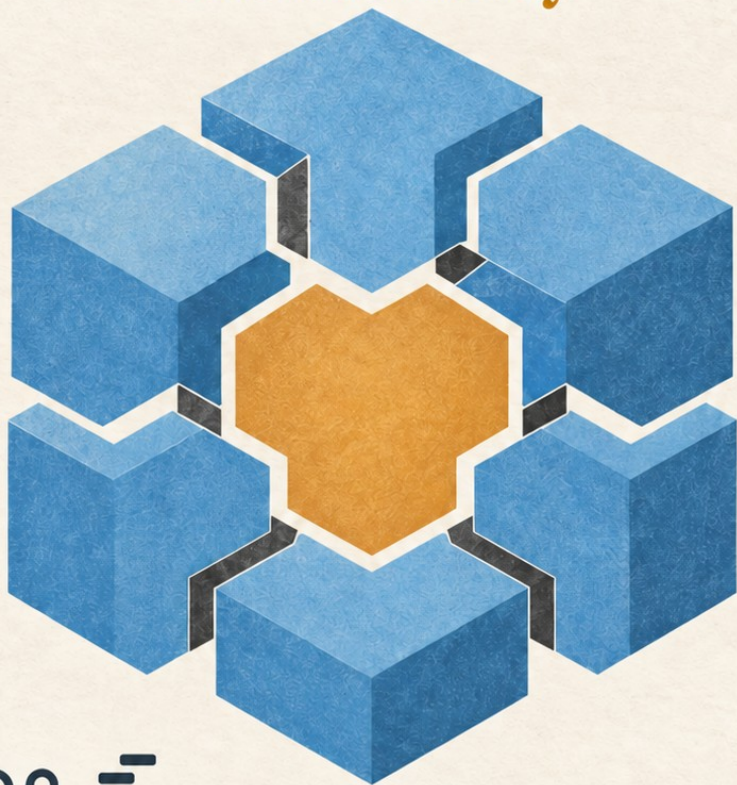


Until the Soul Stands Firm

— Volume Three —

**Rights and the Building
of Community**



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Until the Soul Stands Firm

Volume Three

Rights and the Building of Community

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

To those who know the way but find returning to it tiring; to those whose days are so crowded with responsibilities that they postpone the rights of their own selves and of those they love; and to those who begin enthusiastically, then feel ashamed to try again because they did not finish the last attempt.

This book is for you, and for us alongside you. We all need to learn how to guide ourselves towards good without wronging ourselves, how to give a task its due without neglecting another right, and how to remain steadfast when desire fades and duty remains.

And to a father and mother teaching their child the first prayer, a teacher patiently helping a pupil, and a person striving in a matter nobody sees, then rising on another morning to try again.

We ask Allah to guide us to the best of deeds and grant us sincerity, gentleness, and steadfastness in them. Remember us, our parents, and everyone who helped this book reach you in a good prayer.

Written and distributed by Madarej.

Chapter One: Your Promise Becomes Part of Someone Else's Day

When you say, 'I will'

'I'll send it to you tomorrow' does not end with the person who says it. The listener may set aside time, put another option on hold, or feel relieved that someone has taken responsibility for a matter weighing on them. When we make a promise, part of our decision enters the arrangements of another person's life. A deadline is therefore more than a slot in our own calendar that we can move whenever our mood changes.

This does not mean that every delay is a betrayal, or that life can proceed without interruption. It means that the effect of a delay cannot be measured only by how much it troubles the person responsible. Someone may say, 'I was only half an hour late,' when that half hour was enough to make the waiting person miss another commitment. A courteous apology may follow, without any recognition that the problem calls for practical repair as well as kinder words.

The discipline explored in this volume begins by noticing that absent person. We have discussed the formation of the self, then worship and the guidance of the earliest generations. Now we consider how what we have learned bears on the rights of others. Our dealings with people are not an extra chapter added after a Muslim's real life. They are where trustworthiness,

patience, and the struggle against the desire for comfort or a favourable image become visible.

Keeping your word is a principle, not merely an organisational skill

{وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا}.

Allah says—translation of the meaning: ‘And fulfil the covenant; surely the covenant will be asked about.’ [Al-Isra’ 17:34]¹

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«آية المنافق ثلاث: إذا حدث كذب، وإذا وعد أخلف، وإذا أؤتمن خان»

Translation of the meaning: ‘The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted with something, he betrays that trust.’²

The command to fulfil a covenant makes a person accountable for a commitment, and the hadith warns strongly against these traits. It does not, however, entitle a reader to judge a particular person’s inner state on the basis of a delay whose causes they do not know.

1 The Noble Qur’an, Al-Isra’ 17:34: fulfilling covenants.

2 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter on the signs of a hypocrite, hadith 33.

The detailed rulings on promises, contracts, and conditions, and what becomes binding in each case, are beyond this chapter's purpose. We do not assign all such statements the same legal status. Yet knowing that their rulings differ must not become a device for treating people lightly. Anyone whose words have led another person to rely on them needs to be truthful and clear, and to learn the relevant ruling when a consequential obligation is involved.

This gives organisational tools their proper place. Calendars, reminders, and lists of commitments can help us keep our word; they do not give a person's right its worth. If we attach little weight to that right, we may use these tools to project an image of achievement while leaving the obligation nobody is monitoring at the bottom of the list.

A promise begins before we agree

Many failures begin well before the day work is due. They begin with a quick answer intended to please the person asking. We say yes before understanding the task, reviewing existing commitments, or noticing that supposedly free time is already occupied by work we never record. When the deadline arrives, we think we simply needed to work faster. The problem began earlier, with an assessment of our capacity that was not honest enough.

Trustworthiness includes distinguishing desire from capacity. I may want to help you without being able to promise completion today. I can explain what I can do, ask for time to assess the

task, or suggest an alternative. This answer is less dazzling than a quick promise, but more useful to someone who needs accurate information on which to base a decision.

Caution must not become a reason to refuse every responsibility. We cannot know every detail of some tasks before beginning, and may accept them while explaining what will need review. The difference is that the uncertainty is understood and accepted by everyone concerned. We do not conceal it, then offer it as an excuse after time has run out. A sound promise makes clear what it covers, what depends on others, and when we will reassess it if significant information emerges.

Urgency does not always establish priority

Commitments may pile up because new requests arrive more loudly than old ones. Someone asks for something now and receives an immediate response, while an earlier obligation is delayed because the person owed it is quiet and does not keep asking. The day appears full of helping people. In reality, rights are being reordered according to the force of the demands, rather than what is properly due.

We suggest considering the deadline, the right involved, and the consequences before attending to the noise surrounding a request. Will an earlier commitment suffer? Is the new request a genuine necessity? Am I entitled to change the order of what I have promised? If a change is needed, explain it to those

affected instead of assuming their agreement. Not everything we can do immediately deserves to come first.

Two obligations may sometimes conflict in a way that prevents us from meeting both as originally intended. We then need knowledge of the relevant ruling and an assessment of the circumstances, rather than a single numerical rule. Candour remains useful: What has changed? What can still be preserved? What alternative is available? Remaining silent until the other person discovers the delay adds avoidable uncertainty to the problem.

Delivering properly means more than delivering on time

Someone can meet a deadline to the minute and still fail to deliver what was intended. They may send an incomplete file to appear finished, or hand over unchecked work and leave the recipient to repair it. Measuring discipline solely by the number of completed deliveries can reward this behaviour, even as it transfers the cost to somebody else.

Completion therefore needs a clear meaning. What does the recipient need in order to use what arrives? What standard of quality has been agreed? Are there gaps in the information that must be disclosed? This does not require endless perfection. It prevents us from invoking the deadline to justify sending something we know will not serve its purpose.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«البيعان بالخيار ما لم يتفرقا - أو قال: حتى يتفرقا - فإن صدقا وبينا بورك لهما في بيعهما، وإن كتما وكذبا محقت بركة بيعهما»

Translation of the meaning: ‘The buyer and the seller retain the choice [to complete or cancel the sale] as long as they have not parted—or he said, until they part. If they speak truthfully and make matters clear, their transaction is blessed for them. If they conceal and lie, the blessing of their transaction is erased.’³

The hadith reminds us that a transaction is not made sound merely by the outward exchange taking place. We do not turn it into a modern quality management system. We can, however, learn from its principle of disclosure: a significant shortcoming known to us should not be hidden until someone discovers it after relying on us.

Early communication is part of putting things right

When it becomes clear that a deadline is in difficulty, a useful message does not require a lengthy defence of our good

3 Narrated by Hakim ibn Hizam, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Sales, chapter on the buyer and seller explaining matters, concealing nothing, and dealing sincerely, hadith 2079.

intentions. The person to whom the obligation is owed needs information that helps them decide: What is complete? What remains unfinished? When did the obstacle become apparent? What realistic alternative is there? An apology has its place, but cannot supply this information by itself.

Just as our first promise should be based on an assessment, a faltering promise should not be repaired with a second, even more exaggerated one. A person who is late may promise to finish everything within an hour simply to escape embarrassment, then miss that deadline too and weaken trust further. A modest, honest estimate is more useful than reassurance that repeats the original error.

