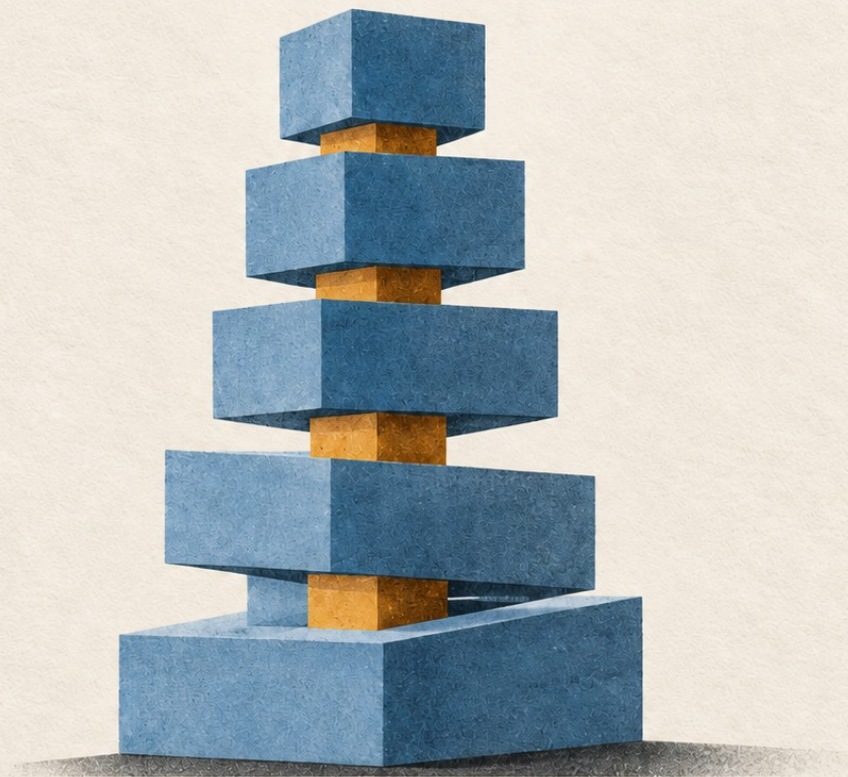


Until the Soul Stands Firm

— Volume One —

Nurturing the Self



مدارج

Until the Soul Stands Firm

Volume One

Nurturing the Self

Patience, self-discipline and the steady work of becoming responsible

English edition

The Volumes in This Series

Volume One: Nurturing the Self

Patience, striving against one's own failings and consistency; raising a family; and the changing relationship between responsibility and ability at different stages of life.

Volume Two: Worship and Lessons in Following Good Examples

Consistency in worship, and what the Prophet's guidance and accounts of the earliest Muslim generations teach us about learning and acting on what we know.

Volume Three: Rights and the Building of Community

Our responsibilities to others at home and at work, shared obligations, and the contribution contemporary research can make within its proper limits.

Volume Four: A Practical Programme for Steadfast Living

Choosing an area of life to work on, learning a skill, observing how we carry it out, and responding to setbacks while continuing the work.

You may read the volumes in order or turn to the subject you need. To put them into practice, choose a clear responsibility and a specific area of life. The short introductory cycle and the twelve-week programme are suggested alternatives; you do not have to combine their durations.

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Dedication

For those who know the way, yet find returning to it exhausting. For those whose days are so crowded with responsibilities that their own needs, and the needs of people they love, keep being postponed. For those who begin eagerly, then feel ashamed to try again because they did not finish the last time.

This book is for you, and for us alongside you. We all need to learn how to guide ourselves towards good without treating ourselves unjustly; how to give a task its due without neglecting another responsibility; and how to remain faithful to our duties when enthusiasm fades.

It is also for a father and mother teaching their child to pray, for a teacher who remains patient with a pupil, and for anyone struggling with something no one else sees, who rises the next morning to try once more.

We ask Allah to guide us to the best deeds, and to grant us sincerity, gentleness and steadfastness in carrying them out. Please remember us, our parents, and everyone who helped this book reach you in a sincere prayer.

Written and distributed by Madarej.

Introduction

We may know what would benefit us and still let a whole day pass without doing it. We want to pray with composure, prepare for work and spend time with our families. Then demands crowd in, postponement stretches on, and evening finds us facing promises we have not kept. We heard the advice and welcomed it. What remains is to learn how to move from loving what is good to remaining faithful to it.

That distance is the subject of this book. We want to understand discipline in Muslim life in a way that brings the heart and action together. Why do we act? What should we do, and how? Whose rights are we responsible for? What should we do when we feel reluctant, when our day changes, or when we miss something we intended? The aim is not to fill every hour until no empty space remains. It is to give each responsibility its proper place in life and fulfil it as far as we are able.

This education begins early. A young child sits down to eat and learns a particular action, sees worship repeated at home, and comes to understand that other people have private spaces that cannot be entered at will. Responsibility grows with the child. An appointment becomes a commitment to someone who is waiting. Money carries obligations towards others. Work entrusted to us requires knowledge and ability. In later life our strength changes, yet meaningful action remains possible in forms suited to our capacity.

Along the way, we learn to practise patience in what benefits us, to work against our own failings without burdening ourselves with demands Allah has not made, to persevere, and to return well after an interruption. We learn when easing a burden helps us remain consistent and when it becomes a cover for neglect.

Worship has a central place in this life. Muslims do not learn faithfulness to Allah from an abstract idea alone. They pray, purify themselves and fast, learning to follow a command in its prescribed time and form. Bringing the effects of worship into our conduct, however, requires attention and effort: truthful speech must reach the marketplace, respect for time must shape our appointments, and regard for others' rights must enter our homes. Life should not remain a collection of disconnected pieces.

We hope this book accompanies you into a real situation: a responsibility to fulfil, a fault in character to address, an act of worship to maintain more faithfully, or knowledge to put to use. You need not promise to repair everything today. You need to understand what is required of you, make an honest beginning, and learn to protect it when the days become ordinary and no one is applauding.

Chapter One: Why Knowing Is Not Enough

Sincere intentions and postponed action

Imagine a reader who buys a book they need, puts it beside the bed, and then spends several weeks reaching for the phone whenever they come home tired. The value of reading is not what they lack. Their proposed remedy, however, is a promise to read for a full hour, rather than a decision about the first page, a manageable time, and the distractions that need to be moved away.

This is an imagined example, and its question is more specific than a judgement about someone's character: which part of the process broke down? Was the task unclear? Was the purpose sound? Was the person able to do it? Did the surroundings help? Was a decision to begin ever made? Saying 'Be disciplined' does not answer these questions. Yet analysing circumstances can itself become another way to postpone action. We need both honesty about our choices and enough understanding to make action possible.

Purpose comes before busyness

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Actions are only according to intentions, and each person will have only what they intended. Whoever migrated for some worldly gain or for a woman to marry, their migration is to that for which they migrated.’¹

The hadith does not make examining our intentions a substitute for acting. It directs action towards its purpose. A person may organise their time in order to cheat. Another may learn a useful skill and then use it to harm people. The ability to carry something out is not, by itself, uprightness.

In this book, discipline means knowing what we are responsible for, bringing ourselves to carry it out correctly in its proper setting, respecting the limits of our ability and the rights of others, and putting right our shortcomings. This is our own working definition, not a transmitted religious formulation. It raises five questions: What must I learn? Is the action

¹ Reported by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, chapter on how revelation began to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, hadith 1.

permissible? Do I have the means to carry it out? What step will I actually take? Who will be affected by my decision?

When restraint is the action required

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ، إِنَّكَ الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ»

Meaning in English: ‘The strong person is not the one who overpowers others in wrestling. The strong person is the one who controls himself when angry.’²

Strength here lies in self-command, not in defeating another person. The hadith does not deny the feeling of anger; it prevents that feeling from becoming an excuse to insult someone. The action needed may be to hold back a message written in anger, then return to it and ask: What legitimate point am I trying to make? Which words cause hurt without making that point clearer? This is a suggested practical application, not a religiously prescribed waiting period or a treatment for every cause of anger.

2 Reported by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Manners, chapter on guarding against anger, hadith 6114.

Other people's rights come before the appearance of achievement

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said:

«مَظْلُ الْغَنِيِّ ظُلْمٌ»

Meaning in English: 'For a person who can afford to pay to delay repayment is injustice.'³

The statement is brief and decisive: someone who can repay a debt when it is due but keeps delaying wrongs the person owed. Postponing a personal project is therefore not equivalent to postponing a payment on which another person depends. The first step towards better discipline may be to fulfil an existing obligation, rather than to add a new habit.

The same distinction applies to an organisation that finishes a project early but delays its workers' wages. Its execution of the project may be orderly, yet that success does not cancel the injustice. Identifying both aspects is more accurate than unqualified praise or condemnation, and it shows where change is needed.

What can modern research contribute?

Moffitt and colleagues followed a group from childhood into adulthood and found associations between early measures of

3 Reported by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Loans, chapter on delay by a debtor able to pay being injustice, hadith 2400.

self-control and later health, financial and behavioural outcomes, taking account of factors including intelligence and social background. This was a longitudinal observational study. It supports the importance of the question, but it does not mean a child's future is written by one test or establish the effectiveness of a particular programme.⁴

A review by Robson and colleagues brought together 150 studies of childhood self-regulation and later outcomes. This breadth of evidence takes the discussion beyond an individual's impression. It does not, however, validate everything described as discipline training. We still need to know what was measured, who took part, and how far the findings can reasonably be applied.⁵

The educational response we propose is to teach people how to organise their actions, rather than merely attach labels to them after a mistake: explain the action, provide an opportunity to try it, and examine what got in the way. This is a practical

4 Terrie E. Moffitt et al., 'A Gradient of Childhood Self-Control Predicts Health, Wealth, and Public Safety', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108(7), 2693–2698 (2011).

5 David A. Robson, Mark S. Allen and Steven J. Howard, 'Self-Regulation in Childhood as a Predictor of Future Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic Review', *Psychological Bulletin* 146(4), 324–354 (2020).

interpretation we discuss, not an intervention those two studies tested in every home and school.

A beginning you can review

Choose one delayed commitment and describe what happened without passing judgement on your whole character: 'I promised to send the file on Tuesday evening, but did not open the data until Wednesday evening.' Then identify what was missing: knowledge, a check that the action was permissible, ability, a decision, or attention to someone else's rights.

The purpose is neither to excuse ourselves nor to punish ourselves with blame. It is to keep a particular mistake from becoming a fog over the whole of life. Begin with an event you know, a responsibility you want to fulfil, and a cause you are trying to understand. A promise to improve can then become an action you can examine.

Chapter Two: The Promise of Guidance Along the Path of Striving

A promise that opens the way to hope

Allah Most High says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾.

Translation of the meaning: ‘As for those who strive for Our sake, We shall surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed Allah is with those who do good.’ (Al-‘Ankabut 29:69)

This verse offers hope to someone weary of their own failings. It is not a guarantee that every human desire will be fulfilled through persistence. The striving is ‘for Our sake’, and the verse closes by speaking of doing good. Both the purpose and the way of pursuing it belong to its meaning.

The surah opens with trial: ﴿أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا﴾. Translation of the meaning: ‘Do people think they will be left to say, “We believe,” without being tested?’ (Al-‘Ankabut 29:2). It also states that the benefit of striving returns to the person who strives: ﴿وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾. Translation of the meaning: ‘Whoever strives does so only for their own benefit. Indeed, Allah has no need of any of creation.’ (Al-‘Ankabut 29:6). This context does not cancel the range of meanings

discussed by Qur'an commentators. It does prevent us from separating the promise from servitude to Allah.

Reading the commentaries

Al-Tabari writes:

«يقول تعالى ذكره: والذين قاتلوا هؤلاء المفتريين على الله كذبا من كفار قريش، المكذبين بالحق لما جاءهم فينا، مُبتغين بقتالهم علو كلمتنا، ونُصرة ديننا (لَتَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا) يقول: لنوفقنهم لإصابة الطريق المستقيمة، وذلك إصابتهم دين الله الذي هو الإسلام الذي بعث الله به محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم (وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ) يقول: وإن الله لمع من أحسن من خلقه، فجاهد فيه أهل الشرك مُصَدِّقا رسوله فيما جاء به من عند الله بالعون له، والنصرة على من جاهد من أعدائه»

Translation: ‘He, exalted by His mention, says: Those who fought these unbelievers of Quraysh who fabricated lies against Allah and denied the truth when it came to them, for Our sake, seeking through their fighting to raise Our word and support Our religion—“We shall surely guide them to Our ways”—He says: We shall grant them success in finding the straight path, namely, attaining Allah's religion, Islam, with which Allah sent Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. “And indeed Allah is with those who do good”—He says: Allah is with those of His creation who do good, who strive for His sake against the people of polytheism, believing His Messenger in what he

brought from Allah, by helping them and granting them victory over the enemies against whom they strive.’⁶

Al-Tabari explains the meaning in terms of supporting the religion and seeking Allah's pleasure. Al-Baghawi records other explanations of striving:

«والذين جاهدوا فينا) الذين جاهدوا المشركين لنصرة ديننا (لنهديهم سبلنا) لنثبتهم على ما قاتلوا عليه. وقيل: لنزيدهم هدى كما قال: "ويزيد الله الذين اهتدوا هدى" (مريم: ٧٦)، وقيل: لنوفقهم لإصابة الطريق المستقيمة، والطريق المستقيمة هي التي يوصل بها إلى رضا الله عز وجل. قال سفيان بن عيينة: إذا اختلف الناس فانظروا ما عليه أهل الثغور، فإن الله قال: (والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهديهم سبلنا)، وقيل: المجاهدة هي الصبر على الطاعات. قال الحسن: أفضل الجهاد مخالفة الهوى. وقال الفضيل بن عياض: والذين جاهدوا في طلب العلم لنهديهم سبل العمل به. وقال سهل بن عبد الله: والذين جاهدوا في إقامة السنة لنهديهم سبل الجنة. وروي عن ابن عباس: والذين جاهدوا في طاعتنا لنهديهم سبل ثوابنا. (وإن الله لمع المحسنين) بالنصر والمعونة في دنياهم وبالثواب والمغفرة في عقابهم»

6 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan, commentary on al-‘Ankabut 29:69.

Translation: “Those who strive for Our sake”: those who strive against the polytheists in support of Our religion. “We shall surely guide them to Our ways”: We shall keep them firm upon that for which they fought. It has also been said: We shall increase them in guidance, as He says, “Allah increases in guidance those who are guided” (Maryam 19:76). It has also been said: We shall grant them success in finding the straight path; the straight path is that by which Allah's pleasure is reached. Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah said: When people differ, look at what the people stationed at the frontiers follow, for Allah said, “Those who strive for Our sake, We shall surely guide them to Our ways.” It has also been said: striving means patience in acts of obedience. Al-Hasan said: The best striving is to oppose one's whims. Al-Fudayl ibn ‘Iyad said: Those who strive in seeking knowledge, We shall guide them to the ways of acting upon it. Sahl ibn ‘Abd Allah said: Those who strive to establish the Sunnah, We shall guide them to the ways of Paradise. It is reported from Ibn ‘Abbas: Those who strive in obedience to Us, We shall guide them to the ways of Our reward. “And indeed Allah is with those who do good”: with victory and help in their worldly life, and with reward and forgiveness in their life to come.’⁷

The second passage shows the range of explanations al-Baghawi records: supporting the religion, remaining firm, being

7 Al-Husayn ibn Mas‘ud al-Baghawi, Ma‘alim al-Tanzil, commentary on al-‘Ankabut 29:69.

patient in obedience, seeking knowledge and establishing the Sunnah.

‘For Our sake’: the purpose that directs effort

A person may persevere so that others will never call them weak, or organise their time to become more accomplished at wrongdoing. ‘How can I become stronger?’ is therefore not a sufficient question. First ask, ‘What am I using my strength for?’ If you are learning a skill to support yourself and benefit your family, keep that purpose present in both your choice and your conduct. If you want to memorise the Qur'an, do not let a page count obstruct sound recitation or acting on what you learn.

Planning serves this purpose; it does not rule over it. Someone may stop a voluntary act to meet the need of a parent who has no one else to help, or reduce a workload their body cannot bear. A change of plan is not always weakness, just as a desire for rest does not excuse neglect of a duty. What matters is which responsibilities are competing and what the person's actual capacity is.

‘We shall surely guide them’: hope that still requires learning

Begin with the good you already understand, seeking Allah's help and asking for further understanding. Action cannot replace knowledge: we may put effort into a mistaken method.

Knowledge cannot replace action either: we may wait to understand every detail before doing what is already clear.

The verse does not mean that a person who strives is infallible, or that their feeling of being guided is evidence binding on other people. Assessing statements and actions requires knowledge and fairness; judging what is hidden in people's hearts is not ours to do. If a student finds a subject difficult, they should ask and reconsider, rather than treat their uncertainty as proof that good has been withheld from them.

Excellence in conduct and regard for rights

Hardship alone does not measure whether a path is sound. A person who protects their time but wounds their family whenever they interrupt needs to improve their character. A researcher who collects hundreds of references and attributes claims to works they have not read needs honesty, not a longer list.

Ask of your project: Where do I need to do better—in my intention, my learning, my methods, my legitimate claims on others, or their claims on me? These are applications we suggest in the light of the verse and its commentaries, not transmitted interpretations of each individual situation.

Do not turn Allah's promise into an accusation against someone who is struggling: 'If you were really striving, you would no longer have this problem.' Their life may contain a mixture of limited knowledge, legitimate impediments, illness and

hardship, and we do not know their inward state. It is more helpful to point them towards a clear good action, help them learn and remove obstacles, while preserving their responsibility for what they can do.

Hold the meaning of the verse together: striving for Allah, hoping for His guidance, and seeking to act well. Begin with what you know, ask about what you do not, and correct your mistakes. A slow journey is not permission to give up.

Chapter Three: Learning to Be Patient

‘Whoever strives to be patient, Allah will grant him patience’

Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«أَنَّ نَاسًا مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ سَأَلُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَعْطَاهُمْ، ثُمَّ سَأَلُوهُ فَأَعْطَاهُمْ، حَتَّى نَفِدَ مَا عِنْدَهُ فَقَالَ: مَا يَكُونُ عِنْدِي مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ أَدَّخِرَهُ عَنْكُمْ، وَمَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرْ يُعْفَهِهُ اللَّهُ، وَمَنْ يَسْتَغْنِ يُغْنِهِ اللَّهُ، وَمَنْ يَتَصَبَّرْ يُصَبِّرْهُ اللَّهُ، وَمَا أُعْطِيَ أَحَدٌ عَطَاءً خَيْرًا وَأَوْسَعَ مِنَ الصَّبْرِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Some people of the Ansar asked the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and he gave to them. They asked him again, and he gave to them, until everything he had was gone. He then said: “Whatever good I have, I will not withhold from you. Whoever seeks to refrain from asking, Allah will help him do so. Whoever seeks to be free of need, Allah will make him free of need. Whoever strives to be patient, Allah will grant him patience. No one has been given a gift better and more ample than patience.”’⁸

8 Reported by Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Zakat, chapter on refraining from asking, hadith 1469.

He gave until he had nothing left, then directed them towards a good that could remain with them. The scene brings together generosity that meets a need and teaching that helps a person develop restraint and patience. This is where striving begins: seek Allah's help, do what you can, and keep trying until what once felt difficult becomes a stronger part of you.

The instruction to strive for patience calls for something a servant of Allah does, rather than a quality they wait to receive without effort. We may begin while still finding the task difficult, bringing ourselves to do what we know is right and asking Allah for help. Feeling tired does not necessarily mean we are hypocritical or do not love what is good. We may love the destination and still find parts of the journey burdensome. What matters is that every burden should not become a sufficient reason to turn away, and that enduring difficulty should not take the place of checking whether our action is right.

This does not mean that everyone who suffers simply needs to endure more. A right may need to be restored, an obstacle removed, harm resisted, or an illness cared for. We must not use the call to patience to keep someone in avoidable harm, justify delaying what they are owed, or prevent them from receiving it. Encouraging a valuable quality does not cancel the other requirements of justice and kindness.

Patience in obedience begins at home too

Allah Most High says: وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى Translation of the meaning: ‘Command your family to pray, and persevere in it.

We do not ask you for provision; We provide for you. The good outcome belongs to mindfulness of Allah.’ (Ta Ha 20:132). Al-

Sa‘di comments: « والأمر بالشيء، أمر بجميع ما لا يتم إلا به، » « فيكون أمرًا بتعليمهم، ما يصلح الصلاة ويفسدها ويكملها ».

Translation: ‘A command to do something is a command to do everything without which it cannot be accomplished. It is therefore a command to teach them what makes the prayer valid, what invalidates it, and what completes it.’⁹

The instruction to pray is accompanied by teaching and patience. A child needs someone to explain, practise alongside them, and make room for questions. When learning is slow, the educator needs to remember this responsibility more than to repeat the order in a louder voice.

Imagine a father waking his son for prayer. He could do no more than call him and then become angry when the child is slow. Or he could look at the whole day: Did the child go to sleep at a suitable time? Does he know how to perform ablution? Are the things he needs in an obvious place? Does he see his father preparing too? These questions help the father

9 ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, commentary on Ta Ha 20:132.

arrange the conditions for the action he is asking for and identify where his son needs assistance.

The father himself may need patience more than the child needs another command: patience to explain again without ridicule, maintain his own practice, distinguish slow learning from defiance, and recognise when to say less so the child can try. Discipline then becomes a shared task. The child learns the action; the educator learns to fulfil the child's claim to proper care and teaching.

Before, during and after an action

Follow patience through a single task from beginning to end. Beforehand, we need to bear leaving what would distract us. During the task, we need to remain faithful to the way it should be done. Afterwards, we need to avoid spoiling it by reminding others of our favours, deceiving them, or acting as though we are superior.

Take keeping a promise. Before the appointed time, you may have to leave a gathering you enjoy so that you can prepare. During the task, a tedious detail may arise that cannot properly be ignored. After you finish, the person to whom you are responsible may ask you to correct a mistake; having expended effort is no excuse for refusing. The difficulty changes at each stage. Saying 'I am patient' is not enough: we need to know what requires patience from us now.

In learning, it may be easy to open a lesson but difficult to stay with a point we do not understand. Patience may mean rereading it or asking a question, rather than sitting longer in front of a page without understanding. Memorising may come easily while accepting correction is hard; in that case, humility is where the learner must strive. If we measured the session only in minutes, we might mistake its length for the problem when the real difficulty is how we respond to error.

