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INTRODUCTION

We all know that marriage is of primary importance in Islam. Numerous Qur'anic verses and hadiths point to this fact.

"And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." (30:21)

And the famous hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

"When a man marries he has fulfilled half of the religion; so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half." (Al-Tirmidhi # 3096)

However, building a life and family with someone (and managing it) is hard work and far from the absolute 'bed of roses' that some people unrealistically expect.

Some even doubt whether being happy in marriage is possible; many of our young people are scared to death of getting married based on what they see happening to married peopleall around them.

Being a struggle, however, does not preclude the possibility of happiness, fulfillment, joy, love, and even romance.

If we have the right orientation about marriage and have realistic expectations, understand ourselves and our spouses, know what true love really means, and realize that marriage, like any other type of relationship in life has its ups and downs, then marriage can be a wonderful and valued experience.

Here, Onislam's Family & Society would like to present this eBook with which we aim to provide Muslim youths with all necessary information and sincere advice in order for them to be ready for this lifetime project called Marriage.

Read through our eBook to enjoy advice and reflections shared by our professional writers and counselors.

Onislam's Family & Society Team







DOS AND DON'TS DURING ENGAGEMENT

By Marwa Abdalla

Deciding whom to marry is one of the most important decisions a person has to make.

Thus, it follows that the engagement period—that period of time, during which two people are getting to know one another with the intention of deciding if they will ultimately marry—is extremely important.



However, the rules governing the engagement period in Islam are often clouded by various cultural practices and family traditions, leaving many engaged couples invariably confused.

Therefore, we need to supplement the books of figh with some of the amazing human experiences that fill our rich Islamic history, and with the contemporary stories of real, practicing Muslims that put this figh into practice.

This article begins to do this with a simple list of DOs and DON'Ts for the engagement period. It is a humble effort to try to help young people as they begin to seek out the special person who will help them fulfill half their faith.

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) as saying, "When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of the religion; so let him fear Allah regarding the remaining half." (Bayhaqi)

So what are some of the dos and don'ts of the engagement period in Islam in everyday terminology?

DO have a clear and correct intention

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) taught us that actions are judged by their intentions, and getting married is no exception.

Marriage is not a game, nor is it an end in itself to be accomplished and then set aside. It is a means for two people to become better, through their love for one another and for their Creator, and this must not be taken for granted.

DON'T forget the proper Islamic guidelines about how to communicate

Allah created us and He knows us better than we know our own selves. Thus, we must follow His guidelines about how to communicate with others, especially when seeking out a potential spouse.

Doing so ensures that Allah will bless the entire process and the marriage that results from it. Thus, initial communication during the engagement period should always involve the potential groom and the potential bride AND her father or "Wali." It should not be secretive or behind anyone's back.

Thereafter, the two may continue their dialogue in an Islamically permissible way.

♣ DO present yourself in an accurate, positive light

One of the most important things when meeting a potential fiancée is to present yourself in a way that best represents who you really are. This goes for everything from the way you look to the way you describe yourself and your interests.

So, put away the photo-shop, the colored contact lenses, and the other "fake" enhancements that you think are going to impress your potential fiancée. It's far more important that you be real and sincere with them.

This is not to say that you shouldn't make an effort, especially when first meeting someone, to look nice and presentable. You should! But in a way that accurately represents who you are.

♣ DON'T be misleading or dishonest

This one really speaks for itself, and is extremely important. Finding out that your fiancée has been dishonest with you is usually a deal-breaker.

Have taqwa, consciousness of Allah, in all that you say or do, and don't mislead the other party about matters—be they related to finances, family, health or anything else.

DO ask questions, but DON'T behave as if you were in a formal business interview

One couple, who ultimately did not get engaged, decided at their first or second meeting to go through a list of questions several pages long; in an effort to get to know one another.

Asking questions is important, but talking in a normal and friendly fashion is also important.

The question and answer format doesn't always allow for one's true personality to show, and it is important that this aspect of couples come through as they are assessing whether or not they are compatible.

Remember, you are marrying a person, not a bunch of data, and so learn about one another in a way that is personable, not mechanical.

A lot of times, this is easier if conversation occurs within a group—with other family members present.

This takes some of the burden of conversation off the potential fiancées while still allowing them to discuss and learn about each other in an Islamically appropriate setting.

DON'T rely on one "perfect" preconceived ideal for your future spouse and dismiss anyone who falls short of that

Be open to different people and don't refuse to meet or talk with someone simply because they don't fit your image of the "perfect partner."

There's really no such thing as a perfect match, there is the right match that will insha'Allah be made easy for you if you allow yourself to consider it.

So maybe this person isn't as tall/short/thin/dark or fair as you had envisioned your spouse to be! That shouldn't always be a deal-breaker, especially if there are other things that make up for it.

It's important to make sure you feel attracted to this person, both to their looks and to their personality. But waiting around

for Mr. or Miss Perfect means you might just spend the rest of your life waiting, because none of us are perfect, that is a quality of Allah alone and of our spouses in al-jennah, insha'Allah.

♣ DO give yourself enough time before deciding yes or no

Deciding who to marry is not a decision that should be made after just one conversation or meeting.

It doesn't always have to take a long time, but one meeting just usually isn't enough.

You must give yourself enough time to really engage your brain in the decision, and to see how your potential fiancée behaves in different situations so as to know that insha'Allah the two of you will be compatible.

DO seek guidance from family and friends

This is often taken lightly, as many young people seem to think that their parents probably don't know enough about them to help them with this decision. But parents and close family and friends who have known you for years can often provide vital insights into what kind of person may or may not be compatible with you.

They can also see things about a potential fiancée that you may be blinded to, so listen to them and take their comments and concerns to heart.

Ultimately who you marry is your decision, but remember that your families will be a part of your life for many years after you marry. Making sure you are all on the same page before the wedding contributes to a lot of peace after.

♣ DO perform Salat-ul-istikhara

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)taught his companions to seek counsel with Allah whenever they had a decision to make.

By seeking Allah's counsel, we remind ourselves: firstly, that all knowledge of what is good or bad for us resides with Him, and secondly, that we are in need of Him to guide us to and make easy for us that which is best for us.

This helps us achieve a level of peace with whatever happens.

♣ DON'T forget to make a lot of duag

The very process of meeting someone, getting engaged, and then planning a wedding is very exciting, and often lends itself to much focus on the material elements of this world. Throughout the course of this whirlwind, one can forget a very important ingredient for success and that is duaa, supplication and prayer to Allah.

I spoke with one young woman who recently had her marriage about the importance of duaa. She showed me a little booklet—the kind you would find at Islamic bookstores or masajid. Its pages were worn, as if it had been read many, many times. The book was entitled, "Patience and Prayer," and it was filled with hadiths and verses from the Qur'an about the virtue of patience and making duaa.

She held it and said to me, "I read this book, and it reminded me above all else, to pray and make duaa to Allah that if this marriage was good for me, to bring it to fruition. And I had to be patient. It took time, and when you want something very much, waiting is difficult. But it finally happened," and she gave me a very big smile.



THE WAY TO A SUCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT

By Sarah N. Saad

Bridges foundation, headquartered in Cairo, Egypt, is initially a foundation that aims at training Muslims, through workshops, on how to become better public speakers when presenting Islam, and how to better communicate with non-Muslims.



However, Bridges Foundation gave a recent workshop about marriage, presented by Mohamed Sharaf El-Din, the author of "The Sacred Bond-A Book about Love, Relationships, and Marriage".

The Sacred Bond, which was the name of the workshop, discussed all issues about marriage, starting from the early stages of choosing a partner to the engagement, marriage contract, and finally the marital life.

The engagement phase, which is a very crucial stage, is worth reflecting on. It has become very common in the Egyptian culture, nowadays, to hear of engagements being broken off.

There are many common reasons behind that, such as family issues, economic obstacles, or simply the couple not getting along. But it's important to know that there are ways to avoid getting into a relationship that will eventually fail.

First, before either the man or women seek a partner they need to know why they want to get married. It might sound rather odd as it seems obvious why anyone would want to get married, but actually to ensure a successful marriage, you need the *right* reasons to get married.

Societal pressure or fear of aging should not be the sole motives for seeking marriage. Instead, you need to understand that marriage is actually a tool for happiness and way to enter Jannah, if you choose the right partner.

You should seek a partner that will help you first and foremost develop yourself and reach your goals and vision in life. Hence, the checklist you have for your ideal partner should not start with wealth or looks, but most importantly with a person who shares your vision in life.

Initially, Allah created us to worship Him, and to reconstruct earth, so choose a partner that will uplift the level of your Iman and support you in excelling in your career.

If you choose accordingly, then know that with that partner you will have a happy life, full of love and respect, and grow old together until you part in the earthly life to meet inthe hereafter inshAllah.

From the "The Sacred Bond" workshop, three steps for a successful engagement:

1- Know your partner:

It is important during the engagement to know the nature of your partner. You should learn about their spending habits, how they treat their family, eating and drinking habits, how it is to travel with them and so on.

Because our Islamic values limit the relationship between the partners during the engagement, it might be difficult to directly get to know your partner in all these aspects.

So, you should seek trusted people who have been around that person and learn from them about your partner. This is not spying, or investigating your partner. Simply, it is vital to learn about the habits of a person that you might possibly spend the rest of your life with, so if there are things you can't tolerate then it becomes your choice to continue in this engagement or not.

2- Don't put unrealistic expectations for changing the other:

Many people try to oversee some serious bad habits or problems in their partner, assuming that they will change after marriage or that they would be able to change the other.

Consequently, this causes great conflicts during the engagement as one of the partners, or both, attempt to create of their partner the ideal picture they had in their mind.

It is important to understand that Allah has not created a single human being perfect, so we need to accept and acknowledge that our partner will have some defaults. The main point though, is to differentiate between "serious" defaults such as being stingy or treating those below with arrogance, which could be intolerable things, and between "mild" defaults such as sleeping late, or not always being understanding, which are things you can accept or eventually change in your partner.

3- Find a common vision and agree on it:

After making istikhara, and being certain that your partner is "the one", and you feel comfortable with them and satisfied with their personality and looks, that's when you start talking about your vision in life. Before talking about materialistic things, you need to set a common vision that you and your partner will build your family on.

This common vision raises questions such as "Why are we building a family? What are our personal goals, what are the goals for our children? What will be the responsibility of each of us towards our family? What will be our priorities in life?" Based on all this you will be able to determine many things in the marriage such as your relationship with others, materialistic issues such as how much you want to spend on the house, the dowry, the wedding...etc.