Putting things right goes beyond announcing an obstacle. We should discharge whatever can be discharged and return whatever must be returned, according to the right involved, the agreement, and the applicable ruling. Compensation for harm may require a specialist when a contract or dispute is involved; readers should not derive a general ruling from an educational example. This chapter explains the responsibility to be clear and keep commitments. It does not replace adjudication or a fatwa on an individual case.

A hypothetical case: two deadlines and a third promise

A designer is working on two jobs promised to two clients. A third request arrives, apparently small, and she accepts because it will take ‘very little time’. Once started, it requires more

revisions and information, delaying the first two jobs. Working longer hours might enable her to finish on this occasion, but it would not address a cause likely to recur whenever another request arrives.

She reviews how she accepts work. She had not defined the scope of the third request, allowed time for revisions, or left reasonable space for difficulties she knows recur. She repairs what she can of the effects of the delay, then begins specifying what delivery includes, when review will take place, and what changes if the requirements change. These are suggested steps for this hypothetical case, not the findings of a documented business experiment.

Another problem then appears. She delivers on time, but some information is missing because she waited for the client without requesting it early enough. She adds a check during the work, rather than only at the end. Her question changes from ‘How can I speed up as the deadline approaches?’ to ‘What can prevent a surprise I already know is possible?’

Nor should her success be reduced to the percentage of deadlines met. She also considers whether the work delivered is fit for use, how many corrections result from her own shortcomings, whether her reporting is truthful, and whether increased output has come at the expense of another binding obligation. Numbers can organise a review, but they do not remove the need to understand the events behind them.

Accepting your limits is better than promising an inflated image

Saying ‘I cannot’ may be difficult for someone who wants to appear capable and quick. That desire needs to be resisted before the delay itself. Refusing extra work or requesting a more suitable deadline may be the more faithful decision, even if it brings none of the praise expected from saying yes.

Conversely, procrastination can hide behind ‘I need a more accurate estimate.’ Assessment never ends if we demand advance knowledge of every possibility. What we need is enough information to accept a reasonable commitment, explain what remains unknown, then begin and review. Honesty does not require knowledge of the unseen. It requires us not to conceal the limits of our knowledge and capacity.

As experience accumulates, a record of commitments becomes a foundation for confidence in ourselves. We learn how long earlier work took, learn from mistakes, and stop returning to the same optimistic estimate every time. Discipline does not mean getting every estimate right at the first attempt. It means taking responsibility for improving those estimates when the facts become clear.

When depending on you brings relief

One of the finest fruits of keeping your word is that others know what to expect from you. You follow through on what you accept, explain what becomes impossible, and repair your mistakes. They do not have to chase you for news, interpret

your silence, or secretly prepare an alternative for every promise because they cannot rely on it.

That relief is created by repeated small actions, rather than by announcing that we are disciplined. This is why promises matter in forming the self. They train us to resist the desire to please in the moment, to bear the work of fulfilling a commitment after enthusiasm has quietened, and to acknowledge when events do not fit the image we wanted to present of ourselves.

Before your next promise, remember that it will not remain within your own day. It will become part of another person's waiting, and perhaps of their livelihood, rest, or work. This awareness does not burden life without purpose. It gives words their proper weight and makes organisation a means of keeping faith, rather than merely a more elegant way to postpone what others are owed.

Chapter Two: Speech, Anger, and Disagreement

Seconds whose effects last much longer

A person may need hours to repair a sentence spoken in seconds. They raise their voice in a tense moment or send an accusation in a short message, then grow calm while the effect remains with the recipient. Responsibility for our words does not end when the feeling that produced them subsides. Nor is it erased because we did not intend everything the other person understood.

Controlling our speech does not mean remaining silent about every injustice or surrendering the right to object. A situation may call for a clear statement; silence may even neglect something that must be explained. What we need to learn is to make our words fit the right they serve: truthful, fair, and no more than is needed. They should not become a way to discharge anger for which we find a good purpose only afterwards.

This is an area in which discipline becomes visible when our mood offers little help. It is easy to speak gently when content. The real test comes when we disagree, are accused, or fear losing our standing. At such moments, striving against the self takes a specific form: I listen before judging, describe what I know, and leave out what adds injury without adding clarity.

Strength at the point of choice

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«ليس الشديد بالصرعة، إنما الشديد الذي يملك نفسه عند الغضب»

Translation of the meaning: ‘The strong person is not the one who overcomes others in wrestling. The strong person is the one who controls himself when angry.’⁴

The hadith does not equate strength with an absence of emotion. It directs our attention to what a person does while angry. We cannot therefore excuse every action by saying that we were upset. The feeling is part of the situation, not an unrestricted licence for what follows.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, also said:

«من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فلا يؤذ جاره، ومن كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليكرم ضيفه، ومن كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليقل خيراً أو ليصمت»

Translation of the meaning: ‘Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day must not harm his neighbour. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honour his guest. And whoever

4 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him.

Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, chapter on guarding against anger, hadith 6114.

believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent.’⁵

Good speech is not limited to what pleases its hearer. It may be frank advice, necessary testimony, or the statement of a right. Yet the requirement to speak good prevents us from treating every thought as worthy of expression, and everything that can be published as deserving publication.

One suggested practice is to separate the purpose of a reply from the first wording we put down. What do we want to correct? What information does the other person need? Which part did we write to wound them or impress an audience? We may retain the entire objection while deleting the insult. Our words can then become stronger because they no longer carry what undermines their fairness.

This exercise does not make the book a treatment for every difficulty involving anger. Some situations call for specialist help, particularly when harm recurs or someone fears for their own or another person’s safety. A person being harmed is not asked to endure danger so that the person causing it can have another opportunity to practise. Protecting safety takes precedence over making a disagreement look more agreeable.

5 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, chapter on the believer in Allah and the Last Day not harming his neighbour, hadith 6018.

When information supplies the spark

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

Allah says—translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, if an evildoer brings you news, verify it, lest you harm people in ignorance and then regret what you have done.’ [Al-Hujurat 49:6] The verse connects verification with the danger of harming people in ignorance and later regretting it. This is not an intellectual virtue detached from our dealings with others. The way we receive a report can turn into actual harm.⁶

An incomplete screenshot of a conversation or one side of a story may reach us, and we fill the gaps with assumptions. We interpret a brief message as mockery, or a delayed reply as neglect. Some interpretations may be right, but possibility is not knowledge. Discipline means distinguishing an event from our interpretation: no reply has arrived—that is known. The claim that the person intended to insult me needs further evidence.

Verification does not mean treating every source as equally credible or waiting for impossible certainty about every detail. Some decisions rest on sound evidence and acceptable probabilities appropriate to their field. But where we have only uncertainty, we should not turn it into a categorical accusation. Where a clear question could resolve the uncertainty, the story we have imagined should not take its place.

6 The Noble Qur'an, Al-Hujurat 49:6: verifying reports.

In digital settings, the spread of a statement makes it harder to retract. Someone who has passed an accusation to a group cannot put matters right simply by changing their own mind. They need to consider who received it and what can be repaired, while also protecting the harmed person's privacy during the correction. A public apology may compound the injury by repeating details that should have remained private. Repair therefore calls for judgement, rather than one action applied to every case.

Disagree with a statement without widening the attack on its speaker

﴿وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ۤأَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ﴾

The Qur'an commands justice even towards people we dislike: translation of the meaning, 'Do not let hatred of a people lead you to act unjustly. Be just; that is nearer to piety.' [Al-Ma'idah 5:8] The weight of this command becomes apparent when the other person really has done wrong. The self can readily treat their mistake as permission to add faults they do not possess.⁷

We can reject a proposal while acknowledging something useful in it, demand a right without attributing an unknown intention to the other party, and describe the effects of an action without passing judgement on the person's entire history. These

7 The Noble Qur'an, Al-Ma'idah 5:8.

distinctions do not weaken an objection. They prevent it from becoming a quarrel with an image larger than the actual event.

Specific wording helps: What happened? What effect did it have? What change are we requesting? ‘You respect nobody’ is a sweeping statement that is hard to address. Describing repeated interruptions in a particular meeting opens an issue that can be discussed. A harmed person is not required to find the most graceful wording before their rights deserve a hearing. We are offering a means that may make the explanation clearer, while leaving every party responsible for fairness.

Listening is an action, not an interval between replies

Someone may think they are listening while preparing an answer throughout the other person’s speech. They select the phrase they intend to challenge and miss the question that explains everything else. Lowering their voice is then insufficient. They need to give the meaning a chance to reach them.

Where a disagreement permits dialogue, we suggest that each person describe what they understand the other to mean before responding, especially when they repeatedly dispute something neither intended. This need not be a word-for-word repetition or prolong the meeting. A question establishing the point may suffice: Are you objecting to the decision itself, or to how it is being carried out? Is the problem the delay, or the failure to tell you about it?