When giving up a sin, gradual progress must not be described as permission to continue it until the self feels ready. A person should promptly leave what they know to be forbidden, use the means that help them remain firm, and seek the assistance they need. Gradual development concerns acquiring those means and skills and becoming steadier. It does not turn a prohibited act into a temporary entitlement we grant ourselves.

Patience does not mean switching off understanding

We need to distinguish a task that requires endurance from one whose method we do not understand. A student who spends hours attempting a problem in the wrong way may be working hard, but more hours will not automatically correct the misunderstanding. The patience required may be a willingness to return to a simpler foundation or admit the need for a teacher.

The same applies to someone who repeatedly misses a work deadline. They may need to resist procrastination, or they may have estimated the task without enough knowledge. Calling

every delay laziness denies them the chance to learn better estimation. Calling every delay an estimating error excuses avoidable neglect. Improvement begins with the details: Which part took longer than expected? Which part never began? Which new commitments did they accept while knowing there was no room for them?

These questions do not reduce responsibility; they make it specific. We are responsible for our promises, for learning what we need, and for not repeating the same mistake without examining it. Patience belongs within this wider process of repair. It is not a word that replaces the process.

Practising without harming ourselves

We suggest practising patience within a permissible task of known benefit, rather than creating needless pain. Someone who wants better attention can choose a suitable learning task, prepare for it, and patiently return to it when some distraction arises. Someone who wants to manage spending can examine a particular need before buying and defer a nonessential permissible purchase until the time chosen for that decision. Someone who wants to improve their conduct can identify a situation in which they often rush and prepare a calmer response.

A review of self-control training found a small average improvement, varying with the comparison used; some adjustments for bias reduced the estimated effect. Start, then, with a skill you actually need and observe whether it improves.

Success at a particular exercise does not guarantee greater strength in every situation in life.¹⁰

A fairer approach in our own practice is to choose something we genuinely need, then ask: Has this behaviour improved? Did the improvement remain when circumstances changed a little? Did it bring harm or cause a responsibility to be neglected? A greater ability to sit for long periods is not an unqualified success if it comes at the expense of a duty. Equally, a task's becoming less difficult does not mean it has ceased to be useful.

A note about one situation

Choose a situation in which you know you tend to hurry away from discomfort: reviewing a lesson, hearing an objection, or finishing a detail at work. Write down what you want to protect in that situation, then the factor that usually weakens your resolve. Do not turn the note into a catalogue of all your mistakes. Understanding one scene well enough to use what you learn is enough.

Next, choose a specific action that protects the responsibility involved. You might repeat a question before answering, finish a section of the lesson you understand before switching tasks, or ask for clarification instead of reacting angrily. Decide how you

10 Malte Frieze, Julius Frankenbach, Veronika Job and David D. Loschelder, 'Does Self-Control Training Improve Self-Control? A Meta-Analysis', *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12(6), 1077–1099 (2017).

will know whether you did it. If you stumble, record what happened without changing the date or deleting the uncomfortable occasion. The aim is an honest record, not an attractive one.

Then ask: Am I beginning to notice the moment of choice I used to rush past? Have I learned an alternative to escape or anger? Striving now has a form you can recognise in your own life.

Chapter Four: Working on Yourself Without Treating Yourself Unjustly

The story of the next well

Ibn al-Jawzi writes in Sayd al-Khatir:

«ومن هذا ما يحكى عن بشر الحافي رحمه الله عليه، سار ومعه رجل في طريق فعتش صاحبه، فقال له: نشرب من هذا البئر؟ فقال بشر: اصبر إلى البئر الأخرى، فلما وصلا إليها قال له: البئر الأخرى. فما زال يعلله... ثم التفت إليه فقال له: [هكذا تنقطع الدنيا].»

Translation: ‘Among the accounts related is one about Bishr al-Hafi, may Allah have mercy on him. He was walking along a road with a man when his companion grew thirsty. The man said, “Shall we drink from this well?” Bishr said, “Wait until the next well.” When they reached it, he said, “The next well.” He kept putting him off in this way... Then he turned to him and said, “[This is how worldly life passes.]”¹¹

The road can feel heavy when you look all the way to its end: a long book you want to understand, a habit you want to leave, or

11 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, Sayd al-Khatir, section ‘How the Self Gains Strength’. Ibn al-Jawzi introduces the account with ‘it is related’ and gives no chain of transmission at this location.

work whose difficulty returns each day. Taking one nearby step can lighten some of that burden. Read the page in front of you. Do well the work whose time has arrived. Meet what follows when it comes. One form of kindness towards yourself is to help yourself carry today's work, without loading the whole journey onto your shoulders at once.

Making the next step feel nearer does not remove your need for rest. Give work a defined limit and take the rest that helps you resume it. If you promise a child or companion a break after a task, keep your promise. Trust supports patience just as a clear next step does.

Give yourself what you are owed

Ibn al-Jawzi also writes:

«أعجباً لأشياء مجاهدة النفس، لأنها تحتاج إلى صناعة عجيبة. فإن أقواماً أطلقوها فيما تحب، فأوقعتهم فيما كرهوا، وإن أقواماً بالغوا في خلافها حتى منعوه حقها، وظلموها. وأثر ظلمهم لها في تعبداتهم فمنهم من أساء غذاءها فأثر ذلك ضعف بدنها عن إقامة واجبها. منهم من أفربها في خلوة أثمرت الوحشة من الناس وآلت إلى ترك فرض أو فضل من عيادة مريض، أو بر والدته. وإنما الحازم من تعلم منه نفسه الجد وحفظ الأصول. فإذا فسح لها في مباح لم تتجاسر أن تتعداه. فيكون معها كالملك إذا مازح بعض جنده، فإن لا

ينبسط إليه الغلام. فإن انبسط ذكر هيبة المملكة. فكذا
المحقق يعطيها حظها، ويستوفي منها ما عليها.»

Translation: ‘Striving against the self is a most remarkable matter, for it requires a remarkable skill. Some people have let the self loose in whatever it loves, and it has led them into what they hate. Others have gone to excess in opposing it until they denied it its rights and wronged it. Their injustice towards it affected their worship. Some fed it poorly, weakening the body so that it could not fulfil its obligations. Some isolated it in a seclusion that produced estrangement from people and led to abandoning an obligation or a virtuous deed, such as visiting the sick or showing kindness to a mother. The truly resolute person is one whose self has learned seriousness from him and adherence to essentials. When he allows it something permissible, it does not dare go beyond that. He is like a king who jokes with one of his soldiers: the young man does not become overfamiliar with him. If he does, the king reminds him of the dignity of kingship. In the same way, a person of sound judgement gives the self its share and exacts from it what it owes.’¹²

Striving needs this balance: restrain yourself from what corrupts you, and give yourself what helps you do good. Hunger, thirst

12 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, Sayd al-Khatir, section ‘Give the Self Its Right and Require from It What It Owes’. The section title is translated here for identification.

and sleeplessness are not ends to pursue for their own sake. Sleep so that you can fulfil your duties. Drink when you need to. Take from what is permissible what helps you meet your responsibilities. Rest at the right time may sustain perseverance more faithfully than a burst of effort followed by collapse.

Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«آخَى النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَيْنَ سَلْمَانَ، وَأَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَزَارَ سَلْمَانُ أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَرَأَى أُمَّ الدَّرْدَاءِ مُتَبَدِّلَةً. فَقَالَ لَهَا مَا شَأْنُكَ قَالَتْ أَخُوكَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا. فَجَاءَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَصَنَعَ لَهُ طَعَامًا. فَقَالَ كُلْ. قَالَ فَإِنِّي صَائِمٌ. قَالَ مَا أَنَا بِأَكِلٍ حَتَّى تَأْكُلَ. قَالَ فَأَكَلَ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ اللَّيْلُ ذَهَبَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ يَقُومُ. قَالَ نَمْ. ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ يَقُومُ. فَقَالَ نَمْ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ قَالَ سَلْمَانُ قُمْ الْآنَ. فَصَلَّيَا، فَقَالَ لَهُ سَلْمَانُ إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، فَأَعْطِ كُلَّ ذِي حَقٍّ حَقَّهُ. فَأَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: صَدَقَ سَلْمَانُ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, established brotherhood between Salman and Abu al-Darda’. Salman visited Abu al-Darda’ and saw Umm al-Darda’ in plain, unadorned dress. He asked, “What is the matter?” She said, “Your brother Abu al-Darda’ has no interest in worldly life.” Abu al-Darda’ arrived and prepared food for him. Salman said, “Eat.” He replied, “I am fasting.” Salman said, “I will not

eat until you eat.” So he ate. When night came, Abu al-Darda’ went to get up for prayer. Salman said, “Sleep,” and he slept. Then he went to get up again, and Salman said, “Sleep.” Towards the end of the night, Salman said, “Get up now,” and they both prayed. Salman told him, “Your Lord has a right over you, your own self has a right over you, and your family has a right over you. Give everyone who has a right their due.” Abu al-Darda’ went to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and told him about this. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Salman has spoken the truth.”¹³

Salman did not lead him away from worship. He helped him give worship its place in a life where all responsibilities are fulfilled. Do not make abundant work in one area an excuse for neglecting another. Your family needs time, your body has needs, and worship has its due. Look at the whole of your day when choosing a programme, and at the people whose rights depend on you.

Name what you want to put right

Useful striving begins by identifying the behaviour. If staying up late causes you to miss the dawn prayer or neglect daytime work, the point to address is bedtime and whatever keeps you

13 Reported by Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on asking one's brother under oath to break a voluntary fast when that is more suitable for him, without requiring it to be made up, hadith 1968.

awake. If anger damages conversations with your family, practise pausing before the hurtful word and apologising for what you have said. The more clearly you identify the difficulty, the more readily you can choose a definite response.

Repeating ‘I am weak’ after every setback does not teach you how to move forward. Ask: What happened before I stumbled? Which route towards that mistake can I close today? You may need to remove a distraction, learn a skill or seek support. Then hold yourself to what you can do, and try again when you make a mistake.

Resolve suited to the circumstances

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«دَعُونِي مَا تَرَكَتُكُمْ، إِنَّكُمْ هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِسُؤَالِهِمْ
وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ، فَإِذَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ،
وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِأَمْرٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ»

Meaning in English: ‘Do not press me about matters I have left unaddressed. Those before you were destroyed by their questioning and their disagreement with their prophets. When I

forbid you something, avoid it; and when I command you to do something, do as much of it as you are able.’¹⁴

‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«كَانَتْ بِي بَوَاسِيرٌ فَسَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ
الصَّلَاةِ فَقَالَ: صَلِّ قَائِمًا، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَقَاعِدًا، فَإِنْ لَمْ
تَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَى جَنْبٍ»

Meaning in English: ‘I had haemorrhoids, so I asked the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, about prayer. He said, “Pray standing. If you cannot, then sitting. If you cannot, then on your side.”’¹⁵

Do what you can, and learn the ruling that applies when you face an inability. The help needed differs with the cause of the difficulty. An able learner postponing a lesson until the right mood arrives may benefit from a fixed starting time, even when beginning feels hard. A mother whose day is interrupted by caregiving may need to divide her reading into shorter periods

14 Reported by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Holding Fast to the Qur'an and Sunnah, chapter on following the practices of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, hadith 7288.

15 Reported by ‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Shortening the Prayer, chapter on praying on one's side when unable to sit, hadith 1117.

and have someone share part of her responsibilities. A person whose energy changes with illness needs work suited to their capacity and specialist advice about matters related to that illness.

Before increasing the pressure, look at the cause. If procrastination is the problem, begin. If the method does not fit your day, change it. If you need help, ask for it. Resolve can then become useful action you are able to sustain.

A step within reach

Choose one area in which you struggle. Identify a step to take today and a time at which to stop. Afterwards, ask: Did I do what I intended? Did I also protect my other duties and the rights of those around me? Adjust the step in the light of what you find, then continue.

The places where we strive are close at hand: a word that needs courtesy, an appointment that needs faithfulness, an act of worship that needs attention. Give yourself what helps you, then ask yourself to do what is right.

Chapter Five: Work That Continues After Enthusiasm Fades

When the day becomes ordinary

A beginning brings a fresh notebook and a strong feeling. Then comes a day with the same work, the same hours and the same tiredness as before. That is where consistency becomes visible. Enthusiasm opens the door, but cannot guard what lies beyond it on its own.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«سَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ لَنْ يُدْخَلَ أَحَدَكُمْ عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَأَنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ أَدْوَمُهَا إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ قَلَّ»

Meaning in English: ‘Aim for what is right and come as close as you can. Know that none of you will enter Paradise by his deeds, and that the deeds most beloved to Allah are those maintained most consistently, even if they are few.’¹⁶

The hadith brings together aiming rightly, doing what is within reach and remaining consistent, while turning the heart towards Allah's grace. Continuing is not a matter of accumulating

16 Reported by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Heart-Softening Matters, chapter on moderation and consistency in deeds, hadith 6464.

numbers or relying on deeds instead of mercy. Nor is doing little a virtue when it becomes a means of abandoning an obligation.

A commitment you can carry

‘Alqamah reported:

«سَأَلْتُ أُمَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَائِشَةَ قُلْتُ: يَا أُمَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، كَيْفَ كَانَ عَمَلُ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ؟ هَلْ كَانَ يَخْصُ شَيْئًا مِنَ الْأَيَّامِ؟ قَالَتْ: لَا، كَانَ عَمَلُهُ دِيمَةً، وَأَنْتُمْ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَسْتَطِيعُ»

Meaning in English: ‘I asked the Mother of the Believers, ‘A’ishah, “Mother of the Believers, what was the Prophet's practice? Did he single out particular days?” She replied, “No. His practice was constant. And which of you can do what the Prophet ﷺ could do?”’¹⁷

Her word *dimah* describes something steady, not a surge of enthusiasm. It does not prescribe one amount suitable for everyone. The account itself recognises differences in ability.

17 Reported by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Heart-Softening Matters, chapter on moderation and consistency in deeds, hadith 6466.

Attention to a lifetime and to others' rights appears in the account of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both:

«قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ، أَلَمْ أُخْبَرْ أَنَّكَ تَصُومُ النَّهَارَ وَتَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ؟ فَقُلْتُ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: فَلَا تَفْعَلْ، صُمْ وَأَفْطِرْ، وَقُمْ وَنَمْ، فَإِنَّ لِحَسَبِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِعَيْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِرِزْقِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِحَسَبِكَ أَنْ تَصُومَ كُلَّ شَهْرٍ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ، فَإِنَّ لَكَ بِكُلِّ حَسَنَةٍ عَشْرَ أَمْثَالِهَا، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ صِيَامَ الدَّهْرِ كُلِّهِ. فَشَدَدْتُ، فَشَدَّدَ عَلَيَّ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنِّي أَجِدُ قُوَّةً. قَالَ: فَصُمْ صِيَامَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَلَا تَزِدْ عَلَيْهِ. قُلْتُ: وَمَا كَانَ صِيَامَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ؟ قَالَ: نِصْفَ الدَّهْرِ. فَكَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ بَعْدَ مَا كَبُرَ: يَا لَيْتَنِي قَبِلْتُ رُخْصَةَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me, “‘Abd Allah, have I not been told that you fast by day and stand in prayer by night?” I said, “Yes, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Do not do that. Fast and also break your fast; stand in prayer and also sleep. Your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your guest has a right over you. It is enough for you to fast three days each month, for every good deed earns ten like it, and that is equivalent to fasting for a whole lifetime.” I pressed for more, and a heavier demand was placed upon me. I said, “Messenger

of Allah, I have strength.” He said, “Then fast the fast of Allah's Prophet Dawud, peace be upon him, and do not exceed it.” I asked, “What was the fast of Allah's Prophet Dawud, peace be upon him?” He said, “Half the time.” When ‘Abd Allah grew old, he used to say, “If only I had accepted the Prophet's ﷺ concession.””¹⁸

The lesson is not to blame ‘Abd Allah, but to view a commitment across a lifetime. Before pledging yourself to a plan, ask: Did I build it around an exceptional day or a day that could recur? This concerns voluntary worship, projects and training methods. Obligations and other people's rights have their own rulings and concessions, which must be learned in their proper context.

Surroundings that help without replacing intention

Studies by Galla and Duckworth provided evidence that some benefits associated with self-control are linked to helpful habits that reduce the repeated need to resist temptation. Statistical mediation, however, does not establish a universal cause or make the will irrelevant.¹⁹

We therefore suggest making the beginning clear and accessible. Put the book where you will use it, identify the next

18 Reported by ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on the body's right in fasting, hadith 1975.

file before today's session ends, and agree on a time that can be respected. Preparation is useful to the extent that it makes action easier. If arranging the desk consumes the time set aside for reading, the means has defeated its purpose.

There is no magic number for a habit

Lally and colleagues followed a chosen daily behaviour for about twelve weeks and found considerable variation in the development of automaticity. The figures commonly quoted from the study are model-based estimates, not a milestone observed in every participant.²⁰

A review by Singh and colleagues brought together twenty studies of health behaviour habits. Timelines and influencing factors varied, and several studies had a high risk of bias. We should not turn one number into a religious timetable or a test of a person's worth.²¹

19 Brian M. Galla and Angela L. Duckworth, 'More Than Resisting Temptation: Beneficial Habits Mediate the Relationship Between Self-Control and Positive Life Outcomes', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 109(3), 508–525 (2015).

20 Phillippa Lally, Cornelia H. M. van Jaarsveld, Henry W. W. Potts and Jane Wardle, 'How Are Habits Formed: Modelling Habit Formation in the Real World', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 40(6), 998–1009 (2010); first published online in 2009.

More useful questions are: Has starting become easier? Do I spend less time distracted? Has quality been maintained? Can I return after an interruption? These are questions for personal observation, not a standardised psychological scale.

Consistency may be weekly

Abu Wa'il reported:

«كَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يُذَكِّرُ النَّاسَ فِي كُلِّ خَمِيسٍ، فَقَالَ لَهُ رَجُلٌ: يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، لَوِدِدْتُ أَنَّكَ ذَكَرْتَنَا كُلَّ يَوْمٍ. قَالَ: أَمَا إِنَّهُ يَمْنَعُنِي مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ أُمَلِّكُمْ، وَإِنِّي أَتَخَوَّلُكُمْ بِالْمَوْعِظَةِ كَمَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَتَخَوَّلُنَا بِهَا، مَخَافَةَ السَّامَةِ عَلَيْنَا»

Meaning in English: ‘ ‘Abd Allah used to remind the people every Thursday. A man said to him, “Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman, I wish you would remind us every day.” He replied, “What prevents me is that I dislike wearying you. I choose suitable times to admonish you, as the Prophet ﷺ used to choose suitable times for us, fearing that we might become weary.”’²²

21 Ben Singh et al., ‘Time to Form a Habit: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Health Behaviour Habit Formation and Its Determinants’, *Healthcare* 12(23), article 2488 (2024).

22 Reported by ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him. *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Knowledge, chapter on setting particular days for teaching, hadith 70.*

Not everything beneficial needs to happen daily. One uninterrupted weekly session may be more useful than scattered minutes every evening. Frequency should follow the nature and timing of the work and the rights of those affected, rather than the number of boxes to tick.

After a suitable interval, consider two questions: What has become steady? What needs adjustment? Do not count pages alone. Look at understanding, quality and the effect on others. The fruit of consistency is that good finds a stable place in life, and that the person to whom you owe something can trust that fulfilling it will not depend on an exceptional burst of enthusiasm.

Chapter Six: What to Do After an Interruption

One mistake need not define the whole journey

A student reviews his lessons regularly for several weeks, then travels and stops. On returning, he sees the gap in his record and decides to wait until the first of the month. A short interruption becomes a longer delay because his plan knew what an ideal day looked like but had no route back.

This is an imagined example. Returning does not deny a failure or erase a right that was neglected. It prevents the pain of failure from taking the place of repair. Someone who has failed another person needs to acknowledge it and then do something that changes the situation.

Making up what was missed has its proper scope

‘A’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported:

«كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ إِذَا عَمِلَ عَمَلًا أَتْبَتَهُ، وَكَانَ إِذَا نَامَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ أَوْ مَرِضَ صَلَّى مِنَ النَّهَارِ ثِنْتَيْ عَشْرَةَ رَكْعَةً. قَالَتْ: وَمَا رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَامَ لَيْلَةً حَتَّى الصَّبَاحِ، وَمَا صَامَ شَهْرًا مُتَتَابِعًا إِلَّا رَمَضَانَ»

Meaning in English: ‘When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ undertook a deed, he maintained it. If he missed the night prayer through sleep or illness, he would pray twelve rak‘ahs during

the day.’ She said: ‘I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stand in prayer for an entire night until morning, nor fast for a whole month continuously except Ramadan.’²³

His practice was steady, there was a way to make up for sleep or illness, and worship did not abolish rest. We can learn to make returning after an interruption part of our plans. If an act of worship has been missed, we must learn the ruling on making it up. A missed reading session or personal task can be addressed in a way that repairs its effects without causing new harm.

After an interruption, distinguish four things: a duty whose ruling needs to be learned; a sin requiring repentance; another person's right that needs to be put right with them; and an optional project that can be rearranged. A recognised inability is not treated as deliberate neglect.

Four questions before trying to catch up

Ask: What was actually missed? Who was affected? What cause do the facts allow us to identify? What is the nearest action that can repair the effect without causing new harm?

An employee falls behind on a report, works all night, and sends a file full of mistakes. Exhaustion has not solved the problem. It

23 Reported by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter bringing together reports on night prayer and those who miss it through sleep or illness, hadith 746f.

may be more useful to communicate honestly, identify the accurate work already available, agree on a realistic deadline, and check what is sent. This is a response to the example, not general permission to disregard deadlines.

A reader who misses a week of an optional programme does not need to squeeze all the sessions into one night merely to remove a blank space from the sheet. Resume where you stopped, reconsider the time required, and do not claim to have finished what you have not.

Change the cause that keeps recurring

If the interruption was unusual, do not dismantle the whole plan. If the same obstacle keeps returning, do not call ignoring it perseverance. State the reason for a change in a sentence that can be checked: 'This time conflicts with a fixed commitment three times a week.' Then decide what will remain and what will change.

You may need someone who respects privacy and understands the limits of their role: someone who sees an obstacle you missed or helps with what you cannot accomplish alone.

