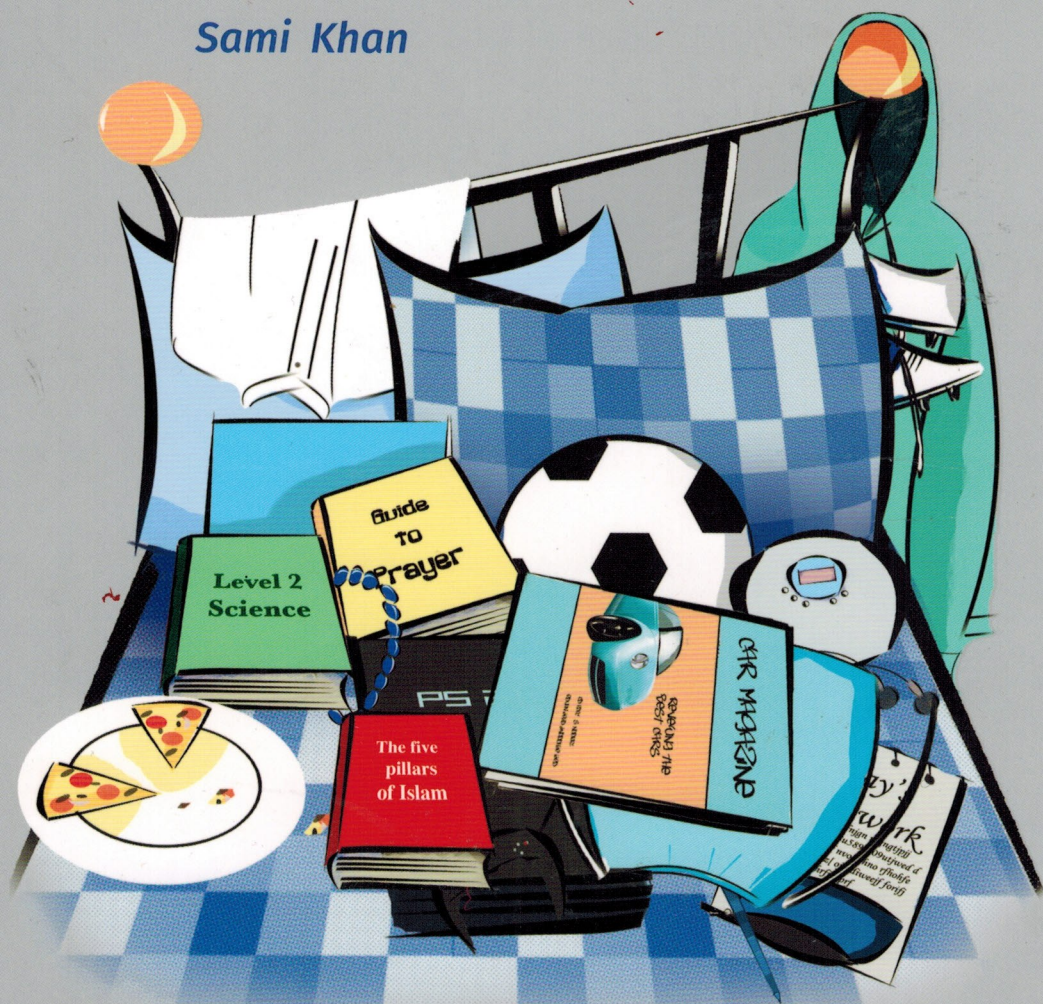


A Muslim Boy's Guide to

Life's **BiG** Changes

Sami Khan



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يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

Ya muqallibal quloob, thabbit qalbee 'ala deenik

**O, Turner of the hearts,
make my heart firm on Your religion**

(Tirmidhi)

*To my younger brother,
As salaam alaikum,*

Congratulations! You are no longer considered a little boy but rather a growing young man.

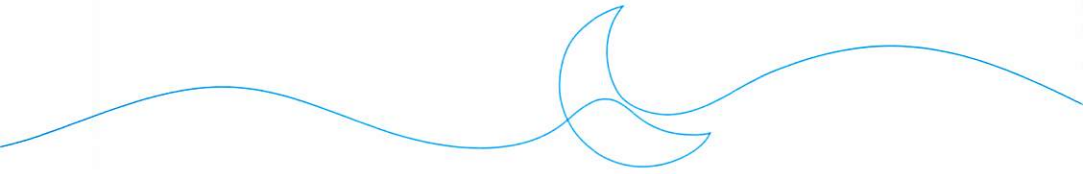
Your interests and activities are changing, and you want to spend more time around your friends. You feel full of energy and want to explore new areas. After all, this is a fast changing and exciting time. However, these years can also be testing ones as life at school with your friends may be different to life at home and you can end up feeling confused about how to behave and what is expected of you.

This book will, insha'Allah, help you to focus on the issues that are important for you as a young Muslim so that you do the right thing whilst making the most of these exciting years.

In short, the best advice I can give you is to, **'Stop, think and consider all that you do in your life.'** May Allah guide you through the coming years and make them easy for you. Ameen.

*Wasalaam,
Sami*

Your Beliefs



The word **Islam** means peace and obedience. It is made up of five basic pillars:

- ★ **Shahadah:** Statement of Belief
- ★ **Salah:** Five times daily prayer
- ★ **Zakah:** Giving of our wealth to the less fortunate
- ★ **Sawm:** Fasting in Ramadan
- ★ **Hajj:** Visiting Allah's House

At this stage of your life, you will need to be most aware of shahadah, salah and sawm for your daily life.

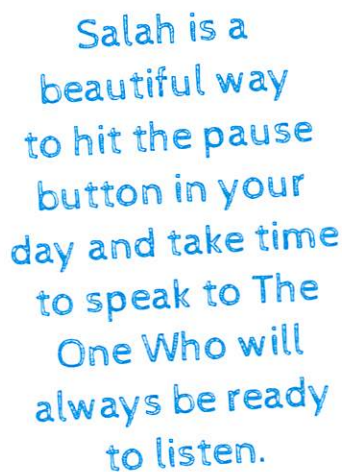
The first part of **shahadah** is believing in the Oneness of Allah or **tawheed**. This means believing that there is only one Allah who has no partners or family; that Allah always has been and always will be; that He created everything and there is none like Him.

Scientists can boast about their achievements, but the fact is that they cannot even create a single atom from nothing let alone the whole complex and beautiful universe that Allah has created.

The opposite of tawheed is **shirk**, which means not believing in the Oneness of Allah, and associating Him with someone or something else. This is the most grave and unforgivable sin in Islam. So whenever you are facing a hard time, remember that Allah is the best friend and helper you could have.

Allah has given us so much and in order to show Him how grateful we are and how much we love Him, we must pray or perform **salah** five times a day. Salah is a chance for you to take time out from the routine of the day and become closer to Allah. It is a time for you to show your gratitude, seek forgiveness for your sins, and ask for help, guidance and direction.

Ideally, you should have started to pray from the age of seven and certainly from the age of ten. If you haven't, then it is never too late to start, because Allah is most Kind and Forgiving. It is very important that you take the time out of your schedule to offer your salah at the right time, whether you are at home or at school or out and about.



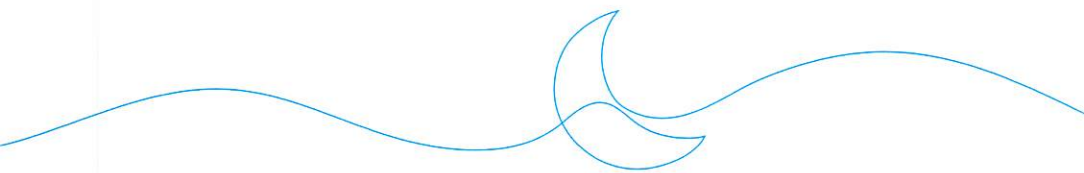
Salah is a beautiful way to hit the pause button in your day and take time to speak to The One Who will always be ready to listen.

During term time, you will have to at least pray Dhuhr salah at school. If there isn't already a room set aside for doing salah in, then organise a polite meeting with the Head to arrange a room for you to pray in during lunchtime. This will benefit not only you and your friends, but also future Muslim students at the school.

Performing the midday salah in congregation on Friday is called **Jumu'ah**. This is a duty that must be upheld by all Muslim males, so you must make every effort to attend Jumu'ah prayers. It is a great time to meet other Muslims, feel part of a community and a chance to learn something useful by listening to the **khutbah** or sermon.

Another act of worship that brings us closer to Allah is fasting during the month of Ramadan (**sawm**). You must fast as soon as you reach the age of puberty, but it is good practice for you to begin before then.

