like children</p> <p>In America, marriages between thirteen and fourteen year olds were once common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thomas Edison was a self-made millionaire before he was fifteen years old - George Washington was an accomplished social and political thinker at the age of fifteen
<p>Love of the Prophet ﷺ</p>	<p>We should remind them who the Prophet ﷺ was and what he looked like</p> <p>Many Muslim children can tell you how tall LeBron James is, how much he weighs, what color his eyes are, where he went to high school, and how much his sneakers contract is worth. But they cannot mention a single attribute of their Prophet ﷺ</p> <p>We could develop cards about the Prophet and his companions, just as we have baseball, and basketball cards featuring sports figures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would be an informal way of conveying information that we usually limit to formal settings <p>Familiarization is a key ingredient in the cultivation of love. It is difficult to love someone you do not know</p> <p>We should praise our children when they display prophetic character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The Prophet will love what you did for that cat because he taught us to be kind and merciful to all creatures.” - Perhaps your child will come one day and say: “The kids found a bird at school today, it could not fly. Everyone was throwing rocks at it, but I didn’t throw any rocks. I tried to stop them.” We should enthusiastically respond, “That was so great! God and His Prophet ﷺ will really love you for that. God will show you mercy one day for your mercy to that bird.”
<p>Moderation</p>	<p>We should try to give them ordinary food as much as possible. Then, when we periodically give them something they really like, it is so much more enjoyable for them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is one way to get them to appreciate the blessings of God - Otherwise, always giving the best of food can cause them to take the blessings of God for granted. This can make their hearts become hard or cold <p>Giving kids the best of clothes can lead to them taking the blessings of God for granted, arrogating themselves over poorer children, and make them a source of jealousy for poorer children</p>

Manual work	<p>At Islamic schools we can have local mechanics come in to give short courses on the basics of automobile maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When our male children reach their teenage years we can arrange for apprenticeships for them at a local Muslim mechanics shop during summer vacations <p>Gardening is another great activity for both boys and girls</p> <p>Working in Muslim refugee camps is a great way to help develop a healthy social consciousness in teenagers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children who have visited such areas generally become a lot more appreciative of the blessings they enjoy here <p>Studying the martial arts is a means for them to have healthy self-esteem. Knowing they can defend themselves makes it easier for them to be Muslim in a sometimes hostile environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studying the martial arts does not enable them bullying because a person who is confident of himself would never start a fight
Balance	<p>We want to give our young generation the space to be children, but letting them know that they're preparing for a serious adult life</p>