How to Avoid Unnecessary Fights?

Tension and quarrels are very common between partners during the engagement period. Both partners are getting to know each other, and hence there is still a lot they are learning about their relationship. However, sometimes people find themselves fighting over very senseless things that seem initially pathetic. This can happen because of envy.

Sometimes, people find it very hard to believe that others might envy them or wish them ill will, or desire for their engagement to break off, but unfortunately it's true and it does happens. A hadith narrated by al-Daylami says" Conceal the engagement and proclaim the marriage".

It is important to realize that not all your friends or acquaintances have been able to find "their someone" yet, and in many cases it can become a very sensitive issue, especially between girls. Hence, be considerate when talking about your fiancé with others, and avoid over telling stories about the sweet things your partner does for you.

Even with your friends who are engaged or married, this can cause sensitivity. Talking too much about the sweet or romantic things your partner does for you can ignite comparison. Some might have partners who don't do similar things, because they can't afford it, or they're perhaps not as creative. So unintentionally, your stories can even cause problems between other couples, who might compare their relationship to yours.

Another way to avoid envy, is something that might not have been an issue a couple of years ago: the usage of social media. It has become very common for people to post on their social media accounts, such as Facebook, pictures, and stories about their relationship. You can't always control who sees

these pictures, and this might ignite feelings of jealousy and envy from both, people that you know and don't know.

How to Maintain Allah's Barakah in Your Engagement

The key for Allah's everlasting Barakah is to maintain a pure relationship with your partner. It can be very challenging not to cross the line, whether verbally by intimate words, or physically through holding hands and similar things, but it's very important to know that crossing the line reduces and can eventually remove Allah's Barakah from your marriage.

Think of the verbal and physically intimate relationship as a credit card. It has a limit, and it is meant to be spent starting day one in your marriage.

If you start spending from it before marriage, you are taking away from the credit, and it cannot be replaced. So think very carefully of how you want Allah to bless your marriage, and remember when you or your partner get weak, the more you save the credit the more you will have to spend during your marriage.



DO YOU REALLY WANT TO GET MARRIED?

By Aneesah Nadir



Do you really want to get married? While there are some Muslims that do not want to get married most young single Muslims do.

Many young people want to get married because their friends are getting married or because "they are at that age" or because their parents are putting pressure on them to get

married. Some want to get out of a difficult home life.

Some want to get married out of physical attraction, or because they are attracted to intellect, and money. Some young Muslims want to get married because they realize marriage was the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and they see marriage as a form of worship. Some who want to get married seek companionship, and the family stability that a healthy married life can provide.

There are of course those who at this point in their life realize they are not ready for marriage. They realize it would be better to wait until they are ready rather than to marry prematurely. They want to avoid living in an unhappy marriage or to end-up dissolving the marriage because of irreconcilable differences.

How do you know if you are ready to get married and more specifically if you are ready to marry that particular person?

To get to know whether or not you are ready for marriage, it is important to get to know yourself. The first thing you must do is spend time conducting a personal self-assessment to identify your personal strengths and areas that need improvement. It is important to get to know what kind of relationship you have with Allah, and what kind of relationship you expect to have with your future spouse.

- Are you ready to share your life with someone else?
- Are you ready to take on the responsibility of building your family, sharing and compromising and working together to achieve your personal and family goals?

 It is important to know what you will contribute to the marriage and what you will do to cultivate a healthy, peaceful family life.

Getting Ready

Premarital education is essential to help us know if we really want to get married and if we are ready to marry. It also helps us learn the skills needed to develop a good marital relationship.

In the United States, many religious traditions require marriage preparation, and education prior to marriage. Some religious leaders have made a commitment not to perform the marriage ceremony of a couple that has not participated in a marriage preparation or education or counseling program.

I recently met a young Catholic man who indicated that he and his fiancé attended 8 weeks of premarital education as well as other programs to educate and prepare them for family life.

Other faith traditions have made major steps to prepare for marriage and family life. It is time that Muslims re-adopt the importance of marriage education that was part of the teaching of Prophet Muhammad during the early days of Islam. I recommend that single Muslims participate in a marriage preparation and education program way before they start exploring prospects for marriage. Such a program should help them get to know themselves better, develop their relationship with Allah, and identify their strengths and areas in which they need to improve themselves.

Most people get married before they know who they really are. Few have taken the time to engage in a personal self-assessment. A marriage education program can also prepare the individual with skills to help them once they do marry.

- Communication skills
- Budgeting and finance
- Anger management
- Problem solving and conflict resolution

All of the above are essential skills in a marriage. Such a program should also include a discussion of intimacy and sex in marriage.

A Likely Match?

Once you meet the person you think you will want to marry I advise both of you to pray Istikhara prayer for guidance, and to seek the wise council of close family and friends.

I also advise that the engaged or soon-to-be engaged couple meet with a wise spiritual and professional advisor to help determine if they are compatible and suitable for one another.

It is important to spend time getting to know the person you are thinking of marrying and whether or not that person has character, temperament, religious character, and behavior that is compatible to yours.

A Premarital Advisement helps to identify the challenges a couple may face in marriage as well as strategies to help prevent or address the challenges before they present a problem.

Marriage is one of the most important things you will do in life. It is half of our religion and is the foundation of our society; however, we tend to spend more time preparing for our career than we do for our marital lives. Expect to spend real time learning about what it means to be married before you sign the marriage contract. Take time to learn whether or not you are really ready to lead a healthy married life.





1, 2, 3'S OF MARITAL LIFE

By Sahar Abdu

My beloved brother came to me so depressed. I tried very hard to help him and to comprehend the source of his depression and misery. I have often felt his pain with my experience in marital relationships.

My brother is a newlywed. He worries about his failure to solve his marital problems and daily clashes with his



wife. I felt his pain as well as his wife's. Neither of them had the chance to fully understand how to be a husband or wife.

I told him that Allah has made us in constant need, with our physical, emotional and financial demands. However, the emotional needs are the most important of these. Allah says in the holy Qur'an it is He (SWT), "Who provides them with food

against hunger and with security against fear (of danger)." (106:4).

Fulfilling these emotional needs is very important to the establishment of a stable martial life and family.

These needs include:

The Need For Love

This is by far the most important type of need. Unfortunately, couples have a tendency to overlook it. The need for love in its general meaning is vital for the continuation of the marital life.

Therefore, couples should renew their love continuously. The following are some of the methods that nurture love between husbands and wives:

 Do not make comparisons between the engagement period and the marriage. It is just unfair. Both have their own conditions. Married couples frequently worry about the absence of the intense emotions that they felt during engagement. They forget that these feelings mature into other types of love; they are expressed in much more mature ways.

- Do not surrender to life's problems and burdens.
 Marital life can get complicated, especially when children enter the picture. Couples feel the real everyday pressures of caring for their children, their homes and their spouses. It is easy to become overwhelmed and forget to smile or laugh!
- Do not use other couples as the standard for yourselves. Husbands and wives should absolutely refrain from making any comparisons with other couples. For instance, the husband must not tell his wife so and so is better than her, nor could she tell him so and so is better than him. It offends him or her. And it is not always the case that the other couples' situation is what it appears.
- Be forgiving of each other's shortcomings. Couples should look past minor failings and concentrate instead on the positive. The focus should be on good deeds and the encouragement of anything that promotes harmony, respect and love.
- Simplicity. Life is already complicated enough. Couples should work to simplify it for one another. The home should be a sanctuary from the stresses of life. The actions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) are a guide to us in this regard.

 Express your love. Couples should express their love to each other by all possible means. They should nurture this love, strengthen it and enjoy it. Unfortunately, some cultures do not promote the male's explicit expressions of love because they associate manhood with toughness.

Prophet Muhammad again was the most compassionate and loving husband. His gentleness with his wives is also a guide to our relationships. This expression may be needed more and more when the wife goes through difficult physical times, like pregnancy or delivery. A loving touch, a gentle word, or a smile are often all it takes to assure your partner of your love, support and appreciation. The Need For Freedom

The type of freedom needed here is a comprehensive freedom in all aspects of life. It includes:

- Financial freedom. The husband should always give his wife some money to spend it whenever she feels necessary, even if his income is limited. Women need to feel secure financially. This is why Islam mandated the dowry to women.
- Freedom of independent opinion. Both sides should not impose their own opinions on the other. They should

respect the independence of the other and respect the difference in their views. Viewing the spouse's opinion as silly or belittling it in any way does not contribute to a healthy marital relationship.

 Social freedom within the guides of the Shari'a. Men should have full confidence in their wives when they seek to go to colleges, visit family, visit friends or seek a job as long as both sides are performing their duties toward themselves and toward the family. Both should realize the need for restrictions on these freedoms. However, the margin of freedom should be respected.

The Need For Success

Husbands and wives need the assistance of each other to succeed in anything they do, even if it is simple matter. No one ought to ridicule what the other is doing, but encourage the other to be their best.

The Need For Change

Daily routine needs to be broken sometimes. There is a need for a walk, a trip, a change in the house decoration, going to the park, to the zoo, etc. These activities renew life and provide it with energy and continuity.

Sexual Needs

Sex is natural and both sides should work hard to fulfill the needs of the other. Couples should not shy from admitting the existence of some sexual problems. There is no harm in that. Both should work on them and seek sexual fulfillment. Statistics have shown that 70% of marital problems are of sexual nature.

In conclusion, my dear brothers and sisters, if love and compassion exists between couples, they should be able to solve any problem facing them.

I pray to Allah to grant all couples happiness and prosperity. Let us all remember that life is so short and we should enjoy it.



MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MUSLIM MARRIAGE

By SadafFarooqi

Women' standards: "He should be tall, dark and handsome. He should have a degree from an Ivy League university, a house in the suburbs that is separate from his family, and a sports-car. He must pray all five prayers in the masjid, and be able to recite the Qur'an perfectly. Oh, and did I mention that he should know how to cook, and help me out in the housework when I am sick?"



Men' standards: "Beauty is very important to me. Her hair should

be long and thick. She should have eyes for no man besides me. She should never have had any friendships with, or romantic feelings for, any man before. She must be the worldly counterpart of the women of jannah: chaste, fair-complexioned, and untouched, like a preserved pearl. But she

must be able to cook as expertly as my mother, and stay at home, keeping it impeccably clean. She should be shy, never answering me back, or raising her voice in front of me when I am angry. After all, as her husband in Islam, I will be like her master."