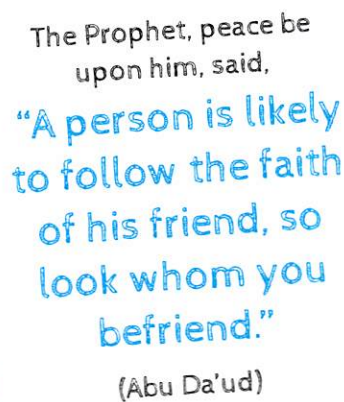
By not eating and drinking during the day, we learn to think of those that are less fortunate than us and to give generously. While you are fasting, you also have to be careful of your actions, intentions and the way you speak. There is no point in not eating and drinking if you are going to lie and swear, for example.



Ramadan is known as the Month of the Qur'an because it was first revealed during this month. It is recommended to try and increase our reading and understanding of the Qur'an in Ramadan. Many men attend the mosque for nightly sunnah prayers called **tarawih** during which the Qur'an is recited. If you are able to, you should try to attend the tarawih salah at your local mosque.

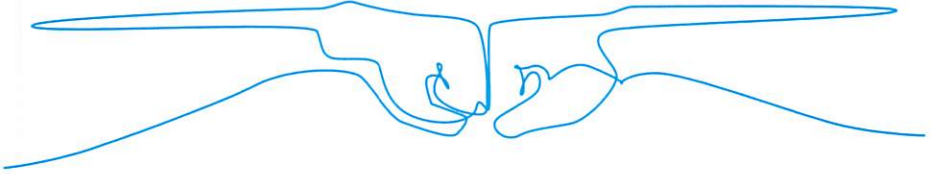
Another very important belief is that the life of this world (**dunya**) is temporary and there is an eternal life after death (**akhirah**). Our actions in this life will determine a smooth entry into **Jannah** (Paradise) depending on how we conduct ourselves. That is why it is so important to take care of each and every one of your actions because you will be asked about them on the Day of Judgement.

Performing your salah regularly and fasting during the month of Ramadan at this age is extra commendable because the Prophet, peace be upon him, explained that Allah is more pleased with the good deeds that we do during our youth than at any other time.



The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,
“A person is likely to follow the faith of his friend, so look whom you befriend.”
(Abu Da'ud)

Your Friends



You will meet lots of different kinds of boys at school and you may choose to spend your time with some of them both in and outside of school. You might not think that it matters too much who your friends are, but it is vital to choose the correct friendship group, as friends can either be your strength or your weakness.

Think about it. As you spend more time with your friends, you find that their views and ideas have an effect on you. They begin to influence the way you look, speak and behave. I can guarantee that your friends will leave a lifetime impression on you, so be careful of who you choose to have as your friends.

Those who choose to be disrespectful to their elders and spend their time in un-Islamic places doing un-Islamic things are really not worth having as friends. They may distract you from your studies, from religion and perhaps pressure you into looking and acting like someone you're not, just to fit in with them.

You should try to keep in the company of those who understand the importance of being a good person and taking care of their every action. You see, at this age your friends are in the unique position of having a big influence on you and it may be easy to forget what your parents have taught you.

It is a mistake to try and lead two lives – one at home in order to please your family and a different one at school to make you popular with your friends. Remember that Allah is All-Seeing and All-Knowing. You might enjoy your popularity with the ‘in’-crowd at school for a short while, but you will ultimately be the loser if you are not true to yourself.

Of course, I understand that it’s not always as simple as it sounds and there will be times when you feel split between your school friends and your religion. It can be difficult to stand up to some peers, but Allah has given you the intelligence to know right from wrong, so you should fight temptation and stand up for what you believe in.

Just remember to...

- ★ Surround yourself with good and suitable friends who will offer you support.
- ★ Be proud of who you are and don’t feel intimidated by those who you know are in the wrong.
- ★ Stop, think and question your actions. It is all too easy to do things in the heat of the moment that you later regret.

- ★ Seek advice and support from your parents, uncles, older brothers and cousins who have all been through what you are facing.
- ★ Always turn to Allah for strength and guidance to do the right thing. At the same time, try to learn more about Islam. It is not just a set of rules to follow and feel confined by. It is a whole system that can help you through difficult times and situations.



Your Time



Part of growing up is about having your independence and freedom to be able to meet with your friends outside of school time. There is no harm in this so long as you stick to some simple rules:

- ★ You must always ask your parents' permission before going out. If they say that you can't go somewhere or do something, then respect their decision.
- ★ Always let them know who you will be with, where you are and what you will be doing.
- ★ You must ensure that you return home at the time your parents tell you to. It is very important that you do not break your parents' trust.

When you are spending time with your friends, make sure that you have safe, halal fun that does not cause anyone any distress. Wandering around the streets aimlessly or hanging out on street corners is a waste of time for you and a nuisance for other people.

As an alternative, why not try sport, whether it's cricket or football or martial arts or anything else you enjoy? Not only is sport fun, it also helps keep you in good shape, teaches you to work as part of a team, disciplines you and is also a sunnah as the Prophet, peace be upon him, enjoyed some sports as well. Do bear in mind, though, that if you attend a gym or go to a swimming pool, the facilities should be for males only. Many sports centres have sessions specifically for men and boys.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, stated,
"Prayer in congregation is more than 27 times more rewarding than prayer at home."

(Bukhari and Muslim)

As a Muslim, the **masjid** (mosque) should be a place that you visit frequently, preferably with other male members of your family. Praying salah at the mosque as opposed to performing it at home holds great reward.

However, a mosque is not only a place of worship but also a social centre for Muslims, allowing people

of all ages to get together. It is a place where you can meet other Muslim boys of a similar age and interests. It is also a place where you will feel a sense of community and belonging. Many mosques offer a variety of activities for young Muslims, but if yours doesn't, then you can always take the initiative and ask the management for group activities to be arranged.

When you are at home, either alone or with friends, you should try to spend your time sensibly. This means that you should not be listening to the latest rap tunes or any other un-Islamic form of music. Most types of lyrical music (Western/ Bollywood/ Bhangra) are not appropriate to listen to because of their unsuitable themes and lyrics.

Music can be considered the **adhan** (call to prayer) of the Shaytan and when the Prophet, peace be upon him, heard music, he would cover his ears with his hands in disapproval.

You might think that you need such music to relax or even to do your homework and soon you find it difficult to do anything without having music on in the background. This is a shame because music containing bad lyrics can blacken your heart and distract you from doing your salah. If you would like to listen to something, then why not try listening to **nasheeds** (non-instrumental vocals) which are a much better and halal form of entertainment.

Did you know that recent research shows young people spend as much as one-third of their lives solidly watching TV or online content? Is that really how you want to spend your whole life? After all, when you spend so long just staring at a screen it must have a bad effect on your eyesight, your posture and your mind. When you watch actors or singers on TV, on social media videos or in the cinema, behaving improperly, dressing immodestly and using bad language then after a while you think that it's OK to behave that way and you start to behave like that too.

Having said that, there are a number of halal and informative programmes and content that you can access for entertainment, if you like.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

“Part of a person’s being a good Muslim is his leaving alone that which does not concern him.”

(Tirmidhi)

Similarly, the internet is an essential source of information and research for schoolwork but it is all too easy to get sidetracked and lose hours just mindlessly browsing, downloading music or streaming videos. Spending your time in chat rooms is a time wasting activity at best and can be dangerous, at worst.

We will have a look in more detail about time spent online in the Double Act chapter.

Another thing you should be careful of is spending too much time playing games on any device. This is neither useful or educational and can end up being addictive. Many games are unsuitable because of their themes of violence and aggression.

Remember that you need to concentrate on your schoolwork now if you want to reach your goals and full potential later on in life. This is the only way that you will have a choice about what

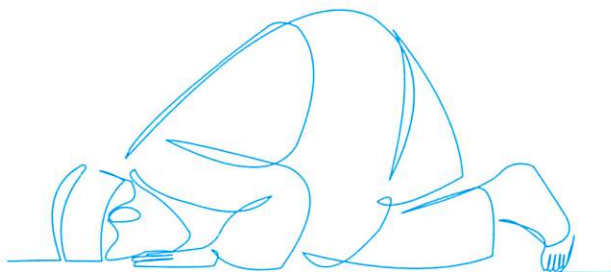
you want to do as a career even if career choices might seem a long way away at the moment.

Be sure to balance your schoolwork, your religious tasks and your leisure time. The keys to spending your time wisely are:

- To remember Allah throughout the day by praying salah and reading Qur'an daily.
- To leave, or at least spend the minimum amount of time on, those things that distract you from your connection with Allah as well as your studies.