The two people may discover that they differ over what success means or which priorities come first, rather than wanting to harm each other. Alternatively, it may become clear that one is refusing an obvious right. Listening does not guarantee agreement, but reduces the risk of building an entire dispute on misunderstanding.

Listening does not mean allowing unlimited abuse. A participant may ask for insults to stop, end a meeting in which they do not feel safe, or turn to an appropriate body when a dispute requires it. Not every relationship can be repaired through more patience from the person being harmed. Advice to remain calm must not become a means of silencing them.

Firmness that does not need humiliation

We sometimes need to refuse a request, prevent a transgression, or take action to protect a right. A decision can be clear without sarcasm. Its legitimate consequences can be stated without exaggerated threats. What must change can be separated from the dignity of the person who erred. Firmness lies in maintaining a proper boundary, not in the volume at which it is announced.

The difference is especially clear in raising children. A child may need to restore someone's right or complete an appropriate task, but shaming the child before their siblings does not explain the step that went wrong. An adult can explain what is needed and help put matters right, then return to a normal relationship

instead of making the mistake the child's defining feature for the rest of the day.

An adult at work should know the reasons for a decision, its scope, and what may be challenged. Recognising a route for reviewing a decision does not weaken authority. It may protect authority from being governed by its holder's anger. A decision that cannot bear a legitimate question may need evidence or correction more than protection from criticism.

A hypothetical case: a message that could have widened the dispute

A colleague is late delivering part of a shared assignment. Another team member writes a message to the group accusing him of caring only about himself. Before sending it, the writer pauses over what is actually known: the work has not arrived and may delay delivery. The colleague's intention is not known. The personal judgement is deleted and replaced with an explanation of what is awaited, when it is needed, and a request to clarify the obstacle.

The reply explains that the colleague understood a different deadline, while acknowledging a failure to confirm it. Identifying a misunderstanding does not finish the matter; the team still needs a written agreement about delivery. But the specific message leaves room for that repair, whereas an insult would have added another dispute to the overdue task.

On another occasion, no explanation justifying the delay may arrive. Specific wording remains useful because it allows fair action instead of exchanged accusations. We do not present this case as an experiment proving that calm resolves every disagreement. It illustrates how preserving evidence and careful language can prevent us from multiplying the effects of an error.

Reviewing matters after voices have quietened

After a disagreement, ask what happened, rather than who won. Did the truth become clear? Did I say something I did not know? Did I wound someone where no such injury was needed to explain the matter? Is someone still being denied a right? An apology for the manner of speaking may be necessary even while the original objection remains valid. We should not confuse them, treating apology as surrender of a right or the validity of a right as an excuse for abuse.

Repair may require redressing a wrong, rather than merely soothing feelings. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

«من كانت له مظلمة لأحد من عرضه أو شيء فليتحلله منه اليوم، قبل أن لا يكون دينار ولا درهم، إن كان له عمل صالح أخذ منه بقدر مظلمته، وإن لم تكن له حسنات أخذ من سيئات صاحبه فحمل عليه»

Translation of the meaning: ‘Whoever has wronged another person in his honour or in anything else should seek his release

from that wrong today, before there is neither dinar nor dirham. If he has righteous deeds, some will be taken from him in proportion to his wrongdoing. If he has no good deeds, some of the other person's sins will be taken and placed upon him.'⁸

We do not turn the hadith into a single procedure for every dispute. It reminds us that the moral consequences of speech do not disappear when a gathering ends.

Growth in this area is often quiet: a word we did not say, an interpretation we did not assert as certain, an apology we did not postpone, and a boundary we upheld without humiliating someone. These acts lie at the heart of discipline. They occur where the self wants to run on unchecked, bringing it back to justice when it has the power to act otherwise.

8 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on seeking release from a wrong and whether it should be explained, hadith 2449.

Chapter Three: Money, Debt, and Wages

Money belongs to people beyond the ledger

When money enters an account, it may all appear available to spend, although some is tied to an obligation not yet discharged: a worker's wages, a payment due, a debt, maintenance, or funds held for another person. Financial discipline begins by refusing to let the displayed balance obscure what we owe. Being able to make a purchase does not by itself mean that the money may properly be spent on our next desire.

This chapter does not cover every area of financial transactions or offer a fatwa on any particular financial situation. It aims to show how trustworthiness becomes repeated action: knowing what we owe, keeping its due date, making clear what is not ours, and distinguishing genuine inability from a chosen delay. It also distinguishes documentation that protects rights from complexity used to obstruct them.

We have already discussed financial maturity during the years of learning. Here we consider our relationship with those to whom we owe something. The question shifts from 'How can I make a better decision for myself?' to 'How can I prevent my comfort from being financed by someone else's waiting, or by money that is not mine?' This calls for a struggle with the self in which tidy-looking accounts are not enough.

When delaying payment is wrongdoing

«مَظْلُ الْغَنِيِّ ظُلْمٌ»

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said —translation of the meaning: ‘Delay in payment by one who can afford to pay is injustice.’⁹

The text identifies a situation with specific elements: an obligation owed, the ability to discharge it, and deliberate delay. We should not apply the same judgement to every late payment without knowing what is due and whether the person can pay. Nor, when those elements are present, should we minimise deliberate delay as merely poor organisation.

Someone able to pay may postpone doing so while waiting for a firmer reminder, preferring to keep the money in hand, or knowing that the creditor has little power to demand it. Such a person needs moral correction alongside an organisational means, rather than a reminder application alone. If the obligation and deadline are known and delay is chosen, forgetfulness does not explain the problem.

{وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ}.

Conversely, Allah says—translation of the meaning: ‘If the debtor is in hardship, then allow time until ease.’ [Al-Baqarah

9 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him.

Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Loans, chapter on delay in payment by a person able to pay being injustice, hadith 2400.

2:280] This text shows that inability to pay is a different situation and that a debtor in difficulty should be treated with regard for those circumstances. Reading the two texts together prevents both the harshness of equating inability with deliberate delay and the laxity of calling a capable person unable merely to protect their choice.¹⁰

One practice we suggest is for debtors to describe their position honestly, explain what they can pay, and avoid promising dates they know they lack the means to meet. Establishing inability to pay, determining priority among competing claims, and assessing the effect of agreements have their own jurisprudence and specialist procedures. A household chart or motivational passage cannot settle them.

Wages are a right, not a reward for waiting patiently

«قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: ثَلَاثَةٌ أَنَا خَصْمُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: رَجُلٌ أَعْطَى بِي ثُمَّ غَدَرَ، وَرَجُلٌ بَاعَ حُرًّا فَأَكَلَ ثَمَنَهُ، وَرَجُلٌ اسْتَأْجَرَ أَجِيرًا فَاسْتَوْفَى مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُعْطِهِ أَجْرَهُ»

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said— translation of the meaning: ‘Allah Most High said: There are three whose adversary I will be on the Day of Resurrection: a man who gives a pledge in My name and then betrays it; a man who sells a free person and consumes the price; and a man who

10 The Noble Qur’an, Al-Baqarah 2:280.

hires a worker, receives his work in full, and does not pay him his wages.’¹¹

The third case describes a wrong that success in other areas cannot erase. An organisation may increase its sales and display impressive achievements while making a worker wait for what is owed, even though it has received the work in full.

Fulfilling the obligation to pay begins with a comprehensible agreement about the work, its compensation, and when that compensation becomes due—not merely at the moment of payment. Vague instructions or unexplained changes can create an avoidable dispute. Documentation is not always sufficient in itself. A contract that a vulnerable party does not understand, or a procedure that conceals important conditions, does not become fair because it runs to many pages.

Details of entitlement may vary with the contract, country, and nature of the work, so we do not prescribe one legal payment period here. What must not be lost is that organisation is also required of the stronger party: preparing the recipient’s details, approving work within a reasonable time, providing a way to pay, and not allowing a file’s passage between departments to become an endless excuse.

11 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hiring, chapter on the sin of withholding a worker’s wages, hadith 2270.

Nor do we ask a worker to accept delay because the employer has been kind in other respects. Kind treatment does not replace a financial right, just as demanding that right gives nobody permission to lie or transgress. Distinguishing rights helps repair the situation. A virtue in one area does not compensate for injustice in another simply because the person responsible adds them together in their own mind.

Disclosure protects the other party's choice

«الْبَيْعَانِ بِالْخِيَارِ مَا لَمْ يَتَفَرَّقَا - أَوْ قَالَ: حَتَّى يَتَفَرَّقَا - فَإِنْ صَدَقَا وَبَيَّنَّا بُورِكَ لَهُمَا فِي بَيْعِهِمَا، وَإِنْ كَتَمَا وَكَذَبَا مُحِقَتْ بَرَكَةُ بَيْعِهِمَا»

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said —translation of the meaning: ‘The buyer and the seller retain the choice [to complete or cancel the sale] as long as they have not parted—or he said, until they part. If they speak truthfully and make matters clear, their transaction is blessed for them. If they conceal and lie, the blessing of their transaction is erased.’¹²

The buyer and seller should understand that an opportunity to benefit does not permit the concealment of what must be

12 Narrated by Hakim ibn Hizam, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Sales, chapter on the buyer and seller explaining matters, concealing nothing, and dealing sincerely, hadith 2079.

disclosed. Blessing here is not an economic figure that we measure and promise for every transaction, nor an experimental finding that guarantees profit. It has a religious meaning that cannot be reduced to financial indicators.