Unrealistic and Idealistic Standards

It is a fact that perfection doesn't exist in this world, and a successful marriage is not the result of two perfectly-matched "alpha" people. Rather it is achieved first by the decree of Allah and then, as a result of sincere effort and hard work put into it, for the sake of Allah's pleasure, and for completing the other half of one's Deen.

However, nowadays there exist expectations and standards for potential candidates whilst seeking marriage that are as high as mountains. With this kind of statements quoted at the start of this article being confidently made not just by hopeful singletons in their youthful naiveté, but often, also by their overbearing, A-type, perfectionistic parents, when their adult sons and daughters take their first gingerly steps into the marriage market, and start their search for a spouse.

It is one thing for daydreaming, inexperienced, and wishful young people with noses buried in chick-lit or glossy magazines, to have sky-high expectations from their future spouses. Their innocuous expectations can be overlooked and

forgiven on the basis of their lack of experience in life. But it is rather shocking, if not outright absurd, to also find such ideas among the parents of those searching for a life partner nowadays.

Just like the latest electronic gadget, educational qualification, appliance, car, or home, now a new spouse, or a son- or daughter-in-law, has also become a "trophy" to be shown off in front of one's familial and social circle. Such a "catch", therefore, is supposed to 'tick' all the right 'boxes', and even though the boxes are unforgiving and innumerable, no one wants to leave even one of them unmarked.

If any quality desired in one's future spouse is missing from the candidate who is proposing marriage, the proposal is refused, even if that trait is not a mandatory prerequisite for a successful marriage.

"We will not send our daughter to live away from us, abroad..."

"The age difference of 9 years is too big.."

"The girl was perfect in every way, but her hands were ugly..."

Come Down To Earth

I would urge my readers to lower their material standards when it comes to giving priority to the traits of a potential

spouse, and instead focus mainly on righteousness, taqwa, and good character/family background.

Provision is decreed by Allah, and it constricts and widens throughout life. Illness, poverty, and other trials occur in life, because it is just real life.

Going through life's ups and downs with a righteous person by your side who fears Allah and wants to obey Him is what you're looking for; not the picture-perfect match that will stop your interfering, fault-finding relatives from critiquing your potential spouse and complaining about his or her shortcomings.

4 Get the Facts Right

There are several myths and beliefs about marriage that are often endorsed and propagated among single youths via hearsay, and through published literature based on fantasy and fiction. Experience of real life, however, abolishes most if not all of them with the passage of time.

Here, I'd like to enlighten readers about some simple "facts" about marriage, learned though my life experience, which did away with the "fiction" that was pushed into my head when I was younger and single.

By "fiction", I mean myths subconsciously pushed into my psyche through a combination of: my desires, day-dreams, wishes, magazines, novels and wishful conversations with starry- eyed girlfriends, as we sat together imagining what our future beaus and marital homes would be like.

- ♣ Myth: Marriage is the outcome of love and romance
- Fact: In Islam, it is actually the other way around

"Love marriage, or arranged?" screamed the slam-book headings and juvenile opinion polls in journals passed around among girls back in middle school. Almost every girl would choose "love marriage"- viz. falling in love with someone first, then marrying him.

In addition, all the television shows, films, novels and even cartoons for children, showed a young man and woman "falling in love", courting, dating, having romantic conversations, and finally, in the end, making their relationship legal and "holy" by getting married.

In contrast, the prevalent arranged marriages seemed so lackluster, deadpan, forced and boring. We would incredulously wonder just how anyone could commit to spending the rest of their lives with someone they did not even know, and hence, didn't "love"?

Time and experience have taught me that, any relationship based on romantic "love" outside marriage is not just impermissible to Allah, but it is also a deceptive illusion fueled by desires and lust.

Furthermore, first-hand observation of how some of my close friends' so-called 'love-marriages' transformed their relationship with their former fiancés from happy, lustful romance into grounded, real-life companionship after they tied the knot, also opened my eyes to the clarity of reality versus illusion.

Only the love in a halal marital relationship is the true love. The real love - though it lacks the outwardly attractive but bogus 'glamour' of typical romantic fiction, is a priceless blessing of Allah, because an Islamic marriage is commenced by proclaiming His name, and in accordance with His laws.

Nothing that Allah has made impermissible can ever be right or beneficial, including so-called "romantic relationships" outside marriage.

Myth: Husband and wife should always be together

♣ Fact: Time apart keeps the spark alive

Singles sometimes assume that if a husband and wife truly love each other, they'd want to always be together, day and night. However, the fact is that, if a husband and wife do not

take regular breaks from each other's company, they can quickly start irritating each other.

When each spouse regularly avails and spends short bursts of time elsewhere - alone, at work, meeting family members, friends, or others besides their spouse, the husband and wife are able to successfully maintain a positive relationship equilibrium that keeps the spark and chemistry between them burning and alive.

- Myth: A happy husband and wife never fight

If we look at any close relationship, be it that of parent and offspring, brother and sister, grandparent and grandchild, or even bosom buddies, we will observe and admit that friction and fall-outs tend to intermittently happen in them all. It is not possible for any close emotional bond to be absolutely free of quarrels, arguments and emotional "slumps" i.e. periods of time in which both people do not feel happy with each other, and temporarily become distant, even though they still in love.

The same applies to the husband-wife relationship. Temporary time apart from each other allows anger to dissipate and the brain to focus rationally upon the bone of contention, allowing the imminent moment of patching up to become sweeter and more poignant than the fight that caused it.

We should remember that all of us are humans, and human beings have shortcomings and weaknesses. We all make mistakes in every realm of life, and marriage is no exception.

- Myth: You always miss your parents' home
- Fact: A happy marital home eventually provides more tranquility

Yes, both the spouses might cling to their parents at first, especially the young, homesick newlywed wife. The apronstrings take time to get severed, but if the husband and wife are able to succeed in becoming emotional supporters and pillars of strength for each other, there comes a time when they'd rather be with each other, during good times and bad, than with their parents.

By saying this, I do not intend in any way to undermine the respect, care and servitude towards elderly parents that is incumbent upon adult offspring especially when the parents need it, but rather, I want to enjoin the importance of the emotional and physical closeness of a husband and wife in Islam.

When love and compassion are the foundation of a successful marriage, then both spouses join forces to take care of not just each other, but also of each other's parents and siblings, when the need arises.

Conclusion

It is very important for Muslims in the modern era (both singles as well as their concerned, idealistic parents) to retain in their minds the original purpose of Islamic marriage: completion of one's Deen; satisfying the natural desire for conjugal love with a person of the other gender via halal means; seeking mercy and tranquility via cohabitation and companionship, and, last but least, bearing righteous offspring to add to the Muslim ummah.

If a potential candidate for marriage ticks all the 'priority boxes', and if you feel inclined towards him or her, please do not 'sweat the small stuff' by dwelling too much on the irrelevant nitty-gritty, such as the habits of their extended family, location of their residence, and minor physical shortcomings.

As Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Tie the camel (first), then trust in Allah." [Al-Tirmidhi]



MARRIAGE FOR YOUNG MUSLIMS: MAKING A PLACE OF LOVE

By Selma Cook

Home is a place of love from which the body may leave but not the heart. No one has invented a place that provides tranquility and love; a soft place to fall, that is better than home. One's happiest moment is entering a peaceful loving home. The human soul is joined for life to its family members and together they make memories that revive and stir the soul throughout its existence.



If home is all these things; and can provide people with so much warmth and comfort, and if it really is the building block of a society, why do so many people stand idly by when families fall apart? And, why do families try to thwart the endeavors of young people who wish to marry in the way of Allah?

Young married Muslims have a number of dilemmas to work through if they are to establish the foundations of a successful, loving and happy home.

Making successful families is both a challenge to young people and a requirement for society to flourish and develop. If people want to live in a place that is harmonious and safe, they should exert every effort to help young people marry and make happy homes so that the rights of all are respected and fulfilled.

The choices people make have consequences in their own lives and also touch and affect the people around them.

As individuals fluctuate between decency and immorality, likewise societies waver between good and evil. As the modern world winds up in terms of technology and scientific advancement, it is suffering from a moral vacuum. As humanity debates and ponders over the ethical framework in which humans should live.

With a lack of boundaries, a loss of spirituality and an absence of conscience, humanity has formulated a modern day civilization where, for the first time in history, indecency and promiscuity are not only allowed, but are fed to young and old through education, advertising and entertainment.

This has culminated in drastic changes in attitudes and societal values that regulate the behavior of people and their ability and desire to commit to marriage. It also reduces the knowhow necessary to not only marry, but to be committed to spouse and children as well as extended family, regulating the self so that home will become a catalyst for change within the individual and his community.

Modern-Day Attitudes and Islamic Attitudes Toward Marriage

In today's world there is a lot of cynicism concerning marriage and family among young people in the general society. Many no longer believe in marriage; trusting that what really matters is that two people care about each other.

In this context, marriage is often considered 'out of date'. Feeding this dilemma, the older generation has shown young people time and time again that divorce is easier than commitment. We are now living in a world where the very definition of 'family' is held up to scrutiny and those young people who adhere to the Islamic definition of family are indeed a minority.

Young Muslims, who are trying to practice Islam, give the world hope that the family will survive the modern day moral onslaught.

A seventeen-year-old who recently married amid criticism from some of her Muslim relatives, explained her thoughts on this issue: "Marriage is not only being with the one you love; you are also attaching yourself to someone with good character; someone you can trust and depend on; someone who will help you solve problems and be your partner in life." She added that since getting married, she has started practicing Islam more. Now, she feels strong enough to face any kind of criticism and opposition.

She also noted: "When I was growing up a certain part of my family were critical and generally negative. There was no sincere concern and love between these family members. Now I'm building my own home, and I'm very much aware of how I want my relationship with my husband to be and how I will raise my children. I want 'my' family to be characterized by love and mercy. That's what I think Allah wants of us."

A twenty-five-year-old mother of two who is happily married said: "You don't have to worry about your husband gambling the money, coming home drunk or stoned or chasing women, because he knows he is accountable before Allah and he is not only committed to me, but also to living a good, clean life." Such attitudes form a solid foundation for marriage and provide more hope of a married couple having a harmonious home.

The Way to Happiness

A twenty-year-old young man who married recently has a vision in his own mind of how he wants his family to be.

"I feel happy just envisaging the possibilities and this really is the beginning of happiness. I feel that the relation between my wife and I is so special; I want to nurture the love, commitment and understanding we have of each other. I want to protect my little family and that starts with me not speaking or behaving in a way that will hurt or harm."