How You Can Become Closer to Allah



There are many ways in which you can spend your time constructively and become closer to Allah.

Reading and Understanding the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the Word of Allah which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, through the Angel Jibra'il. It is a guide given to us by Allah and so it contains plenty of useful and relevant advice about how best to live our lives. By reading it, understanding what it says and acting upon it you will become closer to Allah and, insha'Allah, a better Muslim.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,
"The person who has nothing of the Qur'an inside him is like an empty or ruined house."

(Tirmidhi)

Even reading a few lines of Arabic regularly every day with translation, you will find that you can finish the whole Qur'an at least twice in a year. It is also important to memorise small chapters from the Qur'an (together with their meaning) so that you can recite them in your salah.

Du'a (Supplication)

Du'a, which means 'calling upon', is a very personal way of communicating with Allah. You can choose what you say and which language you say it in, but there are some recommended ways in which to make du'a.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to make du'a by facing the **Qibla** (the direction of the Ka'bah) and raising his cupped hands towards the sky. When you make du'a, it is good to thank Allah for all that He has given you and to send blessings on the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his family. You can ask for anything as long as it is allowed and does not involve asking Allah to harm or hurt anyone else. You can ask for forgiveness, strength, guidance, good health, good exam results, good things in this world and in the hereafter. Be sure to supplicate for your loved ones, including those who have passed away. You can supplicate for those that are less fortunate than you and especially those who are suffering as a result of war, natural disasters and so on. The beautiful truth behind supplicating for others in secret is that when you say the word 'Ameen', the angels reply with, 'And the same for you.'

You must not lose hope if your du'a is not answered immediately in the way you want. If that were the case, it would mean Allah would become our servant waiting for our requests instead of our Master. For your du'a to be answered, you have to work towards becoming closer to Allah, to make sure that your food and drink is **halal** (permitted) and to try your best in whatever it is you are asking for. For example, if you are asking to get good exam results, this would mean that you have to try your hardest to get good grades as well as asking Allah for help.

Remember Allah is the best of planners. Your supplications will, insha'Allah, be accepted as and when Allah wishes, but you have to be patient.

Dhikr

Another way of becoming closer to Allah is through **dhikr** (the remembrance of Allah).

SubhanAllah - Glory be to Allah

Alhamdulillah - All praise and thanks is due to Allah

La ilaha illallah - There is no god but Allah

Allahu Akbar - Allah is the Greatest

You can do dhikr at any time of the day, while you are walking, sitting or even when you can't sleep. You don't need to have **wudu** (ritual ablution). You can spend as little as a few seconds

reciting a few words either in your mind, on your fingers or on a **tasbeeh** (prayer beads). The following words carry a great reward: You can also remember Allah by His 99 Beautiful Names. Why not spend some time regularly looking these up? You will get to know Allah better, love Him more and want to do more to please Him when you realise how Merciful, Loving and Just He is.

Following the Sunnah

The word **sunnah** means 'practice' and it refers to the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who is the best example of how we should think, speak and behave. By following the noble practices of our Prophet, peace be upon him, we can help become the best version of ourselves.

It does not have to be difficult or time consuming to perform a sunnah. For example, the Prophet, peace be upon him, would always begin his meal with the words '**Bismillah**' and eat with his right hand. He would never overeat and he never criticised the taste of food. It is little courtesies such as these which will help others understand Islam better, while earning you a great reward from Allah.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,
“... **Sadaqah**
destroys sins as
water extinguishes
fire...”
(Mishkat)

Sending Blessings upon the Prophet, peace be upon him

This is an easy and effortless thing to do yet the rewards and benefits of spending your time doing this are huge. Not only does it increase our love for the Prophet, peace be upon him, it helps:

- ★ In having your du'a answered
- ★ Making your jobs easier
- ★ Meeting the Prophet, peace be upon him, in the hereafter
- ★ Gaining Allah's pleasure.

Sadaqah (Voluntary acts)

Sadaqah is when you do something generous for others only for the pleasure of Allah. It may be as simple as smiling at someone to cheer them up, picking up litter from the street or perhaps not buying something for yourself one day and giving the money to charity. When you do something selfless for someone else then Allah is very pleased and He rewards you both in this world and in the hereafter.

Seeking Forgiveness (Istighfar)

When we perform a good deed, this act of good is recorded straight away and will remain in our book of good deeds forever. When we do something we shouldn't, the recording angels wait. They wait to see if we stop and reflect on what we have done. They wait to see if we follow up this bad deed with an apology to Allah. If we seek forgiveness (*istighfar*), the bad deed is not

recorded. Try not to deliberately do bad deeds, but if you do, then seek forgiveness from Allah and follow it up with a good deed. Allah loves this.

When you seek sincere forgiveness and Allah accepts it, He removes all the evidence of your wrong action, so you have a clean record.

We are not at all expected to be faultless or sinless, but we are expected to be aware of our behaviour and always ask for forgiveness for our wrong doings.

We all make mistakes and the best way to seek forgiveness is to:

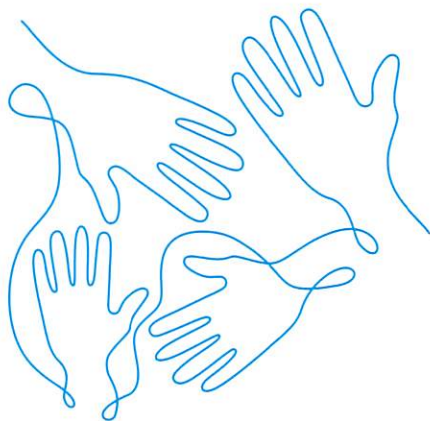
1. Feel genuinely sorry
2. Say, '[Astaghfirullah](#)' – I seek forgiveness from Allah
3. Try your best not to repeat that mistake again.

We make mistakes every single day, and Allah is always offering His forgiveness. Every day and every night, Allah is there and waiting for us to turn to Him. How many of us respond to His call? Every waking moment is a chance for us to erase the things we are not proud of by turning to Allah and asking for forgiveness.

So let's start NOW. Remember Allah is calling to you, personally, to beg Him for His forgiveness. I pray that we can all make this a regular habit, insha'Allah.



The People Around You



Part of being a good Muslim is to balance our duties towards Allah and our responsibilities towards the people that we come into contact with regularly. But what are these responsibilities?

Parents

To please Allah, you must treat your parents with the utmost love and respect. Your mother endured the pain of carrying you inside her for nine months and since the day you were born. She continues to give up so much just to make sure that you are safe, healthy and happy. Your father spends his day caring and providing for you. They both spend every waking moment worrying about you and wanting the best for you. Therefore, under no circumstances should you ever be rude to them, disobey them (unless they ask you to do something that goes against Islam) or answer back to them.

If you want to enter Jannah then you must love and care for your mother to the best of your ability. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also highlighted the importance of pleasing your father: “A father’s pleasure is Allah’s pleasure, and a father’s displeasure is Allah’s displeasure.” (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,
“Paradise lies
beneath the feet
of your mother.”
(an-Nasa’i)

If you want to be successful in this life and in the hereafter then you must take care of your parents – the two most important people in your life.

A man asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, “What deed is most beloved by Allah?” He said, “Salah on time.” The man asked, “And then?” He said, “Respecting one’s parents.” (Muslim)

On the other hand, if we upset our parents, this is one of the ways to earn Allah’s anger. It is so easy to take our parents for granted or speak to them carelessly, but it is most important for you to place the pleasure of your parents above that of any other human being.

Siblings

You must respect others if you want them to respect you, and that applies especially to those that you live with, regardless of whether they are older or younger than you. It is worth remembering that your actions, especially negative behaviour, will most certainly have an impact on your entire family.

Brothers and sisters who see you arguing with your parents will be badly affected by the tension in the house. It is selfish and narrow minded to think, 'It's my life' and 'What's it got to do with anyone else?' because Muslim families are supposed to be loving, caring and close-knit. That is the safest environment in which to bring out the best in everyone.

If you are older than your brothers and sisters, then make sure that you behave well around them, so they can turn to you as an example and role model. If your siblings are older than you, then you must treat them with respect and speak politely to them.

Teachers

You should show your teachers great respect because, after your parents, it is your teachers that care about your welfare and education. You should avoid playing the class joker just to impress your friends at the expense of your teacher. Teachers are valuable people who are there for you, not just for school matters but also personal concerns. This also applies to any teachers you have outside of school as well, such as scout leaders.