Discipline includes making information that affects a decision clear before a commitment is made. What exactly are the goods? What work will be done? What does the payment exclude? What defect is known to either party? The longer disclosure is postponed until after someone has relied on what was said, the less room they have for free and informed choice.

We may deceive ourselves before deceiving others. We write down a deadline we cannot meet, then say that we will try. We present a best-case outcome as normal, or quote an initial cost while postponing disclosure of necessary additional costs.

Repair requires us to describe what we know accurately, rather than find an ambiguous phrase that will later let us deny what the listener understood.

Documentation serves a right; it should not conceal it

We need records that distinguish personal money from funds held for others, amounts due from amounts anticipated, and what has been paid from what has merely been promised. These are organisational tools we suggest; we do not attribute their particular form to a specific religious text. They help reduce forgetting and make review possible, especially when many tasks and people are involved.

Yet a record can serve the wrong purpose when an established right is made conditional on unnecessary paperwork. A procedure may grow more complex because each department protects itself from blame while nobody considers the person left waiting. Fair organisation asks why each step exists: Does it establish necessary information? Would its absence prevent proper payment? Or is it an obstacle repeated simply through habit?

We must also avoid mixing entrusted funds with our own interests. Someone authorised to pay or buy may assume that money passing through their hands can be arranged for their personal use. The limits of action derive from the owner's rights, the agreement, and the relevant ruling—not from easy access to the account or payment tool.

A modern financial action may take only a quick digital step, but its substance cannot be reduced to a click. Sending a transfer to the wrong destination, approving an unauthorised purchase, or storing sensitive information without protection calls for preventive measures suited to the risk. We do not demand extraordinary, constant vigilance. We need a system that helps people check where checking makes a difference.

A hypothetical case: a small payment stuck between two departments

A technician completes work for an organisation. The responsible department sends confirmation, but the invoice continues passing between technical and financial officers. Each

says they are waiting for the other, and the person owed payment does not know whom to approach. This example alone does not establish every ruling governing entitlement. It does reveal an organisational failure: no identifiable person is responsible for following the payment through to completion.

The organisation reviews the process. Who confirms completion? Who checks the information? Who authorises payment? Who tells the recipient if anything is missing? It gathers the necessary information once, instead of requesting it in separate rounds far apart, and communicates a realistic date consistent with its obligation. This is a suggested improvement, not a legal system prescribed for every organisation.

It then emerges that some delays were not caused by paperwork. Payments closer to an officer's personal preferences had been given priority. Simplifying the form is insufficient here; the organisation needs to define and review the authority to set priorities. Procedure, competence, and trustworthiness complement one another. None can replace the others.

When measuring improvement, the organisation should look beyond the number of closed invoices. It should consider how long a due payment waits, why requests are returned, the errors borne by recipients, and differences between influential people and others. An average may improve while a vulnerable group still waits a long time. The figure then conceals what the process was meant to repair.

When resources become tight

A person or organisation may experience genuine difficulty. Describing it honestly prevents financial disruption from becoming a chain of impossible promises. The person responsible needs to identify existing obligations, stop optional commitments that deepen the shortfall, communicate with those owed payment, and seek specialist advice when matters become complex.

They are not entitled to cancel another person's claim or turn it into a donation on their own authority. Nor should everyone be treated as though differences in impact did not matter: a small amount may be essential to its recipient's livelihood.

Determining binding priorities requires knowledge and justice, rather than choosing those whose voices are quieter or whose location is farther away.

These situations reveal the difference between facing reality and improving its appearance. Embarrassment about admitting difficulty may lead a person in charge to delay disclosure until the gap widens. Early acknowledgement does not by itself supply the missing money. It does prevent others from basing decisions on reassurance that its giver knows is untrue.

What does financial success measure?

Growing assets are not enough if undischarged obligations accumulate. Reduced spending is not enough if the reduction comes at the expense of someone entitled to wages or care. A useful financial review may ask about fulfilment before profit:

Have I delayed an obligation I can discharge? Have I used money that is not mine? Have I disclosed a shortcoming known to me?

These questions do not turn the book into a comprehensive fatwa or a professional accounting system. They restore the ethical purpose of financial tools. We learn that some purchases we forgo are not deprivation, but protection of a right that preceded our desire. Some payments made on time are not generosity for which we may claim credit, but fulfilment of what we owe.

When this understanding becomes sound, a painful inconsistency diminishes: training ourselves to save our own money meticulously while being careless about money someone else awaits. Discipline remains incomplete until our concern extends beyond immediate self-interest to the trust placed in us, and ensuring that a right reaches its holder becomes a goal we follow through to the end.

Chapter Four: Family and Work— Coordination without Neglect

When your work reaches someone else's home life

We may think our work concerns only us because we are the ones giving it our hours. Yet a changed schedule can rearrange a spouse's day. Coming home late may leave another person carrying care duties that were never agreed. Staying connected to work at home can make physical presence very different from real presence. The relationship between work and family therefore cannot be resolved by an individual timetable alone. We need to understand which costs of our decisions pass to those who live with us.

Volume One discussed family life and competing rights. This chapter brings coordination into focus. How do we agree on recurring tasks? How do we manage exceptions? How do we distinguish mutual sacrifice from neglect that has become normal because the other person seldom complains? We do not prescribe a single religious allocation of roles or assume that all families share the same capacity and circumstances.

The aim is for rights to inform decisions before complaints intensify. Work may be necessary to earn a living; care may be necessary with nobody else available to provide it. Both may coincide on a difficult day. We cannot resolve that complexity by demanding that a person do everything equally well at the same time. We need to identify what is required, what can

change, who can help, and what needs agreement or specialist advice.

The loudest voice does not own the rights

«كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، الْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا، وَالْخَادِمُ رَاعٍ فِي مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ - قَالَ: وَحَسِبْتُ أَنْ قَدْ قَالَ - وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي مَالِ أَبِيهِ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said —translation of the meaning: ‘Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those in your care. The ruler is a shepherd and is responsible for those in his care. A man is a shepherd over his family and is responsible for those in his care. A woman is a shepherd in her husband’s home and is responsible for those in her care. A servant is a shepherd over his master’s property and is responsible for what is in his care.’ The narrator said, ‘I think he also said: A man is a shepherd over his father’s property and is responsible for what is in his

care. Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for those in your care.’¹³

«سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ: مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَصْنَعُ فِي بَيْتِهِ؟ قَالَتْ: كَانَ يَكُونُ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ - تَعْنِي خِدْمَةَ أَهْلِهِ - فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ خَرَجَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ»

Al-Aswad reported—translation of the meaning: ‘I asked ‘A’ishah, “What did the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, do in his home?” She said, “He would attend to his family’s needs”—meaning, serve his family—“and when the time for prayer came, he went out to pray.”’¹⁴

These two texts do not yield a uniform list of household tasks for every home. They do, however, rule out an understanding of responsibility detached from service and from fulfilling the rights of those in one’s care.

When demands compete, one person’s preference cannot by itself determine what always deserves priority. A genuine duty

13 Narrated by ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Friday Prayer, chapter on Friday prayer in villages and towns, hadith 893.

14 Narrated by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on a person attending to his family’s needs who goes out when the prayer is called, hadith 676.

may be placed first—or an activity that brings public appreciation may be placed above a quiet right that no audience sees. We need to ask why we are choosing: Can nobody else do this work now, or have I never considered what could be delegated? Is the need at home unexpected, or is it something I know recurs and keep ignoring?

Balance does not mean equal hours or the removal of differences in responsibility. At one stage, one person may undertake more than the other with agreement, willingness, and capacity; later, circumstances may change. Unequal shares are not always the problem. The problem arises when the imbalance becomes invisible and cannot be discussed, and when asking to review it is interpreted as ingratitude or insufficient patience.

What can work–family research add?

A review by Michel and colleagues brings together research associations between work–family conflict and role demands, strain, time, and support. It included 178 samples and 1,080 correlations. These associations do not establish a religious order of rights or give every problem a single cause. They do draw attention to the fact that conflict is not merely an

individual lack of resolve. How demands and support are distributed is part of the question.¹⁵

Our suggested use of this finding is limited. When attempts to reconcile demands repeatedly fail, we should not ask only why the person did not persevere more. We should also ask whether the burdens can realistically be combined and what authority the person has to change them. Yet describing pressure does not exempt anyone from fulfilling what lies within their capacity. Some room for choice remains, and its extent differs from one person to another.

It is a mistake to use research to judge every family in which a wife works or a husband works long hours. That fact alone cannot reveal the nature of their relationships, the quality of care, or the support available. Turning a research variable into an accusation against a family repeats the error we are trying to avoid: reducing life to a single explanation that overlooks its details.