This young man and his wife married amidst a great deal of opposition from family members who had no valid excuse to criticize the match. Overcome by cultural expectations, the families lost sight of the goal of marriage; tranquility and mercy.

His wife commented: "Society these days has made the relation between a man and woman not special anymore. It has become cheap; something that comedians make jokes about, a subject for films and stories that distorts the reality.

There is cheap pleasure everywhere! Marriage in Islam is based on a contract but that is just the beginning; each party

has to be committed to the happiness and well-being of the other.

The possibilities of how close and happy a couple can become, is endless. My husband and I wake each other up at least once a week to do the night prayer. It's things like that, and simple pleasures like going for walks, making plans, and eating a meal together that create happy memories."

A Way to Avoid Falling into Sin

For many young Muslims, marriage is a way to avoid committing sins. A twenty-four-year-old said:

"Today we are surrounded by opportunities to do and say things that are clearly wrong. It is common for people to swear, drink alcohol as a means of relaxation and entertainment; it's considered normal. It's also considered normal for young people to have boyfriends and girlfriends.

The pressure on the youth to keep away from committing sins is a huge challenge. Some try to get married young to avoid sin but in doing that families often make things difficult. They say things like 'you have to finish school, you don't have enough money,

you should marry a relative from overseas'. Really, sometimes it's just too much pressure."

The issue of avoiding sins is an important part of Muslim youth getting married. Islam treats most sins by getting people to transcend them; keep away from them. However, in the matter of sex the treatment lies in fulfilling this human desire, but doing so within the framework of marriage.

Conclusion

The choices we make forge a path for us through our lives and because evil is always present in life, people who exemplify noble character and rise above temptations, attaining respect and admiration, apart from those who allow themselves to sink low, finding themselves capable of untold wickedness, should be supported and helped.

The courage, steadfastness and resiliency that young Muslims must exemplify to take the path of piety in our modern world should be applauded. This path promises amazing rewards in this life and the next but it is a difficult one.

Young Muslims who consciously choose to seek a life partner and marry, with the intention to gain Allah's pleasure and build a loving home, deserve the support and encouragement of family and community. After all, their success is ours.

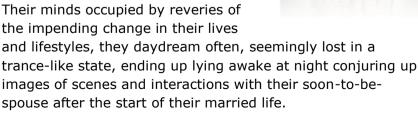


DISCRETION IN WEDDINGS: DON'T 'SHOW AND TELL'

By SadafFarooqi

In the exciting, bittersweet and somewhat tumultuous days leading up to a wedding, the young bride and groom experience natural, human nervousness.

They often have butterflies in their stomachs; their anticipation further compounded by the myriad of chores and errands to be done in preparation for the wedding.





The Days Leading Up to the Marriage

The presence and support of family and friends is an integral part of any marriage anywhere in the world, no matter what the religion and culture.

As the big day approaches, relatives and friends from abroad begin to descend upon and stay at the hustling and bustling family home that is about to witness a wedding.

Near and dear ones are fundamental in making this prominent milestone a memorable one for the bride and groom. Unless it is deliberately executed as a small-scale, downplayed, private affair, any wedding almost always involves a feast, banquet, or party, with loved ones in attendance, who shower the new couple with their blessings, gifts, dua's and expressions of love.

The Love of Family and Friends

Undoubtedly, it feels wonderful to be the center of attention and to bask in the love everyone gives to you when you get married. In their excitement, they want to know everything about your to-be husband or wife, and your future in-laws as well.

During the carefree merrymaking and festive celebrations, amid the *henna* and jewelry, silks and flowers, sparkling lights and crisp currency bills, there comes a time, though, when the blurry, thin lines that demarcate boundaries of personal privacy, decency and social decorum, nonchalantly begin to be crossed.

It might start with harmless humor and jokes, which open the door to freer communication. Passive observation of the prewedding events and activities by some might prompt them to criticize the way things are being done, or to give suggestions.

An invasive question or a hasty comment might escape their lips, followed by a taunt here, and an unnecessary remark there. An undercurrent of tension can begin to develop amid the superficial, innocuous facade of festivities.

Just like when a pot of water is brought to boil to make tea, if it is left unwatched or allowed to boil away at high heat, the scalding water will eventually overflow from the rim of the vessel, extinguishing the flame underneath it and making a mess.

The solution is for the chef to constantly stand at the stove, warily watching the pot, in order to ensure that a perfectly flavored brew of tea is prepared and be sure that It is this meticulously tempered 'tea' that everyone truly enjoys.

So too, happens when many people of diverse ages and backgrounds come together for the sake of celebrating the wedding of a loved one: if left unchecked, the frivolous atmosphere can allow someone to cross limits. This can end up causing damage to the ongoing happy occasion, not to mention, to the marriage itself.

Unfortunately, sometimes the damage is irreparable!

The Eye

A woman whose older son or daughter is as yet unmarried might feel envious and resentful when her sister's younger offspring gets married first; and that too to a picture-perfect mate, with spectacular celebrations on a scale that she cannot afford for her ward.

As a result, she might feel anger at the hand dealt out to her by Allah through His decree, and her envy might cause an ill effect on the marriage of her niece or nephew where she is present on every occasion, seething underneath her apparently calm exterior.

This underlying envy and resentment might become the cause of some unwittingly nasty remarks and vile behavior on her part towards her unsuspecting sister's family during the wedding celebrations.

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Everyone who is blessed with something is envied."

Whenever a person acquires a blessing, inevitably someone out there envies him or her for it. Envy can be described as a feeling of anger, resentment or dislike at the fact that another person possesses a blessing, often accompanied by a desire to see that blessing snatched away from him or her.

There is no doubt about the fact that the eye- is not just true, but that it also has a negative effect on others, especially during wedding celebrations. When the eye combines with envy, it can be even more detrimental.

In the contemporary world, it is getting more difficult by the day for young singles to find suitable and righteous spouses from honorable families. During the twenties and thirties, singles often undergo immense societal pressure to find a decent spouse.

Therefore, when someone who has been on the search for years and is on the verge of desperation attends a wedding of another, envy can very well be borne inside his or her heart. If not in theirs, then in their parents', who worry more for their offspring's future welfare, prosperity and success than anyone else does.

Parents Are Advised to Use Discretion

Weddings are already a delicate time for both the bride and groom, who are nervous about starting a new chapter in their lives: a chapter regarding which they have no prior experience and no guarantee of protection from failure. They and their immediate families should take extra care to avoid being too open in displaying their blessings to all and sundry during this sacred union and its associated celebration.

It is advisable to be discreet when discussing monetary and material aspects of the wedding expenditure and preparations, because more often than not, there is more than one "rat" lurking within one's circle under disguise.

He/she might be wearing a facade of sincerity to become indistinguishable from the crowd, plastering a fake smile on their face yet seething with resentment underneath at the fact that someone is getting a blessing that they wanted to get first!

The effect of the eye has been witnessed at many weddings in many real life cases, often in bizarre and eerie ways, in which weird things happened without any justifiable reason or discernible cause. For example, at one wedding which I attended, the bride and groom both fell sick with high fever hours before their nuptials, and looked visibly taxed while

sitting together all decked up, with the bride constantly coughing away and asking for prescription medicines.

At another wedding reception, the bride's only neckpiece, an antique that she bought painstakingly from another country just for her big day, broke into pieces just as she was putting it on at the salon. In the furor that followed to get it fixed, she lost her shoes en route to her wedding reception to which she was already hours late. She entered barefoot, but thankfully, her flowing dress was long enough to cover her feet!

In another case, the wedding was called off at the last minute because of a falling out between the bride and her to-be mother-in-law over a petty issue. In yet another case, the bride, who had agreed to her betrothal wholeheartedly, became mysteriously cold, aloof and depressed in the days leading up to her wedding, eventually calling it off because she thought her fiancé was too "insensitive" towards her feelings.

In almost all of the cases that involve the effect of the *eye*, there seems to be no tangible or explainable cause of the harm or loss that occurs. Everyone ends up asking, "What went wrong?" and no one can offer a logical answer to this question.

But, the fact remains: the wedding is either cancelled or ruined for the bridal couple, and there is no going back.

Clearly Mark the Boundaries, Observe Them

In order to be careful and discreet during weddings, it is important to not just demarcate boundaries in order to protect the new couple's privacy, but to also ensure that the couple's own parents and siblings do not overstep these boundaries.

Jokes about marital intimacy and intrusive questions about the giddy, "puppy-love" romance that takes place between the new husband and wife should be strictly avoided.

A lot of brides are given "the talk" a day or two before their wedding by older married aunts, sisters, cousins or other relatives, often in front of other girls during sleepovers, leading to an exchange of confidential "wedding night" stories that is strictly prohibited in Islam. This kind of "talk" then pressures the bride to divulge her own wedding night details to these same immature, giggly friends and cousins when she visits her parents' home for the first time after her wedding.

Further, boundaries also need to be highlighted in order to quell the materialistic competitiveness that can arise. Many people will admit to the existence of an undercurrent of one-upmanship that exists in extended families, particularly during wedding celebrations. From the size of the hotel banquet hall to the number of guests, no one likes to be "outdone" in economic status and material wealth.

The parents of the bridal couple should therefore be very careful not to let their relatives get too nosy about the details regarding wedding preparations.

In an age where finding an agreeable and Allah-fearing husband or wife is itself becoming an uphill and increasingly challenging task, there is an urgent need to adhere to the principles of wisdom, simplicity, moderation and privacy found in Islam's basic tenets of social etiquette.

At the end of the day, it is more important to have a longlasting and happy marriage, than to have the "perfect", wedding that the family grapevine gushes about for decades.



YOUTH MARRIAGE: HOW FAR PARENTS SHALL BE INVOLVED?

By SadafFarooqi

They say, "Youth is wasted on the young". There is some degree of truth behind these words. Youth is that time of life that is bursting with energy and enthusiasm.

It is charged with idealism, and fueled by a strong desire to pursue dreams in the pursuit of a bright and happy future, leaving no stone unturned in turning them to reality.



The energetic years of youth are often tinged with impatience and haste, based on desiring to see optimum results of endeavors quickly.

The one thing lacking when one is young, however, is the essential component of success that is foremost in imparting wisdom and knowledge to a person, and in acquiring which, there are no shortcuts: life experience.

Life experience has no counterpart or rival. It is because of this gem or treasure that older people possess more than their younger counterparts, that their advice and counsel is all the more valuable for the latter in making big, life-altering decisions.