Girls

You may find that your non-Muslim friends are starting to take an interest in girls. You may have noticed that some girls are changing too – their dress sense may seem more mature and they too seem to enjoy the company of the boys. It is natural to have such feelings at this age, but you must be absolutely clear that it is against the teachings of Islam to mix freely with girls. You should avoid situations where you find yourself alone with a girl and you should refrain from joining friendship groups that mix freely with the opposite sex. In fact, you should lower your gaze when there are girls around.

You must never join in with boys who boast about being with girls or comment and laugh at girls or 'rate' them because of their appearance. For those of you who have sisters or female cousins, ask yourself would you like a bunch of boys speaking about your own family member like that?

Allah likens the person who **backbites** to one who **eats the flesh** of his dead brother in Surah 49:12

In General

You should be polite and respectful to everyone you meet regardless of age, race or religion. This is the way to be respected by others. You may not agree with everything that everyone says but you need to remain calm and remember not to get angry when you talk with others.

If you cannot think of anything good or positive to say, then it is better not to say anything at all. Try not to backbite (talk behind people's backs) about others, spread rumours, intentionally make anyone feel bad, swear or talk loudly.

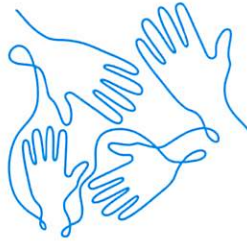
This respect also extends to all of Allah's creation, including animals and the environment in which we live. Islam teaches us that we should treat animals with love and kindness and to make sure that no harm comes to them. If you abuse your surroundings and create unnecessary pollution and waste, then you are being ungrateful to Allah for all that He has given you. This means that you should be careful about not wasting things like water and paper.

Pollution is a growing concern for our planet and one that requires each and every one of us to make changes and be mindful of our daily activities. Making small but consistent changes to the way we do things will create a cleaner planet for all.

Let's become more mindful about:

- ★ Walking, cycling or taking the bus when we can
- ★ Switching off lights when not in use
- ★ Turning off the tap while we brush our teeth
- ★ Not printing something if we don't need to
- ★ Shopping for things we don't really need
- ★ Using single-use plastic.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, led a very simple life with very few possessions. Part of following his sunnah is to try to adopt a simpler lifestyle.



Your Image



The image and attitude that you create for yourself sends out a message to everyone you meet. Does your wardrobe consist entirely of designer labels? Are you sporting the latest haircut that is carefully held in place with far too much gel? When you speak do you speak harshly or even use the odd swear word? Is your smartphone always in your hand?

Are you modelling yourself around wannabe internet sensations and the likes of 'YouTubers', 'Instagrammers', football players, pop stars and other celebrities? Are they really the best role model for you? As a Muslim, you should ask yourself whether your dress code, language and values are dictated by Islam or by celebrities.

Islam teaches us to dress modestly and decently and in a way that does not intimidate other people. Your clothes should not be too expensive, made of silk or resemble feminine clothing. Gold jewellery is strictly haram for men. The area from your navel to your knees is called your **awrah** and should always

be fully covered in a loose garment in front of everyone including your mother, sister and other males.

Wearing torn trousers showing part of your leg is neither 'fashion' nor in line with covering your awrah. Trousers that hang so far down your waist not only look ridiculous but are incredibly hard to walk in!

This also means that sharing a communal shower or showering in a public place is strictly **haram** (not permitted). When you play sports or go swimming then your awrah must be completely covered.

It is also haram to change your God-given appearance in any way. This means that it is not allowed to have any part of your body pierced or to have any tattoos (even the temporary kind).

Your hair should be kept well combed and neat. It is **wajib** (recommended) to keep a beard and it shows that you are proud to be a Muslim. It is sinful to get rid of it once it has grown, so do think of your intentions before you commit to growing it.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

“Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather He looks at your hearts and actions.”

(Muslim)

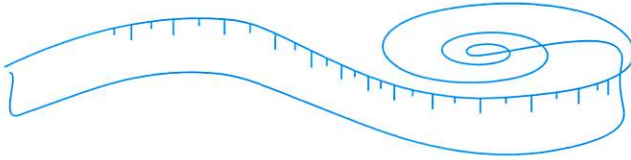
When you speak, you must always use decent language and talk politely and respectfully with everyone. The Prophet, peace be upon him, always smiled both at people that he knew and also people that he did not know because he was a very pleasant and good-natured person.

You are judged by the way that you behave with other people not by the number of accessories that you have. If your parents do not feel it necessary for you to own the latest smartphone or whatever latest gadget, then respect their wishes because they know best. Be honest, do you want a gadget simply to keep up with everyone else or do you really need one?

Next time you go out, think about the message that you are sending out to the world in how you dress and come across. Do you want to be seen as a shallow fashion-obsessed guy or a decent young man with character?



Changes in Your Body



You will find that there are some changes occurring in your body now. This process is called puberty and takes place between the ages of 11 and 15, lasting between two and four years. So what are these changes?

**Remember,
everyone matures
at a different rate. It
will happen: it's just
a matter of when.**

- ★ You will notice that your body's shape and size is changing. You may gain weight and begin to develop muscles. Your shoulders and chest broaden and you begin to grow taller.
- ★ You will find thicker, darker hair growth on your legs, feet, arms, underarms, face and your private area (pubic hair) and perhaps also on your chest and back.
- ★ Your glands produce more oil and so you will begin to sweat more. Your hair and face may be oilier than before,

and you might get spots or even acne on your face, shoulders and chest.

- ★ You will also experience a change in your voice. Your 'voice breaks' as a result of your voice box (larynx) getting bigger. To begin with, you may find that the pitch of your voice is slightly higher at times. Once this settles down your voice will sound deeper and louder.
- ★ During puberty, you will find that your bones are growing at such a fast rate that your muscles become stretched and cause pain, especially in your legs.
- ★ Some boys experience swollen, tender breasts. This is quite normal and can last up to 18 months.

All these changes are a blessing from Allah and mark your move from childhood into adulthood. Watching your body change can leave you feeling a little unsettled and worried. You may find that you feel a little anxious and self-conscious as you may not be developing at the same rate as your friends.

Every part of you will go through a growth spurt and this includes your private parts increasing in size too, both your penis and your testicles will appear and become bigger. The testes are two small organs that are found in the scrotum (the bag of skin that holds and helps to protect the testicles). These testes are responsible for making sperm (which will allow you to have a baby when you are settled and married in later life) and are involved in producing a hormone called testosterone.

Testosterone is an important hormone during male development as it helps the muscles to develop, the voice to deepen and for growing body hair.

You may find during your waking day that you feel a tingling sensation in your private area, and this can lead to your penis becoming hard and longer than usual. This is known as an erection and after a little time has passed the penis returns to a softer state and reduces back to what is a normal size for you. Erections start in the brain. Something you saw, felt, smelled, heard or thoughts makes your nerves send chemical messages to the blood vessels in the penis. The arteries in your private area relax and open up to let more blood flow in; as this happens the veins close up creating pressure and causing your penis to expand and hold until it passes.

Now that you are reaching the age of maturity, you may be taking more of an interest in the way you look in the hope of impressing members of the opposite sex. You may find that you are thinking of girls in a different way than before.

These feelings are perfectly natural but, as a Muslim, you should try to manage these thoughts. You may find that you are thinking of girls both during the day and perhaps while you are sleeping, through your dreams. As a result of these dreams (known as wet dreams), you might find that when you wake up, your bedding and clothing is a little wet as, through these dreams, the private part has released a sticky fluid (semen).

If you experience a wet dream and discharge of semen, you must take a special bath known as **ghusl** to purify yourself. You must perform ghusl as soon as possible otherwise you cannot perform salah, read or touch the Qur'an. Remember that any bedding and clothing which has become soiled by the discharge must be washed thoroughly. Ghusl must also be carried out in the event of a discharge of semen without a dream.

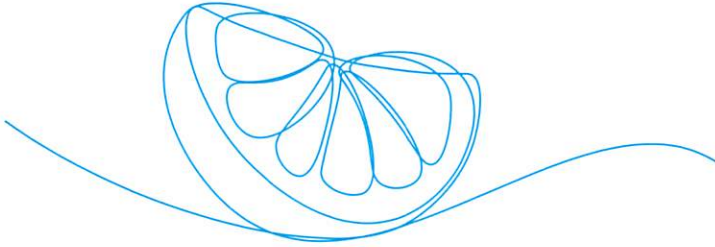
While wet dreams are normal, it is best not to encourage any un-Islamic thoughts. As a Muslim, you should never watch films which show men and women acting out a physical relationship with one another; you should not view magazines that feature pictures of naked or scantily clad people; you should not visit adult websites or apps with such content; or use chat lines. Looking at other men who are not dressed is also haram. All of these acts are considered as **zina** or adultery, which is a very serious sin in Islam as your eyes and ears are doing things which they should not be, whether that is in secret or in public. Remember that Allah sees and hears ALL things.