Make unseen work understandable

Some work at home is visible when completed; other work becomes visible only when missed: remembering an

15 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), 689–725 (2011); 1,080 correlations from 178 samples.

appointment, preparing what a child needs, following up information from school, arranging care, and anticipating a shortage before it occurs. One person may think the other has done little because there was little visible activity, while this continuing attention has consumed both thought and time.

Making such work visible does not require turning a family into a daily accounting office. At a quiet moment, each person can explain what recurs and what others depend on, then consider a suitable distribution together. The purpose is not to prove who is more tired. It is to prevent decisions from resting on an incomplete picture.

Handing over a task should also include responsibility for it to the extent appropriate. Delegation does not mean saying, 'Remind me to do it,' while leaving the burden of remembering and following up permanently with the other person. A learner may initially need support. With sufficient capacity, however, they can take responsibility for understanding, timing, and completing the task. Cooperation then transfers some responsibility, rather than only its visible part.

At the same time, nobody can insist on their preferred method in every detail and then complain that others do not help. If the required outcome is protected and the method is permissible and safe, allowing room for difference may be part of accepting support. Real cooperation does not turn everyone into hands carrying out one person's design.

Agree on exceptions before they become the rule

There will be days of illness, travel, work pressure, and unexpected need. Such days should not destroy a relationship or lead family members to judge one another by the plan for an ordinary day. Family flexibility does, however, need boundaries so that ‘emergency’ does not become the name for everything nobody planned.

We suggest distinguishing rare events from recurring ones. If work pressure is known to rise at the end of each month, it is not a fresh surprise every time. The family can prepare, arrange support, and clarify when the usual pattern will resume. If an interruption is genuinely unexpected, both people can consider what is possible now and review its effects when things settle, rather than overwhelming the urgent moment with reproach.

Agreement does not mean that a stronger party can change everything and then demand understanding. Explaining a decision is not a merely formal request for permission. Silence alone does not establish consent in a relationship where someone fears objecting. The person with greater freedom to decide should consider what they can ease, rather than treating another person’s endurance as an inexhaustible resource.

Disconnecting from work requires a boundary

The working day may end while its requests remain open in a person’s mind and device. Not every response after hours neglects the family; a known commitment or necessity may be involved. Unlimited availability nevertheless needs review,

especially when every alert takes over the gathering even if it is not urgent.

A person may agree with their employer on what counts as an emergency and how it should reach them, distinguishing time available for necessary contact from time when non-urgent matters can wait. These are suggested arrangements to negotiate, not uniform legal rights in every country or occupation. Someone without authority to change their hours may need alternatives and support, rather than further blame for failing to turn off a phone.

At home, a clear boundary helps more than a vague promise to be present. When the family knows that a particular time is free from routine interruptions, they can rely on it. If someone must interrupt that time, they can explain and return, rather than leaving others waiting beside a device with no idea when its user will finish.

A hypothetical case: care cannot depend on guesswork

A family shares the care of an older relative who needs help with some matters. Each person assumes that somebody else will arrange a recurring appointment. As it approaches, they discover that nothing has been arranged. The problem is not necessarily lack of love. Responsibility has no clear holder, and information is not reaching everyone.

They agree that each appointment will have a named person responsible and a backup. The relative's wishes and privacy remain central; needing assistance does not justify making decisions on their behalf without regard for them. When the responsible person cannot attend, they notify the backup in advance instead of waiting until providing support becomes a crisis.

It then becomes apparent that one family member has always carried the tasks others dislike. Successful appointments are not enough to declare the distribution successful. They review the allocation, capacity, and willingness involved, and seek available help where needed. This suggested example shows that completing a task and the fairness of the arrangements behind it are different indicators. Neither should conceal the other.

Do not let negotiation replace initiative

Discussion about sharing work can become a series of long meetings after which nothing changes. Everyone knows what needs repair and repeats the same language, then the burden returns to its original bearer. An agreement needs a near-term action, a clear person responsible, and a time for review—not just exchanged declarations of intent.

Some needs at home cannot wait for a planning meeting. If someone sees a need they can meet within their limits, taking the initiative may be more sincere than waiting to be asked. This does not mean erasing agreements or burdening a capable

person with everything nearby. It means keeping a system in the service of doing good, rather than turning it into a reason to leave undone what we know is useful and within reach.

In a disagreement about a shortcoming, distinguish not knowing what is required, being unable to do it, and refusing despite a clear requirement. Each calls for a different response: explanation, adjustment, or taking responsibility. Calling all three bad faith loses the route to a solution. Calling them all misunderstanding loses legitimate accountability.

A home that can count on your return

One effect of discipline may be that your family knows you will return with some attention to give, rather than leftover time about which they have no right to ask. Your colleagues, too, can know what you can commit to without promises that break against circumstances you never explained. The aim is not a life without fatigue. It is to prevent fatigue from becoming a permanent reason to transfer the cost to someone else without their knowledge or consent.

Arrangements that serve both family and work do not succeed through multiplying schedules alone. They succeed when connected to truthful promises, respect for differences, recognition of hidden effort, acceptance of help, and review when circumstances change. These are all forms of patience and striving against the self. Speaking about them may be easier than practising them when the time comes to surrender comfort, a habit, or the desire to control.

When a household learns to review its arrangements without threatening affection, discipline protects the relationship instead of continually testing it. Each person knows that they are responsible for what they can do, that their needs can be heard, and that smooth-running work does not justify neglecting the person who did it.

Chapter Five: Skill, Quality, and Fit

Working hard at a method that does not lead you forward

A repeated mistake does not by itself show that the person making it does not want to do things correctly. They may never have learned an earlier step, may not know how to check their work, may be using an unsuitable tool, or may occupy a role requiring a capacity they have yet to acquire. If we gather all these situations under the word laziness, we will not know where repair should begin.

Conversely, analysing obstacles must not become a permanent excuse for giving up the attempt. Someone may know what they need and have the means to obtain it, yet postpone because they dislike the effort learning involves. Distinctions allow us to combine firmness with justice: we should not punish someone for a skill we have not taught, or excuse necessary practice once it is clear and within their capacity.

Discipline here means connecting effort to a sound method and matching the task to available capacity, or to a clear pathway for acquiring it. A method may change while the goal remains; we may also discover that the goal itself needs reassessment. What matters is that persistence with our first approach does not replace the learning the work was meant to serve.

Fitting work to the worker is different from continuing it

Abu ‘Ayyash’s dissertation on discipline includes a section on ‘fitting work to the worker’, concerning the relationship between a task, the person doing it, and what helps them perform it. This differs from consistency. Someone may persist with a task unsuited to their capacity or circumstances, becoming more tired without performing it correctly. Useful persistence may first require a change in the task, training, or environment.¹⁶

{قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ}

In the account of Musa, peace be upon him, one of the two women said—translation of the meaning: ‘One of them said, “My father, hire him. Surely the best person you can hire is one who is strong and trustworthy.”’ [Al-Qasas 28:26]¹⁷

16 Muhammad Ahmad Husayn Abu ‘Ayyash, Discipline in the Light of the Prophetic Sunnah: A Thematic Study, doctoral dissertation, Yarmouk University; p.21 on consistency and pp.91–93 on fitting work to the worker. English title is a translation of the Arabic title.

17 The Noble Qur’an, Al-Qasas 28:26: strength and trustworthiness.

The verse brings together the capacity the work needs and the trustworthiness that safeguards its due. In the earlier discussion of distributing responsibilities, we explained that a person's virtue does not automatically qualify them for every role. A present lack of skill does not determine their worth or close the way to learning. It calls for fairer selection and clearer training.

When assigning work, ask what it actually requires: knowledge, accuracy, speed, communication, time, decision-making authority, or perhaps several of these together. Someone may have strong knowledge but struggle to present it. Another may be accurate but slow in a task where speed without review would be unsafe. Describing such differences supports training and selection better than a general label such as excellent or weak.

The environment is also part of performance. Someone asked to document information without a reliable source or suitable tool cannot solve the problem simply by striving harder. Someone receiving contradictory instructions needs the contradiction removed. Making work fit is not a luxury added after holding people accountable. It may be necessary before we can understand what they were able to do at all.

Practice needs information that reaches the learner

A learner can repeat a mistake until they become faster at making it. They therefore need correction that identifies what is sound and what requires adjustment. 'Try again' helps when

they know what to change. If the method remains obscure, it may only repeat the experience of failure.

We suggest beginning training with a specific task whose performance can be observed, identifying the immediate error, then trying again at the point of difficulty rather than necessarily repeating the entire task. In writing a paragraph, the problem may lie in the link between an idea and its evidence, rather than the whole style. In data entry, it may lie in the definition of one field. The more specific the correction, the more clearly the learner can see the effect of another attempt.

With a new skill, reduce demands that do not help its acquisition. We should not ask a beginner to learn the content, the tool, speed, and public presentation all at once, then conclude from their confusion that they are unsuitable. Parts that need separate learning can be learned separately and later combined in a broader performance when established. These are suggested teaching methods adapted to a task, not fixed numbered stages binding on everyone.