Older People - Mostly All the Wiser

Nowadays, one of the greater obstacles that young Muslims face when it comes to marriage is the opposition they face from their family elders regarding their choice of spouse.

There can be many grounds for this opposition, e.g. race, ethnicity, cultural disparity, level of religious commitment, age difference, chosen profession of the prospective spouse, and family background, to name a few.

There are more chances of conflict between generations when they are not on the same page in other areas as well, e.g. lifestyle choices, frank and friendly communication, mutual respect and compassion, as well as moral and religious inclination. For example, a young, single person might want to marry someone belonging to another ethnicity or religion only on the basis of sexual attraction/physical desire, and their parents might not agree with their choice because they can clearly see the red flags of incompatibility leading to future marital disaster.

If this conflict persists, the youngster might be ill-advised by friends or colleagues to go ahead with their choice of spouse and marry them any way, ignoring their parents' opinions, and go off to live an independent life away from their elders' eyes.

However, before any youngster decides to jump the gun in such a manner, and take such a drastic measure, they should pause and try to rationally and objectively reflect upon why their parents are refusing to let them marry the person they like. What are the reasons for their parents' opposition to that person as a spouse? They should try to communicate in a calm and controlled manner with their parents to find about this.

Next, they should reflect upon the relevance, correctness and validity of their parents' concerns. Nine times out of ten, parents are justified in their reservations about their adult offspring's decisions, and want to protect their offspring from suffering and getting hurt ahead in life.

Their more advanced life experience enables them to see the long-term results and outcomes of the choices made by people during young age, and they are all the wiser because of it.

The only rare situations in which the opinions of parents can (and should) be undermined when a young singleton is seeking a spouse for marriage, is when their parents are non-Muslims, or much less religiously inclined than them, and their prime reasons for opposing an otherwise religiously compatible match, are purely worldly or cultural in nature.

Such reasons might be like: the guy is too short, or he has too many siblings; the *mahr* being given is not high enough; their daughter will not have her own home to live in after marriage; they only marry within the extended family, not outside; the girl their son likes (their future daughter-in-law) doesn't yet know how to cook, or she doesn't have a college degree because she is only 19....etc

As long as the reasons for parents' reservations regarding their offspring's choice of spouse are related to things that can change with time (e.g. educational qualification, visa status, professional establishment, size or location of residence, or living arrangements), a young singleton should not allow them to turn away good proposals.

They should gently and respectfully educate their parents about the commands of *Deen* related to marriage, to persuade them to let the small things slide, and not stick to rigid and irrelevant cultural traditions.

The best way for a singleton to deal with marriage proposal conflicts with parents, is to regularly turn to Allah in earnest and sincere *istikharah* prayers, to supplicate for the best decision and decree regarding their marital future.

Single people should remember that, even though it might outwardly seem as if their parents are in-charge of their future, and are turning away perfectly nice proposals for trivial reasons; ultimately, all matters related to their future provision and decree have been preordained by Allah.

Nothing can turn away from them that which is written for them -- not even their parents, who are standing firmly at the helm, 'steering their life boat', so to speak.

The Quran on seeking permission of parents before marrying chaste Muslim women

The Quran enjoins marrying chaste women from among the believers, only after gaining the permission of 'their people' (using the Arabic word "ahl" to describe her guardians/family):

"So marry them with the permission of their people, and give them their due compensation, according to what is acceptable.." [4:25]

To a newbie in Islam, it might seem outwardly 'unfair' that a women needs her guardians' approval before marrying someone she wants to, whereas a man can go ahead and marry a chaste and religiously committed woman even against his parents' wishes -- although it is not at all recommended for him to do so.

One cursory look at 'free', secular and liberal societies where women are supposedly 'free' to marry whoever they please, or rather, men are 'free' to marry any woman they choose without seeking her parents' approval first, will give us a clear picture of the inherent wisdom behind Allah's command that is highlighted in the verse of the Quran above.

Fact: Women are the more vulnerable partner in marriage

Women are more prone to being emotionally and physically abused by husbands than vice versa, because the latter have been given more physical strength and emotional indifference as compared to them.

What this means is, that it is relatively easier for a man to roam around more freely outside in the world, as he is less at risk of harm to his self or life, and also because he never gets 'tied down' with the responsibility of child bearing and rearing as a result of his marriage(s).

Men in 'free' societies thus end up 'enjoying' one no-stringsattached sexual relationship after another with women, without committing to marriage or child maintenance (if a child is born).

Women, on the other hand, not only endure the physical rigors of pregnancy and birth if they conceive a child, but they are also unable to work at physically tasking jobs that require hard labor and constant travel, while simultaneously catering to full-time child rearing.

This narrows down their professional options in seeking suitable employment that will provide for them and their children without physically taxing them beyond their limits, such as office-desk jobs.

The 'freedom' from parental permission before marriage or romantic relationships with women, mostly leaves them as single mothers carrying a double burden: that of breadwinner as well as child-rearer.

Wisdom in Allah's commands

Because of these physical and physiological differences between men and women, if the latter were easily available to men for marriage without the prerequisite of seeking their guardians' approval first, it would allow men to go around marrying and divorcing women at their whim and fancy, without taking on the responsibility of their financial maintenance and that of their children.

It would allow men to marry anyone they want, and later on abandon her -- when the onslaught of pregnancies and the addition of little children made her less sexually accessible and pleasurable, and more expensive to maintain.

Just taking a casual glance at the social dynamics of secular, "free" societies nowadays, where men do not need the elders'/guardians' permission to court or marry a woman, and looking at how the women in these societies work full time as single mothers, compromising on their children's upbringing by placing them in daycare because they have to go to work to provide for them, will make us appreciate the command of Allah that deters men from using women just for pleasure and procreation.

Islam guards single women like jewels, not available for all and sundry to use and discard at will.



Conclusion:

Both the single Muslim youth today and their parents should aim to strike an optimal balance when the time comes for them to marry, which allows their parents to be involved in their choice of spouse, yet provides them with enough freedom of choice to not feel restricted due to adherence to obsolete and trivial cultural and worldly.



HAPPILY (N)EVER AFTER

By Hiba Rahim

Why are we always shocked when we hear of a loving couple who is going through big marital problems or getting a divorce?

"They seemed like such a happy couple "is the most common mental reaction you can have.

Why did they seem like such a happy couple? Is it because you did not see them quarreling or bickering before? Well, simply because most people reserve their martial challenges for the privacy of their homes; the issue



privacy of their homes; the issue that turns out your confidence about their marriage to an illusionary view!

Marriage... An Uphill Journey

The fact is it is far more shocking to find a 100% happy couple.

The nature of marriage- like all human relations- is that it is full of conflicts, adjustments, concessions, disappointment; and any other struggle-word that normally exists when two people live an intertwined life.

This should not dishearten you. In fact, it is great to be armed with this knowledge when you open up for a new relationship.

Marital relationship is meant to be major, an uphill journey, and not a battle "Journey". Thus, anything uphill gets to be very strenuous.

You and your partner need to map the best route, exercise wisdom, work as a team, pull each other up when you fall, and eventually, after bitter trials and sporadic give-ups the voyage will plateau.

This usually happens many years into a relationship. And that's why so many fresh couples do not pass the five-year mark. They have not given enough time for major changes to settle.

Of course it is not healthy to be fighting the whole way through. If you are, you need counseling. But occasional major disagreements and intermittent tiffs should be expected. The key is to figure out how to overcome these challenges and after maintaining an open line of communication, a basic hint is to be flexible in your ability to compromise.

Ideal Is Fiction

So if you are one of those couples who have attained the ideal marriage, then know that you are almost as fictional as Romeo and Juliet. So, keep this to yourself, whereas some blessings are better to stay private.

But if you fall into the normal category of clashing camaraderie, then hang in there, do not be afraid to seek counsel from someone you trust—some**one**, not **every**one—and work on giving and taking a little.

Marriage is when two become one, not when two become you, and that means meeting someone half way.

Above all, do not look around and envy all those perfect couples. Chances are they are secretly envying you.





CHAPTER THREE

Challenges Facing Newlyweds

HICCUPS OF NEWLYWEDS AFTER GREAT EXPECTATIONS

By SadafFarooqi

Life is not a bed of roses... How many times did you read or hear this adage whilst growing up?

Whether you were the indomitable idealist lost in a fantastical world of romance, make-believe and fiction, or the cynical realist who flicked away all hearsay regarding someone's blissful matrimony with a "we'll-see" eye-roll and contemptuous snort, the fact is that, notwithstanding life in general, marital life is definitely *not* a bed of roses!

It doesn't take long for a married couple to realize, once the roses in the floral table centre-pieces at their *walimah* dinner have drooped and wilted, that married life is less about round-the-clock romance and more about being human, making mistakes, compassion, forgiveness, moving on from the past, adjustment, compromise, responsibility, *Shari'* rights and persistent *work*.

Expectations vs. Reality

When many people get married, they are more often than not young and never married before.

Whereas the innocence and naiveté adds to the giddiness of novel experiences, the lack of life experience and past interactions with people from the opposite gender also unfortunately fuel their level of expectations from their spouse, and make them enter their marriage with baggage carried over from witnessing their own parents' marital relationship.

♣ "Delicious...almost as good as Mom's!"

Take the case of, for example, Adnan. A loving, stay-at-home mother who never had a job, was not educated beyond high school; never earned her own money, nor possessed much wealth. She could therefore not supervise her children's homework or exam preparation beyond primary school level.

Her kid always saw his father single-handedly take care of financial matters, never consulting his mother for any careerrelated discussions or professional advice. He grew up watching her mother keep house, cook, clean, sew and host dinners - and not much else.

Now when he gets married, he might presume, against his better judgment that his wife intends to live exactly like his mother, which might make him attempt to replicate his own parents' marriage with his wife.

He might presume that his wife is inept to handle outside-thehome worldly matters, and is not street-smart; but rather, is predisposed and content to stay at home; aspires to cook at the level of master chef, and she may not be matured enough to be consulted for professional advice and major career decisions.

He might start always comparing his wife, detrimentally to their marital relationship, with his mother or sisters, even going so far as to judge her novice cooking skills against his Mom's polished, decades-old culinary expertise.

How often has a wife gone out of her way to cook an elaborate dish only to have her husband undermine it because his "Mom" made it better?

As a result, for the first few years of their marriage, his wife might struggle for him to accept her for who she is, particularly if she is highly educated, world-wise, well-read, professionally experienced, capable of handling money, and up-to-date with current affairs.

She might get frustrated at being coerced to keep her focus only in the kitchen, when her interests spill over into many other areas.