If you have engaged in any of the above acts, do not lose hope! Allah's kindness and mercy is vaster than His anger. There is nothing more Allah loves than for us to turn to Him and sincerely repent, to reflect on the sin, to seek forgiveness and to promise to try harder not to do it again. Have a look back to Chapter 4 for how to seek forgiveness.

If you have any questions or concerns about your changing body and feelings, it is best to speak to someone who has dealt with these changes: your father, an uncle, older brother, a male cousin, a Muslim therapist – there is always someone you can and should talk to who will understand and help you through this time. You do not have to struggle through this alone.



Taking Care of Your Body



Your body is a trust from Allah. You must look after it well because on the Day of Judgement you will be asked about how you treated it. Personal hygiene is extremely important for a Muslim, so it is essential that you take good care of this by showering regularly and performing wudu before you worship Allah.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

“Allah is Pure and Clean and He loves cleanliness and purity.”

(Mishkat)

Sometimes you might feel like not bothering to do your wudu, but did you know that wudu is an act of worship in itself? By performing wudu regularly, not only are your sins washed away, but those parts of the body that you wet will shine on the Day of Judgement? (Muslim). In addition, wudu refreshes you and keeps your body temperature regulated.

As well as washing your mouth out regularly during wudu, it is also a good idea to use a [miswak](#) (a special soft tooth stick) as was the custom of the Prophet, peace be upon him. This is an excellent way of keeping the mouth clean and your breath smelling fresh.

It is important that you keep your nails short because dirt that collects under your fingernails will end up in your mouth when you are eating and doesn't look very appealing.

As I mentioned earlier, you will begin to notice thick hair (pubic hair) growing around your private parts (penis) and your armpits. This is normal hair growth and marks your transition from boy to man. You need to remove this hair under your arms and from your private parts by shaving regularly, but certainly no more than forty days must pass before you do this. By shaving this hair, you help keep your body clean.

Hair on your chin will begin to grow and it is recommended to grow your beard when you feel you are ready for such a commitment. Moustache hair should also be shaved and not allowed to grow long.

You will also notice your skin becoming oilier and spots may appear. Be sure to wash and moisturise your face. Eating a nutritious diet of fresh fruit and vegetables and fewer unprocessed and fried foods will help with keeping your skin at its best.

Make sure that you change your clothes regularly and your underwear daily, as this will help keep you smelling fresh and clean.

Aside from doing wudu, Allah has instructed Muslims to perform ghusl when certain situations arise. You will need to perform ghusl each time you become unclean through discharge (semen), which is a sticky thick liquid that exits the penis. This can happen in the day or may happen whilst you are asleep. Having a 'wet dream' is out of your control and is not something to be ashamed of. However, you must purify yourself if you find this has happened before you are able to pray or touch the Qur'an.

It is recommended for all Muslim males to perform ghusl on Friday before going to the mosque for Jumu'ah salah.

How to perform ghusl:

1. Start your ghusl by making an intention or **niyah** to purify yourself.
2. Wash both hands up to and including the wrists.
3. Wash your private parts.
4. Perform wudu by washing your hands three times, washing your mouth out three times, taking water up your nose three times, washing your face three times, washing from your wrist to your elbow three times (starting with the right side), passing your wet hands over your head once, wiping your ears inside out once, and finally washing your feet, starting with the right foot.

5. After wudu, you need to pour water three times over your head, three times over your right shoulder, three times over the left shoulder and finally over your entire body. This is to make sure that by the end of your ghusl not even a single hair or place of a hair on your body is left dry otherwise the ghusl will be incomplete.

As well as taking care of your body from the outside, it is important that everything you eat is halal and pure ([tayyib](#)). This means that you should be careful about what you eat especially when you are eating out. Meat or chicken burgers from non-halal restaurants are haram. Saying Bismillah over a cooked burger before taking a bite does not make it halal. Sometimes, it may not be obvious that something is haram, for example, some cheese and sweets that contain haram animal products like rennet and gelatin. Always be careful about reading the labels of food that you eat and, if in doubt, then leave it.

Your body is growing and changing fast, and you will need to eat a balanced diet which will help towards building a healthy body and, therefore, a healthy mind. Your body will need a balance of proteins, such as meat, fish, eggs and cheese, and complex carbohydrates, such as rice and wholegrains. Try to have fruit and vegetables at every meal, while trying to cut down on fatty, processed junk foods and fizzy drinks which are not good for your health and will not help you concentrate in your studies.

It is also important to do a moderate amount of exercise which will help to keep you fit and prevent you from becoming overweight. However, be careful about overdoing it as too much exercise can be dangerous (especially lifting heavy weights) and leave you sore and exhausted. There is no need to buy supplements and body-building drinks; your body will grow when it is good and ready.

Some of the boys in your school may be smoking cigarettes, vaping or drinking alcohol. Smoking cigarettes is anything but cool. It makes you smell, damages the heart and lungs, poisons the blood and can cause death. Anything we do that destroys our body is haram. Once you become addicted to smoking, it is very difficult to kick the habit, so stay well clear of the 'cancer stick' which will lead you to a life of misery. Vaping is also harmful and addictive.

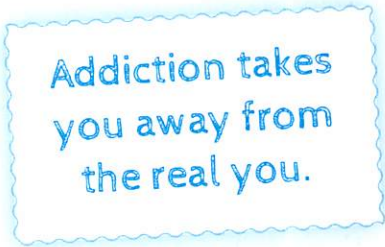
Drinking alcohol in public or in secret is haram. One drink is just as haram as many drinks. Alcohol has numerous devastating effects on the body and mind, as well as resulting in badly affected relationships. It will cloud your mind and impair your judgement and you may end up doing things under the influence of alcohol that you will later regret. That is why Allah has categorically prohibited the consumption, buying, selling and handling of alcohol.

You must be clear that recreational drugs are haram. They are strictly forbidden for all Muslims as they are considered a

poison. Don't feel pressured into trying them just because other boys are. Too many decent families are being torn apart because of young boys who are under the influence of drugs. It starts off as a small recreational pastime and, before you know it, you have completely changed and become a stranger to all those who love you. Drug usage must be avoided at all costs as it leads to certain addiction.

Addiction – whether that is alcohol or drugs or gaming – takes you away from the real you – the you that loves to please Allah, the

boy who values his family and thrives on being in a loving and supported environment, the you that feels at peace and belongs. Your studies begin to suffer. Your time management and general awareness is no longer of importance to you. The value of money is no longer a consideration and your entire day revolves around your next 'fix'. Relationships begin to suffer and the calm in your family home is now replaced by daily showdowns, destroying of household objects through tantrums and scuffles between you and your parents. Younger siblings' lives become affected as they watch on in fear and no longer view home as a safe and loving space. Often the police are dragged into this situation and the sad reality of it is that the 'friends' who enticed you into this way of life are far from your friends and nowhere to be seen now. It is far better to not go down this path of destruction in the first place, as it will leave you and your family physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually wrecked.



Addiction takes
you away from
the real you.

Although you may be tricked into thinking drugs or alcohol give you a 'high', the reality is that they leave you confused, unhappy, depressed and in a low and anxious state. No former drug user or alcoholic will ever say that they would wish this life on another human being. They are all filled with regret and sadness for destroying their own life, education and potential, and also dragging their loved ones with them. They will have spent time in prison or in trouble with the police. They will have spent years in rehabilitation programmes.

There is no such thing as harmless drug use. There is no such thing as a harmless drink of alcohol. Be very clear that these are dirty and expensive habits.

Drug use makes you steal from your family and others to fund your addiction.

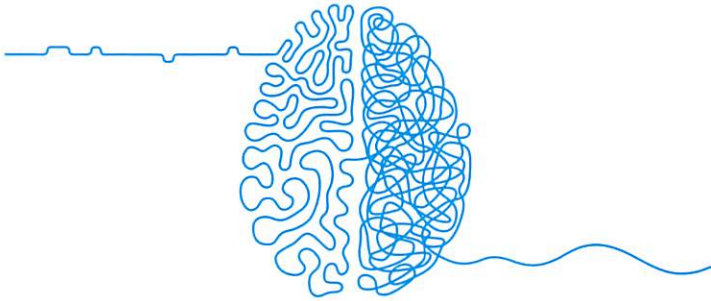
You fall in with gangs of evil people who have no problem harming or killing you.