Support does not require an audience before whom you display the details of your worship and failings.

A record is a tool, not a measure of piety

A review by Harkin and colleagues combined 138 experiments on monitoring progress towards goals and found a pooled standardised effect of 0.40. This does not mean a forty per cent

increase in success, nor does it mean all methods, goals and settings are equivalent.²⁴

We draw on this to suggest a simple record of observable action, not an instrument for judging sincerity or a person's standing before Allah. Record the actual opportunity, what happened, and the reason for a setback if it is known. Do not erase the embarrassing days.

In an imagined training example, a student plans five sessions and completes three. An unavoidable appointment displaces one session; the phone consumes another. She should not combine both explanations into 'I couldn't.' She can move the conflicting session to an available time, put the phone away when the other session begins, and then check whether she understood what she studied. If the adjustment fails, she can return to examining the cause rather than condemning her character.

Hope with responsibility

An interruption may leave us more honest in assessing ourselves—not because failure became desirable, but because we learned how to put something right. A motivational phrase cannot erase everything that was missed, although some losses can be made up.

24 Benjamin Harkin et al., 'Does Monitoring Goal Progress Promote Goal Attainment? A Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence', *Psychological Bulletin* 142(2), 198–229 (2016).

Do not turn yesterday's success into a permanent certificate of goodness, or yesterday's mistake into a reason for despair. There is work available now: a right to restore, knowledge to seek, or support to draw upon. Identify where you will return instead of continually announcing a new starting date.

Chapter Seven: Learning Responsibility at Every Age

Teach the action before assigning blame

‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported:

كُنْتُ غُلَامًا فِي حَجْرِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَكَانَتْ يَدِي تَطِيشُ فِي الصَّحْفَةِ، فَقَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: يَا غُلَامُ، سَمِّ اللَّهَ، وَكُلْ بِيَمِينِكَ، وَكُلْ مِمَّا يَلِيكَ. فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ طِعْمَتِي بَعْدُ

Meaning in English: ‘I was a boy in the care of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and my hand used to wander around the dish. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me, “Boy, mention Allah's name, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is nearest to you.” That remained my way of eating afterwards.’²⁵

The guidance did more than condemn the mistake. It named specific actions for the child in the situation, and ‘Umar described their lasting effect. Before blaming a child for a daily task, ask: Have they seen it done? Have they understood the steps? Can they reach the things they need?

25 Reported by ‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Foods, chapter on mentioning Allah's name over food and eating with the right hand, hadith 5376.

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«خَدَمْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ عَشْرَ سِنِينَ، فَمَا قَالَ لِي أُفُّ، وَلَا لِمَ صَنَعْتُ، وَلَا أَلَّا صَنَعْتُ»

Meaning in English: ‘I served the Prophet ﷺ for ten years. He never said “Uff” to me, nor “Why did you do that?” nor “Why did you not do that?”’²⁶

We should not extract an entire school policy from these words, but neither should we separate a child's education from an adult's character. Someone asking a child to control their tongue cannot excuse their own hurtful words merely because they are in a hurry.

For a daily task, we suggest letting a child see it performed, then complete part of it with support, and gradually have more room to try. This is a proposed educational sequence, not a religious age timetable. A small observational study by Bernier and her colleagues linked certain forms of support for autonomy with later executive functions. It directs attention towards the educator's conduct, but does not establish that a particular action at home causes a known amount of improvement.²⁷

26 Reported by Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Manners, chapter on good character, generosity and the dislike of miserliness, hadith 6038.

Prayer: teaching before holding accountable

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«مُرُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ سَبْعِ سِنِينَ، وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ عَشْرِ سِنِينَ، وَفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Instruct your children to pray when they are seven years old, and strike them for it when they are ten, and separate them in their sleeping places.’²⁸

The rulings and limits of discipline, together with children's rights, belong to Islamic jurisprudence. This book does not offer striking as a training programme. Its practical approach here is nonviolent: teaching purification and prayer, setting an example, preparing, and following up with compassion.

27 Annie Bernier, Stephanie M. Carlson and Natasha Whipple, ‘From External Regulation to Self-Regulation: Early Parenting Precursors of Young Children's Executive Functioning’, *Child Development* 81(1), 326–339 (2010). An associational study; it does not establish that support for autonomy alone caused the outcome.

28 Reported by ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both. Abu Dawud, Sunan, Book of Prayer, chapter on when a boy is instructed to pray, hadith 495; graded hasan sahih by al-Albani. Discipline is subject to its juristic limits; the practical approach in this book is nonviolent.

On helping children become accustomed to fasting on ‘Ashura’, al-Rubayyi‘ bint Mu‘awwidh, may Allah be pleased with her, reported:

«أَرْسَلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ غَدَاةَ عَاشُورَاءَ إِلَى قُرَى الْأَنْصَارِ: مَنْ أَصْبَحَ مُفْطِرًا فَلْيُتِمَّ بَقِيَّةَ يَوْمِهِ، وَمَنْ أَصْبَحَ صَائِمًا فَلْيَصُمْ. قَالَتْ: فَكُنَّا نَصُومُهُ بَعْدَ، وَنُصَوِّمُ صِبْيَانَنَا، وَنَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ اللَّعْبَةَ مِنَ الْعِهْنِ فَإِذَا بَكَى أَحَدُهُمْ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ أَعْطَيْنَاهُ ذَلِكَ، حَتَّى يَكُونَ عِنْدَ الْإِفْطَارِ»

Meaning in English: ‘On the morning of ‘Ashura’, the Prophet ﷺ sent word to the villages of the Ansar: “Whoever began the morning without fasting should complete the rest of the day, and whoever began it fasting should continue the fast.” She said: “After that, we used to fast it and have our children fast. We would make them a toy of wool; if one of them cried for food, we gave them that until it was time to break the fast.”’²⁹

We can learn from the presence of support without turning this account into permission to harm a child or a single demand to impose on every child.

29 Reported by al-Rubayyi‘ bint Mu‘awwidh, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on children's fasting, hadith 1960.

Learning rights is part of learning duties

Sahl ibn Sa'd, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَتَى بِشَرَابٍ فَشَرَبَ مِنْهُ، وَعَنْ يَمِينِهِ غُلَامٌ وَعَنْ يَسَارِهِ الْأَشْيَاحُ. فَقَالَ لِلْغُلَامِ: أَتَأْذُنُ لِي أَنْ أُعْطِيَ هَؤُلَاءِ؟ فَقَالَ الْغُلَامُ: وَاللَّهِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَا أُؤْثِرُ بِنَصِيبِي مِنْكَ أَحَدًا. قَالَ: فَتَلَّهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي يَدِهِ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was brought a drink and drank from it. A boy was on his right and older men were on his left. He asked the boy, “Will you allow me to give it to these men?” The boy replied, “By Allah, Messenger of Allah, I would not give anyone preference over myself in my share from you.” So the Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed it in his hand.’³⁰

A child learns that an orderly arrangement can protect their rights, rather than being a series of commands serving the more powerful. The educator should therefore honour turns and agreements, and explain when a promise must be changed. Respecting a child's rights does not mean letting the child decide everything. It means explaining limits and applying them fairly.

30 Reported by Sahl ibn Sa'd, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Drinks, chapter on asking the person on one's right for permission to give the drink to an older person, hadith 5620.

Responsibility changes with the stage of life

Allah Most High says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَهُنَّ طَوَّافُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾.

﴿وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمْ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾.

Translation of the meaning: ‘You who believe, let those whom your right hands possess and those among you who have not reached puberty ask your permission at three times: before the dawn prayer, when you lay aside your clothes at midday, and after the night prayer. These are three times of privacy for you. Beyond these times, there is no blame on you or on them, as you move about attending to one another. In this way Allah makes the verses clear to you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.’ (Al-Nur 24:58). ‘When the children among you reach puberty, let them ask permission as those before them asked permission.

In this way Allah makes His verses clear to you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.’ (Al-Nur 24:59).³¹

The two verses distinguish between children who have not reached puberty and those who have, in relation to asking permission and privacy at home. Education does not mean repeating one unchanging rule from early childhood to adulthood.

Allah Most High also says:

﴿وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبَرُوا وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘Test the orphans until they reach marriageable age. Then, if you discern sound judgement in them, hand over their property to them. Do not consume it wastefully and hastily, fearing that they will grow up. Whoever is wealthy should refrain; whoever is poor may take a reasonable amount. When you hand over their property to them, have witnesses present. Allah is sufficient as a Reckoner.’ (Al-Nisa’ 4:6).³²

31 ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa’di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, commentary on al-Nur 24:58–59.

The verse mentions reaching marriageable age and discerning sound judgement before handing over property. We should not assume that every practical skill becomes complete at the same instant. Detailed questions concerning a minor's property should be referred to the relevant Islamic jurisprudence and legal system.

Do not turn a test into a prophecy

A review by Pandey and colleagues brought together forty-nine randomised studies involving fifty self-regulation interventions for children and adolescents and more than 23,000 participants. Many interventions showed improvement, but the findings were not uniform. The proportion of interventions with positive findings is not the proportion of children who succeeded.³³

In a re-examination of delayed gratification, Watts and his colleagues showed that accounting for family background, early abilities and the home environment reduced some of the widely

32 ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, commentary on al-Nisa’ 4:6.

33 Anuja Pandey, Daniel Hale, Shikta Das, Anne-Lise Goddings, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore and Russell M. Viner, ‘Effectiveness of Universal Self-Regulation–Based Interventions in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis’, *JAMA Pediatrics* 172(6), 566–575 (2018).

discussed associations. We should not judge a child's future by whether they wait for a sweet or eat it immediately.³⁴

Describe the action that needs correction. Do not close down a young person's identity by saying, 'You are lazy' or 'You cannot be trusted with responsibility.' Teach them, give them an opportunity to try, and hold them responsible for what they understood and were capable of doing.

Adult responsibility and work suited to the person

As our role in family and working life grows, our decisions affect other people's time, money and peace of mind. We may need to say honestly, 'I cannot accept this work within that deadline,' more than we need to appear capable of everything.

When assigning work, consider whether the task fits the person's abilities and what tools, time and support they need. A worker may fail because the task was not explained or the means were unavailable, rather than because they lacked willingness.

Choose and prepare well, then assess performance against clear expectations.³⁵

34 Tyler W. Watts, Greg J. Duncan and Haonan Quan, 'Revisiting the Marshmallow Test: A Conceptual Replication Investigating Links Between Early Delay of Gratification and Later Outcomes', *Psychological Science* 29(7), 1159–1177 (2018).

The method changes while the purpose remains

‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«كَانَتْ بِي بَوَاسِيرٌ، فَسَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ، فَقَالَ: صَلِّ قَائِمًا، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَقَاعِدًا، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَى جَنْبٍ»

Meaning in English: ‘I had haemorrhoids, so I asked the Prophet ﷺ about prayer. He said, “Pray standing. If you cannot, then sitting. If you cannot, then on your side.”’³⁶

The text concerns the prayer of someone who is ill. It does not give every worldly task an equivalent religious ruling. Within its own subject, however, it establishes that the form of performance takes ability into account. In everyday life, the amount of help, time and the means needed also change with age, illness and circumstances.

Richmond-Rakerd and colleagues followed the Dunedin cohort into midlife. This is an observational follow-up of the same

35 Muhammad Ahmad Husayn Abu ‘Ayyash, *Al-Indibat fi Daw’ al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah: Dirasah Mawdu‘iyyah* [Discipline in the Light of the Prophetic Sunnah: A Thematic Study], doctoral dissertation, Yarmouk University, p. 21 on consistency and pp. 91–93 on matching work to ability; the discussion here concerns pp. 91–93.

36 Reported by ‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him. *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Shortening the Prayer, chapter on praying on one's side when unable to sit, hadith 1117.*

cohort, not an independent sample. An older person's health should therefore not be treated as conclusive evidence of their earlier discipline or neglect.³⁷

The useful question remains: What right action is available to me now? It may be doing something directly, passing on experience, protecting a right or accepting help. Adapt the means to your ability without abandoning the aim of doing good.

37 Leah S. Richmond-Rakerd et al., 'Childhood Self-Control Forecasts the Pace of Midlife Aging and Preparedness for Old Age', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(3), article e2010211118 (2021).

Chapter Eight: A Home That Helps a Child Learn

Before understanding instructions, a child observes the scene

A child enters life before knowing the names of many virtues, but enters a home where certain things happen repeatedly. The child sees how adults speak when tired, what they do when prayer time arrives while they are busy, how they honour an appointment, how they apologise for mistakes, and whether they put away what they have used or leave someone else to clear up. These small details do not form character on their own. They do, however, create the setting in which a child learns what the words they hear actually mean.

Here begins the difference between a home full of commands and a home that supports learning. A father may say every morning, ‘Get ready early,’ while he himself rushes out each day because he has not prepared what he needs. A mother may ask her daughter to look after her belongings while moving things to different places each time, leaving the child without an arrangement she can learn. The advice itself is not wrong; the surroundings are saying something else.

In Luqman's counsel to his son, the Qur'an presents an education in which direct speech reaches into the heart of a relationship: worshipping Allah alone, gratitude, prayer, enjoining good, patience, and then manners towards others, in

walking and in speaking. يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهٍ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَكَ. Translation of the quoted meaning: ‘My son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you.’ (Luqman 31:17). Belief, worship, patience and character come together in a father's counsel to his child (Luqman 31:13–19).

A child does not need a perfect home where no one makes mistakes; no such home exists. They need a home where an adult's mistake does not abolish the rule. If a father raises his voice and then insists that only the child's voice is a problem, the child learns that the rule follows power. If the father says, ‘I handled that badly,’ and repairs what he can, he adds a lesson that long lectures may never teach: people are responsible for their actions, and adults do not stand outside the standard simply because they are adults.

Responsibility at home is not unaccountable authority

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْأَمِيرُ رَاعٍ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ، فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those in your care. The ruler is a shepherd; a man is a shepherd over his household; and a woman

is a shepherd over her husband's home and his child. Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those in your care.’³⁸

Care is a trust placed in the educator's hands. They consider what benefits the child, teach what the child needs, do what lies beyond the child's ability, and leave the child a share of work they can manage. Greater authority brings greater responsibility for using it well.

Al-Aswad reported:

«سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَصْنَعُ فِي أَهْلِهِ قَالَتْ كَانَ فِي مِهْنَةٍ أَهْلِهِ، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ قَامَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ»

Meaning in English: ‘I asked ‘A’ishah what the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, used to do among his family. She said, “He used to attend to his family's needs, and when prayer time came, he would rise for prayer.”’³⁹

38 Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on a woman being responsible for her husband's household, hadith 5200.

39 Report of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, chapter on how a man behaves with his family, hadith 6039.

A child sees an adult share the work of the home and then go to pray, and learns that both work and worship have a place in the day. What we do in front of children gives our words a form they can learn from.

Discipline must therefore mean more than a child's obedience. If children are asked to put their belongings away, adults also need enough order to avoid making a child the little worker who cleans up everyone's mess. If a family sets limits on devices, those limits lose meaning when screens are forbidden to children but remain in adults' hands throughout a gathering. Identical rules are not required in every matter: age and responsibility differ. A truthful example is required.

Chapter Seven discussed generally how responsibility changes with age. Here the question is narrower: how can the home itself become a setting that helps children do what they have learned? Covering the walls with rules is not the answer. As changing commands multiply, children find it harder to tell which instructions are stable and which were spoken under pressure and then forgotten.

From being told to becoming accustomed: practice before independence

Children need practice before they can carry a responsibility independently. The chapter on prayer before puberty presents the Prophetic text and explains preparation for worship. Here we consider recurring household tasks children learn to carry out.

Some responsibilities are learned through repetition before independence. We should not expect a child to manage an entire morning alone, then call them a failure when they forget. Divide the task into parts, explain it, practise together, and reduce support as learning becomes established. Training aims to make learners able to act with greater understanding. Control may leave them dependent on an outside voice every time.

Among Ibn al-Qayyim's counsels on raising children is:

«ويعوده البذل والإعطاء وإذا أراد الولي أن يعطي شيئاً أعطاه»
 «إياه على يده ليزوق حلاوة الإعطاء». Translation: 'Accustom him to generosity and giving. When the guardian wishes to give something, let him give it through the child's hand so that the child tastes the sweetness of giving.'⁴⁰

Give children a real share in doing good. They can respectfully carry what you are giving to someone in need, prepare a gift for a relative, or help at home. In this way, they come to know giving through action and find opportunities in their day to practise the character you speak about.

Taking ability into account helps you choose their share of the task. One of two children may learn quickly while the other

40 Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ayyub, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Tuhfat al-Mawdud bi-Ahkam al-Mawlud*, section on children's upbringing and education, attention to their character and aptitude for occupations; the passage beginning 'He grows up upon what his educator has accustomed him to' and what follows.

needs another demonstration. Do not make a prediction about their futures from that difference. Give each the help they need to progress, while maintaining a responsibility suited to their age.

Routine: when the surroundings reduce the number of decisions

A household routine is not an end in itself, and a home need not become a barracks. Its practical value is that recurring tasks can become predictable instead of prompting a fresh negotiation every time. A fixed place for a schoolbag, a familiar bedtime sequence and a usual time to prepare for going out shift part of the burden from immediate memory to an organised setting.

Family studies suggest associations between consistency in some daily routines and better emotional regulation among children and adolescents. Homes do not need identical timetables. Choose an arrangement your family can sustain, and adjust it when work, health or caregiving needs change.⁴¹

41 S. E. Anderson, A. Sacker, R. C. Whitaker and Y. Kelly, ‘Self-regulation and household routines at age three and obesity at age eleven: longitudinal analysis of the UK Millennium Cohort Study’, *International Journal of Obesity* 41 (2017): 1459–1466; PubMed abstract and principal findings. Observational findings in a British sample do not establish routine alone as the cause of improvement. Allen W. Barton, Gene H. Brody, Tianyi Yu, Steven M. Kogan, Edith Chen and Katherine B. Ehrlich, ‘The profundity of the

One home may have a reasonably stable bedtime. In another, where a parent works shifts, the day's ending may follow a familiar sequence: food, preparation, a short reading and then sleep. The aim is enough predictability to reduce conflict and help the child recognise the next step.

Support that teaches rather than takes over

Research on support for children's autonomy draws attention to how much adults intervene and when. In an early study, autonomy support was associated with better later performance in some executive functions. These are skills that help with remembering, planning and holding back a hasty response. Alongside instruction, children need opportunities to use them.⁴²

In another observational study, greater parental over-involvement when children were already engaged in a task was

everyday: family routines in adolescence predict development in young adulthood', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 64(3) (2019): 340–346; open text in PubMed Central, sample of 504, annual follow-up over six years. A longitudinal study in a specific sample, without experimental proof of causation.

42 Annie Bernier, Stephanie M. Carlson and Natasha Whipple, 'From external regulation to self-regulation: early parenting precursors of young children's executive functioning', *Child Development* 81(1) (2010): 326–339. Correlational; does not establish autonomy support alone as the cause of the outcome.

associated with lower scores on some indicators of self-regulation. If a child knows the next step and is working on it, allow time. If they stop at something they do not understand, offer the help they need.⁴³

Educators may recognise the situation. A child has learned to put on shoes, but an adult is in a hurry and does it for them every morning. The adult saves two minutes but loses dozens of opportunities for the child to practise sequencing, trying and persisting. A girl can gather her things using a picture list, but her mother directs every move: ‘Take the pencil. Put it here. Now the book. No, not like that.’ The scene may end tidily, yet we still do not know whether the child has learned to manage the task or to wait for the next instruction.

Offering bounded choices during a shared task was associated with better performance on executive-function tests in a study bringing together several preschool samples. Give children a genuine choice in matters they can choose, then give them a chance to act on that choice.⁴⁴

43 Jelena Obradović, Michael J. Sulik and Anne Shaffer, ‘Learning to let go: parental over-engagement predicts poorer self-regulation in kindergartners’, *Journal of Family Psychology* 35(8) (2021): 1160–1170; 102 dyads according to the abstract. Observational; association does not establish causation.

Choice needs clear limits that protect duties and family members' rights. The next chapter discusses this alongside the steps for handing responsibility to a child.

Support is not permissiveness, and firmness is not suppression

A meta-analysis combined findings associating supportive parenting styles with better self-regulation, and suppressive styles with lower indicators. Children need rules they understand and a relationship in which they can learn. Parenting cannot be reduced either to a loud voice or to leaving children without boundaries.⁴⁵

A more careful approach combines an intelligible rule, a secure relationship, help suited to ability, boundaries protecting rights,

44 Romulus J. Castelo et al., 'Parent provision of choice is a key component of autonomy support in predicting child executive function skills', *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2022): 773492; four preschool samples, N = 366; open full text. Correlational preschool study; does not establish a causal effect of choice alone.

45 Jessica Blume, Gabriella M. Garcia, Marianne Garcia and Ann M. Mastergeorge, 'Associations between parenting styles and child self-regulation skills: a series of meta-analyses', *Journal of Family Psychology* 39(7) (2025): 885–898; PubMed abstract; 62 studies in the analyses. A meta-analysis of varied studies, not a single effect applicable to every child.

an opportunity to try, and a permissible, proportionate educational consequence when needed. It then returns to teaching instead of turning each mistake into an identity. If we want children to learn self-control, we should not teach them that good is merely what they do under supervision.

We should not use diagnostic language without knowledge. A child who often forgets may be within a normal developmental stage, facing a task too advanced for their age, experiencing disturbed sleep or family stress, or living with a difficulty needing specialist assessment. A general book cannot diagnose them. What we can say is that repeated errors alone do not establish intention or character. Good education begins by understanding the task and the child's ability before choosing a response.

Five principles for a household routine that teaches

First, make the routine's purpose understandable. Do not rely on 'Because I said so' for everything that can be explained. A three-year-old does not need a lecture about every instruction. An older child, however, benefits from understanding that packing a bag protects belongings, speaking quietly at night respects sleepers, and being ready on time respects anyone waiting for the family. Understanding does not cancel rightful obedience. It helps build awareness that remains when no one is watching.

Second, limit the rules and remain consistent about what matters. A home with twenty instructions, some changing every day, teaches a child to read an adult's mood more skilfully than the rule. At each stage, choose a small number of behaviours the household actually needs. Explain and repeat them. Do not add a rule every time a passing incident annoys you.