She might feel angry at being compared to someone else, and have all her skills and talents besides homemaking and cooking completely ignored.

"But Daddy always used to....."

Now let us look at the other side of the coin: when a wife carries her baggage of past life experiences and observation of her parent's marriage into her marriage, in the form of high expectations.

It is common for many wives to expect the same, if not a better lifestyle and standard of living, than that which they were accustomed to before marriage. Whether or not they were a pampered 'Daddy's Girl', if they were always kept on a pedestal and showered with love and material gifts on demand, they might be in for an awakening after marriage.

By naively falling into the trap of assuming that their husband will immediately love, trust and indulge them just like their

parents used to, they might soon also suffer the consequences of "carry-over-syndrome".

Sometimes new brides' expectations from their husbands are based entirely on their past relationship with their father, who might have consulted them in all major family decisions and valued their opinion as an individual with a head on their shoulders. Consequently, they will expect their husbands to do the same from day one, and when that doesn't happen in the beginning, they might get hurt.

The question that arises then would be; who is responsible for this pain? The person who did not come up to expectations, or the person who kept those expectations too high, made unfair comparisons, and expected perfection much too soon?

Life is Rosy.....

Now picture this scenario: Sameera got married thinking that her husband would have long, deep conversations with her over romantic dinners at restaurants. She expected that he'd dish out pocket money for her from day one, just like her father did with her mother, and consequently, that he would be earning enough to *have* that much money in the first place.

She expected him to wear the kind of clothes she liked whilst at home, just the way her brother did, lounging around in branded tees and sweatpants.

As it turned out, her husband did not dine at restaurants, and preferred having her cook everything at home. He was interested in little else but physical intimacy the first few weeks, and long conversations just caused delays. He wanted to relax and 'be himself' when at home, which translated to wearing a vest and worn-out PJ's. He never gave her any money, but more than willingly bought her whatever she needed. He did not consult her about his career or professional work, as he wanted their time together to be more about her. Nevertheless, he was madly in love.

There was nothing in the least wrong with Sameera's marriage, nor was her husband lacking in any significant way, but because of her high expectations and preconceived notions about the early marital relationship, borrowed heavily not just from her past life experiences but also from films, glossy magazines and novels, she ended up feeling hurt and disappointed.

She thus started to spiral into a downward eddy of ingratitude and anxiety, believing that her husband and her relationship with him was lacking in many ways, when for the most part, everything was fine.

Relationships Need Time to Mature

Both the spouses, in the above fictional scenario, were unintentional victims of the "carry-over-baggage" syndrome, if we can call it that. They carried their own past relationships with their parents, and their parent's marital relationship with each other, over into their own marriage, instead of letting their relationship develop a new, purely on the basis of their unique personality traits, strengths and weaknesses as a couple.

It can take years before the ups, downs, peaks and trials of married life unveil to each spouse the true positive and endearing qualities of the other. Every couple eventually falls in love, finds happiness and becomes each other's best friend, but this necessitates for each one to stop comparing their spouse to their parent of the same gender, and learn to value them for who they were.

Adnan's son will then be able to realize that whilst his wife might not be able to expertly 'cook up a storm' in the kitchen, - yet - she *can* do many *other* things. She can drive a car, educate his children, give him career advice, build his resume online, check and respond to his work emails, draw up and adhere to monthly and annual household budget, and also save money for the family using the "envelope" system.

Sameera will be able to realize that her husband is much caring and romantic than her father ever was, and let's her have a lot of leeway in the way she chooses to run the household, bringing out the hidden administrator and interior designer in her. And that he looks just fine in PJ's.

Once she stops comparing him to her father, and he stops sizing her up against his mother, they will be able to not just appreciate each other for who they are as unique individuals, but will be also able to build their spousal relationship from scratch, free from clichéd expectations and childhood baggage carried over from the past.

That was when they started to truly enjoy the recurring pleasant "you- also-have-this-amazing-quality?" surprises!



FIRST YEAR OF MARRIAGE: IS IT COMPLICATED?

By SadafFarooqi

The beginning of the sacred union of marriage is marked with many bittersweet moments for the newlywed bridal couple.

The new husband and wife cascade through the usual outward rituals: the nikah ceremony, the post nikah banquets, the greetings, dua's and endless hugs from close kin. The incessant showering of gifts; childlike enthusiasm, and euphoria at finding a life partner, are tinged with the natural nervousness and hidden fears



associated with this milestone transition of stepping into an asyet unknown realm of life.

Despite it being the most natural thing for an adult man and woman to live together as a married husband and wife, the first few weeks, months and years of this cohabitation are a crucial time of adjustment.

The new spouse is hitherto still a stranger whom the other partner is just starting to get to know.

If the spouses do not tread with care, compassion, patience and discretion, their natural disagreements in the initial years of marriage can blow out of proportion into big problems that are very difficult to solve.

Therefore, it is important for every newly married couple to remember a few important tips and words of advice when they embark upon this new phase in their lives:

1- Getting to Know the New Family

It is more often than not the extended families and circle of friends and acquaintances on both sides that come together to "jump start" the marital union, not to mention, celebrate it to the hilt over a period of a week or so of banquets and social get-togethers.

Hence, in the first few days, a marriage involves meeting a lot of new people, remembering lots of names and new faces, receiving many handshakes and hugs, and exchanging excited greetings with absolute strangers. A husband or wife will have to live with, make small talk with, and answer the questions asked by, a lot of people - close ones as well as mere acquaintances. This can add to the pressure of the new marriage, which involves moving into a new home (especially for a bride), having and getting used to conjugal relations, and dressing up every morning or evening in order to perfectly look and act out the part of bride or groom.

In order to not let the constant barrage of well-wishing but sometimes pushy near and dear ones from causing problems between a new husband and wife, both of them should remember that with the passage of time, at the most a few weeks, this overenthusiastic deluge of meetings with relatives and friends will melt away, giving them more privacy.

They will eventually get time to relax, go out, sleep in, and breathe freely in their private space.

2- Controlling the Tongue

The less a new bride or groom says to each other in front of their families in the first few weeks of marriage, the better.

This is because they are almost always under close observation by those around them, and saying something at the wrong time, or even in the wrong tone, can lead to

misunderstandings, ill-perceptions and giving leeway to the envious troublemakers of the extended family to have a field day with their criticism and tongue-wagging.

It is advisable for a bride or a groom to not express their opinions about everything too often, too loudly, or too voraciously, especially in large social gatherings. This is because, unfortunately, the first impression is usually the last. People tend to have very good memories when it comes to recalling and gossiping about any unpleasant situations or scandals that took place during a wedding.

Even when talking to each other in privacy, it is important to weigh what they are going to say before they say it. The first few months are a time of sensitive, nervous and raw emotions and feelings. Treading with care ensures prevention of unwanted problems.

3- Not Sweating the Small Stuff

Sometimes, trivial matters can be blown out of proportion if a spouse jumps to self-made conclusions and overreacts to them in the beginning of a marriage.

For example, a wife might fall sick right after her wedding and consequently, fall behind in doing household chores due to her lack of domestic experience.

At such a point, when she needs her husband to be supportive and caring, if he instead thinks, "If I let this go by being lenient, she might make it a habit," and starts to force her to do all the chores, even when she is sick, because of his innate insecurity that if he does the chores himself it will encourage her to be slothful, this will cause a lot of damage to their relationship.

Wife will see him as harsh, oppressive and insensitive.

Similarly, if a wife gets resentful of her husband spending more time with his relatives and at work than with her in the first few weeks after marriage, she should try and quell her insecurities that might be making her think that if she doesn't protest, he will take her silence as approval and continue to ignore her for the rest of their marriage.

Ignoring and overlooking small blows to their personal ego in the first few months go a long way in conveying to one's spouse the loud-and-clear message that, "I will stand by you through thick and thin". And this is one the most comforting messages that they can give to each other when their marriage is new.

4- Patience during First Pregnancy

The arrival of a child means a whole new world of emotions, feelings, and life experiences.

It adds value to the family unit and affects all the existing relationships. It is a fact that the arrival of the first baby, which, in many cases, is a much-awaited blessing from Allah, causes the well-adjusted, comfortable husband-wife relationship to go through its first major transition.

Most couples await and desire the birth of their first child within the first 2-3 years of marriage. However, no matter how much they anticipate it, the actual, first-time experience of pregnancy and childbirth can really task their patience and mutual understanding as a couple.

For the husband, his wife now starts to move from the realm of romantic partner, best friend and conjugal partner, to that of soon-to-be mother of his child. Her body starts going through changes that might cause her to gain weight and experience unpredictable mood swings, which can put a strain on their hitherto smoothly functioning relationship.

A progressing pregnancy also implies less physical intimacy than before, especially during the nausea-and-vomiting infested first trimester, the lower-abdomen-tasking last month before delivery, and then the almost 2-month long post-birth recovery period.

In many cases of severe pregnancy sickness requiring roundthe-clock care or even hospitalization, it is not uncommon for the first-time pregnant wife to spend a few days, weeks or even months back at her parents' home. This can leave her husband feeling lonely, miserable and resentful.

The most important tip for a new husband and wife that can help them pass through their first pregnancy and childbirth as a loving, supportive and emotionally close couple, is to practice immense patience, compassion and empathy with each other.

I would go so far as to say that the husband has a greater role to play in this situation,- that of modeling immense patience, sacrifice and forbearance, as he is not the one experiencing the physical "jihad" (struggle) of bringing a new life into this world.

Consequently, he should overlook every unjust demand, inappropriate behavior or outright atrocity of his pregnant wife, with a smile and supportive, loving words.

5- Time Heals Every Wound

They say, "If it won't kill you, it will make you stronger," and this adage is true for every challenge that life throws our way, including the make-or-break first few years of marriage.

It is in these initial years that Allah makes a newly married couple endure problems that eventually become stepping-stones towards higher levels of strength and mutual closeness.

Allah sends their way trials that are perceived as obstacles in achieving what they desire, and apparent 'blockades' that hamper the smooth sailing of their marital 'boat'.

In reality, these challenges are sent their way for a very good reason - to make the husband and wife come closer together.

The more problems they overcome, the more a husband and wife become stronger as a team.

MARRIAGE AS A ROLLER COASTER: SPECIAL TIPS

By ZeneefaZaneer

Blessings in life are like the autumn, the colors and the breeze are welcomed warmly.

One such blessing is the happy marriage. Though, it has been a trend to host a marriage ceremony grandly, but once it is over everything is over.