You have to live with the stigma of being a 'druggie' long after you have become 'clean' because criminal records last for years and employers won't want to give you a job. That makes it hard for you to have enough money for even the basic things in life, like a decent place to live.

It really is not worth it to abuse your body.



Mental Health



We have learnt the importance of taking care of our physical health, but another area we must be mindful of is our mental wellbeing. The way you value yourself, what you think about yourself and the way you ‘speak to yourself’ are all key factors when it comes to your day-to-day life. It is really important to notice the way you feel from within. Feeling a little low, tired, uninspired and deflated are all normal from time to time as no one can always be happy!

However, when we find ourselves dipping and feeling really unhappy, full of worry, anxiety, despair and withdrawing more and more from activities and people we normally enjoy, then this is the time to take note and work on our mental state to get back to feeling better. Some ways in which to do this are:

- ★ **Talk about your feelings** – Find someone you trust and relate to and express what is on your mind. Bottling your thoughts can lead to the problem being blown up in your

mind. Worry begins to mount and you start to feel anxious. Just being listened to can help you feel supported and less alone. You can speak to a trusted family member, someone trusted at the local mosque or in the community or a member of your school safeguarding team.

- ★ **Writing your feelings** – If you find speaking is difficult, try writing it down. Try drawing or and writing some words that express how you feel in a diary or journal that is private. You can choose to show it to someone trusted. It might not seem cool to have a journal, but it can really help keep your head clear when it all feels too much.
- ★ **Exercise** – When you exercise, you have to come out of your head and thoughts and force your body to snap out of feeling lazy and down. Even though you don't feel like getting started, once you do, 'happy hormones' or endorphins are released into your body making your mind feel better immediately. Just try it!
- ★ **Eat healthy** – There is a strong link between what we eat and how we feel. If we fuel our bodies with the right foods and drinks, we will feel more in control, less sluggish and more productive.
- ★ **Busy yourself with something you enjoy / are good at** – Focus on what makes you happy. Team up with likeminded people who share your interests and get stuck into a

project. Force yourself to not be in your own company – this will help you to stay positive and reduce thinking time.

- ★ **Take a break, change your scene** – If you are lucky enough to have extended family nearby or close family friends who would welcome you for an afternoon or a weekend stayover then do it! Changing your scene, being around different people and letting people fuss over you is a great way to pick yourself up again and make you feel valued.
- ★ **Enjoy the great outdoors** – Spend time admiring Allah’s creation. It might be the local park or just down the road. Really focus on what you can hear, see, smell and feel. When you focus in detail on what is around you, it takes the focus off what is inside you and helps you gain perspective.
- ★ **Carry out an act of kindness** – When we do something good for someone else, we in turn feel great about ourselves. We can’t help it! So check in on an elderly neighbour or sick relative, offer your services and reap the benefits.
- ★ **Step away** – Social media and games are very powerful psychological tools. They are made by people who know how to get you addicted. If being online is draining you and making you unhappy, then step away. Take a break from your devices, block or delete apps, remove comments etc. Do whatever it takes to filter out external influences on your mind until you feel strong enough to handle things again.

- ★ **Your company** – The company you keep will affect your mood. So surround yourself with positive, supportive, God-conscious people. You may wish to attend a youth event at the local mosque, or hang out with good friends or family members. If you attend a gathering where Allah’s name is mentioned, you will find peace and be in the company of angels, who will mention your name to Allah.
- ★ **Turn to Allah** – I cannot stress this enough! I might have put this last on the list but it certainly is the most important and first port of call. Allah loves you multiple times more than even your parents, so turn to Him always. Turn to Him when you want to thank Him, turn to Him when you want to share your happiness, turn to Him when you are feeling sad and overwhelmed and angry and confused. Because He will get it. He will understand. He will listen and He will respond.

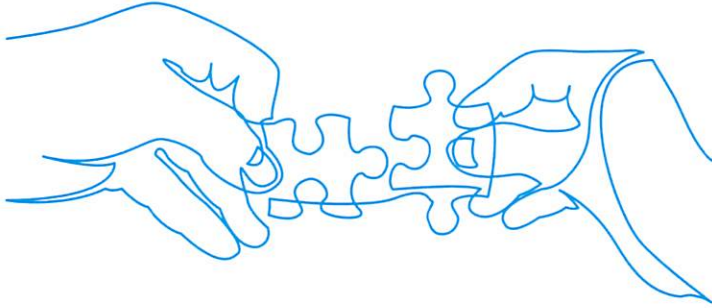
You have to do your bit by keeping firm on praying your salah, making du’a, staying in the state of wudu, busying your tongue with dhikr. That is the deal when Allah says,

“Remember Me and I shall remember you.”

(2:152)

This has got to be the biggest and greatest privilege any human being can receive from their Creator whose generosity is endless and knows no bounds.

Double Act



With so much conflicting pressure from social media and peer pressure and home to look or behave in a particular way, it can sometimes be much easier to just give in and be like the people you happen to be with at the time. This is the 'chameleon' Muslim.

At home he is the modestly dressed, soft-spoken son, who performs his salah when his parents ask him to. But outside the home, when he is with his friends, he wants to feel like he belongs with them. So he dresses in a way that is far more down with the guys, he might be a little louder, more boisterous, have more swag about him and not so careful about his prayers. Sometimes, it can go further, and the 'chameleon' Muslim hides the truth from his parents about where he is, who he is with and what he is doing.

But you don't always need to be out of the house or wearing different clothes to lead two lives. So many young Muslims dress and behave according to the Qur'an and sunnah, are proud of their identity and present a consistent face to everyone they meet. Then it all changes when he logs on to the internet and he morphs into 'cyber' Muslim.

'Cyber' Muslim begins his transformation by ditching his birth name, often chosen by his parents with great care, and instead replaces this with something far more upbeat, catchy, and 'meaningful'. This is accompanied by a close-up picture of himself with latest hairdo. Finally, this formerly well-spoken Muslim adopts a new language, style and attitude that are much more street cred.

In the comfort of his own room, whilst under the roof of his parents, 'cyber' Muslim is now ready and geared up to step into the big wide world of social networking. Here he has the opportunity to be who he wants, with whom he wants and whenever he wants. All this without leaving his front door or explaining his actions to Mum and Dad!

So where might 'cyber' Muslim hang out? Well, there are many sites for 'cyber' Muslim to explore in order to pick up new friends, reconnect with old ones and nose into other people's lives.

YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are all great pastimes for 'cyber' Muslim. Performing, texting, creating music

videos and uploading goofy pictures all seem like harmless fun. All this time, 'cyber' Muslim's parents are happy because they think their dear son is glued to the computer screen slaving over his latest assignment.

At this point, those of you reading will either realise that you are 'chameleon' or 'cyber' Muslim or you will know someone who is. So what's the issue? Well the problem is that leading a double life, whether it is in real life or in cyberspace, is being a hypocrite.

Ask yourself: Would you be happy for your parents to see your 'cyber' persona or to bump into you when you are out with your friends, or would you be ashamed?

If you minimise a window on your laptop when your parents come into the room or

cross the road to avoid them, then that means you are cheating yourself and the people around you. Is it right to take advantage of the fact that Mum and Dad trust you to get on with your schoolwork or be at a friend's house when you might actually be on social media collecting 'subscribers' and likes or out and about? You may be able to hide your double life from your parents or the community, but Allah is Al-Baseer, the All-Seeing. You will never be able to hide from the One who is All-Knowing.



“And nothing is hidden from your Lord.”

(Surah 10:61)

Ask yourself do you want to be friends with other people who lead double lives, are hypocrites and do not respect their religion? If they can lie to their parents who love them and look after them, what kind of friends will they be to you? This is true for the real world as well the cyber world.

Be careful of whom you spend time with online or whom you follow, invite or accept as 'friends' to join or view your page. If it is haram to have a relationship of any kind with a female in the real world, then the same thing is true online. Ideally there is no need to be on every social networking site there is.

However, if you feel that you really need to have an online presence, then please be cautious about what you relay and show about yourself. Be sure to implement privacy settings by restricting viewing access, only accepting and sending requests to those you know or those you can truly benefit from.

I'm not asking you to close down every account but limit such activities, keep it in perspective and don't allow your device to rule over what's really important in life. Be true to yourself in all situations, be it when face-to-face with others, through your words spoken down the phone, through the messages sent to others or even when sat in front of your webcam.