Third, prepare the surroundings before blaming memory. If children should put belongings away, provide a known place they can reach. If departure should be calm, complete some preparation earlier. If screen use should be reduced, do not leave a device open in front of a child all the time and then demand feats of willpower adults do not ask of themselves.

Fourth, leave a share for the child. Do not turn help into doing the work for them. After explaining the task, allow a reasonable time before intervening. Ask what they think remains instead of supplying every answer. If a mistake in the order of steps causes no harm, practising correction may teach more than an ideal result produced by an adult's hands.

Fifth, review the routine if everyone in the household is failing at it. If the whole family runs late every morning, perhaps the explanation is not four weak-willed people at once. The waking time may be unrealistic, evening preparation incomplete, or everyone may be delayed at the same point. Improving the arrangement does not cancel individual responsibility. It removes an obstacle that serves no useful purpose.

An example: a short bedtime routine

In this imagined example, a family has two children, aged nine and six. The end of the day has become a stream of orders:

‘Pick up the toys. Get your clothes ready. Where is the notebook? Put the device down. Go and brush your teeth.’

Shouting recurs because each task arrives without warning and adults are themselves occupied with devices or work until the last moment.

The family decides to try a short routine beginning at a suitable interval before bedtime. There are just three stages: return essential things to their places, prepare what is needed for tomorrow morning, and make a calm transition towards getting ready for sleep. The younger child has a picture list; the older one has a short written list. They need not work in the same way. Each needs to know their part.

During the first few days, a parent carries out part of the routine with them rather than standing at a distance and calling instructions. The parent puts the phone away, begins closing down their own work, and asks, ‘What is your first step?’ If the younger child forgets, the parent points to the picture. If the older child knows the step but lingers in conversation, the parent gives a reminder about time without packing the child's things for them.

After two weeks, the family reviews only three observations: How many steps did each child complete without a direct reminder? At which step did difficulty recur? Did the adults

themselves begin at the agreed time? These observations are not combined into a score called 'the child's discipline'. They are modest pieces of information about a particular task.

They discover that the younger child cannot easily reach the box for some toys, while the older child forgets a notebook because it is sometimes unclear what will be needed the next day. One needs a change in the surroundings; the other needs a clearer source of information. Greater strictness alone would have repeated blame for two problems blame could not solve.

At the same time, they find that the older child knows some steps but delays them to finish watching a clip. Choice and responsibility still matter here. The family agrees that screens will be turned off before the routine begins, and the child can choose when to watch within the time allowed beforehand. Moving objects will not solve every difficulty. Some situations require learning to leave an enjoyable activity when another responsibility becomes due.

How can we tell whether the routine is teaching?

A child need not obey silently for us to recognise progress. More useful signs include knowing the steps, needing fewer reminders, returning after forgetting, asking a relevant question instead of waiting for every command, distinguishing what can and cannot be chosen, and remaining in a relationship where correction is possible without humiliation.

Children may still work slowly while becoming more independent. That is not necessarily failure. An adult who completes a task for a child in two minutes is faster than a child learning it in ten, but speed is not the only measure. Teaching allows some safe slowness because part of the aim is to transfer ability to the learner.

On the other hand, independence must not become an excuse for abandoning a child to a task beyond their ability. The question changes as the child learns: What part can they now do after suitable instruction? Give them that part and remain responsible for what exceeds their capacity. Burdening them with risks or responsibilities unsuited to their age is not education merely because it is called character-building.

When the routine breaks down

Every home has days that do not follow the plan: illness, visitors, travel, unexpected appointments, tiredness or conflict. It is a mistake to think a successful routine never breaks. What matters is that the family knows how to return and that enough flexibility exists to prevent an interruption from becoming permanent disorder.

A family can prepare a shorter version for a disrupted day: What must not be lost? What can wait? Who needs help? When an ordinary day returns, so does the usual routine. This is not open permission to neglect rights; it is a way to distinguish essentials from extras.

A household record should not become a surveillance system that exhausts a child. If recording provokes more conflict than learning, simplify it. A small mark for one step being learned may be enough, and the record can disappear once the step becomes established. The aim is for children to live responsibly, not inside a permanent assessment chart.

Home is the first place for sharing responsibility

Choose what your home needs now from this chapter: a fixed place for belongings, a clearer time, or an example an adult needs to correct in themselves. Then watch the child working. What do they now understand? Where do they still need you?

There is no single prescription for every home. One may need less disorder, another less adult interference, a third clearer rules, and a fourth more kindness towards a child who learns slowly. The shared question is this: Does the setting we have created help the child recognise a responsibility, try to fulfil it, carry an appropriate share, and let that share grow with them?

If so, the home is doing more than producing a quiet morning or a tidy room. It is teaching someone to move from external reminders towards responsibility they help to carry. The next chapter builds on that movement: how to know when to help, when to step back, and how to move a child from support towards independence without severing the relationship of care.

Chapter Nine: From Help to Independence

Useful help has an intended destination

An educator may think that more intervention always means greater care. They remind before a child forgets, answer before a question is asked, correct a mistake before its consequences appear, and carry what the child could carry because they can do it faster and better. The day ends with less disorder, but something else may remain unfinished: the child's learning to begin, notice mistakes, ask for help when needed, and finish without an adult standing nearby.

Help in education cannot be judged apart from its purpose. It can be an act of kindness and teaching, or unintentionally become a barrier to developing ability. A child who does not know the path needs someone to walk alongside them. A child who has learned part of it but is still carried at every step loses the opportunity for their own legs to grow stronger.

Educational independence does not mean leaving children alone, loosening their bond with family, or freeing them from duties and limits. Its meaning here is more precise: gradually hand over responsibility for actions they have become able to perform, while continuing to care, advise and remain available for what they cannot yet do well, or what involves risk or another person's rights.

Good education asks more than ‘What can this child do today?’ It also asks, ‘What could they learn next if we offered enough help, then stepped back by the right amount?’

From assessment to handing over: a lesson from the verse on sound judgement

Concerning the property of orphans, Allah Most High says:

وَابْتَئُوا الْيَتَامَى حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا ۖ فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبَرُوا ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَغْفِرْ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ۝

Translation of the meaning: ‘Test the orphans until they reach marriageable age. Then, if you discern sound judgement in them, hand over their property to them. Do not consume it wastefully and hastily, fearing that they will grow up. Whoever is wealthy should refrain; whoever is poor may take a reasonable amount. When you hand over their property to them, have witnesses present. Allah is sufficient as a Reckoner.’ (Al-Nisa’ 4:6).

Al-Tabari explains the command to test them: «واختبروا عقولهم
يتاماكم في أفهامهم، وصلاحهم في أديانهم، وإصلاحهم
في أموالهم». Translation: ‘Test the minds of the orphans in your

care with regard to their understanding, their uprightness in religion, and their sound management of their property.’⁴⁶

The verse describes testing before property is handed over, and sound judgement recognised through conduct. An educational lesson we draw is to prepare for responsibility through suitable experience and expand it according to the ability that becomes evident. Do not withhold every task from a child and then confront them with it suddenly when they are older. Nor should you hand them something beyond their experience and blame them for struggling.

Teach, allow a safe attempt, and observe what they do well and where they need help. When their performance becomes steady, hand over a larger share. Independence can then be the fruit of learning you can see in their actions.

Age alone is not a complete assessment of ability. It matters, but does not describe competence in every area. An eleven-year-old may independently prepare school belongings without being ready to manage a large sum of money. A teenager may use public transport along a familiar route without yet being able to

46 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an, commentary on al-Nisa’, 4:6: the meaning of ‘test the orphans’ and reports from the early generations about testing understanding and conduct. The verse concerns an orphan's property. Its family application here is an educational inference, not a generalisation of the financial ruling.

judge a financial contract or a health decision. The areas of responsibility widen with age, but are not all handed over at once.

Between explanation and action: how scaffolding works

Researchers in child development and learning use the term scaffolding for gradually adjusted support. An adult offers help that makes a task just beyond a child's current ability manageable, then varies the amount according to what the child is actually doing. The adult does not construct the entire solution. They provide temporary support around the learner and remove it when it is no longer needed.

In a study following children from ages two to four, scaffolding at age three was associated with better executive-function performance at four. The way we help therefore deserves attention: What do we demonstrate? What do we let the child try? When is a small cue enough?⁴⁷

47 Stuart I. Hammond, Ulrich Müller, Jeremy I. M. Carpendale, Maximilian B. Bibok and Dana P. Liebermann-Finestone, 'The effects of parental scaffolding on preschoolers' executive function', *Developmental Psychology* 48(1) (2012): 271–281; longitudinal study of 82 children measured at ages two, three and four. Correlational developmental follow-up, not a tested prescription for every family.

Another follow-up study found links between scaffolding, negative interactions and the development of executive functions, with different relationships depending on the aspect measured. Helpful presence notices and responds to what the child needs. It cannot be measured simply by counting instructions.⁴⁸

These studies offer associations that can inform understanding; they do not guarantee one outcome for every child. Support should therefore begin with observation and improve through what experience teaches us.

Below, we propose five practical levels for choosing the amount of help, from demonstrating a task to independent performance.

A child may need to move back a step when a task changes or circumstances become more complicated. Someone who packs their bag alone during an ordinary week may need extra help for a school trip with a different list. Someone managing a small allowance may need clearer supervision when online purchases and unfamiliar offers enter the picture. A temporary reduction in independence is not failure. It is an adjustment of support to a changed task.

48 Claire Hughes and Rory T. Devine, ‘For better or for worse? Positive and negative parental influences on young children’s executive function’, *Child Development* 90(2) (2019): 593–609; 13-month follow-up of 117 parent–child dyads. Correlational follow-up; relationships differ with the dimension measured.

Do not take away a problem the child can solve

One of the most difficult forms of over-helping looks very kind. A child forgets a sheet at school, and the parent immediately calls everyone they know to obtain it. The child falls behind on a project, and the adult stays up to finish it. A small disagreement arises with a classmate, and the parent intervenes before the child tries talking. An item is repeatedly forgotten, and the adult becomes a permanent external memory.

Help may be necessary in a particular situation, especially where safety or rights cannot be left to experimentation. But if every mistake is erased before a child meets its safe, natural consequence, they will not learn to read the effects of their choices. Independence grows through success and through small mistakes a learner can repair.

Ask two questions before intervening. First: Would letting the child handle the outcome expose them to harm unsuited to their age or infringe another person's rights? If so, intervene. Second: Is there something useful the child can do now before I do it for them? If so, give them that part.

If a forgotten assignment can be recovered without harm, the child's role may be to contact the teacher through an available channel rather than have a parent conduct the entire conversation. If time was wasted and is now short, the child may need to choose which part to begin and face the limited time, rather than have an adult turn the night into a complete rescue operation. If a small purchase goes wrong within agreed

limits, discussing the reason afterwards may teach more than forbidding all experience with money until puberty.

Rescuing a child from every brief discomfort can delay learning for a long time. Leaving them in a difficulty beyond their capacity is not education either. Wisdom lies between the two.

Clear direction supports independence better than a stream of instructions

‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«كُنْتُ غُلَامًا فِي حَجَرِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَكَانَتْ يَدِي تَطِيشُ فِي الصَّحْفَةِ فَقَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: يَا غُلَامُ سَمِّ اللَّهَ، وَكُلْ بِيَمِينِكَ وَكُلْ مِمَّا يَلِيكَ. فَمَا زِلْتُ تِلْكَ طِعْمَتِي بَعْدُ»

Meaning in English: ‘I was a boy in the care of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and my hand used to wander around the dish. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said to me, “Boy, mention Allah's name, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is nearest to you.” That remained my way of eating afterwards.’⁴⁹

49 Report of ‘Umar ibn Abi Salamah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Foods, chapter on mentioning Allah's name over food and eating with the right hand, hadith 5376.

A few words made the action clear, and their effect remained in the child's practice. When a mistake occurs, name the right action clearly and make the next step something the child can actually perform.

Too much instruction can become an exhausting form of control. Within a minute we may say, 'Open the book. Write the date. Sit properly. Don't forget your pencil. Start with the first question. Read carefully. Hurry up. Pay attention.' We may be producing responses to external prompts more than teaching the child to manage the task.

Sometimes the educator needs to speak less so the learner can hear the plan taking shape in their own mind. Ask, 'What is the first step?' If the child knows, they can begin. If they hesitate, offer a cue. If they do not know, explain. After enough practice, even the question may become unnecessary.

With an older child, planning itself can be handed over. Instead of making a weekly timetable and demanding compliance, ask them to identify fixed commitments, set aside time for tasks, and show you the plan. Your role is not to approve every choice. It is to point out what they missed and preserve limits they cannot discard. The plan then belongs more fully to them, rather than being a sheet on the wall expressing a parent's mind.

Independence does not make everything optional

A common mistake is to confuse supporting independence with making duties optional. If a child must attend school, asking

every morning, ‘Do you want to go?’ and then becoming angry at ‘No’ makes little sense. If an age-appropriate bedtime has arrived, it is not honest to present sleep itself as optional when refusal will not be accepted.

Genuine choice operates within genuine limits: Which assignment will you begin with? Will you tidy the desk before or after bathing? Which of these two books will you read? Will you save the remaining money or set some aside for a purpose we have agreed on? The person making a real choice carries its effects within a safe space.

An experiment in motivation research suggests that explaining why an action matters, acknowledging the learner's feelings, and allowing some choice may help them adopt the value of an activity that initially lacks appeal. You might say, ‘I know you want to keep playing. It is time to prepare what we need tomorrow. Which part will you start with?’ You have heard the wish, preserved the responsibility, and left a decision the child can carry.⁵⁰

A duty does not depend on a child's liking it. Understanding its purpose can nevertheless help the child carry it out knowingly and rely less on someone being there to watch.

50 Edward L. Deci, Haleh Eghrari, Brian C. Patrick and Dean R. Leone, ‘Facilitating internalization: the self-determination theory perspective’, *Journal of Personality* 62(1) (1994): 119–142; abstract and description of the principal experiment.

Ability belongs to particular areas of life

Calling a child ‘irresponsible’ may wrong them with a statement broader than the evidence. They may look after their belongings well but struggle with time; hesitate when speaking to strangers; follow written instructions very well but become confused by spoken ones; or manage at home yet become distracted at school. Responsibility is not one colour that fills a whole person at once.

Hand over responsibility area by area. Know precisely what the child is learning now: packing a bag, managing a limited sum, keeping an appointment, completing a household task, following up an assignment, apologising for a mistake, or asking for help at the right time. Each has its own skills, risks and signs of progress.

This also guards against granting a major privilege because of success in an unrelated area. Academic achievement alone does not establish good money management. Quiet conduct at home does not establish sound judgement of risks outside it. Technical skill is not the same as maturity in dealing with strangers or protecting privacy. Equally, difficulty in one area does not erase success in another.

This precision is fairer and more useful for teaching. Something specific can be taught, observed and reviewed. A child may find it hard to know what to do tomorrow with the general judgement ‘You are responsible’ or ‘You are irresponsible.’

Five levels of support

An educator has more than two options: doing the task or leaving the child alone. Support can be adjusted to need.

At the first level, the adult demonstrates the task and explains what needs explaining, particularly if it is new or potentially dangerous. At the second, the child takes a real part—choosing, preparing or completing a step—while the adult retains what the child cannot yet manage. At the third, the child does most of the work and the adult offers a hint or question instead of the solution. At the fourth, the child works independently and brings the result for review. At the fifth, the task becomes an ordinary responsibility; checking is needed when a problem appears or circumstances change, rather than every time.

These levels are not a rigid ladder or fixed ages. A child may be at the fifth level in putting belongings away, the second in cooking, and the first in using a dangerous tool. They may advance and temporarily move back during illness or when the task changes. The point is for the educator to recognise that reducing help is part of teaching.

A study of supportive speech found associations between its timing in relation to a child's activity and some attention-switching abilities. Before intervening, notice whether the child

needs that cue now. A brief silence may provide the chance to discover the next step independently.⁵¹

A real task may teach more than a long artificial exercise

Learning independence does not always require special exercises separated from life. Many useful opportunities already exist: a schoolbag, a kitchen, an appointment, an allowance, a book, an assignment, a conversation requiring courtesy, or something damaged that needs repair.

A real task gives the action meaning. When a child compares two prices for a small purchase, the figures do more than fill a worksheet: they affect the money left. When they plan to reach an activity they enjoy on time, time is more than an abstract timetable: lateness changes the experience. When they send a courteous apology after a mistake, they do more than memorise an ethical formula: they address the effect of their action on another person.

Real experience does not mean avoidable risk. We should not test independence through something that could damage health,

51 Maximilian B. Bibok, Jeremy I. M. Carpendale and Ulrich Müller, 'Parental scaffolding and the development of executive function', *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 2009(123): 17–34; study of the timing of supportive statements and its relationship to attention shifting. A correlational finding about the timing of support, not a fixed rule for every situation.

lose money that cannot be spared, expose a child to exploitation, or impose an adult's responsibility. Choose a scale on which mistakes and learning are possible without serious harm.

In a study of participation in household chores, recorded interactions showed more cognitive scaffolding at the beginning of a task and less as it progressed, while emotional support continued. This reminds us that reducing practical help can go together with continuing closeness and encouragement.⁵²

Withdrawing help need not mean withdrawing the relationship. We can leave a child to carry out a task while remaining available, welcoming their effort, comforting them after failure, and talking afterwards. Healthy independence grows through trust that leaves room to work and room to return, rather than through coldness.

An example: from carrying money to managing a small purchase

In this imagined example, a family wants to teach their twelve-year-old son to manage money for small everyday needs. Until

52 Liting Xia, Shuo Chen, Xia Hong, Yuqi Liang, Liying Cui and Aruna Wu, 'The relationship between involvement in household chores and problem-solving abilities among preschool children and the moderating role of parental scaffolding', *Acta Psychologica* 260 (2025): 105629; first study N = 125; video analysis in the second study N = 31. A limited study with recorded observations of a small sample; no proof of causation.

now, his father has given him the exact amount, specified the product and shop, and asked for the change. The boy carries out the errand successfully but makes little real decision beyond transporting the money.

The father begins with a low-risk purchase and a limited sum. He shows his son two lists of similar products and explains what matters: the need first, then price, suitable quality, and keeping the receipt and change. He does not ask the boy to learn all of economics in a day.

The first time, they read prices together. The second time, the father gives the task and asks his son to explain the plan before buying. The third time, he joins the comparison only when asked. Some small purchases then become the boy's responsibility, within a clear spending limit and a fixed rule: no purchases through an online account, recurring commitments, or disclosure of personal information without consulting the parent.

Once, the boy chooses a larger package believing it is better value, then discovers that its unit price is higher. The father does not reclaim the money from his allowance merely to punish the mistake, or say, 'You know nothing.' They sit with the receipt and calculate the difference. The mistake becomes material for learning rather than a trial of the boy's character.

After several weeks, the question is not 'Has he become a responsible man?' It is more specific: Can he complete this kind of purchase within the agreed limit? They review five signs:

Does he identify the need before entering the shop? Does he compare correctly? Does he keep the receipt and change? Does he ask when he meets something unfamiliar? Can he explain afterwards why he chose what he did?

Once these skills are steady, the task can expand a little. If a gap appears, help returns to that point. One mistake need not remove the whole responsibility, and one success need not justify expanding it.

Experience reveals what the boy can do and what he still needs to learn. The next task is chosen accordingly. Responsibility grows with ability, and consulting the parent remains possible.

Observing responsibility without turning a child into a set of scores

We need observations close to behaviour rather than sweeping judgements about a person. For a short period, an educator can notice four things within one task.

First, the number of reminders needed to begin or continue. Moving from five prompts to one is progress in that particular task. Second, the kind of help: does the child need someone to do it for them, a question that points the way, or only a check afterwards? Third, recovering from mistakes: does the first problem bring everything to a stop, or can the child go back a step and try another way? Fourth, explaining the action: a child who understands a step's reason and plan is better placed to use

the skill elsewhere than one who repeats a movement without understanding.

These signs do not need to be combined into a number. A short weekly note may be enough, and the record can be set aside when it has served its purpose. Observation should help us decide when to increase or reduce support, not create a permanent file that follows the child around.

Be wary of speed as a misleading sign. Children starting to do something independently may be slower than an adult would be. Do not take the task away simply because their efficiency is not yet an adult's. Look at improvement relative to their own earlier ability, preserve the limits that prevent harm, and allow time for the skill to become established.

When should we not step back?

There are situations in which 'Let them try' is poor advice. If a mistake could cause significant physical harm, infringe another person's rights, disclose private information, incur a large financial commitment, or expose a child to a relationship whose risks they cannot assess, the educator's responsibility comes before the wish to practise. Teach through simulation or a safe part of the task, rather than letting harm occur so that the child can learn from it.

Likewise, if a possible developmental, neurological or psychological difficulty affects memory, planning or attention, increasing pressure in the name of independence is not

appropriate. Some children need external support for longer, visual lists, reminders, and more carefully divided tasks.

Needing support for longer is not a moral failure.

Fairness requires distinguishing the aim from the method. The aim may be for a person to learn as much as they can about managing their affairs, while the route differs from one person to another. Needing a reminder tool or continuing help in one area does not lower a person's worth before Allah or diminish their dignity. This book concerns learning, not ranking people by how quickly they perform.

When an independent child asks for help

Some educators see a request for help after a task has been learned as regression. It is not always so. Independence does not mean doing everything alone. It includes knowing what one can and cannot do, seeking assistance at the right time, and carrying one's own responsibility once help arrives.

A child may be able to prepare a school presentation but receive a new task in unfamiliar software. Saying 'Teach me this step' is more mature than hiding the gap until failure. A teenager managing a limited allowance may encounter a transaction whose terms are unclear. Consulting a guardian is a sound response, not a loss of independence.

Do not make independence a wall between child and adult. Let it be a door that opens both ways: the child goes out to try and

can return to ask without ridicule or rebuke for not knowing everything.

The educator whose success makes some help unnecessary

In some professions, continued demand for a service measures success. Education has a different feature: one sign of success is that children need less of some help they once required, while love, kindness to parents and family ties remain. They learn to tie shoes, so we stop tying them. They learn to organise an appointment, so we no longer pursue them each time. They learn to review a plan, so we stop making it for them. As they grow, they can carry greater obligations.

This reduced need is not a loss of a parent's role. It is one of its fruits. Yesterday's learner is capable today; today's capable child is preparing for a tomorrow in which they can support themselves and benefit others.