In high-risk tasks, an opportunity to try does not mean leaving an unqualified person to act alone. Practice may require simulation, supervision, or licensed training, depending on the field. Other people's rights must not become material for testing a learner's self-confidence. Appropriate training takes account of how much error can be tolerated, as well as the trainee's capacity.

What practice hours tell us—and what they do not

A review by Macnamara and colleagues brought together studies of deliberate practice and performance across music, games, sports, education, and professions. The proportion of performance variation associated with practice differed between fields. This does not deny the value of training. It does challenge the easy claim that a single number of hours explains all excellence in every field.¹⁸

Differences in how practice is defined and measured, and in study design, belong in a critical reading. A published percentage cannot properly be turned into a judgement on one person's future. A learner may need better training, rather than more hours of the same method. Learning opportunities, tools, prior experience, and factors not experimentally isolated may also play a part.

The practical question we suggest is: What changed in performance as a result of what I did? Did errors decrease? Did I understand the reason for a decision? Did I need less help?

18 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), 1608–1618 (2014); corrigendum, 29(7), 1202–1204 (2018). Consultation: abstracts, metadata, and correction; no reanalysis.

Could I complete a related task that was not exactly the one I practised? These questions bring us closer to skill than counting hours alone. They are not presented as a standardised measure of expertise.

Quality is different from waiting without end

A person may invoke quality to delay delivery indefinitely, revisiting small details that do not affect the purpose while neglecting a time-bound obligation in pursuit of a perfect image. We then need to define what makes the work fit for use and what counts as an improvement that can follow later.

This does not mean accepting a significant deficiency or sending work we know is wrong. We distinguish a defect that prevents use or harms people's rights from an optional improvement on which the basic purpose does not depend. The threshold changes with the work: what is tolerable in a private draft may be intolerable in a medical or financial decision affecting others. We therefore give no general percentage of quality that is sufficient for every task.

One suggested review practice is to write down beforehand what others will rely on, which errors must be prevented, and who decides whether the work is acceptable. Clarity here reduces later arguments between someone demanding perfection and someone pursuing speed at any cost. Discussion can rest on a known standard, rather than a shifting preference discovered only after the worker has finished.

Returning to a simpler level is not returning to zero

An adult may struggle because they feel ashamed to learn a foundation they think everyone else has already mastered. They keep collecting advanced solutions to a problem rooted in a step they never understood. Striving against the self here means accepting a suitable starting point and giving up comparison between their own image and other people's.

In learning a language, arithmetic, or writing, returning to a simpler exercise may offer a faster route to sound progress. This does not mean that simplification always helps. It can become avoidance of necessary effort if learners remain with what they have mastered and never move on. Review is needed: Have they acquired what was missing? Is it time to increase the challenge?

The teacher should explain the reason for stepping back so that it is not understood as an insult. 'This step will help you with the task you want to do,' the teacher can say, then show the connection. Knowing why we are doing something makes it easier to bear a stage that does not immediately give a strong sense of achievement.

A hypothetical case: a repeated error in a report

An employee prepares a report in which totals are repeatedly incorrect. The manager assumes a lack of care and returns it several times with the instruction, 'Check carefully.' Examining the process reveals that the employee is combining data from two files that define the same category differently. Correction

does not simply require more concentration. The definition needs to be unified before calculation.

The team corrects the source and writes down the field definitions. The employee prepares a small example, which an appropriately qualified party checks, then redoes the report. This suggested response shows that some errors reside in task design. If the employee then continues to skip the now-clear review step, however, questions about choice and commitment also become legitimate.

In measuring improvement, the manager looks beyond reduced completion time, reviewing the accuracy of the results, clarity of the source, and whether someone else can understand the calculation method. If speed increases but nobody can check the work, the improvement remains limited. Skill that protects a trust can explain its limits, rather than merely put on a display.

Transferring a skill needs a bridge

Learning a procedure in one situation does not necessarily prepare someone for every situation with a similar name. They may solve a familiar example well but not know how to choose a method when some information changes. They may work with discipline under close supervision, then struggle when guidance decreases. Transfer needs practice across varied contexts, making clear what remains constant in the principle and what changes in its application.

The report *How People Learn* discusses the importance of understanding, context, and variation in the transfer of learning. It does not guarantee that a particular exercise will transfer every skill. It reminds us that practising a single version of a task is not always enough for the independence we want.¹⁹

One application we suggest is to ask learners after initial mastery: What would you do if this condition changed? What would you need to ask about? Which mistake must you not risk making on your own? We do not suddenly withdraw support. We transfer some decision-making to the learner as understanding becomes apparent, while preserving the point at which a specialist should be consulted.

Discipline that learns instead of repeating itself

A hardworking person who does not learn from mistakes may prolong difficulty for themselves and for those who depend on their work. A person who understands much but never practises remains with knowledge that does not become capacity. We need a cycle of learning, attempting, correction, and review, increasing or easing demands according to what emerges.

«الْمُؤْمِنُ الْقَوِيُّ خَيْرٌ وَأَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ الضَّعِيفِ، وَفِي كُلِّ خَيْرٍ، احْرَضْ عَلَى مَا يَنْفَعُكَ، وَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ، وَلَا تَعْجِزْ، وَإِنْ

19 National Research Council, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition*, chapter 3, ‘Learning and Transfer’, pp. 51–78, especially pp. 62–63 and 77–78 (2000).

أَصَابَكَ شَيْءٌ فَلَا تَقُلْ: لَوْ أَنِّي فَعَلْتُ كَانَ كَذَا وَكَذَا، وَلَكِنْ قُلْ: قَدَرُ اللَّهِ وَمَا شَاءَ فَعَلَ؛ فَإِنْ لَوْ تَفْتَحَ عَمَلَ الشَّيْطَانِ»

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said —translation of the meaning: ‘The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, and there is good in both. Be eager for what benefits you, seek Allah’s help, and do not give way to helplessness. If something befalls you, do not say, “If only I had done such and such, it would have been such and such.” Rather, say, “Allah decreed, and He did what He willed,” for “if only” opens the way for Satan’s work.’²⁰

We do not confine the hadith to vocational training. We benefit from its direction to pursue what is useful, seek Allah’s help, and take practical means, and from its warning against helplessness and dwelling on regret. The aim is not to prove our toughness by clinging to our first method. It is to do sound work, acknowledge what we need to learn, and protect the rights of those who rely on our skill.

20 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Sahih Muslim, Book of Divine Decree, chapter commanding strength, rejecting helplessness, seeking Allah’s help, and entrusting the decrees to Allah, hadith 2664.

Chapter Six: Procrastination, Distraction, and Digital Life

Movement is not always progress

Someone may spend an evening moving between messages, collecting links, and saving videos to watch, then feel that they have done a great deal. Asked about the task they originally came to do, they find it exactly where they left it. They were not still; they were moving away from the action they needed. This hypothetical picture explains why busyness alone is an insufficient measure of discipline.

Someone else may appear to have stopped because they are waiting for necessary information or checking a decision. Not every delay is procrastination; temporarily refraining may be the responsible action. Our distinction in this chapter is practical: What prevents starting or finishing? Is the obstacle genuinely connected to the task, or has turning elsewhere become a way to avoid its difficulty?

We need to ask without disparagement. Delay may combine fear of error, unclear requirements, the habit of opening a phone, and a task too large for the available time. It may also be simpler: someone knew what was owed, then chose a permissible pleasure over a right that had fallen due. Analysing causes does not remove responsibility. It prevents us from treating different situations with a single phrase.

When preparation becomes another route to postponement

A student can delay reading by buying another book, postpone writing a paper by changing a note-taking application, and put off reviewing previous learning by collecting another course. Such use does not make the tools themselves bad, but reverses their function. What was a means of reaching the work becomes a place to remain for someone unwilling to face its difficulty.

We suggest a revealing question: What will this preparation make possible that was not possible before? If the answer is clear—for example, obtaining a source on which an argument depends—preparation belongs to the task. If only the folder's appearance or the chart's colour changes for the fifth time, we may need to begin the available work instead of improving its image.

We need not forbid every enjoyable form of preparation. The problem is not the pleasure of organising, but its taking over time owed to an obligation. We can give it a reasonable allocation, then move to the smallest genuine part of the task. Opening a blank page is not completing a research paper. It can be a beginning followed by a specific question, necessary reading, and a written paragraph.

A phone is a tool; our relationship with it needs boundaries

A message may be part of the work or an interruption to it. A video may provide useful learning or merely consumption that

leaves its viewer feeling they have learned. Judging the medium alone is therefore unhelpful. We need to know what we were doing, why we opened it, and when we will return to the task.

In an experiment by Stothart and his two colleagues, phone notifications disrupted performance on an attention-demanding task even without direct interaction with the device. This is a finding from a specific experimental task, not a judgement that every notification disrupts every kind of work equally. It does make the task environment a reasonable subject of attention, rather than demanding resistance to distractions that could first be reduced.²¹

One application we suggest is to distinguish a necessary period for communication from a period of concentration required by the work. Someone on duty or responsible for emergencies may be unable to close every channel. They can retain the essential channel while reducing others. Someone not facing an emergency need not treat every message as an urgent rescue. Useful boundaries follow the obligation the device serves.