Be mindful that every action is being recorded by the angels and your limbs will speak either for you or against you on the Day of Judgement.

A note to those of you who know a 'chameleon' or 'cyber' Muslim: Alhamdulillah you are true to yourself and realise the value of upholding the 'real' you to everyone around you. But that doesn't mean that you can sit back and be smug! You have a duty to let your friends know if they are going down a path that will earn them the displeasure of Allah or will compromise their dignity and safety.

I am not saying that the internet and social media are all bad. There are many, many great aspects of using the internet and social media sites. One is being able to reconnect and make new friends and contacts. Communication is often quicker and can help reduce levels of loneliness for those who are far from friends and family. Real time posting often leads to a heightened sense of awareness of current issues, events, appeals and puts you in touch with people of similar interests. Social sites are a great place to show case your work, projects and ideas and allow you to take inspiration from others. And of course, it's fun!

All I am saying is that you must be mindful of the pitfalls with having an online presence because it can be hard to see how far you can fall in and then it is so hard to come out. An increasing number of people are spending the majority of their waking day compulsively using social media, neglecting face-to-face interactions and other responsibilities. Night and day rolls into one as hours and hours are frittered away checking your status, uploading content and checking in on those you follow. This has a negative impact on your health and wellbeing.

Insecurities arise when you begin to believe that your life is dull, average and unappealing as you see account after account littered with holiday pictures, good food, must-have expensive purchases, endless followers, likes. You are made to believe that these influencers, these social media ‘stars’ have it all and your once happy contented life is lacking all of this!

This mindset is psychologically damaging and results in low self-esteem, feelings of loneliness, depression and ingratitude. You become consumed by people you don’t have any real connection with, and instead start to lose the bond with those you have under your own roof!

If you are someone who chooses to ‘put yourself out there’ then please be careful as to how much you choose to share and the image you wish to portray. Don’t lose your true identity just to please the creation of Allah; rather let Him be The One who leaves a ‘comment and a like’ in your book of great deeds, insha’Allah.

A note to any parents reading: Please be aware of all the latest activities that children of your children’s age group may be involved in, online or otherwise. Do not allow your children to pull the wool over your eyes; show them that you are on top of things. Show them that you are part of THEIR world.



Heroes



Throughout our life many people will come and go, and in some way, each one of them will have an impact on our character, thoughts and actions. We may find strength and courage in people we know as well as being inspired by those we see on social media or TV – athletes, singers, models, and actors. As glamorous and successful as their lives may seem to us, their gains and successes are temporary. Today they are held in high esteem. Tomorrow they are forgotten by those who claim to be their ‘fans’. True success isn’t about money or material things. True success is standing firm in your beliefs, regardless of the circumstances; striving to do the right thing, even when it is a struggle. It is this type of success that leads to bliss in the hereafter. In Islam, there are many great men we can look up to, take strength from, be inspired by and be reminded of our real goals in life.

Studying the seerah of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, teaches us about the greatest man to have ever walked the earth. Even before the Prophet, peace be upon him, became a Messenger of Allah at the age of forty, there are countless stories and accounts of him showing his kindness, honesty, integrity, intelligence and compassion. These are all admirable traits that we can try and implement in our own lives.

In the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is asked to follow the path of Prophet Ibrahim, on him be peace. So what is special about the Prophet Ibrahim? He was asked by Allah to leave his wife and child in a desolate barren land; he was ordered to sacrifice his young son, Ismail; he was thrown into the flaming hot fire for his beliefs. He did everything that Allah asked of him and never lost hope and trust in Allah to save him from each and every trial that stood before him. It was because of his close bond and love for Allah that no harm ever came to him or his loved ones and this is why we send blessings to both these Prophets in our salah.

The Companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, displayed sacrifice, courage, strength and devotion to Allah. Great men like Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, may Allah be pleased with them all, are just a few of these select Companions who have been promised entry into Jannah with no questions asked!

Ironically, Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, had initially set out to kill the Prophet, peace be upon him, as his heart was closed to the idea of Allah. Then he heard a recitation of the Qur'an and his heart turned and he became Muslim. The biggest lesson we can learn here is that through listening and reading the Quran and engaging with it, we can truly understand the beauty behind Allah's message that can turn our lives around for the better.

The 10 Companions promised Jannah are:

1. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq
2. Umar ibn al-Khattab
3. 'Uthman ibn Affan
4. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib
5. Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah,
6. az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam
7. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf
8. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas
9. Sa'id ibn Zayd
10. Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah

An Abyssinian named Bilal was kept as a slave in Makkah by Umayyah bin Khalaf. Umayyah could not tolerate the fact that Islam was a fast-growing religion and punished Bilal for accepting Islam by whipping him and placing hot boulders on his chest in the burning sand. All that Bilal said was, "The One, The One" referring to Allah, trusting in Allah. What supreme strength

and courage! Abu Bakr freed Bilal, may Allah be pleased with them both, and Allah elevated Bilal to being the first caller to prayer ([muadhdhin](#)) at the Prophet's mosque in Madinah. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to say about Bilal, "I hear Bilal's footsteps in front of me in paradise." To this day Bilal, may Allah be pleased with him, continues to be mentioned and respected by all who follow Islam simply because Allah loved the fact that he did not deviate from the Straight Path when many others would have crumbled.

Ali ibn Abi Talib's life is one to be admired. Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him's young cousin and the first child to accept Islam at the age of 10.

Remember that Ali's father, Abu Talib, was not Muslim, so it was not easy for this young boy to embrace Islam, knowing he may upset his own father. Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saw the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, bowing down in prayer. He then joined them in prayer, not in haste, but after making a considered decision about what he was doing.

Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was a perfect example of someone whose faith was built upon the guidance relayed directly from the Prophet, peace be upon him, which shows the importance of keeping good people close to you to learn from and grow with.

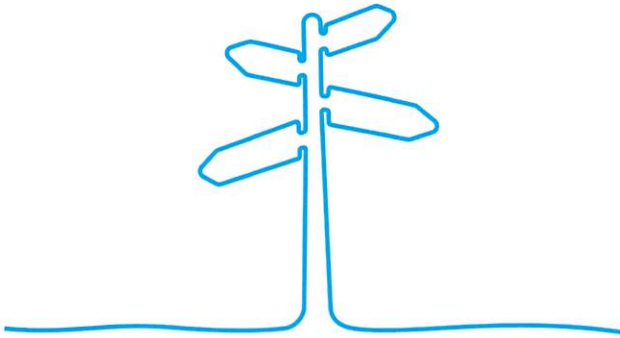
In the year of the migration to Madinah, Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was 22 years old. Once again, he stepped up and showed his strength and trust in Allah. He risked his own life by sleeping in the Prophet's bed as an impersonator to trick those who were looking to kill the Prophet, peace be upon him. The enemies of the Prophet opened the door only to find Ali there instead!

Despite being so young, Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was a great aid to the Prophet, peace be upon him, by running the family business, spreading the message of Islam and was known for being loyal and dependable. He later went on to marry the Prophet, peace be upon him's daughter, Fatima, may Allah be pleased with her.

Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was also a great scholar of Islam with a deep understanding of the Qur'an. Many of his sermons, letters and sayings are available for us today to act upon in our lives. His life shows us that us that even as a youngster, you can make mature life choices and be a real change and help in other people's lives.

There are so many more role models, but they all had one thing in common – we remember them through the centuries for their character, their strength, their courage, their unwavering commitment. These are timeless role models.

Why All These Rules?!



It is very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Islam is just a whole heap of rules to follow. Why does Allah need us to jump through all of these hoops? What do we get out of it?

Well the answer has two parts:

Firstly, Allah is our Creator and the Creator knows best how the creation should function. If you have a tech issue with your device, you will ask tech support for help. If you have a question about physics, you will ask your teacher or look it up. You cannot figure these things out yourself. You need to go outside of yourself to find the answer and it's a blessing to have someone to ask.

So in the same way, we need to look outside ourselves for the answer on how to live. If we try to figure it ourselves, we would get it wrong and it would take too long for us to work it out. So

in His mercy, Allah tells us. He tells us how to live to get the best out of our lives in this world and the next life in the hereafter.

Just like you know that you have to charge your phone battery, but not overcharge it; that you shouldn't drop your phone on the concrete or submerge it in water, otherwise it won't work, Allah knows which conditions are best for the human being. And these are His laws.

When human beings all live by the laws of Allah, then each individual can be his best self and communities and societies and nations all live in harmony with each other and with the environment.

When we don't follow Allah's laws, we get poverty, crime and injustice, and evil takes over and no one is really happy or safe or contented.