The discipline we seek is more than a child's quick response to every external instruction. That may be a stage of teaching in some situations, but it is not the whole purpose. We want a person who understands, remembers, plans, begins, persists, corrects, asks when unsure, and knows that responsibilities remain even when no one watches.

The previous chapter considered a home that supports learning. This chapter has followed the gradual handing over of responsibility within it. The next turns to a great act of worship

in which children practise before the obligation of adulthood applies: prayer. It calls for particular care in distinguishing teaching from religious accountability, gentleness from neglect, and appropriate practice from turning worship into a battleground.

Chapter Ten: Teaching Prayer Before Puberty

A child does not wake on the day of puberty with knowledge of prayer already in the heart, its times stored in memory, its movements familiar to the body, and a settled place for it in daily life. Religious accountability has its boundaries and rulings, but education begins years before that point. We therefore need to ask more than when prayer becomes obligatory as it is for an adult. An earlier question matters too: How do we prepare a child to know prayer, become familiar with performing it, and be able to carry it out when the time of responsibility arrives?

Confusing teaching before obligation with obligation itself can damage education in opposite ways. Some educators treat a child as though an adult's established duty had already been neglected, imposing accountability before its conditions apply. Others keep prayer distant from the child's life until puberty and then expect, in a single day, a practice whose movements, times and preparations were never learned. Between those extremes lies a long education: introduction and example, instruction, participation, follow-up, and a gradual handing over of responsibility.

Allah Most High says: ﴿وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا﴾.

Translation of the quoted meaning: ‘Command your family to pray, and persevere in it.’ (Ta Ha 20:132). Directing the family

to prayer and being patient in it belong together in the educator's life: teach, encourage, repeat gently, and remain faithful yourself to what you call others towards.

In Luqman's counsel, discussed in Chapter Eight, prayer belongs with worshipping Allah alone, patience and good character. Teaching its time and form remains part of that education, inseparable from the meaning of servitude to Allah.

Age seven: beginning directed practice, not first acquaintance

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«مُرُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ سَبْعِ سِنِينَ وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ عَشْرِ سِنِينَ وَفَرَّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Instruct your children to pray when they are seven years old, and strike them for it when they are ten, and separate them in their sleeping places.’⁵³

Teaching begins through observation, gentleness and practice, with the educator responsible for follow-up. What is transmitted about discipline is subject to its juristic limits. A parent must not

53 Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Prayer, chapter on when a child is instructed to pray, hadith 495; graded hasan sahih by al-Albani. Questions of discipline have their juristic conditions; the application here is nonviolent.

treat it as permission to harm a child or act upon it in anger. This chapter presents safe ways to teach.

The instruction at seven does not mean a child should never have seen prayer before then. A seven-year-old starting from nothing in ablution, the direction of prayer, bowing and prostration needs something different from a child who has spent the early years watching parents pray, hearing the call to prayer, seeing prayer's place in family life, and trying to stand beside them without pressure to master what has not yet been taught. The example discussed in Chapter Eight comes before organised instruction and prepares the way for it.

Notice also that the hadith directs the educator to act: 'Instruct your children.' We should not turn it into a demand that children alone produce a result whose foundations we have not built. If a seven-year-old does not know al-Fatihah, cannot distinguish the number of prayer units, or does not understand the instructions for ablution, the first item in the family's plan should be better teaching, not louder commands.

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, also said:

«رُفِعَ الْقَلَمُ عَنْ ثَلَاثَةٍ عَنِ النَّائِمِ حَتَّى يَسْتَيْقِظَ وَعَنِ الصَّبِيِّ حَتَّى يَحْتَلِمَ وَعَنِ الْمَجْنُونِ حَتَّى يَعْقِلَ»

Meaning in English: 'The pen has been lifted from three: from the sleeper until he wakes, from the child until he reaches

puberty, and from the person without reason until he regains it.⁵⁴

The years before puberty are a time for learning and preparation. Children become familiar with worship and practise it before carrying adult accountability. Educators must teach, instruct, follow up, and remain patient with the learning required.

This is deliberate education before full accountability applies: neither neglect because a child has not reached puberty nor complete equality with an adult in being held to account. The space between is where teaching takes place.

Before saying ‘Pray’, make sure the child knows how

A father may call ‘Pray’ from the other end of the home dozens of times while the actual difficulty lies elsewhere. A child may be unsure about ablution, forget the order of movements, confuse the number of units, or fear making a mistake in front of adults. The command alone does not address the missing skill.

54 Report of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him; Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Prescribed Punishments, chapter on a person of unsound mind who steals or commits an offence subject to a prescribed punishment, hadith 4403. Graded sahih by al-Albani. This reports his grading; it is not an independent assessment of the chain of transmission.

Malik ibn al-Huwayrith, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«أَتَيْنَا إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَنَحْنُ شَبَبَةٌ مُتَقَارِبُونَ، فَأَقَمْنَا عِنْدَهُ عِشْرِينَ يَوْمًا وَلَيْلَةً، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَحِيمًا رَفِيقًا، فَلَمَّا ظَنَّ أَنَّا قَدْ اشْتَهَيْنَا أَهْلَنَا أَوْ قَدْ اشْتَقْنَا سَأَلَنَا عَمَّنْ تَرَكْنَا بَعْدَنَا فَأَخْبَرْنَاهُ قَالَ: ارْجِعُوا إِلَى أَهْلِيكُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا فِيهِمْ وَعَلِّمُوهُمْ وَمُرُوهُمْ - وَذَكَرَ أَشْيَاءَ أَحْفَظَهَا أَوْ لَا أَحْفَظَهَا - وَصَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَلْيُؤَذِّنْ لَكُمْ أَحَدُكُمْ وَلْيُؤَمِّمْكُمْ أَكْبَرُكُمْ»

Meaning in English: ‘We came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, as young men of similar age, and stayed with him for twenty days and nights. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was compassionate and gentle. When he thought we longed for our families, or missed them, he asked about those we had left behind, and we told him. He said, “Return to your families, stay among them, teach them and instruct them”—and he mentioned things that I remember, or do not remember—“and pray as you have seen me pray.

When prayer time comes, let one of you give the call to prayer, and let the oldest of you lead you.”⁵⁵

They learned through observation and companionship, then returned to teach their families. Let a child see prayer performed, then pray with you and ask about what is unclear. Seeing the whole action can bring together what separate explanations leave scattered.

Teaching can begin with specific parts:

- Learn when ablution is needed, then learn how to perform it step by step.
- Know the direction of prayer at home, at school, or wherever the child usually prays.
- Gradually memorise al-Fatihah and the remembrances needed in prayer, with calm correction.
- Watch the complete prayer more than once, then perform it alongside the person teaching.
- Learn the number of units in the prayers being performed, rather than being expected to assemble every detail alone.

⁵⁵ Report of Malik ibn al-Huwayrith, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on the adhan and iqamah for travellers in a group, and likewise at ‘Arafah and Jam‘, hadith 631.

- Know what to do after forgetting or when a question arises, so that a small mistake does not become fear of prayer itself.

A comprehensive examination in one evening is unnecessary. Children are learning movements, words and times, as well as the transition from play, sleep or study to worship. Each may need a different amount of repetition.

Choose a clear instruction the child can follow. Several simultaneous corrections may distract from the central thing being learned.

When a mistake needs teaching, address what is needed now and postpone what can wait. Correcting ten details in a minute may leave a child remembering the corrective tone and forgetting the prayer.

From an adult's reminder to recognising the time

In the early years, an educator carries much of the child's external memory: 'Prayer is soon.' 'It is time.' 'Get ready.' This should not remain unchanged indefinitely. The aim is a gradual move from responding to a parent's reminder to recognising the signs of prayer time independently.

The transition can have stages. At first, the child hears the reminder and moves with the family. Later, before the reminder, ask, 'Which prayer comes next?' or 'How will you know its time has begun?' In time, the child may set an alarm or attend to the call to prayer in a way suited to their age and surroundings.

Follow-up can then move from reminders for every prayer to a review at the end of the day or week, according to need.

Devices do not produce worship. An alarm supports memory; it does not supply intention. It can nevertheless reduce dependence on the educator's voice when the difficulty concerns remembering to move between activities.

Distinguish a child who forgets from one who does not know, one who avoids, and one who cannot manage in particular circumstances. The outward result may be identical—not beginning prayer at the expected time—while the response needed differs.

If the form of prayer is unknown, teach it. If absorption in another activity leads to forgetting, create a signal for transition. If the child avoids prayer because it has become linked to daily quarrels, repair the relationship and the approach to follow-up. If illness or particular needs affect movement, understanding or endurance, learn the rulings related to ability and seek suitable guidance. Do not call inability a lack of willpower.

Prayer has a regular place in the day, but is more than a habit

Prayer has its time in the day and an intention directed towards Allah. An organised setting and reminders can help a child prepare: a known place for what is needed, a cue to move from play to ablution, and time to learn what is not yet done well.

Keep the meaning present in conversation: we pray to Allah, stand before Him, and learn what we say and do. Observe preparation and correct performance, leaving judgement of the heart to Allah. If a record is needed, use it for a particular skill, such as beginning after a reminder, rather than as a grade for the child's faith or sincerity.

Gentleness does not abandon teaching; firmness does not require harshness

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«إِنَّ الرِّفْقَ لَا يَكُونُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ وَلَا يُنْزَعُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ»

Meaning in English: ‘Gentleness is never present in anything without beautifying it, and it is never removed from anything without disfiguring it.’⁵⁶

Gentleness appears in the tone of instruction, patience with questions, and correction that preserves a child's dignity. An educator can be clear and consistent without humiliation or anger.

A firm father may say, ‘It is prayer time. Close the game now and come so we can perform ablution,’ then calmly follow

56 Report of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her; Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Maintaining Ties and Manners, chapter on the virtue of gentleness, hadith 2594a.

through. A firm mother may prevent the day's arrangement from swallowing prayer time, reorganise it, and supervise a child at a stage when supervision is needed. Clear limits do not always require anger.

Equally, gentleness does not mean smiling at every omission and saying, 'The child is free to choose.' Children have a claim on us to teach what benefits them, make room for worship in their day, and remain patient with the repetition education requires. Gentleness describes how to carry the educational responsibility, not how to cancel it.

A family study across several countries linked parental religiousness with differing pathways in parenting. A religious purpose does not exempt us from examining how we treat a child. Look at the effect of your approach: Is the child understanding and learning, or becoming more afraid and concealing the very questions they need to ask?⁵⁷

Follow-up that protects learning and dignity

The family is responsible for teaching prayer and following up on it. Discussing the instruction concerning children, al-Nawawi

57 Marc H. Bornstein et al., 'Mixed blessings: parental religiousness, parenting, and child adjustment in global perspective', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 58(8) (2017): 880–892; three-year longitudinal study of 1,198 families in nine countries. A longitudinal study across countries and religions, not an experiment on teaching prayer.

writes: «لَيْسَ أَمْرًا مِنْهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِلصَّبِيِّ وَإِنَّمَا هُوَ «أَمْرٌ لِلْوَلِيِّ فَأَوْجِبَ عَلَى الْوَلِيِّ أَنْ يَأْمُرَ الصَّبِيَّ». Translation: 'This is not a command from him, peace and blessings be upon him, to the child. It is a command to the guardian, making it obligatory for the guardian to instruct the child.'⁵⁸

Begin with example and teaching, address obstacles to moving into prayer, and establish calm follow-up the child understands. If difficulty recurs, look for its cause and adjust your approach. The practical methods here are nonviolent: health evidence links physical punishment with harm to children. Detailed juristic questions about discipline should be put to a qualified scholarly authority, not answered by a general training plan.⁵⁹

If every prayer begins with shouting and pursuit, stop repeating the same approach. The aim is for the child to know prayer and be able to perform it when no one stands behind them.

58 Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi, al-Majmu‘ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab, Book of Prayer, section on a child's prayer; approximately 3:10–11 in common editions; electronic text at database page 1148. Quoted from the electronic text in that section, without collating differences between editions.

59 World Health Organization, 'Corporal punishment of children: the public health impact', and 'Corporal punishment of children and health'; technical report dated 11 August 2025, 36 pages, and fact sheet updated 11 May 2026. A public-health source on harm, not an interpretation of the hadith or a religious ruling.

When a child refuses, do not begin by judging the intention

A nine-year-old may say, ‘I don't want to pray now.’ The words trouble the educator and may prompt a sweeping explanation: hatred of prayer, corruption of the heart, bad company or defiance of the parent. Yet the same behaviour can have different causes.

The child may be absorbed in a game and not yet have learned to stop it for another activity. They may be very sleepy. They may fear a recurring mistake for which someone embarrasses them. They may not understand part of the prayer and experience it as unfamiliar movements. Prayer time may have become a time of family quarrelling. Or there may indeed be a deeper refusal requiring a conversation about meaning, rather than a behavioural device alone.

Before choosing a response, ask: What is preventing the beginning?

If the problem is leaving a screen, do not make the whole question of faith revolve around the device. Establish a rule to close it before prayer time, or give a reminder a few minutes beforehand, and apply the arrangement to family members as far as possible. If knowledge is missing, return to teaching. If the child asks, ‘Why do I pray?’ do not rebuke the question. Explain worshipping and thanking Allah and standing before Him in age-appropriate terms, leaving room for further questions.

If refusal recurs alongside major disturbances in sleep, attention, mood or general behaviour, a parent should not treat every difficulty as solely religious. A child may need assessment or assistance in another area affecting the ability to act consistently. Prayer matters, and fairness towards the child matters too.

A family's prayer cannot take the place of the child's own

Example is powerful, but does not replace handing over responsibility. A child may watch a father maintain prayer for years and still need to learn personally how to stop an activity and turn to prayer. The previous chapter explored this gap between observation and responsibility.

At first a father may say, 'Come with me.' Later, 'Get ready for prayer.' Then, 'What do you still need to do before prayer?' As maturity increases, the parent's role becomes checking whether the arrangement works, rather than directing each step.

Family members should not compete in the number of reminders. Three adults repeating 'Pray' within five minutes may produce a noisy home without identifying who is responsible for follow-up or what the consistent approach is. Agree instead: Who follows up? When do they remind? What can the child do alone? What still needs teaching?

Do not make an older sibling a permanent police officer over a younger one. The older child may be an example and

companion, but placing full religious and educational responsibility for another child on them confuses roles and can damage the sibling relationship.

The mosque can welcome learning or become a place of aversion

A child entering a mosque enters a place with rights to respect: the worshippers' peace, the cleanliness of the space, and freedom from disruptive behaviour that harms others. These rights need teaching, and the teaching needs to take age into account.

Before going, briefly explain what is expected. Early visits should involve a prayer or circumstances the child can manage, particularly for a very active child. Stand where the educator can respond without disturbing others. A small mistake need not bring public humiliation. The aim is to teach both respect for the place and the beauty of worship.

Do not generalise from one child to all children. Some can stand quietly for a suitable period at an early age; others need longer practice. Sensory or developmental needs may make crowds or particular sounds exhausting for some children. This does not cancel the mosque's rights or permit harm to others. It does affect the method, time, place and amount of support.

An example: an eight-year-old who knows how to pray but does not begin alone

In this imagined example, an eight-year-old generally knows ablution, has memorised al-Fatihah and short surahs, and prays when a parent asks. After school, however, he becomes absorbed in play and needs repeated reminders to prepare for the afternoon prayer, ‘Asr.

The first possible mistake is to label him ‘lazy about prayer’. That broad description is unhelpful. The difficulty can be described more precisely: he does not move from play to preparing for ‘Asr without several reminders.

During the first week, the parents do not demand complete independence. They agree that an initial reminder a few minutes before the usual time means finishing the current round without starting a new one. When prayer time begins, he puts the device in a fixed place away from the prayer area and performs ablution with his father if he is home, or independently with checking when needed. The family does not add a payment for every prayer or make worship a transaction. The aim is to organise the transition.

In the second week, the child sets a simple alarm after coming home from school. A parent continues to supervise, but replaces several repetitions of ‘Go and pray’ with ‘What is your plan for ‘Asr today?’ If he answers and follows through, the conversation ends. If he ignores the plan, a clear, direct reminder follows.

In the third week, the family reviews just three things: Did he recognise the time? Did he begin preparing after the cue? Did he complete the prayer steps he had learned? They do not put a number on his inward humility, grade his faith, or compare his heart with his brother's. A mistake in a movement or remembrance is addressed through teaching at a suitable time, rather than making every prayer an examination.

After several days, it becomes clear that the hardest point is not ablution or prayer itself but stopping the game. The response focuses on that skill: avoiding a new round near prayer time, closing the device at the cue, and keeping it away from the prayer area. The parents learn that sometimes another speech on the virtues of prayer is not what is needed. A clear obstacle between knowledge and action needs removing.

If, instead, the child did not understand why we pray or objected to worship itself, a different conversation would be needed. A behavioural programme cannot answer a question of faith that has not yet been heard.

A two-week record, no longer than needed

A short, temporary record can support teaching at this stage, provided it does not become permanent surveillance. Choose one prayer or one recurring difficulty and observe, for example, for two weeks:

1. Did the child remember the time or respond to the cue? Yes / needed another reminder.

2. What help was needed in preparing? Worked independently / needed a question / needed direct explanation.
3. Was there a gap in knowledge? Ablution, number of units, recitation, or moving between positions.
4. What was the clearest external obstacle? Sleep, a screen, going out, crowding, forgetting, or no suitable place.
5. What change will we try? One change at a time.

After two weeks, ask whether reminders are needed less, the missing skill has been learned, and the arrangement has become less tense. If so, reduce recording. If nothing has changed, do not spend two months adding the same mark. Re-examine the difficulty.

There is no need to calculate a ‘religious success rate’. If a proportion is used for a specific behaviour, keep its meaning narrow and explicit: for instance, the proportion of occasions on which the child began preparing after the agreed cue. It must not become a judgement of the child's righteousness.

What should a ten-year-old know before we ask for more?

Before increasing follow-up, the educator can examine their own work through specific questions:

Can the child explain why we pray in age-appropriate words? Do they broadly know the prayer times and how to recognise their arrival in their surroundings? Have we actually taught

ablution and prayer, or merely issued commands? Can the child ask about a mistake without fear of ridicule? Is prayer present in the parents' lives, or only demanded of the child? Does the child know, at a suitable level, what to do in illness or some forms of inability? Does our follow-up preserve dignity and serve its purpose, or repeat the same conflict each day?

These questions do not transfer all responsibility from child to educator. They prevent us from demanding a fruit whose conditions for growth we have not provided.

From teaching to religious accountability

Before puberty, we teach, instruct, follow up and build ability. A new stage then changes the nature of religious responsibility. The adolescent's world changes too: privacy, permission to enter, their relationship with their body, friendships, decisions, and a growing capacity to understand and choose.

It is unwise to enter this stage with the same approach used for a seven-year-old. What was done for the child should diminish. What once needed a short instruction may now need a conversation. What was directly supervised gradually becomes a trust the young person carries before Allah.

During this stage, children have learned that prayer has a time and form, that preparing for it belongs in their day, that mistakes can be corrected and questions are welcome, and that their family neither abandons them nor burdens them beyond capacity. This is not the end of education. It is firm ground from

which to enter the next chapter: puberty, privacy and responsibility.

Chapter Eleven: Puberty, Privacy and Responsibility

At puberty, a young person does not suddenly acquire complete experience. Nor do they remain a child whose life is managed as before. Religious responsibility begins, the body changes, and the need for privacy and permission grows. They need room to learn to choose. The family's role is neither to withdraw nor to control everything, but to offer clear teaching, known boundaries, and support that recedes as ability develops.

Asking permission begins at home

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ﴾.

﴿وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ﴾.

Translation of the quoted meanings: Allah Most High says, ‘You who believe, let those whom your right hands possess and those among you who have not reached puberty ask your permission at three times: before the dawn prayer, when you lay aside your clothes at midday, and after the night prayer. These are three times of privacy for you.’ (Al-Nur 24:58). He then says, ‘When the children among you reach puberty, let them ask

permission as those before them asked permission.’ (Al-Nur 24:59).⁶⁰

These verses establish a practical courtesy: closeness has boundaries, and living in one home does not remove the right to privacy. This becomes more significant after puberty. A son should not enter his parents' private space without permission, and parents should not constantly invade his room or belongings without reason.

«أَطْلَعَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ جُحْرٍ فِي حُجْرِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِدْرَى يَحْكُ بِهِ رَأْسَهُ فَقَالَ: لَوْ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَنْظُرُ لَطَعَنْتُ بِهِ فِي عَيْنِكَ إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ الْإِسْتِذَانُ مِنْ أَجْلِ الْبَصَرِ»

Sahl ibn Sa‘d, may Allah be pleased with him, reported— meaning in English: ‘A man peered through a hole into the Prophet's rooms while the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, had a comb-like implement with which he was scratching his head. He said, “Had I known you were looking, I would

60 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an, commentary on al-Nur, 24:58: seeking permission at times of privacy. Isma‘il ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim, commentary on al-Nur, 24:58–59: after puberty, children seek permission as adults do.

have pierced your eye with it. Permission to enter was prescribed because of looking.”⁶¹

The immediate lesson is that being able to see something does not give us a right to see it. In the age of the phone, intrusion may mean opening a drawer, reading a private paper, or browsing messages out of curiosity. Privacy is not immunity from protection, however. When credible signs of blackmail, harm or exploitation appear, a guardian intervenes to the extent needed and explains why as far as possible. General anxiety should not become permanent inspection.

A useful household principle is to ask permission in ordinary circumstances, intervene for a specific danger, and avoid extending the intervention into unrelated matters. The adolescent can then understand both their dignity and personal space, and the responsibility their family will not abandon.

Do not leave the rulings of puberty to chance

«جَاءَتْ أُمُّ سُلَيْمٍ امْرَأَةً أَبِي طَلْحَةَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ، هَلْ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ مِنْ غُسْلِ إِذَا هِيَ اخْتَلَمَتْ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: نَعَمْ إِذَا رَأَتْ الْمَاءَ»

61 Report of Sahl ibn Sa‘d, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Seeking Permission, chapter on permission being prescribed because of looking, hadith 6241.

Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported—meaning in English: ‘Umm Sulaym, the wife of Abu Talhah, came to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and said, “Messenger of Allah, Allah is not shy of the truth. Must a woman perform a full ritual bath if she has a wet dream?” The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Yes, if she sees the fluid.”’⁶²

This was a direct question about a ruling a person needs, and the answer was clear. Modesty does not mean entering religious accountability without knowing what makes purification and worship valid. Shortly before the need arises, a father can explain the main changes and their rulings to his son, and a mother to her daughter, using respectful language or drawing on a reliable source if they are unsure how to explain.