In a family, we should not create digital rules for children while exempting adult behaviour from review. Nor should we demand complete equivalence between a device used for an adult's work

21 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), 893–897 (2015).

and one used for entertainment. The difference should be explained honestly, without allowing ‘work’ to become a permanent cover for a parent’s absence from a conversation they promised.

A small beginning must connect to the end

One suggested method is to turn a broad task into a step our hands can perform now. Instead of ‘study the subject’, read a defined problem and try to explain it. Instead of ‘put my obligations in order’, identify the first commitment due and communicate about it. The value of a small step lies not merely in requiring less effort, but in removing uncertainty about where to begin.

Breaking down a task can nevertheless become another device for avoidance. Someone completes ten easy steps around the work without touching the part they came to do. After beginning, therefore, we ask: How does this connect to the required outcome? Is it time to move to the harder part? Successfully opening a door is not the same as walking through it.

A step also needs a recognisable endpoint. Someone facing a task without boundaries may flee it because they imagine being unable to stop until everything is finished. They can choose a meaningful unit and identify where to resume before stopping. This is an organisational tool, not permission to interrupt a religious duty with a prescribed form or time however one wishes, nor a single recipe for every task.

Facing a feeling does not mean insulting it

Heaviness may arise before starting or halfway through the task. We do not promise that readers will rid themselves of all boredom before working. Some useful work contains parts they dislike and need patiently to bear. They also need to recognise when fatigue reaches a point that calls for rest, care, or a genuine adjustment.

A learner can say, ‘This part is difficult for me, and I will try to understand it with suitable help,’ without saying, ‘I am incapable of everything.’ They can acknowledge choosing to escape into a device without turning that acknowledgement into self-abuse. Describing behaviour makes returning possible. Fixing an identity of failure upon oneself may increase the distance to the next attempt.

When difficulty persists and affects study, work, or basic daily life, a person may need professional assessment rather than only more general plans. This chapter does not diagnose a disorder from procrastination or equate chosen idleness with illness. Seeking appropriate help may itself be the disciplined action that has been postponed.

Do not reduce digital interruptions by cutting yourself off from people

Someone may decide to remedy distraction by closing every communication channel for days without informing those who depend on them. They gain a quiet hour while imposing anxiety or disruption on others. Withdrawal from commitments is not a

condition of concentration. We need agreement about when we are available, when we will return, and how an urgent need can reach us.

At work, a team can collect some questions for an agreed time and clarify what warrants interruption. At home, someone can request a period for a task while taking a fair share of care beforehand or afterwards. We should not set boundaries as though only our own time were valuable and other people's time a free resource onto which every interruption could be displaced.

Boundaries should also be open to review. If a system delays an essential service, adjust it. If every minor request destroys a period of concentration, reconsider what counts as urgent. The aim is not to win a contest on behalf of a rule we made. It is to make the rule better at protecting both work and rights.

A hypothetical case: a research paper that never begins

A student wants to complete a research paper within a period agreed with a teacher. The first days are spent collecting dozens of references without writing a precise question. Every new title seems to need inclusion before writing can start. After a long evening searching for sources, the student turns to unrelated videos, feeling entitled to an open-ended break.

Reviewing the situation does not call for a promise to double the hours. The student defines the research question, identifies

the two sources needed for an initial approach, and writes a paragraph that can be discussed. A separate list holds material that may be needed later, so every session does not reopen all possibilities. At the end of the work, the student records what has been established and what still needs evidence.

This is a suggested educational design, not an experiment conducted with a real student. Progress is not assessed only by counting saved files. We look for a clearer question, a paragraph supported by a reference, and a point the student recognises is not yet supported. Reading may decrease while fidelity to the task increases, because reading has become connected to a purpose that can be examined.

If a day is missed, the student should not erase what is written to announce a completely fresh start. They return to the last sound point and take responsibility for any delay to the agreed deadline. A concentration programme does not excuse them from truthful communication with the person waiting for the paper.

The benefit is more than reduced screen time

Phone use may decrease while an obligation remains postponed. This time a person escapes into another task, sleep chosen beyond their need, or endless conversation. We should therefore look beyond the measure of the tool—how many minutes were spent on the device—and also ask what happened to the work we wanted to protect.

Someone may need longer on a device because their work or learning has moved onto it. That is not a setback in itself.

Context, content, and effect matter. We should not turn hours into a moral judgement without knowing what happened during them, just as the benefit of some use does not justify opening ourselves to everything that interrupts the way forward.

This connects the chapter to the meaning developed at the close of the previous one, after quoting the complete hadith of the strong believer: choosing what is beneficial, seeking Allah's help, and resisting helplessness and dwelling on regret. We do not reduce this guidance to productivity. Digital discipline is not victory over a device. It means returning our decisions to a sound purpose and a known obligation, with the tool serving both.

Chapter Seven: Trust Built Through Our Dealings

When others can rely on your word

Trust in our dealings is more than a warm feeling towards someone we like. Its practical meaning becomes clear when another person relies on information we have given, an appointment we have promised to keep, or money entrusted to us, and makes a decision on that basis. Someone may stop looking for an alternative because we said we would come, pay a price because they believed our description, or hand over a task because they thought we understood its limits.

Discipline therefore concerns more than the person practising it. When words match actions, some of the uncertainty other people carry in their dealings with us is reduced. When promises multiply and are repeatedly broken, the loss goes beyond an unfinished task. People may find themselves checking every statement again or preparing a fallback for every agreement.

This is an analysis of what reliance involves, not a statistical law promising that every honest person will win everyone's trust or approval. Honest people may be treated unjustly, and deceivers may prosper for a time. The moral value of an action does not depend on an immediate result. Yet considering its effects helps us see the benefit or harm it may bring.

Honesty includes what matters to the decision

«الْبَيْعَانِ بِالْخِيَارِ مَا لَمْ يَتَفَرَّقَا - أَوْ قَالَ: حَتَّى يَتَفَرَّقَا - فَإِنْ صَدَقَا وَبَيَّنَّا بُورِكَ لَهُمَا فِي بَيْعِهِمَا، وَإِنْ كَتَمَا وَكَذَبَا مُحِقَتْ بَرَكَةُ بَيْعِهِمَا»

Hakim ibn Hizam, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said. Translation of the meaning: ‘The buyer and seller have the option of cancelling the sale as long as they have not parted—or he said: until they part. If they are truthful and make things clear, their sale will be blessed for them. If they conceal and lie, the blessing of their sale will be erased.’²²

The hadith shows that trustworthiness involves more than avoiding a false sentence. Making matters clear also means giving the other party information needed for an informed decision. A seller may use accurate words while remaining silent about a significant defect they know about. Accuracy in a few statements does not by itself make the transaction honest.

We can draw an educational application for work and learning: a researcher should not hide the limits of a source; an employee should not imply that a task is finished when it has not been checked; a teacher should not use a student's trust to conceal

22 Hakim ibn Hizam; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Sales, chapter on the buyer and seller making matters clear, concealing nothing, and giving sincere advice, hadith 2079.

ignorance of a question. Each field has its own detailed rules, but the principle of disclosure prevents us from being satisfied with the impression we want others to have.

Sometimes an unremarkable sentence does most to protect trust: I have not checked yet; this part is complete, but that part is not; I do not know; I need to ask a specialist. These statements are not weakness when they describe the facts. The weakness lies in having to repair a decision made on the strength of certainty we never possessed.

Trustworthiness does not remove the need for records

Someone may resist putting an agreement in writing because they see it as doubt about their character. Yet a record can protect honest people from forgetfulness and different understandings, without accusing them of anything. Trust does not require us to leave everything to memory. It calls for enough clarity to protect the right in question and prevent disagreement where possible.

For institutional practice, we suggest describing each commitment clearly: who is to carry it out, for whom, by when, what counts as completion, and how it will be reconsidered if circumstances change. Not every small agreement needs a lengthy file. Proportion is part of sound judgement. Excessive documentation can consume the time needed for the work; neglecting it where substantial rights are involved can make repair much harder.

Nor should we make monitoring a substitute for honesty. People can fill in forms while concealing the truth. An honestly written record reveals something about performance, but cannot guarantee it. We need moral commitments that keep our methods directed towards their purpose, and methods that make it possible to examine whether those commitments have any practical effect.

Trust depends on the responsibility involved

We may trust someone with money without asking their advice on a subject they do not know. We may respect another person's knowledge without considering them suitable for every organisational task. This does not diminish their worth. It distinguishes trustworthiness from the ability and experience a particular task requires.

We have already seen, in the advice given to Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, that a person's merit and the affection felt for them do not make every responsibility suitable for them. The application here is that trust in someone's work should not rest on a general title alone. We ask about the ability relevant to the responsibility being entrusted to them, the support they need, and the limits of their authority.²³

23 Abu Dharr al-Ghifari; Sahih Muslim, Book of Leadership, chapter on the undesirability of seeking authority without necessity, hadiths 1825 and 1826.