You might not think that you doing your wudu and salah, for example, makes a difference to the world. But done over a lifetime, it makes you humble, disciplined, punctual, kind, just and keeps your heart pure. Now if everyone did that then the world would be a totally different place.

So we follow Allah's laws in totality because they help us be our best self as a person and as a society, so that everyone can live a good life. We may not understand why each and every rule is good for us, but we trust in Allah that it is.

Now we know that following Allah's laws benefits us in this world. But they also benefit us in the hereafter in ways that we cannot even imagine.

Let's delve deeper into what we can look forward to for having spent our lives refraining from evil and working hard to please our Lord and Master. Once our time has expired on this earth, we will be returned to Allah with only our deeds to show Him. Those who pleased Allah and worshipped Him to the best of their ability and were good to His creation will be admitted into Jannah.

You will be admitted to Jannah through one of its seven gates that best describes your work on this Earth.

- ★ **Gate as-Salah:** Those who pray on time and really focus in their salah can enter Jannah through this gate.
- ★ **Gate as-Sadaqah:** Those who give consistently and generously in charity will enter Jannah through this gate. Charity is considered anything from giving money, giving someone your time and efforts, a loving smile, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, nursing the sick.
- ★ **Gate al-Kazimeen al-Ghaiz wal Afina Anin Nas:** This gate is reserved for those who control their anger and forgive others. Knowing you are right in a situation is sometimes enough. Don't fight every battle. Don't think you need to prove yourself every time. Remember Allah knows your worth and those that held their tongue to create ease and defuse a situation shall enter Jannah through this gate.

- ★ **Gate al-Iman:** This gate is for those who really trust in Allah and who always want to please Allah.
- ★ **Gate al-Jihad:** Those who pass away whilst defending their religion will enter Jannah through this gate.
- ★ **Gate ar-Rayyan:** This gate is for those who fast much and do their absolute best in Ramadan.
- ★ **Gate al-Hajj:** Those who complete a sincere Hajj will enter Jannah from this gate.
- ★ **Gate ad-Dhikr:** This gate is for those who remembered Allah frequently and their tongues were constantly moist in the remembrance of Allah.

And if we fall into many of these categories, then we can choose which gate we wish to enter the Gardens of Paradise through. Let's aim to work hard and be amongst those people!

Our minds cannot fully comprehend the beauty and magnificence of Jannah, but we have been given some descriptions:

**Allah has said about what awaits in Jannah,
"I have prepared for you things that no eyes
have seen, what no ears have heard and
what no heart has felt."**

(Surah 32:17)

Jannah will be filled with all our 'firsts' and each time things will become better and even more pleasing to us.

There will be no concept of time in Jannah. The fun, the laughter, the element of surprise, the happiness you feel has no end. As there will be no sense of time, you will never be late for anything. You will never be rushed and above all you will be forever healthy and young! That means no aches or pains, no flu, no glasses, no tummy aches, no doctors and dentists, no medicines, no diseases.

You can do whatever you like with your time. Stay in bed, stay up late, hang out with friends. There are no chores, no school, no constraints, no brushing your teeth or cutting your nails.

The weather will be just as you like it, it will never be too cold nor too hot and that means no hayfever or sweating or freezing.

Your home in Jannah will be massive, made of gold, silver, pearls and diamonds, filled with whatever you wish, with as many cars, consoles, trainers, games rooms as you can think of! All this and much much more will be waiting for you, insha'Allah.

The inhabitants of Jannah will be perfect in every way. Whatever you desire will be given to you without hesitation, you won't have to go via Mum or Dad, nor save up for it. Think it and it is yours then and there.

All your loved ones who made it to Jannah will be there too. Elderly grandparents, family members and friends who may have left this world already will be restored to great youthful health. In Jannah there is no sadness, no anxiety, no jealousy, no fear, no danger, no competitive behaviour. No one will feel shy, embarrassed, inadequate, insecure, unconfident. No one has more power over another – everyone is happy for each other. Nothing but calm and peace will fill your heart and mind.

Rivers will be made of milk, fresh clear sparkling water, and honey. Fruits and all food and drink will be permissible to eat and drink. They will be delicious, and the second bite will taste better than the first and the third better than the second! You can eat as much as you wish and you won't ever feel sick, full, ill or get overweight.

When we feel like we have everything before us, when we feel nothing us could ever make us want any more or feel any happier, you will then hear a voice that will ask, "Is there anything more that you want?" The inhabitants of Jannah will reply by saying, "What more could we possibly want?" Allah will then reply, "I will always be pleased with you" and then, at that moment, the greatest of gifts will be revealed – Allah Himself! For the very first time you will see your Lord and Creator.

Now imagine that! You have worked so hard to please The One whom you cannot see. You have worshipped Him and trusted Him and believed in Him as if you can see Him. Your reward is

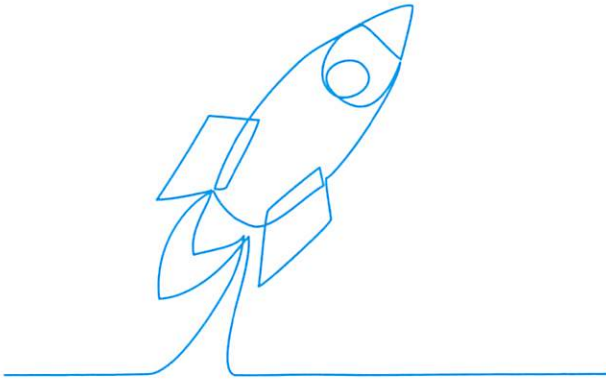
that the Great and Majestic King will reveal Himself to you! That is the Ultimate Privilege, reserved for the elite – a sight no eye can imagine and so beautiful that your eyes will never want to look away.

Our lives here on Earth are momentary. Our desires are illusions. So make the most of your time in this world and sow the seeds of a beautiful eternal life, where you can sit with the great men we have talked about including the Prophet, peace be upon him.

The struggle is real but keep your eye on the prize!



Parting Words



So we have taken a brief journey into what you can expect while you are growing up. It is understandable if you are feeling a little confused about your identity as a Muslim and daunted by the years ahead of you.

The best advice I can give you is to keep remembering Allah. Remember Him through the good and happy times as well as the difficult times. Praying to Allah for guidance is always the right thing to do.

Friends are important, but they are not everything. You should aim to please Allah and your parents by always being mindful of your language, actions and behaviour. This will earn you

respect. Don't waste these precious years by slavishly becoming a follower of fashion, social media trends and celebrities. Rise to the challenge, be your own person, set your own goals.

Above all, be proud to be a young Muslim and stand up for your beliefs. Remember that Islam is about respect, kindness and peace.

I pray that Allah keeps you on the Right Path always and that Allah guides and blesses you in all that you do. Ameen.



Quick Quiz

Circle the answer that applies most to you and then see how you have done on the next page.

1. Are you careful about not buying or wearing designer labels?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

2. Do you perform salah five times a day?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

3. Are you careful about not listening to music which angers Allah?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

4. Are you careful about whom you choose to be friends with?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

5. Do you read the Qur'an daily?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

6. Do you consider that Allah sees and hears all things that you do through the day and night?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

7. Do you avoid temptation by staying well clear of non-Islamic hangout places, real and online?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

8. Do you put your parents' view before your friends'?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

9. Are you careful about covering your awrah?

→ Always

→ Mostly

→ Sometimes

→ Never

Find which answer you have circled the most number of times and see what it says about you:

'Always' – Well done! You seem to be aware of your Islamic duties and are careful about fulfilling them. Keep it up!

'Mostly' – Good for you! You are mostly aware of what you should be doing, you just need to push yourself a bit more.

'Sometimes' – You do know right from wrong but you don't always practise it. Do you find yourself behaving differently around different people or in different places? Remember that Allah is everywhere. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain by doing the right thing.

'Never' – Well done for being honest. Try to make a small resolution at the beginning of each week or month and then stick to it. It will become easier to incorporate Islamic habits into your daily life.

Have you ever had questions about growing up as a Muslim but didn't know who to ask? Maybe you have questions about your faith, your changing body, your relationships, your studies and how it is all supposed to fit together. Well, this is the perfect book for you!

In *A Muslim Boy's Guide to Life's Big Changes*, Sami Khan explains all in a 'big brother' way with lots of encouragement, empathy and practical advice.

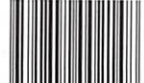
As well as having two young boys, Sami spends lots of time fundraising for good causes both in the UK and abroad while also trying to understand the needs and challenges of Muslim youth today.

Recommended for ages 10-14



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