A long session covering every detail is unnecessary. Gradual teaching can establish four messages: bodily change is not shameful; the rulings of purification are learned; the body has sanctity; and questions about worship and safety should not bring ridicule or public embarrassment.

Religious responsibility begins at puberty, but experience in money, relationships and risk is not thereby complete. A young person may know the rulings of ritual bathing yet still need to

62 Report of Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ritual Bathing, chapter on a woman having a wet dream, hadith 282.

learn how to respond to digital blackmail. They may pray independently while learning to manage money, outings and time. Responsibilities should therefore move across one area at a time, rather than through the slogans ‘They are grown, leave them’ or ‘They are still young, control everything.’

Understanding and governing desire

{قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ}ـ
{وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا}ـ

Translation of the quoted meanings: Allah Most High says, ‘Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their chastity’ (Al-Nur 24:30), and directs believing women likewise in the following verse. He also says, ‘Do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. It is indeed an outrage and an evil way.’ (Al-Isra’ 17:32).

«دَخَلْتُ مَعَ عَلْقَمَةَ وَالْأَسْوَدِ عَلَى عَبْدِ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ: كُنَّا مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ شَبَابًا لَا نَجِدُ شَيْئًا فَقَالَ لَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضَى لِلْبَصَرِ وَأَحْصَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ»

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Yazid reported—meaning in English: ‘I entered with ‘Alqamah and al-Aswad to see ‘Abd Allah. ‘Abd Allah said, “We were young men with the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and had no means. The Messenger of

Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said to us, ‘Young men, whoever among you has the means for marriage should marry, for it is more effective in lowering the gaze and guarding chastity. Whoever cannot should fast, for it will restrain desire for him.’”⁶³

The guidance recognises desire and points towards chastity. Adolescents should not be made to feel corrupt merely for experiencing attraction, nor left without limits. Teach the distinction between feeling and choice, lowering the gaze, protecting the body, choosing companions, avoiding the approaches to wrongdoing that they know weaken them, and returning to Allah after a mistake. Fasting is worship, not punishment or a means of harm.

Supervision that helps honesty grow

Recent family research suggests that excessive psychological control may be associated with poorer self-regulation and less voluntary disclosure by adolescents. The relationship can be reciprocal and influenced by many factors. These findings do not establish that every rule causes harm or that parents are the sole influence. Our practical point is narrower: protect a young

63 Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on fasting for someone unable to marry, hadith 5066.

person when danger arises without trying to possess every thought and secret.⁶⁴

Instead of repeated interrogation, families can agree beforehand on three areas:

- Safety and rights: assault, blackmail, harm or a credible danger requires intervention.
- Shared household matters: return times, sleep, household duties and purchases need clear agreements.

64 Adam A. Rogers, Madison K. Memmott-Elison, Laura M. Padilla-Walker and Jennifer Byon, ‘Perceived parental psychological control predicts intraindividual decrements in self-regulation throughout adolescence’, *Developmental Psychology* 55(11) (2019): 2352–2364; seven waves, 500 families, ages 11–17. Jian-Bin Li, Yanyouk E. Willems, F. Marijn Stok, Maja Deković, Meike Bartels and Catrin Finkenauer, ‘Parenting and self-control across early to late adolescence: a three-level meta-analysis’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14(6) (2019): 967–1005; 191 studies, 1,540 effect sizes, $N = 164,459$. Şule Selçuk et al., ‘A longitudinal study of parental solicitation, rule-setting, and psychological control as predictors of adolescent disclosure across more individualistic and more collectivistic countries’, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 55(2) (2026): 516–535; 1,215 adolescents in eight countries at ages 13, 15 and 16.

- Ordinary personal space: harmless conversation, a private notebook and permissible choices should generally be respected.

This is a suggested educational distinction, not a universal juristic ruling. Age, ability, legal requirements and risks differ. Its value is to avoid two mistaken extremes: ‘Everything is private’ and ‘Nothing is private.’

A practical example

A fourteen-year-old agrees with his parents to leave his phone outside his room at ten, then breaks the agreement for three nights. There is no specific sign of danger. His father neither searches every conversation nor ignores the breach. He says, ‘We agreed on a time, and this is what happened. What is preventing you from keeping the agreement?’ They discover that homework discussion turns into late conversation. They agree on an earlier reminder and a shared place for the phone.

The boy also knows to tell his parents immediately if a stranger asks for a private image, threatens him or attempts blackmail. He knows intervention will address the problem, rather than become a search through his whole life. After two weeks, they review what happened: Was the agreement kept? Did sleep improve? Did any danger appear? Trust is not an unchanging slogan here; it is room that grows through responsible behaviour.

A family review

Parents can ask themselves:

1. Has our son or daughter learned the necessary rulings of purification from a reliable source?
2. Do the adults observe the courtesy of asking permission that they require from children?
3. Are the rules about phones, outings and money known before a crisis?
4. Do we have a specific reason when entering personal space?
5. Can our child tell us about a danger, knowing they will be heard and their dignity protected?
6. Does their responsibility expand as they demonstrate ability?

Puberty opens the door to accountability without closing the door to education. The aim is to move from discipline under supervision to responsibility carried when the supervisor is absent: knowing one's duties, seeking knowledge where it is missing, asking permission, protecting oneself and others' rights, and returning to family when danger arises. We now turn to an everyday area in which this responsibility becomes visible: learning and time.

Chapter Twelve: Learning and Time in a Young Person's Life

Early adulthood offers many possibilities: study, skills, friendship, work and an endless supply of content. The problem is not always too few opportunities, but too many within limited time. Discipline here does not mean packing the greatest number of tasks into a day. It means choosing what benefits you, learning it well, and protecting time for it without neglecting worship, the body or family.

Two blessings that can pass unused

«نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُورٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، الصَّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ»

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said—meaning in English: ‘There are two blessings in which many people are at a loss: health and free time.’⁶⁵

The image of loss draws attention to something we may not notice as it happens. A young person can have health and time yet spend them moving randomly between clips and projects, imagining that never stopping means being usefully busy. A full

65 Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening the Heart, chapter on matters that soften the heart and that there is no life but the life of the Hereafter, hadith 6412.

day is not necessarily a fruitful one. It can end without a duty well performed or a skill advanced.

Allah Most High swears by time in Surah al-‘Asr, then explains that deliverance from loss lies not in time merely passing but in faith, righteous deeds, and encouraging one another in truth and patience (Al-‘Asr 103:1–3). We need to connect our hours with deeds of worth before Allah and benefit in life, rather than treat the timetable itself as sacred.⁶⁶

Begin with what benefits you

«الْمُؤْمِنُ الْقَوِيُّ خَيْرٌ وَأَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ الضَّعِيفِ وَفِي كُلِّ خَيْرٍ احْرِصْ عَلَى مَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَاسْتَعِزْ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْجِزْ وَإِنْ أَصَابَكَ شَيْءٌ فَلَا تَقُلْ لَوْ أَنِّي فَعَلْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا، وَلَكِنْ قُلْ قَدَرُ اللَّهِ وَمَا شَاءَ فَعَلَ فَإِنَّ لَوْ تَفْتَحُ عَمَلَ الشَّيْطَانِ»

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said—meaning in English: “The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, though there is good in both. Be keen on what benefits you, seek Allah's help, and do not give up. If something befalls you, do not say, “If only I had done such and such, it would have been such and such.” Say

66 Isma‘il ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur‘an al-‘Azim, commentary on al-‘Asr, 103:1.

instead, “Allah decreed, and He did what He willed,” for “if only” opens the work of Satan.⁶⁷

The hadith begins with seeking what is beneficial, not with multiplying goals. Before a course or project, ask: What need does it serve? What will I be able to do afterwards? Which responsibility will compete with it? Then seek Allah's help, take the available means, and do not make the first setback a final judgement of your ability.

This principle can prevent someone from launching five equally demanding pursuits in one week. Language learning, programming, reading, memorisation and exercise may all be beneficial. Limited capacity still requires an order: a present duty, a main learning project, and modest room for other interests. Deliberate postponement can protect what you have chosen to master rather than express laziness.

Knowledge is a path we walk

«مَنْ نَفَسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسِّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

67 Report of Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih Muslim, Book of Divine Decree, chapter on strength, avoiding helplessness, seeking Allah's help and entrusting decrees to Allah, hadith 2664.

وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ وَمَنْ سَلَكَ
 طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا
 اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ
 وَيَتَدَارِسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلَّا نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمْ الرَّحْمَةُ
 وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ وَمَنْ بَطَأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ
 يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ»

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported—
 meaning in English: ‘Whoever relieves a believer of one of the
 distresses of this world, Allah will relieve him of one of the
 distresses of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes things
 easier for someone in hardship, Allah will make things easier
 for him in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever conceals a
 Muslim's faults, Allah will conceal his in this world and the
 Hereafter. Allah helps His servant so long as the servant helps
 his brother. Whoever follows a path seeking knowledge, Allah
 will make easy for him thereby a path to Paradise. No people
 gather in a house of Allah, reciting Allah's Book and studying it
 together, without tranquillity descending upon them, mercy
 enveloping them, angels surrounding them, and Allah

mentioning them among those with Him. Whoever is held back by his deeds will not be advanced by his lineage.’⁶⁸

The text speaks of following a path. Seeking knowledge involves recurring action: reading, asking, reviewing and using what is learned. Collecting links or watching explanations while remaining entirely passive is not enough. Each piece of learning should leave something you can examine: explain the idea in your own words, solve a problem, identify evidence, or apply the skill in a small project.

Reviews in learning science suggest that retrieval from memory and practice spaced over time are often more helpful than consecutive rereading alone, with effects varying by material, learner and assessment. Do not rely only on a feeling of ease. A page may seem familiar because you have seen it repeatedly, yet you may be unable to explain it once it is closed.⁶⁹

68 Report of Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness, chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur’an and remember Allah, hadith 2699a.

69 John Dunlosky, Katherine A. Rawson, Elizabeth J. Marsh, Mitchell J. Nathan and Daniel T. Willingham, ‘Improving students’ learning with effective learning techniques: promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology’, *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 14(1) (2013): 4–58; review of ten learning techniques. Henry L. Roediger III and Jeffrey D.

Try a simple exercise: read a suitable passage, close it, and write its three main ideas. Check what you got wrong, then revisit it after two days and after a week. This is not a prescription for every subject, but it moves learning from exposure towards active effort.

Protect attention from interruption

A phone supports learning and communication, but also admits a stream of demands. Limited experiments have found that computer multitasking, the mere presence of a phone in some conditions, or receiving a notification can impair performance on attention-related tasks. These findings depend on context; they do not establish that every phone ruins every learning experience.⁷⁰

The practical lesson is to move the device away for work that does not require it. When solving problems, put it out of sight and turn off notifications. If you need it as a dictionary, open the tool required and close other routes to distraction. Set a time to

Karpicke, ‘Test-enhanced learning: taking memory tests improves long-term retention’, *Psychological Science* 17(3) (2006): 249–255; two experiments using prose passages, with testing after five minutes, two days or one week. Nicholas J. Cepeda, Harold Pashler, Edward Vul, John T. Wixted and Doug Rohrer, ‘Distributed practice in verbal recall tasks: a review and quantitative synthesis’, *Psychological Bulletin* 132(3) (2006): 354–380; 839 assessments, 317 experiments, 184 articles.

communicate after the session rather than asking your mind to return after every alert.

Do not count minutes alone. Deliberate practice accounts for part of the differences in performance, not all of them. Ability, instruction, opportunity and the nature of the field vary. Observe what was accomplished: a problem solved, a page understood, a paragraph written or a skill applied, rather than merely a book remaining open for two hours.⁷¹

70 Faria Sana, Tina Weston and Nicholas J. Cepeda, 'Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers', *Computers & Education* 62 (2013): 24–31. Adrian F. Ward, Kristen Duke, Ayelet Gneezy and Maarten W. Bos, 'Brain drain: the mere presence of one's own smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity', *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* 2(2) (2017): 140–154; two experiments. Cary Stothart, Ainsley Mitchum and Courtney Yehnert, 'The attentional cost of receiving a cell phone notification', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 41(4) (2015): 893–897.

71 Brooke N. Macnamara, David Z. Hambrick and Frederick L. Oswald, 'Deliberate practice and performance in music, games, sports, education, and professions: a meta-analysis', *Psychological Science* 25(8) (2014): 1608–1618. Scope reported in the Arabic edition: abstract and publication details, without reanalysis of the original studies.

Companionship enters your day

«مَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ الصَّالِحِ وَالسَّوِّءِ كَحَامِلِ الْمُسْكِ وَنَافِخِ الْكَبِيرِ، فَحَامِلُ الْمُسْكِ إِمَّا أَنْ يُحْذِيكَ، وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَبْتَاعَ مِنْهُ، وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْهُ رِيحًا طَيِّبَةً، وَنَافِخُ الْكَبِيرِ إِمَّا أَنْ يُحْرِقَ ثِيَابَكَ، وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ رِيحًا خَبِيثَةً»

Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said—meaning in English: ‘A good companion and a bad companion are like a seller of musk and one who blows the bellows. The seller of musk may give you some, you may buy from him, or you may enjoy a pleasant scent from him. The one who blows the bellows may burn your clothes, or you may find an unpleasant smell.’⁷²

Companions do not determine a person's future alone, but they enter into habits and what comes to feel normal. A short-term longitudinal study of adolescents observed similarities and mutual influence in some aspects of academic performance without reducing outcomes to friendship alone. Choose company that reminds you of responsibilities and helps you

72 Report of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Slaughter and Hunting, chapter on musk, hadith 5534.

begin, rather than turning a study hour into an open-ended conversation.⁷³

Group study helps when it has a purpose: two people divide problems, each explains a topic, or one tests the other. A gathering without a task or a clear ending may increase the feeling of working without increasing learning.

A practical example

A university student wants to master English and programming, memorise a text, improve grades and exercise daily. The student starts everything and then feels guilty for maintaining nothing. The week is rearranged as follows:

1. First set the times for lectures, assignments, prayer, sleep and family responsibilities.
2. Choose English as the one additional learning project for this term and postpone intensive programming until the holiday.
3. Arrange three short sessions for retrieval and application, rather than watching alone.

73 J. Ashwin Rambaran, Andrea Hopmeyer, David Schwartz, Christian Steglich, Daryaneh Badaly and René Veenstra, ‘Academic functioning and peer influences: a short-term longitudinal study of network–behavior dynamics in middle adolescence’, *Child Development* 88(2) (2017): 523–543; N = 342, ages 14–15.

4. Put the phone away while solving problems and allow a defined period for messages afterwards.

After two weeks, ask concrete questions: Were commitments attended? Were retrieval sessions completed? What most often prevented a start? If the plan exceeded reality, reduce it. If sleep was the underlying problem, address it. If the phone interrupted the session, move it elsewhere.

Four decisions are enough for a beginning: What will I learn? How will I check my learning? With whom will I learn? How will I protect my attention? They teach a young person that a limited resource requires choices. After time comes another resource in which the cost of choice is particularly clear: money.

Chapter Thirteen: Financial Judgement Before Wealth Grows

A young person may reach puberty and begin earning before learning how to weigh a need against a desire, or present resources against a commitment that falls due later. Money does not automatically give its owner good judgement. It reveals the honesty, patience and care for other people's rights that the person has practised. Financial education therefore begins before a large salary arrives: with small sums, real decisions and consequences that can reasonably be borne.

Puberty is not the same as financial judgement

﴿وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَامًا
وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا﴾.
﴿وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَى حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا
فَازْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ﴾.

Allah says—translation of the meaning: ‘Do not entrust to those of unsound judgement your property, which Allah has made a means of support for you. Provide for them from it, clothe them, and speak to them kindly’ (al-Nisa’, 4:5). He then says: ‘Test the orphans until they reach marriageable age; then, if you

discern sound judgement in them, hand over their property to them' (al-Nisa', 4:6).⁷⁴

These verses concern the property of orphans. They do not establish a general test by which parents may take control of every adult child's money. They do, however, make an important distinction: reaching puberty is one condition; managing money well is an ability demonstrated through experience. Nor does protection permit humiliation. The Qur'an brings together safeguarding property, providing food and clothing, and speaking with kindness.

At home, sound judgement is not tested by a lecture on economics, but by small decisions. Does the young person know what comes in and what goes out? Can they postpone a purchase they cannot afford? Do they repay what they borrow? Can they distinguish an item's price from its total cost after fees? Do they protect an obligatory right before spending on extras?

74 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, commentary on al-Nisa', 4:5: restricting an imprudent person's disposal of property while providing food, clothing and kind speech. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*, commentary on al-Nisa', 4:6: testing an orphan before handing over property, and forms of testing sound judgement.

A measure for spending

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا﴾

Allah describes the servants of the Most Merciful—translation of the meaning: ‘Those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but keep a just balance between the two’ (al-Furqan, 25:67).⁷⁵

Moderation is not a single figure that suits every family, nor does it mean spending equally in every category. An expensive purchase may be wasteful for one person and a legitimate need for another. The balance becomes clearer when we consider income, obligatory rights, alternatives, frequency, and what a person will have to go without later because of today's decision.

Before making a purchase, a young person can ask:

1. Is this an obligatory right, a need, an improvement, or a passing desire?
2. Can I pay for it now while still meeting my commitments?
3. What is the full cost, beyond the price on display?
4. What will I have to postpone if I buy it?

⁷⁵ ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa’di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on al-Furqan, 25:67: moderation between extravagance and miserliness, and fulfilment of obligatory rights.

5. Do I still want it after waiting a little?

At the beginning, these questions matter more than knowing the names of complicated financial products. Someone who has not learnt what it means to make a decision may memorise many definitions and still repeat the same behaviour.

Money involves other people's rights

«كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَعُودُنِي عَامَ حَجَّةِ الْوَدَاعِ مِنْ وَجَعٍ اشْتَدَّ بِي فَقُلْتُ إِنِّي قَدْ بَلَغَ بِي مِنَ الْوَجَعِ وَأَنَا ذُو مَالٍ، وَلَا يَرِثُنِي إِلَّا ابْنَةٌ، أَفَأَتَصَدَّقُ بِثُلْثِي مَالِي؟ قَالَ: لَا. فَقُلْتُ بِالشَّطْرِ؟ فَقَالَ: لَا. ثُمَّ قَالَ: الثُّلُثُ وَالثُّلُثُ كَبِيرٌ - أَوْ كَثِيرٌ - إِنَّكَ أَنْ تَذَرَ وَرَثَتَكَ أَغْنِيَاءَ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ تَذَرَهُمْ عَالَةً يَتَكَفَّفُونَ النَّاسَ، وَإِنَّكَ لَنْ تُنْفِقَ نَفَقَةً تَبْتَغِي بِهَا وَجَهَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا أَجَرْتَ بِهَا، حَتَّى مَا تَجْعَلَ فِي فِي امْرَأَتِكَ. فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَخْلَفَ بَعْدَ أَصْحَابِي؟ قَالَ: إِنَّكَ لَنْ تُخْلَفَ فَتَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا إِلَّا أَزِدَّتْ بِهِ دَرَجَةً وَرِفْعَةً، ثُمَّ لَعَلَّكَ أَنْ تُخْلَفَ حَتَّى يَنْتَفِعَ بِكَ أَقْوَامٌ وَيُضَرَّ بِكَ آخَرُونَ اللَّهُمَّ أَمْضِ لِأَصْحَابِي هِجْرَتَهُمْ، وَلَا تَرُدَّهُمْ عَلَى أَغْقَابِهِمْ، لَكِنِ الْبَائِسُ سَعْدُ ابْنِ خَوْلَةَ»

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allah be pleased with him, related—meaning in English: ‘During the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, would visit me because of an illness that had become severe. I said, “My illness has become very severe. I have

wealth, and only a daughter will inherit from me. May I give two-thirds of my property in charity?" He said, "No." I asked, "Half?" He said, "No." Then he said, "A third—and a third is a large amount [or: a great deal]. It is better for you to leave your heirs well provided for than to leave them dependent, begging from people. You will be rewarded for whatever you spend seeking Allah's countenance, even the morsel you place in your wife's mouth." I said, "Messenger of Allah, will I be left behind after my companions?" He said, "If you are left behind, every righteous deed you do will only increase you in degree and standing. Perhaps you will remain until some people benefit through you and others are harmed through you. O Allah, bring my companions' emigration to completion, and do not turn them back on their heels. But poor Sa'd ibn Khawlah!" The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, expressed sorrow for him because he had died in Makkah.⁷⁶

The lesson here bears directly on our subject. A financial decision is not judged by its appearance of generosity alone, but also by the rights of those a person supports and by the consequences left behind. Ordinary household spending is rewarded when it is done seeking Allah's countenance. Saving must not become an escape from an obligatory right; nor should a public donation result in neglect of one's household.

76 Report of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Funerals, chapter on the Prophet's expression of sorrow for Sa'd ibn Khawlah, hadith 1295.

Teach with small amounts of real money

Modern financial-literacy frameworks describe the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour needed to make decisions in context, rather than merely memorising terms. International findings show that students encounter accounts, cards and different forms of digital purchasing early in life, and that family, work and education all contribute to their financial upbringing.⁷⁷

A review of school financial-education experiments indicates average improvements in knowledge and some behaviour, with variation between programmes and outcomes. Information is useful, but insufficient on its own. The home therefore needs

77 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ‘PISA 2022 financial literacy framework’, PISA 2022 Assessment and Analytical Framework (2023), chapter 3: the definition of financial literacy, application in life and non-cognitive factors. OECD, PISA 2022 Results, Volume IV: How Financially Smart Are Students? (2024), explanatory chapter on financial-literacy assessment: accounts, cards, digital purchasing, behaviour and family environment. Soyeon Shim, Bonnie L. Barber, Noel A. Card, Jing Jian Xiao and Joyce Serido, ‘Financial socialization of first-year college students: the roles of parents, work, and education’, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 39(12) (2010): 1457–1470; N = 2,098; financial-socialisation model.

opportunities for practice in which a young person can see the effects of a decision.⁷⁸

A small allowance can become a place of learning when its boundaries are clear: a known amount, what it covers, what it does not cover, and what happens if it runs out early. A young person should not be rescued every time an impulsive purchase has consequences, nor left without an essential need. They bear a manageable consequence, learn from it, and then reconsider the decision without being belittled.