It is a shame that the sparks of the wedding night fade so soon. Is marriage meant just for a day where the bride meets her prince charming, pledges to be his wife forever?

Some believe that meeting the end is called happily ever after, like the fairytales we used to read and watch, and that end always becomes the marriage; trust me this is not true! You

just begin the adventure not the end, for marriage is one roller coaster.

We are much exposed to the world that the western minds have created of. The unlawful relationship is beautified by the western thinkers and purposefully forgotten to illustrate the beauty of the marital life.

The mistake we commonly do is that when we get used to something we care less to beautify the relationship.

Healthy Tips

1. Halal Dating

How often do you go out with your spouse? Can you remember a candle-lit dinner spent with a light heart chat with your spouse after the early days of your marriage? Why should honeymoon get over so soon?

These are the common errors in today's marital lives. Honeymoon soon ends. The masks removed and we start living with the truth, truth of being busy with our business, meetings, children and other responsibilities. Does this mean that the marital relationship becomes a burden? When responsibilities drown one, does that mean he or she has to give up being the caring and close partner of their spouse?

The answer is NO. Take your spouse to a restaurant, have a special dinner and let your partner feels she/he is special to you. After all, your spouse is halal to you, why feel ashamed in entertaining her/him?

Explore the beauty of Allah's creations while entertaining your life. Have a break from your usual schedule. Take your spouse on a trip. Different environments create different moods for both of you and soon you will find the change in your life.

2. Balanced Life

It is true that each day we gain experience and grow old. Another day is a blessing of Allah. The realization makes us feel matured and we tend to prepare for the other life while enjoying our current lives and fulfilling our duties towards the family.

Indeed, Islam teaches a balanced life, hence we call it the way of life.

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) told us,"Be in this world as a stranger or wayfarer." [Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, and Ahmad]

The wayfarer or stranger does not avoid comfort, enjoyment, or interests related to their journey or place of sojourn.

However, they realize that their destination is more important than their fleeting journey or sojourn. Thus, they prioritize, realizing that this worldly life is a means to the next life. We seek the good in it, as a means to the good in the next life, not as an end itself.

3. Gifts

Exchange gifts with each other. Your spouse is the other half of you. Why not make yourself happy?

A gift is an expression of love. We are often fed that these are wasting our money. But what if you bought the regular brand of shampoo she/he uses as a gift, after all you remember what brand she/he likes and it will make her/him happy.

We are told that a gift should be something expensive. That is where we have mistaken. A gift can be anything. Even if it is simple, it will be much appreciated.

4. Show Love

- Cuddle and kiss your spouse often with affection and don't forget to appreciate him/her.
- Give a light head massage to your spouse, that's a practiced secret for a successful marital relationship.

- Get close to your partner and drift your spouse's attention to you from the television or the book.
- Tease and joke with your partner.

It is much easier to declare war against them when they commit a simple error. But we are stingy when it comes to using the words like 'I love you'. When others can keep on saying those words for their unlawful partner, why can't you whisper so day and night to your spouse? After all, your spouse is lawful to you.

"And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between you; verily, in that are signs for people who reflect." (Qur'an, 30:21)

5. Beautifying and Admiration

The common mistake we all do is that we beautify ourselves when we leave home and neglect ourselves while we are at home. Whom are we trying to please, our spouse or someone on the street? And keep in mind that men and women like to be admired by their spouses.

Saying how beautiful or how handsome is not a sin or you aren't going to lose anything by expressing your feelings. What is wrong in admiring the beauty of Allah? You are to

lowerdown your gaze in front of non-Mahram not in front of your husband or wife.

6. Communicating and Listening

One should realize that even without these fancy tips, you still can love each other. A healthy discussion is the main key to open doors to the secret chamber of your spouse.

A keen listener can be the best friend of your partner. You don't want your friends to listen to you though Allah has given the best companion for you to talk with.

7. Get Rid of Ego

Egoism plays a major role in our marital life.

When honeymoon ends and we tend to mind our own business, we seriously 'do mind our own business'. We think if our spouses do not reply to us due to the interest he or she has in reading or watching, why we should bother talking to them back! This way, some spouses do not consider their partners in the relationship, all they think of and care for is their own ego!

8. Understanding What We Need From Each Other

A man's primary need is for respect, while a woman's primary need is for love. The pattern of argumentation that results when the wife does not show respect and the husband does not show love. When a wife feels that her husband is acting unloving, she often reacts with disrespect, which in turn makes the husband act even more unloving.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has said, "A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another." (Muslim)

9. Patience

Finally patience is all what makes marriage successful. Everything said above could be put under the word *patience*. None of us are perfect and imperfectness is what creates the uniqueness. Petals look alike but they are different, removing one different petal doesn't make the flower beautiful but it makes it incomplete

"Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full without reckoning (or measure)." (Qur'an, 39:10)

10. Keep Marriage Secrets

Don't compare your marriage with your friends. Every marriage is made of odds and ends. Don't share marital life's secrets with others. Once your problem is over, you forget but others don't.

If you find flaws in your relationship, keep faith in Allah and use the powerful weapon you are gifted with: Du'aa.





LOVE OR ARRANGED MARRIAGE?

The guy whom I like, did not accept my love for him. In anger that I have said yes for marriage to another guy. Now he (the first one) accepted and want to marry me, I too want to marry him. Please tell me what I have to do, select love or parents' choice? I can't live without him.

Counselor: AliahAzmeh

As-salamu `alaikum sister sister,

Thank you for sending us your question. It seems like you are in quite a difficult predicament. May Allah guide your heart towards the truth and also make you realize your full potential as a human being and value your self-worth.

Marriage is a very serious affair, and by no means should be taken lightly. Allah mentions marriage in the Quran as being "a firm and strong covenant" (4:21). Deciding whether or not to marry someone requires much thought and consideration..

You have mentioned in your question that the man whom you admired did not reciprocate admiration back to you. Therefore,

out of anger with him, you agreed to marry another man. In other words, you agreed to marry the other man out of spite.

Let's take a moment and read the dictionary definition of *spite*: "Malicious ill will prompting an urge to hurt or humiliate." After reading this definition, is being a malicious and hurtful person someone you want to become? Or more importantly, **is this how you want to base your decisions and actions?**

Unfortunately, many people base their actions on reactions and not principle. We allow our emotions or our *lower nafs* to take over us, and in doing so, we hurt ourselves and those around us.

Generally, it is human nature to feel angry with someone and feel the need to "get even with them" after they hurt us. In your situation, you may have felt humiliated and hurt after the man you admired refused to reciprocate that admiration back. Out of anger, you agreed to marry another man to make him feel hurt and humiliated. So your decision to marry the second man was a *reaction*.

This is a no-win situation because you are doing yourself and the man whom you agreed to marry an injustice. You set yourself up for disappointment because you didn't want to marry this man in the first place. You set that unfortunate man up for a disappointment because he probably didn't want to marry a girl who didn't want him in the first place. All this drama just to get back at someone!

We need to be people of integrity. We need to strive to make our intentions and actions based on good moral character. When someone angers us, we act with goodness. Our aim is not to humiliate them, but it also does not mean that we allow people to humiliate us. Instead, we are assertive and our aim is to talk rationally with the person who angered us in order to resolve the issue at hand respectfully.

In your situation, the man whom you admired did not show you he was interested in marrying you. Based on your question, it seems like you had some sort of relationship with this man. You felt hurt.

At that point, you must acknowledge that he does not want to marry you and that the both of you will no longer be in a relationship because you want to get married and he doesn't.

After you officially end whatever relationship the both of you had, you give yourself sometime to heal. Give yourself time to focus on yourself, your intentions, and your desires in life. Most importantly, you should give yourself that valuable time to reflect on that past relationship and learn from it.

It will take some time to heal the hurt, but eventually you will feel like yourself again. Contrary to what you have written in the question, **you** *can* **indeed live without him**. You lived without him before you met him, so you can live without him now!

It is natural to feel low self-esteem after a breakup. You feel like you are insignificant and that your value is somehow related to whether or not this man wants to marry you or not. Do not let yourself believe that.

You are an important and valuable person with or without him. It is important to know that we should never depend on other people to make us happy. Happiness should come from within ourselves.

Last but not least, we need to completely depend on Allah, because He is the only one that can fulfill our hopes and dreams. A human being will let us down at some point, but Allah never will.

The last part of your question asks about choosing the right partner. You now have two men who are interested in marrying you. The first man being someone you already know and the second man is someone your parents have chosen.

However, there is one important thing that you need to keep in mind, and that is that you have already agreed to marry the man whom your parents have chosen for you.

The prophet (pbuh) said, "A man must not propose to his brother's fiancé unless he withdraws or gives him permission" (Al-Bukhari). Since you have agreed to marry the second man, the first man cannot propose to you unless your engagement with the second man ends.

You need to decide whether or not you want to continue with the man whom you are currently engaged to. Take some time and get to know him. Does he have the characteristics that you desire in a husband? Does he have any characteristics that you absolutely don't want in a husband? Is he compatible with you and your vision of life? Do you agree on how to live your lives? Are your goals parallel to each other's?

Are you attracted to this person in anyway? Beware of the false notion of "falling in love." Feeling like you want to be romantically involved with a man is not love. It is more of an infatuation or lust.

Love is actually a verb, not a noun. Love doesn't happen to you. Love is created by giving a part of yourself without the expectation of receiving. Look for that characteristic in this man – if he is a giving and passionate person.

May Allah choose the best for you and assist you to make the best decision.



MARRYING SOMEONE I NEVER MET IN PERSON: RISKY?

Salam Aleykum. I have been dating a guy for almost four and a half years. He is from Kenya but currently lives in South Africa. I have never met him personally; we got to know each other online. He is a nice guy masha' Allah, he introduced me to his family, and now he is asking me if I am ready for marriage.

I gave him my parents' phone number and he talked to them. Am I risking my life to get married to a man I have never met before? I need your advice. Thank you.

Counselor: SakeenaAbdulraheem

Dear sister,

You stated that you have been dating a guy online for four and a half years, but you have never met him. I assume that when you say he introduced you to his family, he did so online. Four and half year is a very long time to maintain communications with someone without ever meeting him in

person. I would agree with you when you stated that you are taking a tremendous risk in agreeing to marry someone who you have never met.

Before making any commitments with anyone, it is important for you to meet the individual face to face to gauge the way they look in person which may be different from how they look online. Another reason for meeting the individual in person would be gauge whether or not there is a mutual attraction, chemistry, and an overall healthy dynamics between you and your prospective spouse.