Three useful areas for practice are:

- A short weekly or monthly budget recording money received and money spent.
- A purchase that involves comparing two options and calculating fees and later costs.
- A real savings goal for which a small desire is postponed.

Make digital money visible

A payment made with one tap may not feel like money leaving your hands in the way that cash does. ‘There is money in the account’ is therefore not enough. Review statements regularly, enable alerts, bring recurring subscriptions together in one list,

78 Tim Kaiser and Lukas Menkhoff, ‘Financial education in schools: a meta-analysis of experimental studies’, *Economics of Education Review* 78 (2020): 101930; 37 experiments or quasi-experiments, including 18 randomised experiments.

and know when each commitment is due. A credit card or deferred-payment service is not new income: it is a claim on future income. Fees or religious rulings may differ with the contract and country, so consult trustworthy qualified specialists about the details.

A beginner does not need fixed percentages imposed on every income. Begin with priorities: obligatory rights and commitments, then needs, then a suitable reserve, followed by desires and goals. After that, choose proportions suited to the actual situation. The figures serve the rights; they do not replace them.

Practical example: a first regular income

A student receives a monthly allowance and wants a new phone, although he owes a friend money and must pay for transport and books. He writes down the amount coming in, then puts the debt, transport and books first. He sees that buying the phone now would require another loan. Instead of stopping at ‘I cannot afford it’, he sets a monthly savings goal and a date to review it in three months.

In the first month, he discovers two subscriptions he does not use and cancels them. In the second, a family occasion arises, so he adjusts the amount he saves without touching the money owed to his friend. He has learnt more than the price of a phone: every riyal given to one category is unavailable to another, and a plan can be revised without overriding other people's rights.

Financial judgement is neither miserliness nor a social display, nor a lifeless spreadsheet. It means seeing money as a trust and a means: knowing the limits of your resources, protecting rights, resisting a momentary impulse and accepting the consequences of your choices. As resources grow, so do competing claims. That brings us to the next field: family life, where the rights of a spouse, the body, children, parents and work may all press at once.

Chapter Fourteen: Family Years and Competing Rights

In family life, a right is not always neglected because its holder has been forgotten. Sometimes many rights arrive together: work, a spouse, children, parents, a body in need of rest, and worship without which life cannot be set right. Discipline within a family is not an unchanging timetable. It means knowing who has a claim upon you, ordering necessities, consulting one another, and restoring balance when circumstances change.

The account of Salman and Abu al-Darda'

«أَخَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَيْنَ سَلْمَانَ وَأَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَزَارَ سَلْمَانُ أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَرَأَى أُمَّ الدَّرْدَاءِ مُتَبَدِّلَةً، فَقَالَ لَهَا: مَا شَأْنُكِ؟ قَالَتْ: أَخُو أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا. فَجَاءَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ فَصَنَعَ لَهُ طَعَامًا، فَقَالَ: كُلْ. قَالَ: فَإِنِّي صَائِمٌ. قَالَ: مَا أَنَا بِأَكِلٍ حَتَّى تَأْكُلَ. قَالَ: فَأَكَلَ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ اللَّيْلُ ذَهَبَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ يَقُومُ، قَالَ: نَمْ. فَنَامَ ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ يَقُومُ فَقَالَ: نَمْ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ قَالَ سَلْمَانُ: قُمْ الْآنَ. فَصَلَّيَا، فَقَالَ لَهُ سَلْمَانُ: إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلَإِهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، فَأَعْطِ كُلَّ ذِي حَقٍّ حَقَّهُ. فَأَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: صَدَقَ سَلْمَانُ»

Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported—
meaning in English: ‘The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon

him, established brotherhood between Salman and Abu al-Darda'. Salman visited Abu al-Darda' and saw Umm al-Darda' in plain, unadorned dress. He asked, "What is the matter?" She said, "Your brother Abu al-Darda' has no interest in worldly life." Abu al-Darda' arrived and prepared food for him. Salman said, "Eat." He replied, "I am fasting." Salman said, "I will not eat until you eat." So he ate. When night came, Abu al-Darda' went to get up for prayer. Salman said, "Sleep," and he slept. Then he went to get up again, and Salman said, "Sleep." Towards the end of the night, Salman said, "Get up now," and they both prayed. Salman told him, "Your Lord has a right over you, your own self has a right over you, and your family has a right over you. Give everyone who has a right their due." Abu al-Darda' went to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and told him about this. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Salman has spoken the truth."⁷⁹

This account shows that voluntary worship does not justify neglect of the body or family. Good intentions alone do not put competing rights in order; they need practical arrangement. Salman did not forbid night prayer. He placed it where it belonged, alongside sleep, food and the family's rights.

79 Report of Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on asking one's brother under oath to break a voluntary fast without requiring it to be made up when this is more suitable for him, hadith 1968.

«يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَلَمْ أُخْبَرْ أَنَّكَ تَصُومُ النَّهَارَ وَتَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ؟ قُلْتُ: بَلَى
يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: فَلَا تَفْعَلْ، صُمْ وَأَفْطِرْ، وَقُمْ وَدَمٌ، فَإِنَّ
لِجَسَدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِعَيْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِرَوْحِكَ عَلَيْكَ
حَقًّا»

The same meaning appears in the report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both—meaning in English: “‘‘Abd Allah, have I not been told that you fast by day and stand in prayer by night?’’ I said, ‘‘Yes, Messenger of Allah.’’ He said, ‘‘Do not do that. Fast and break your fast; pray and sleep. Your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, and your wife has a right over you.’’⁸⁰

The lesson is not to divide each day into equal portions. These rights are not all of one kind. Some are obligations that cannot be delayed; some are urgent needs; some recur; others concern voluntary acts. What matters is that one right should not become a permanent excuse for consuming all the rest.

80 Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter ‘Your wife has a right over you’, hadith 5199.

Each person is responsible within their own sphere

«كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْأَمِيرُ رَاعٍ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ، فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said—meaning in English: ‘Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those in your care. The ruler is a shepherd; a man is a shepherd over the people of his household; a woman is a shepherd over her husband's household and his children. Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those in your care.’⁸¹

Care is a responsibility, not a privilege belonging to whoever raises their voice. Part of it is knowing what each person carries and what the other needs. Allah says: ﴿وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ﴾ —translation of the meaning: ‘Live with them in kindness’ (al-Nisa’, 4:19). Kindness appears in spending, speech, time,

81 Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on a woman being responsible for her husband's household, hadith 5200.

consultation and respect for dignity. It is not fulfilled by checking off one item while neglecting the rest of married life.⁸²

A child is not an attachment to the adults' timetable. Concerning weaning, Allah says: ﴿فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا﴾—translation of the meaning: ‘If they both wish to wean the child by mutual agreement and consultation, there is no blame upon them’ (al-Baqarah, 2:233). Even this decision concerning a child is joined to mutual agreement and consultation. Neither spouse should make themselves the sole decision-maker and then accuse the other of falling short.⁸³

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا﴾

Nor do parents disappear from the picture when a new household is established. Allah says—translation of the meaning: ‘Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and show goodness to parents. If one or both of them

82 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on al-Nisa’, 4:19: living with wives in kindness.

83 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an, commentary on al-Baqarah, 2:233: weaning by the parents' mutual agreement and consultation.

reach old age in your care, do not say “uff” to them, nor rebuke them, but speak to them honourably’ (al-Isra’, 17:23). Yet dutifulness to parents should not be managed by neglecting the rights of a spouse or children. It calls for clear planning, cooperation and help when needed.⁸⁴

Work does not stay at the office door

Research reviews point to associations between work–family conflict and mental health, and suggest that one spouse's stress may carry over to the other and to the atmosphere at home. Findings vary with the kind of work and family and the methods of measurement. Reviews have also examined the relationship between the work–family interface and children's mental health. These associations do not establish that every work pressure causes a particular outcome. They do remind us, however, that unnamed exhaustion can turn into harshness or withdrawal, whose cost is borne by those closest to us.⁸⁵

84 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on al-Isra’, 17:23: goodness to parents and their increased need in old age.

85 Dongyu Liu, Yanyan Ni, Tiffany S. W. Ma, Xiaoyan Fan, Yongle Zhan, Ivan H. L. Lam, Matthew C. L. Lui, Tarani Chandola, Ichiro Kawachi, Pim Cuijpers and Michael Y. Ni, ‘Work–family conflict and mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis’, PLOS Medicine 23(7) (2026): e1005162; 82 longitudinal studies, with 52 studies and 112,714 participants in

A household therefore needs an honest sentence before an outburst: ‘This is a demanding week at work. I need us to redistribute some tasks.’ A person under pressure has no right to make everyone else carry it without explanation. Equally, every shortage of energy should not be read as a shortage of love.

Work carries legitimate claims when it involves earning a living, fulfilling a trust or honouring a contract. But it is not the only claim. If the exception becomes permanent, or every family commitment can be cancelled, the problem is no longer merely a busy week. The arrangement itself needs review.

the meta-analysis. Jesse S. Michel, Lindsey M. Kotrba, Jacqueline K. Mitchelson, Malissa A. Clark and Boris B. Baltes, ‘Antecedents of work–family conflict: a meta-analytic review’, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 32(5) (2011): 689–725; 1,080 correlations from 178 samples. Haley R. Cobb, Alexius E. Strasburg, Madeline L. Billeaud, Rachel S. Rauvola, Candice L. Thomas and Cort W. Rudolph, ‘Applying the actor-partner interdependence model to meta-analysis: a dyadic test of the spillover-crossover model for dual-income couples’, *Occupational Health Science* 8 (2024): 763–803; dyadic meta-analysis. Jaunathan Bilodeau, Maya Mikutra-Cencora and Amélie Quesnel-Vallée, ‘Work–family interface and children’s mental health: a systematic review’, *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 17(1) (2023): 45; 25 studies from 4,146 records.

A short meeting to put things back in order

A brief weekly conversation can be very useful, provided it does not become a courtroom. Give it four questions:

1. What fixed rights and commitments must we meet this week?
2. Where is there a peak in pressure or an unusual appointment?
3. Which task needs help or delegation?
4. What time will we protect for the family, for us as a couple, or for our parents?

The conversation is not a search for mathematical equality. One spouse may carry more during a week of illness, and the other during travel or examinations. Fairness means that effort is seen and appreciated, and that an exception does not silently become someone's permanent lot.

When spouses disagree, the child must not become their messenger or judge. Nor should a child's closeness to one parent be used to punish the other. A disagreement between adults is addressed between them, or with trustworthy help. The child remains protected from private matters they are not equipped to carry.

Practical example: a crowded week

A family has two working spouses, two children, and an elderly mother who needs a medical appointment. The husband has a work deadline, the wife an important work engagement, and the

older child an examination. If each protects their own timetable in isolation, every request may become an accusation.

They sit down for twenty minutes. They first secure the mother's appointment and the examination arrangements. They agree that the husband will take full responsibility for two mornings with the child, while the wife accompanies the mother to the medical appointment, with her brother helping with the return journey. They postpone a non-essential social visit. The husband asks for one meeting to be reduced instead of shifting all the pressure home. On two evenings, they protect half an hour for conversation without phones.

Not every right received equal time, but each was given a visible place. At the end of the week, they ask: What worked? What burden did one of us carry unseen? What should not happen again? This review turns an apology from a word into a change.

Competing rights are not resolved by a general sense of guilt. They are addressed by recognising the people concerned, ordering obligations and urgent needs, consulting, seeking help, and then restoring balance. When a person's health, age or ability changes, rights do not disappear, although the way they are fulfilled may change. That is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Fifteen: When Ability Changes

We build habits suited to our health and time. Then illness, travel, pregnancy, disability or old age may change what we can do. We may imagine that discipline means clinging to the old plan whatever happens, burdening ourselves beyond our capacity—or abandoning everything because its former shape is no longer possible. The sounder course is to preserve the purpose, understand the permitted concession, seek what remains possible, and accept help without humiliation.

Ability is part of religious responsibility

{فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ}.

{لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا}.

Allah says—translation of the meaning: ‘Be mindful of Allah as much as you are able’ (al-Taghabun, 64:16). He also says: ‘Allah does not burden any soul beyond its capacity’ (al-Baqarah, 2:286).⁸⁶

86 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on al-Taghabun, 64:16: mindfulness of Allah to the extent of ability and the qualification of commands by capacity; and commentary on al-Baqarah, 2:286: no soul being burdened beyond its capacity, and relief where excuses apply.

«دَعُونِي مَا تَرَكْتُكُمْ، إِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِسُؤَالِهِمْ
وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ، فَإِذَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ،
وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِأَمْرٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ»

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said— meaning in English: ‘Do not press me about matters I have left unaddressed. Those before you were destroyed by their questioning and their disagreement with their prophets. When I forbid you something, avoid it; and when I command you to do something, do as much of it as you are able.’⁸⁷

Ability is not an excuse attached to religion from outside it. It is a qualification stated in the revealed text. Knowing the extent of your ability is part of being truthful: neither invent an incapacity nor deny a real one until you collapse. When necessary, ask qualified scholars about the ruling for your own circumstances. Do not base a religious concession on guesswork.

87 Report of Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Holding Fast to the Qur’an and Sunnah, chapter on following the practices of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, hadith 7288.

The form of worship may change without its door closing

«كَانَتْ بِي بَوَاسِيرٌ فَسَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَقَالَ: صَلِّ قَائِمًا، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَقَاعِدًا، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَى جَنْبٍ»

‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him, said—meaning in English: ‘I had haemorrhoids, so I asked the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, about prayer. He said, “Pray standing. If you cannot, then sitting. If you cannot, then on your side.”’⁸⁸

The text does not cancel prayer when ability changes, nor demand from a sick person a posture beyond their capacity. It opens a clear transition from one posture to another. This teaches us not to confuse the former outward form with worship itself. Someone who needs to sit is not less sincere for taking what Allah has permitted. Someone who can do part of a good deed should not abandon it because the whole has become impossible.

In the context of jihad, the Qur’an removes blame from people with specified excuses: لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى ۖ الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ —translation of the

88 Report of ‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Shortening Prayer, chapter on praying on one's side when unable to sit, hadith 1117.

meaning: ‘There is no blame upon the blind, nor upon the lame, nor upon the sick’ (al-Fath, 48:17). Rulings from this context cannot be transferred to every subject without understanding the law. Yet the verse rules out a harsh view that treats disability itself as a moral failing.⁸⁹

A history of good deeds is not erased by incapacity

«سَمِعْتُ أَبَا بُرْدَةَ، وَاصْطَحَبَ هُوَ وَيَزِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي كَبْشَةَ فِي سَفَرٍ، فَكَانَ يَزِيدُ يَصُومُ فِي السَّفَرِ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُو بُرْدَةَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا مُوسَى مَرَارًا يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: إِذَا مَرَضَ الْعَبْدُ أَوْ سَافَرَ، كُتِبَ لَهُ مِثْلُ مَا كَانَ يَعْمَلُ مُقِيمًا صَحِيحًا»

Ibrahim al-Saksaki said—meaning in English: ‘I heard Abu Burdah when he and Yazid ibn Abi Kabshah were travelling together. Yazid used to fast while travelling. Abu Burdah said to him, “I heard Abu Musa say repeatedly that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: When a servant becomes ill or travels, the equivalent of what he used to do while resident and healthy is recorded for him.”’⁹⁰

89 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on al-Fath, 48:17: removal of blame from the blind, lame and sick in the context of jihad.

This hadith reassures a person whom illness or travel prevents from keeping a righteous practice established while healthy and at home. A temporary incapacity need not become the whole story of their life, nor should they imagine that their relationship with Allah has begun again from nothing. At the same time, the hadith is no excuse for abandoning what remains possible: it speaks of a real impediment and an established practice.

Old age is not a personal failure

Allah says: ﴿وَمَنْ نُّعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ﴾— translation of the meaning: ‘Whoever We grant long life, We reverse in creation. Will they not understand?’ (Ya-Sin, 36:68). Changes in strength with age belong to the patterns of creation. They do not show that a person has managed themselves badly. Movement may slow, hearing may weaken, and what was once done quickly may take longer.⁹¹

The World Health Organization describes healthy ageing in terms of functional ability arising from a person's capacities and environment, and emphasises the diversity of older people's

90 Report of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, chapter on a traveller receiving the equivalent of what they used to do while resident, hadith 2996.

91 ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on Ya-Sin, 36:68: the reversal in creation of those granted long life.

circumstances. It also understands disability as an interaction between a health condition and personal and environmental factors, rather than a label that reduces a whole person to one feature. These are general health frameworks whose applications change; they do not replace individual assessment. They do draw attention to the environment: stairs without a handrail, instructions in small print, or a gathering in which an older person cannot hear may create an additional limitation that could be reduced.⁹²

The lesson for a family is to ask: What could our relative do if we adjusted the environment? Perhaps they need a grab rail, larger print, more time, transport, or a task divided into stages. Good assistance does not take every role away. It removes an obstacle so that a person can remain active to the extent of their ability.

92 World Health Organization: ‘Ageing’, health topic, on healthy ageing, functional ability, intrinsic capacity and the environment; ‘Healthy ageing and functional ability’, questions and answers, on the diversity of older people, intrinsic capacities, environment and functional ability; International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, on functioning and disability in context and the inclusion of environmental factors; ‘Disability’, health topic, on interaction between health conditions and personal and environmental factors, and the effects of barriers on participation.

Receiving help does not cancel dignity

Independence does not mean doing everything alone. Someone may make their own decisions while needing help to move.

They may perform worship themselves while needing another person to prepare the space. A helper does not serve well by deciding everything on a person's behalf in the name of care.

Before helping, ask, 'What would you like me to do?' Allow time for an answer. Do not speak about an older or disabled person as though they were absent when they are present. Do not turn every request into a favour for which repeated thanks are owed. Protecting dignity is part of care.

An acute illness differs from a chronic condition; a stable disability from changes with age; temporary fatigue from lasting incapacity. Treating them as one category leads to a poor plan. Someone with a fever for a few days needs temporary arrangements. Someone whose ability has changed for the longer term needs a sustainable new system, and may need specialist medical or rehabilitation assessment.

A practical guide when ability changes

When the old timetable no longer fits, work through five steps:

1. Identify what has actually changed: movement, concentration, pain, time, or financial means.
2. Distinguish obligations from voluntary acts, and ask about the religious ruling when it is unclear.

3. Keep the purpose and change the means: sitting instead of standing when unable to stand, shorter sessions, or an assistive tool.
4. Ask for specific help, rather than making a general request that leaves others unsure how to respond.
5. Review the plan after a period of time, because ability may improve or decline.

Consider a man accustomed to a long portion of recitation after dawn prayer who begins a treatment that causes severe morning fatigue. He neither declares his programme finished nor insists on the same time until he abandons it altogether. He asks about the rulings of his worship if necessary, moves some of his reading to a time when he has more energy, divides it into shorter portions, and maintains an amount he can sustain. If his health improves, he increases it gradually again.

Within a family, a mother who is ill may need temporary relief from tasks she used to perform. It would nevertheless be unjust to remove every opportunity for participation and decision from her. Redistribute the work, ask each person what they can do, and preserve a real role for them. Discipline here means responsible flexibility, without harshness or disorder.

When ability changes, people are not measured against their former selves or against someone else's capacity. They consider their sincerity in doing what is possible, take concessions with understanding, preserve the good they can still do, and accept

assistance. This brings to a close the volume that has followed a person's development through childhood, youth, family life and changing ability. We now turn to the practical details of daily worship.

References and Source Notes

This list brings together the sources used in the volume; individual quotations are documented in the footnotes. Statements about the extent of consultation below describe the source work recorded in the approved Arabic edition. They do not claim a new independent review of those works for this translation. Descriptive English renderings of titles and chapter headings are provided for identification.

Report of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. Reported by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, chapter on how revelation began to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, hadith 1. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Report of Abu Hurayrah. Reported by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Manners, chapter on guarding against anger, hadith 6114. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Report of Abu Hurayrah. Reported by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Loans, chapter on delay by a debtor able to pay being injustice, hadith 2400. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Terrie E. Moffitt et al. A Gradient of Childhood Self-Control Predicts Health, Wealth, and Public Safety. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 108(7) (2011): 2693–2698.

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David A. Robson; Mark S. Allen; Steven J. Howard. Self-Regulation in Childhood as a Predictor of Future Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Psychological Bulletin* 146(4) (2020): 324–354. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: abstract and publication details. A synthesis of predictive evidence; consulting it is not equivalent to reading every original study it includes.

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Report of Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri. Reported by Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him. *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Zakat*, chapter on refraining from asking, hadith 1469. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

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edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Malte Frieese; Julius Frankenbach; Veronika Job; David D. Loschelder. Does Self-Control Training Improve Self-Control? A Meta-Analysis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12(6) (2017): 1077–1099. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: abstract and publication details. A small effect influenced by bias correction and comparison design; it does not establish a single willpower-strength mechanism.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, Sayd al-Khatir. Section: How the Self Gains Strength. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the section was read in an electronic text edition. The account of Bishr is introduced as something related, without a chain of transmission in the passage read. It cannot justify harmful deprivation of water or sleep.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi, Sayd al-Khatir. Section: Give the Self Its Right and Require from It What It Owes. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the section was read in an electronic text edition. A statement of the author's view on balance, not a general attestation to the authenticity of every account in the book.

Report of Abu Juhayfah. Reported by Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him. *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Book of Fasting, chapter on asking one's brother under oath to break a voluntary fast when that is more suitable for him, without requiring it to be made up, hadith 1968. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Report of Abu Hurayrah. Reported by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Holding Fast to the Qur'an and Sunnah, chapter on following the practices of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, hadith 7288. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Report of ‘Imran ibn Husayn. Reported by ‘Imran ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Shortening the Prayer, chapter on praying on one's side when unable to sit, hadith 1117. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Report of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. Reported by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Heart-Softening Matters, chapter on moderation and consistency in deeds, hadith 6464. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

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Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar. Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on a woman being responsible for her husband's household, hadith 5200. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited Arabic passage and chapter details. Establishes responsibility for care within the family; does not by itself specify parenting methods or household routines.