Also, if marrying him means that you would have to move away from your family and live where he currently lives, it's important for you to visit the type of living situation you are about to move in. It is also essential for the guy, who you are dating, to visit where you live in order to get to know the cultural differences, similarities and nuances of who you are as a person and how your environment has shaped you. Online relationships can often be a hit or miss, because individuals are able to hide who they really are. As a woman, it is important to take certain precautions and ask thorough questions to find out if the two of you are compatible.

The next step you should take is to plan a trip in a neutral location and bring a chaperoning family member or trusted friend with you. If the overall dynamics is still the same, the

next step will be for you to plan an additional trip where he goes to meet your family and then you plan a separate trip where you go to meet his family. During these visits, pay attention to the way in which he interacts with his mother and father.

Look at the overall dynamics between his parents. If his parents are divorced or never married, have discussions on the impact this has had on his view of relationships and marriage overall. Although, you have been speaking to him online for a very long time I'm assuming these questions have come up at some point. However, if they have not, you want to make sure that you have these types of discussions with him.

Other important topics to touch when having discussions about marriage are:

Value system-similarities and differences

Your world views

Culture - how similar and different the cultural traditions are that you incorporate into your lives.

Religion – similarities and differences in religious interpretation and practice: does the individual's interpretation of faith

matter to you? Will it cause clashes in your marriage or family interaction?

- -Fitness and health
- -Any existing health problems or mental health problems
- -The number of children you would like to have
- -Your career
- Your education
- -Views on women's issues and rights
- -Personalities
- -Interests
- -Styles of communication
- -Temperament

These are all very important issues you should definitely make sure the both of you are on the same page in regards to belief, interpretation, implementation and approach, and if there are differences, make sure that these are differences the both of you can live with. Finding a spouse in these complex times is not an easy task. However, it is important for you to take your time and approach your relationship with patience, understanding, and constantly reflecting upon and renewing your intentions.

Best Wishes,

BETWEEN LOVE AND MY PARENTS' WISH

I am a practicing Muslim. I love a guy and I've confessed my parents about our love, but they are not even willing to meet his family or get to know him, they prefer seeking a highly educated man. The problem has risen two days ago. My parents are emotionally threatening me, but I can't betray Faisal (whom I like). What can I do now? Should I wait or should I go according to my parents' wish?

Counselor: AliahAzmeh

SalamuAlaikumSister,

Thank you for sending us your question. May Allah help you to make the right decision and give you peace of mind.

Since you have given a very brief description of your situation, I will answer to the best of my ability hoping that I do not make false assumptions about the circumstances that you are in.

It appears that you are infatuated with a young man named Faisal. When you told your parents that you wanted to marry him, they refused and will not even consider him. You mention that they'd prefer someone who is more educated (and I am also assuming they want someone who is of higher socioeconomic status).

Most parents prefer someone who is more educated because they most likely have better jobs, and thus they get paid higher salaries and live more comfortably than those who are not as educated. In other words, your parents are looking to marry you to someone who will provide well for you, so you will live comfortably without worrying about finances or the like.

Of course, having sustainable income is important; there is no doubt about that. However, money is not the only important factor when it comes to choosing a spouse. There are also other factors that must be looked into to make sure that the potential spouse is compatible to you.

Factors such as his overall worldview, religious and cultural practices or lack of them, expectations regarding marriage and how life should be lived, ideas relating to parenting, how they spend their spare time, personality traits, etc. Money alone cannot determine happiness in a marriage.

Feeling that you "like" someone is also not enough to sustain a marriage. You and your parents must keep in mind the above factors to determine compatibility and determine whether or not a suitor is a good match or not.

I am not sure if Faisal is a good match for you. You have not mentioned much about him other than you both like each other. Again, as mentioned above, simply "liking" someone is not enough to sustain a happy marriage. If you believe that Faisal is compatible to you, then I would advise you to talk to your parents again about him.

I would suggest you reevaluate your position on him and objectively determine whether or not he is right for you. Do you both share similar views on how to live life? How to solve problems? How to handle difficulties? How to raise a family? How to make ends meet? Do you both have the right kind of patience, maturity, and responsibility to be married and face all the hurdles in life as a strong married couple?

Or have the both of you not discussed important life issues, but rather spent your time together getting caught up with how much you "love" each other? It is unfortunate but many young single people overlook the important issues they have to discuss with potential spouses and get caught up with their emotions and feelings of "love" or as I call it, infatuation.

Please, reevaluate your relationship with Faisal and objectively determine whether or not a marriage with him is what you expect in a marriage.

I ask Allah to guide you to the right decision.

RULES FOR MUSLIM GENTLEMEN?

Assalamu alaykum,I have a problem with girls. I talk to them, but I am never sure about my feelings or their feelings. I don't know if it is a crash or a real love I feel, or if she is even interested in me. I also don't know how to test if this girl could be my future wife or not.

How can I find it out whether this girl is now the last and only one in my life, or if she is only a crash? How to handle talking to girls? Are there Islamic, "gentleman rules" to treat girls accordingly like ladies first? How to talk to girls in general without loving them? What then if it is not a love, but a crash? How can I avoid this, and how to find my future wife?

Counselor: Abdullah Abdur Rahman

Wa `alaykum as-salam,

Thank you for writing to us. Here are some thoughts for your consideration.

First, while we appreciate the fact that you are giving so much thought to girls and to getting married, we want to take this opportunity to remind you that in Islam, there is great emphasis placed on being <u>emotionally</u>, <u>physically</u>, and <u>intellectually mature</u> as well as being financially secure before attempting to bring another person into one's life through marriage.

Allah Most High has created us and knows well our strengths and weaknesses, especially with regards to matters of the heart. Allah has knowledge of our innermost thoughts and desires. And to Him alone should we turn in order to seek confirmation of our feelings as well as to seek guidance and direction before taking any decision through the Istikharah Prayer.

Second, let's be clear about the difference between having a "crush" on someone and "real love." In common language, having a "crush" on someone essentially refers to a temporary, passing feeling of fondness, attachment, or even "love" most notably during the teenage years. Love is associated with a deep, profound, intense, and more permanent longing; whereas in the teenage years, one could possibly have a crush on a new person every day of the week.

Love, in contrast, is not a feeling one can easily give up. Whereas there is little or no emotional involvement when one has a crush on someone, with love, the conversation is only about emotional involvement, about intense feelings, about joy, and about heartaches. We urge you to review your own feelings in light of the comments we have made here.

Third, among the "Islamic gentlemen rules," one finds tremendous importance placed on the need to uphold dignity, modesty, and respect when interacting with members of the opposite gender.

In addition, the interaction between men and women must be purposeful, limited, and occur in public settings. One can avoid having a crush on someone by doing one's best to be conscious of Allah Most High and by limiting one's interaction with that person so that one's heart does not grow fonder and become attached.

Although it is impossible to deny what one is feeling, the strong among us are those who are able to exercise self-restraint by not behaving in a manner displeasing to Allah. There is nothing wrong with falling in love with another person if one then makes every possible effort to marry the person. However, having a crush or falling in love with a person for the sake of satisfying one's lower desires outside the institution of marriage, could lead to sin and is displeasing to Allah Most High. We are clearly warned by Allah in Surat Al-Israa when He says:

{And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way.} (Al-Israa' 17:32)

We should do everything possible to stay away from *zina* (fornication or adultery) and anything that could possibly lead us to *zina*.

Finally, we urge you to read about and learn more about marriage in Islam, especially its purpose and how to go about finding the righteous spouse. You are asking all the right questions and, *in sha' Allah*, with the help and guidance of Allah Most High, you will find the answers so that you can live life according to Islamic teachings. Make lots of *du`aa'* to Allah to forgive you and to guide you.

And Allah knows best.

PARENTS DISAGREE WITH MARRYING A DISABLED GIRL

I'm a 25 years old boy from Afghanistan; I love a girl who I really want to get married with. The problem is that one of her legs has been injured during tribal wars in Afghanistan when she was a child. She went to Europe in 2010 for treatment and did operation, but now she must live there, because it would be very difficult for her as a disabled girl to live here in our country.

I told my parents about her, but they got angry on me; they disagree to marry her due to her disability. I know I should accept my parents' advices as their consent is important, but if I reject my love as they wish, her life will be in danger because it's very hard for a young Muslim girl to live alone in a European society. This situation is very painful for me, I can't leave her alone in a non-Islamic society, therefore, I want you to guide me what Islam says regarding my case.

Shall I accept whatever my parents say or shall I disagree with them and save a Muslim girl?

Counselor: AliahAzmeh

SalamuAlaikumBrother,

Thank you for sending us your question. I ask Allah to help you make the right decision regarding this issue, and grant you and this young woman a successful and bright future.

You have mentioned that you want to marry a girl from your country who currently lives in Europe due to her disability. You have mentioned that she decided to leave Afghanistan and move to Europe four years ago, because there are more services there for people who are disabled. She has made this decision for herself, and *inshAllah*, Allah will protect her and preserve her faith. We also ask Allah to help her to reach her personal goals, whether they are related to her health, education, work, etc.

Contrary to what you may believe, in many places in Europe, there are many strong Muslim communities that have been doing well for themselves in the last century or so. Islam has become a global religion, and alham dulillah there are many mosques and Muslim organizations in almost every part of this world. I do not know where she lives in Europe, but we hope that she resides in a city where there is a masjid or active Muslim organizations that will provide her with spiritual and emotional support.

After all, it was her (and I assume her parents') decision to move to Europe in the first place. This was a personal decision, and as a fellow Muslim brother who cares about her wellbeing, you (and all of us) must respect her and her parents' decision. Marrying her in order to bring her back to Afghanistan may not be her or her parents' desire to begin with since she has been living there for almost four years now.

A marriage requires consent from the groom and the bride as well (as their families). We know that you want to marry this girl, but does this girl want to marry you as well? You have also mentioned that your parents are not in agreement to this marriage, how about her parents? Having all sides agree to a marriage is vital for a marriage to start out smoothly and successfully.

I believe you must ask yourself whether or not marrying this girl is a wise decision or not, especially since there are many points against this marriage working such as your parents' refusal, the young woman living in another country, etc.

But one thing that is worthy of mention is that you do not have to feel responsible for this girl's religion. It was her decision to live in Europe in the first place, and every Muslim answers for him/herself on the Day of Judgment. Do not let this feeling of responsibility make you feel guilty if things don't work out between her. Allah will take care of her *in sha' Allah*.



May Allah choose the best for both of you.