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Jelena Obradović; Michael J. Sulik; Anne Shaffer. Learning to Let Go: Parental Over-Engagement Predicts Poorer Self-Regulation in Kindergartners. *Journal of Family Psychology* 35(8) (2021): 1160–1170; 102 dyads according to the abstract. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract and publication details; the full article was not read. An observational study of particular interactions. It does not mean that parental guidance is always harmful or justify leaving a child without support.

Romulus J. Castelo et al. Parent Provision of Choice Is a Key Component of Autonomy Support in Predicting Child Executive Function Skills. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2022): 773492; four preschool samples, N = 366; open full text. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: abstract, methods, discussion and conclusion in the open full text. A pooled correlational analysis of samples from the American Midwest. It does not prove that offering choice alone causes improvement in executive function.

Jessica Blume; Gabriella M. Garcia; Marianne Garcia; Ann M. Mastergeorge. Associations Between Parenting Styles and Child Self-Regulation Skills: A Series of Meta-Analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology* 39(7) (2025): 885–898; PubMed abstract; 62 studies in the analyses. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract and publication details; the full article was not read. A meta-analysis of relationships between varied parenting patterns and self-regulation measures. It does not establish causation for each practice or automatically correspond to Islamic legal terminology.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an. Commentary on al-Nisa’, 4:6: ‘test the orphans’ and early-generation reports on testing understanding and conduct. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the displayed Arabic passage from al-Tabari, including the report numbers on the page. The verse concerns the ruling on an orphan's property. Applying the principle of gradual training outside that financial ruling is an educational inference, distinct from the specific legal meaning.

Stuart I. Hammond; Ulrich Müller; Jeremy I. M. Carpendale; Maximilian B. Bibok; Dana P. Liebermann-Finestone. The Effects of Parental Scaffolding on Preschoolers' Executive Function. *Developmental Psychology* 48(1) (2012): 271–281; longitudinal study of 82 children, measured at ages two, three and four. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract and publication details in PubMed; the full article was not read. A longitudinal study with a limited sample. It does not establish that every form of support causes general improvement. It is used to assess the relationship between scaffolding and executive function within the measured task.

Claire Hughes; Rory T. Devine. For Better or for Worse? Positive and Negative Parental Influences on Young Children's Executive Function. *Child Development* 90(2) (2019): 593–609; 13-month follow-up of 117 parent–child dyads. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract and publication details in PubMed; the full article was not read. An observational longitudinal study. It distinguishes aspects of parent–child interaction without making support the sole cause of executive function.

Edward L. Deci; Haleh Eghrari; Brian C. Patrick; Dean R. Leone. Facilitating Internalization: The Self-Determination Theory

Perspective. *Journal of Personality* 62(1) (1994): 119–142; abstract and description of the principal experiment. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: abstract, article details and description of experimental factors on the publisher's page; the full article was not read. A psychological explanatory framework and an experiment on internalisation, not a source of Islamic values or evidence that every duty should become a choice.

Maximilian B. Bibok; Jeremy I. M. Carpendale; Ulrich Müller. Parental Scaffolding and the Development of Executive Function. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 2009(123): 17–34; study of the timing of supportive statements and its relationship to attention shifting. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract and publication details in PubMed; the full article was not read. Focuses on the timing of particular forms of parental speech and their relationship to an executive-function measure. It does not establish a general rule that less speech is better.

Liting Xia; Shuo Chen; Xia Hong; Yuqi Liang; Liying Cui; Aruna Wu. The Relationship Between Involvement in Household Chores and Problem-Solving Abilities Among Preschool Children and the Moderating Role of Parental Scaffolding. *Acta Psychologica* 260 (2025): 105629; first study N = 125; video analysis in the second study N = 31. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract, author details and publication data in PubMed; the full article was not read. The principal component is correlational and the video sample is small. It does not prove that household chores or reduced intervention caused growth in problem-solving ability.

Report of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. Report of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him; Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Prescribed Punishments, chapter on a person of unsound mind who steals or

commits an offence subject to a prescribed punishment, hadith 4403. Graded sahih by al-Albani. This reports his grading; it is not an independent assessment of the chain of transmission. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: hadith text, location details and the grading reported on the electronic Sunnah encyclopaedia page. The page reports al-Albani's authentication; other sources give other assessments of some transmission routes. No independent chain-of-transmission study was conducted in this project. The report is used here to distinguish the prepubescent stage from adult religious responsibility.

Report of Malik ibn al-Huwayrith. Report of Malik ibn al-Huwayrith, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on the adhan and iqamah for travellers in a group, and likewise at 'Arafah and Jam', hadith 631. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage was read. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Report of 'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers. Report of 'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her; Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Maintaining Ties and Manners, chapter on the virtue of gentleness, hadith 2594a. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: hadith text and location details. A general hadith on the virtue of gentleness. It does not alone determine every detail of teaching a child to pray.

Marc H. Bornstein et al. Mixed Blessings: Parental Religiousness, Parenting, and Child Adjustment in Global Perspective. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 58(8) (2017): 880–892; three-year longitudinal study of 1,198 families in nine countries. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract, methods, results, conclusion and publication details on the publisher's page; not every

appendix. A cross-cultural correlational longitudinal study, not a causal experiment and not specifically a study of teaching prayer. Used only to show that parental religiousness may accompany different educational pathways depending on parenting style.

Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi, al-Majmu‘ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab.

Book of Prayer, section on a child's prayer; approximately 3:10–11 in common editions; electronic text at database page 1148. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete displayed Arabic passage in the electronic text. The available source is an electronic text, not scans of a critically edited edition. It documents al-Nawawi's statement that the instruction is directed to the guardian and concerns teaching a child before puberty, not the collation of editions or every question in the section.

World Health Organization. Corporal Punishment of Children: The Public Health Impact; Corporal Punishment of Children and Health. Technical report dated 11 August 2025, 36 pages; fact sheet updated 11 May 2026. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the technical-report page and abstract, and the updated fact sheet on the WHO website. A public-health and child-safety source, not a hadith interpretation or religious ruling. Used to describe contemporary evidence on risks of corporal punishment and support the choice of a nonviolent educational programme.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an. Commentary on al-Nur, 24:58: seeking permission at times of privacy. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the verse and displayed commentary, including the differing views on who is addressed by the instruction to seek permission. Used to establish the principle of seeking permission at times of privacy, not to construct all contemporary digital-privacy rulings.

Isma‘il ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim. Commentary on al-Nur, 24:58–59: the child's transition after puberty to seeking permission as adults do. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: both verses and the displayed commentary explaining permission before and after puberty. Used for the meaning and boundaries of permission within the home. Detailed rules for phones or personal data cannot be derived from it alone.

Report of Sahl ibn Sa‘d. Report of Sahl ibn Sa‘d, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Seeking Permission, chapter on permission being prescribed because of looking, hadith 6241. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: hadith text, chapter and location details. A hadith on the principle of permission and protection from looking. The chapter's digital applications are contemporary educational inferences, not the hadith's own words.

Report of Umm Salamah. Report of Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ritual Bathing, chapter on a woman having a wet dream, hadith 282. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: hadith text, chapter and location details. Used to establish the legitimacy of asking necessary questions about bodily purification, not to prescribe a comprehensive sex-education curriculum.

Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud. Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on fasting for someone unable to marry, hadith 5066. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: hadith text, chapter and location details. Used in the discussion of chastity, lowering the gaze and guarding private parts. Fasting must not become punishment or bodily deprivation outside the rules of worship and ability.

Adam A. Rogers; Madison K. Memmott-Elison; Laura M. Padilla-Walker; Jennifer Byon. Perceived Parental Psychological Control Predicts Intraindividual Decrements in Self-Regulation Throughout Adolescence. *Developmental Psychology* 55(11) (2019): 2352–2364; seven waves, 500 families, ages 11–17. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: publication details and complete PubMed abstract. An observational longitudinal study of perceived psychological control. It does not mean that every parental rule or check is psychological control, or alone establish causation in every context.

Jian-Bin Li; Yayouk E. Willems; F. Marijn Stok; Maja Deković; Meike Bartels; Catrin Finkenauer. Parenting and Self-Control Across Early to Late Adolescence: A Three-Level Meta-Analysis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14(6) (2019): 967–1005; 191 studies, 1,540 effect sizes, $N = 164,459$. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: publication details and complete PubMed abstract; the full text was not read in that round. Largely correlational pooled findings, showing reciprocal directions between parenting and self-control. They do not justify one prescription for every family or adolescent.

Şule Selçuk et al. A Longitudinal Study of Parental Solicitation, Rule-Setting, and Psychological Control as Predictors of Adolescent Disclosure across More Individualistic and More Collectivistic Countries. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 55(2) (2026): 516–535; 1,215 adolescents in eight countries, ages 13, 15 and 16. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: publication details and complete PubMed abstract; not every analysis detail or appendix in that round. A longitudinal cross-national study of disclosure, psychological control, solicitation and rules. It does not establish that every parental

question helps or every rule harms; findings vary with the definition of disclosure.

Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas. Report of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening the Heart, chapter on matters that soften the heart and that there is no life but the life of the Hereafter, hadith 6412. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: Arabic hadith text and location details. The hadith establishes the value of health and free time. It does not call for abolishing rest or filling every hour with a productive task.

Isma’il ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim. Commentary on al-‘Asr, 103:1. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the cited passage in the commentary on al-‘Asr. Interprets al-‘asr as the time in which human deeds take place. This alone does not turn the surah into a modern time-management theory.

Report of Abu Hurayrah. Report of Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih Muslim, Book of Divine Decree, chapter on strength, avoiding helplessness, seeking Allah's help and entrusting decrees to Allah, hadith 2664. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: Arabic hadith text and location details. Applying the hadith to choices about study and skills is an educational inference from general guidance, not a restriction of its meaning to productivity.

Report of Abu Hurayrah. Report of Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness, chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur’an and remember Allah, hadith 2699a. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: Arabic hadith text and its context at the electronic location. The context includes seeking

knowledge, Qur'an recitation and study. Not every worldly skill can unconditionally be given the same promise of reward in the Hereafter.

John Dunlosky; Katherine A. Rawson; Elizabeth J. Marsh; Mitchell J. Nathan; Daniel T. Willingham. Improving Students' Learning with Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions from Cognitive and Educational Psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 14(1) (2013): 4–58; review of ten learning techniques. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: detailed abstract, publication details and published utility ratings; the complete restricted-access article was not read in that round. Ratings vary with the material, learner and task. The ranking of techniques is not one prescription suitable for every context.

Henry L. Roediger III; Jeffrey D. Karpicke. Test-Enhanced Learning: Taking Memory Tests Improves Long-Term Retention. *Psychological Science* 17(3) (2006): 249–255; two experiments using prose passages, tested after five minutes, two days or one week. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract, details of both experiments and their principal result. Two controlled experiments on prose materials; they do not automatically generalise to every subject, skill or learning interval.

Nicholas J. Cepeda; Harold Pashler; Edward Vul; John T. Wixted; Doug Rohrer. Distributed Practice in Verbal Recall Tasks: A Review and Quantitative Synthesis. *Psychological Bulletin* 132(3) (2006): 354–380; 839 assessments, 317 experiments, 184 articles. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: American Psychological Association record, complete abstract and details of the pooled analysis. A review of verbal recall showing interaction between spacing and retention interval. It does not offer one fixed ideal interval for all learning.

Faria Sana; Tina Weston; Nicholas J. Cepeda. Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers. *Computers & Education* 62 (2013): 24–31. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: abstract and relevant methods, results and discussion in the open text concerning the simulated-lecture experiment. An experimental simulated-lecture setting. It does not mean that every educational use of a computer is harmful; it concerns distracting multitasking under the conditions tested.

Adrian F. Ward; Kristen Duke; Ayelet Gneezy; Maarten W. Bos. Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* 2(2) (2017): 140–154; two experiments. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: abstract, general discussion and the design of both experiments in the open text. Experimental findings on particular cognitive measures; not proof that a phone's presence harms every learner or every real-life task.

Cary Stothart; Ainsley Mitchum; Courtney Yehnert. The Attentional Cost of Receiving a Cell Phone Notification. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 41(4) (2015): 893–897. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: publication details and complete PubMed abstract. A laboratory task requiring attention. Its result is not equivalent to the effect of every notification in all study and life settings.

Brooke N. Macnamara; David Z. Hambrick; Frederick L. Oswald. Deliberate Practice and Performance in Music, Games, Sports, Education, and Professions: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Science* 25(8) (2014): 1608–1618. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract, publication details and reported proportions of variance by domain. Estimates differ by domain and

method. They qualify the claim that hours of practice explain all performance, without denying the value of structured practice.

Report of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari. Report of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Slaughter and Hunting, chapter on musk, hadith 5534. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: hadith text and location details. The hadith provides an ethical foundation concerning companionship. It does not alone establish a quantitative causal relationship between particular companions and academic attainment.

J. Ashwin Rambaran; Andrea Hopmeyer; David Schwartz; Christian Steglich; Daryaneh Badaly; René Veenstra. Academic Functioning and Peer Influences: A Short-Term Longitudinal Study of Network–Behavior Dynamics in Middle Adolescence. *Child Development* 88(2) (2017): 523–543; N = 342, ages 14–15. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract, publication details and supporting information visible on the publisher's page. A longitudinal network study observing both selection and influence. It does not prove that a particular friend inevitably causes an academic outcome.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an. Commentary on al-Nisa’, 4:5: restricting an imprudent person's disposal of property while providing food, clothing and kind speech. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete displayed Arabic passage, including differing early-generation views and the summary of practical meaning. The verse and financial guardianship have detailed juristic treatment. Imprudence must not become an educational stigma, nor historical commentators' statements a general judgement on a sex or age group without careful qualification.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, al-Jami‘ li-Ahkam al-Qur’an. Commentary on al-Nisa’, 4:6: testing an orphan before handing over property, and forms of testing sound judgement. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the displayed Arabic commentary, particularly the first two questions and the reported forms of testing. The testing examples belong to guardianship over an orphan's property, and some reflect historical custom. The principles of gradual training and testing can be used without turning old examples into a literal contemporary programme.

‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa’di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on al-Furqan, 25:67: moderation between extravagance and miserliness, and fulfilment of obligatory rights. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete displayed Arabic commentary on the verse. Explains balanced and moderate spending. It does not automatically produce fixed budget percentages for every family or income.

Report of Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas. Report of Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Funerals, chapter on the Prophet's expression of sorrow for Sa’d ibn Khawlah, hadith 1295. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: direct access to the Arabic text and verification of the hadith's location and number. The context is a bequest during illness and spending on dependants. It is not a general savings percentage or investment rule for young people.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. PISA 2022 Financial Literacy Framework. PISA 2022 Assessment and Analytical Framework (2023), chapter 3: definition of financial literacy, application in life and non-cognitive factors. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the published framework page, with

complete reading of relevant passages on definition, application, non-cognitive factors and limits of causal inference. An international assessment framework, not an Islamic theory or an experiment on a particular family programme. It explicitly states that PISA data do not establish causal links between knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. PISA 2022 Results, Volume IV: How Financially Smart Are Students? Explanatory chapter on financial-literacy assessment (2024): accounts, cards, digital purchasing, behaviour and family environment. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the published page and summary of numerical findings concerning fifteen-year-olds, online purchasing and discussion of money with parents. International observational data from participating countries and economies. Links between financial literacy, behaviour and family discussion are correlational, not causal, and do not represent every country individually.

Soyeon Shim; Bonnie L. Barber; Noel A. Card; Jing Jian Xiao; Joyce Serido. Financial Socialization of First-Year College Students: The Roles of Parents, Work, and Education. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 39(12) (2010): 1457–1470; N = 2,098; financial-socialisation model. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete abstract, publication details, sample and principal result in the university portal. A cross-sectional study using structural equation modelling. It does not establish parental causation or that every form of home financial education outperforms every school programme or work experience.

Tim Kaiser; Lukas Menkhoff. Financial Education in Schools: A Meta-Analysis of Experimental Studies. *Economics of Education Review* 78 (2020): 101930; 37 experiments or quasi-experiments,

including 18 randomised experiments. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: complete published abstract, design details and reported knowledge and behaviour effect estimates, checked against the DOI page. A meta-analysis of varied school programmes. Average effects do not predict a particular child's or programme's result; effects on behaviour are smaller than effects on knowledge.

Report of Abu Juhayfah. Reported by Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on asking one's brother under oath to break a voluntary fast when that is more suitable for him, without requiring it to be made up, hadith 1968. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: direct access to the Arabic text, checking the hadith number, context and ending, 'Salman has spoken the truth'. Establishes the plurality of rights and the duty to give each holder their due. It does not prescribe fixed family time shares or one universal order of priorities.

Report of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As. Report of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter 'Your wife has a right over you', hadith 5199. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: direct access to the Arabic text, checking the hadith number and location. Addresses excess in fasting and night prayer. It supports protecting rights, without converting each right into a fixed amount of time.

Report of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar. Report of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter on a woman being responsible for her husband's household, hadith 5200. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: direct access to the Arabic text, checking the hadith number and wording. Establishes responsibility and trust. It does not alone specify every contemporary family role or divide those roles mathematically.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on al-Nisa’, 4:19: living with wives in kindness. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete published commentary on al-Nisa’, verse 19. Interprets the verse in the context of marital rights. It does not specify a household management programme or a timetable dividing hours.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’an. Commentary on al-Baqarah, 2:233: weaning by the parents' mutual agreement and consultation. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the commentary on weaning by mutual agreement and consultation, with the surrounding context. The immediate context is nursing and weaning. The educational benefit drawn from consultation and preventing harm is an inference; it does not transfer weaning rulings to every family decision.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on al-Isra’, 17:23: goodness to parents and their increased need in old age. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete published commentary on al-Isra’, verse 23. The verse and commentary establish parents' rights and the duty of goodness. They do not alone resolve every practical conflict between extended-family and marital rights.

Dongyu Liu; Yanyan Ni; Tiffany S. W. Ma; Xiaoyan Fan; Yongle Zhan; Ivan H. L. Lam; Matthew C. L. Lui; Tarani Chandola; Ichiro Kawachi; Pim Cuijpers; Michael Y. Ni. Work–Family Conflict and Mental Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. PLOS Medicine 23(7) (2026): e1005162; 82 longitudinal studies, with 52 studies and 112,714 participants in the meta-analysis. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: detailed PubMed abstract covering methods, results and limitations; in the 26 September

follow-up, the authors' abstract and passages from results and discussion were checked on the PLOS website, without reading the complete study or supplement. The studies are observational, and the authors state that causation cannot be fully established. The pooled associations are small.

Jesse S. Michel; Lindsey M. Kotrba; Jacqueline K. Mitchelson; Malissa A. Clark; Boris B. Baltes. Antecedents of Work–Family Conflict: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 32(5) (2011): 689–725; 1,080 correlations from 178 samples. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: published abstract, study details and findings concerning role pressures, time demands and social support. A meta-analysis of associations. It does not prove that one factor causes conflict in every family or supply an Islamic ordering of rights.

Haley R. Cobb; Alexius E. Strasburg; Madeline L. Billeaud; Rachel S. Rauvola; Candice L. Thomas; Cort W. Rudolph. Applying the Actor-partner Interdependence Model to Meta-analysis: A Dyadic Test of the Spillover-crossover Model for Dual-income Couples. *Occupational Health Science* 8 (2024): 763–803; dyadic meta-analysis of dual-earner couples. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: verification of publication details, title, authors and the study's dyadic meta-analytic design; only the general finding about effects carrying between partners was used. Use is limited to the spillover–crossover model. It does not justify certainty about a causal pathway in a particular couple.

Jaunathan Bilodeau; Maya Mikutra-Cencora; Amélie Quesnel-Vallée. Work–Family Interface and Children's Mental Health: A Systematic Review. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 17(1) (2023): 45; 25 studies from 4,146 records. Consultation

recorded in the Arabic edition: complete PubMed abstract covering methods, findings, qualitative assessment and limits arising from variation. Direct evidence is heterogeneous and many associations are not statistically significant. It does not permit the conclusion that parental employment, or every work–family conflict, causes a child's mental-health problem.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on al-Taghabun, 64:16: mindfulness of Allah to the extent of ability, and commands being qualified by capacity. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete published commentary on al-Taghabun, verse 16. The verse and commentary establish the relevance of ability to religious responsibility. They do not alone specify every individual concession or ruling for a particular illness.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on al-Baqarah, 2:286: no soul being burdened beyond its capacity and relief where excuses apply. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete published commentary on al-Baqarah, verse 286. Establishes capacity and relief where excuses apply. It does not replace detailed jurisprudence for a particular act of worship or illness.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on al-Fath, 48:17: removing blame from the blind, lame and sick in the context of jihad. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete published commentary on al-Fath, verse 17. The immediate context is remaining behind from jihad with an excuse. It cannot become a general exemption from every obligation.

Report of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari. Report of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari, may Allah be pleased with him; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad and Expeditions, chapter on a traveller receiving the equivalent of what they used to do while resident, hadith 2996. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: direct access to Arabic and English texts, checking the hadith number, chapter and wording. Concerns recording reward for established deeds during illness or travel. It must not become a detailed calculation of reward, nor cancel obligations that remain within a person's ability.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on Ya-Sin, 36:68: reversal in creation for those granted long life. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the complete published commentary on Ya-Sin, verse 68. Describes the return of weakness with advancing age in general. It does not state that every older person loses the same abilities at the same rate.

World Health Organization. Ageing. WHO health topic: healthy ageing, functional ability, intrinsic capacity and the environment. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the official topic page, definition and components of functional ability. A public-health and functioning framework, not a religious standard of responsibility or a tool for individual diagnosis or assessment of a concession.

World Health Organization. Healthy Ageing and Functional Ability. WHO questions and answers: diversity among older people, intrinsic capacities, environment and functional ability. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the official page, including the definition of functional ability and the passage on diversity and the absence of a typical older person. A general population framework. It

cannot judge a particular person's ability without assessing their actual circumstances.

World Health Organization. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. WHO classifications: functioning and disability in context, including environmental factors.

Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the official classification page, its scope and environmental factors. An international health classification. Its use here is conceptual, to understand the interaction of functioning with environment, not to issue a diagnosis or religious ruling.

World Health Organization. Disability. WHO health topic: interaction between health conditions and personal and environmental factors, and the effects of barriers on participation. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: the official topic page, including the definition of interaction and the environment's effect on disability experience and participation. A public-health and social description. It does not reduce disability to environment alone or judge an individual's condition or religious capacity.