Speaking beyond one's knowledge can betray people's trust even when the intention is to help. Someone who answers every question to protect their image puts that image ahead of the soundness of other people's decisions. Referring a question to those who know protects a right that enthusiasm alone cannot fulfil.

From reliable individuals to reliable institutions

Bringing together well-intentioned people does not make an institution reliable if its rules contradict one another or its information is confused. An employee may promise something they think another department can deliver, only for it to emerge that neither they nor the person they referred to has the authority to do it. Shared work needs a way to connect promises with a real ability to fulfil them.

One practical proposal is for an organisation to identify what it can commit to, prevent unauthorised promises, and distinguish an initial estimate from a firm commitment. Clients and beneficiaries should not repeatedly bear the cost of unclear internal coordination, only to be told that the employee meant well.

When an institution makes a mistake, trust is not restored by automatically defending everyone within it. Repair begins by establishing what happened, protecting the affected person's rights, correcting the information, and addressing the cause. The mistake may lie with an individual or with the system. Fairness

means neither sacrificing a vulnerable person to conceal a wider failure nor using ‘the system’ to hide a known personal choice.

Not every purpose deserves cooperation

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحِلُّوا سَعَايِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا آمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامِ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاں قَوْمٍ أَنْ صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾

Allah says. Translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, do not violate the sacred rites of Allah, the sacred month, the sacrificial animals, the garlanded animals, or those making their way to the Sacred House seeking bounty and pleasure from their Lord. When you have left the state of ihram, you may hunt. Do not let hatred of a people who prevented you from reaching the Sacred Mosque lead you to transgress. Cooperate in righteousness and mindfulness of Allah, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression. Be mindful of Allah; surely Allah is severe in punishment.’ [Al-Ma'idah 5:2]²⁴

This boundary prevents us from treating good coordination as a virtue independent of its purpose. A team may work with great

24 Qur'an, Al-Ma'idah 5:2: cooperation in righteousness and mindfulness of Allah.

discipline to cheat or oppress. Effective execution does not make its aim good.

When building trust, then, we ask: what are we cooperating to achieve? Who might be harmed if our work succeeds exactly as planned? The moral question is not an ornament added after a project is finished. It belongs in the choice of the project itself. Loyalty to colleagues must not become a demand to conceal a violated right or misleading information.

In some situations, honest disagreement protects public trust better than comfortable agreement. A person offers advice where it belongs, uses legitimate channels, checks information, and does not attribute to others what they do not know.

Disagreement does not justify public defamation, just as unity does not justify silencing every correction.

An imagined case: a service that is late, then apologises

An educational service centre tells every family that a reply will arrive the same day. Staffing is insufficient, and some enquiries need investigation. Employees apologise politely, but families have organised their days around the promise and lose time. Training staff only to apologise leaves the underlying problem intact.

We suggest sorting requests according to what they require, stating response times the centre can meet, and informing a family early when a real obstacle appears. The centre should

then check whether the reply is useful, not merely whether a quick message of some kind was sent. A service that honestly explains its limits may be more trustworthy than an expansive promise followed by an apology every evening.

The centre also needs to notice who bears the cost of delay. Some families may be better able to wait than others; some need information before a decision that cannot be postponed. This does not mean favouring those who complain most. It means establishing a fair basis for priority and applying it consistently.

This is an educational illustration, not an account of an institution that has been studied. It helps us see the relationship between trust, realistic judgement, clear information, and correction. Satisfaction alone cannot measure the outcome: people may welcome an unrealistic promise whose harm appears later. We need truthful commitments, sound performance, and protected rights.

Rebuilding trust begins with what can be checked

Someone who has repeatedly failed to keep their word may say: trust me this time. Asking for a feeling does not undo the effect of actions. They can begin with a limited commitment they know they can fulfil, explain what they cannot do, and put right obligations still outstanding. They cannot require the person harmed to feel reassured immediately.

At this stage, consistent repair matters more than repeated apologies. The person does not need to appear perfect. They

need to be observably honest: not hiding a delay, changing their account, blaming someone else for their mistake, or asking for a right to be waived simply because they are tired of discussing it. The way back remains open to them, and the other person's right remains theirs.

Nor should a single lapse become our final judgement on a person. We distinguish an error acknowledged and repaired from a repeated pattern its author insists on disguising. This distinction helps us be fair without being credulous, and protect rights without closing the door to repentance and learning.

A quiet benefit in other people's lives

A trustworthy person may never become well known, yet makes another person's day less unsettled. Accurate information arrives, an appointment is kept, money is returned, the limits of ability are clear, and a mistake is repaired when it occurs. Through such ordinary acts, discipline becomes a good that reaches beyond its owner, rather than a private record of achievement.

An institution that wants this effect needs to reward honest accounts of shortcomings, rather than frighten employees into hiding them. Its standard should be fulfilling people's rights, not simply completing a report. When purpose, rules, and practice agree, people have firmer grounds for cooperation, while continuing to review and learn.

Chapter Eight: Education and School

What does a student learn when we ask for discipline?

A school may succeed in silencing a class without knowing whether students have learnt to work together or why they should respect the person speaking. Another class may be lively and full of questions while still having clear boundaries that prevent insults and give everyone a turn. Discipline is not the same as silence, and participation does not mean surrendering the room to disorder.

A school's question is broader than how to reduce rule-breaking: what should students learn so that they can direct themselves towards right conduct when supervision eases? They need to understand the task, learn how to begin, recognise others' rights, practise asking for help, and accept correction. Some of this is taught through explanation; some is learnt from the way the school itself operates.

A teacher is not a device for enforcing written rules. Asking teachers to maintain order without resources, time, or support, then holding them solely responsible for every difficulty, reduces a complex problem to one person. Education within an institution requires adults to receive help in carrying out their roles, while their own conduct is also subject to fairness and respect.

A rule that can be taught

‘Respect others’ is a sound aim, but a particular situation may need more explanation. How does disagreement differ from an insult? How does a student ask for a turn? What should they do when they do not understand? What must they not publish about a classmate? A rule becomes teachable when we connect it with recognisable action.

Detail does not mean issuing a new instruction for every minute of the day. Too many instructions can obscure what matters. We suggest beginning with a few meaningful boundaries, then showing how they apply in the classroom, corridor, and group work. Students can learn what changes with the setting and what remains constant in respecting people's rights.

«أَنَّهُ كَانَ إِذَا تَكَلَّمَ بِكَلِمَةٍ أَعَادَهَا ثَلَاثًا حَتَّى تُفْهَمَ عَنْهُ، وَإِذَا أَتَى عَلَى قَوْمٍ فَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَلَامَ عَلَيْهِمْ ثَلَاثًا»

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Translation of the meaning: ‘When he spoke a word, he would repeat it three times so that it would be understood from him; and when he came to a group and greeted them, he would greet them three times.’²⁵

25 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on repeating a statement three times so that it is understood, hadith 95.

«قَالَتِ النِّسَاءُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: غَلَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الرِّجَالَ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا يَوْمًا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ. فَوَعَدَهُنَّ يَوْمًا لَقِيَهُنَّ فِيهِ، فَوَعَظَهُنَّ وَأَمَرَهُنَّ، فَكَانَ فِيهَا قَالَ لَهُنَّ: مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةَ مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانَ لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. فَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ: وَاثْنَيْنِ؟ فَقَالَ: وَاثْنَيْنِ»

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reported. Translation of the meaning: 'The women said to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: "The men have taken up your time, so set aside a day for us." He promised them a day on which he met them, admonished them, and gave them instructions. Among what he said was: "No woman among you loses three of her children before her but that they will be a screen for her from the Fire." A woman asked: "And two?" He said: "And two."²⁶

The first report reminds us that teaching attends to whether the learner has understood, rather than stopping at the fact that the teacher has spoken once. The second shows learners asking for time in which knowledge could reach them, and their request being answered. We do not derive an entire modern school model from these reports. We take the principle relevant to teaching, then develop suitable ways to put it into practice.

26 Abu Sa'id al-Khudri; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on setting aside a separate day for teaching women, hadith 101.

Mistakes can teach, but they are not all alike

A student who speaks because they did not understand when questions are allowed differs from one who deliberately interrupts a classmate after the rule has been explained. A student who forgets materials because the requirements changed without their knowledge differs from one who knows what is needed but repeatedly neglects it. Both situations may require action. Fair action takes account of the reason for the behaviour, the instruction already given, and the student's ability.

Before judging, we suggest asking: what was required? How was it taught? What resources and opportunities did the student have? What choice do we actually know they made? We should not investigate intentions without evidence or reduce a child to a file of mistakes. Specific responsibility teaches more than a label such as ‘troublemaker’, which can become attached to a student and colour every interpretation of their conduct.

When a mistake harms others, more explanation is not enough if the injured person is ignored. Students need to learn how to repair the effects: a sincere apology where it helps, putting right what they damaged according to their ability and the appropriate rules, and respecting a boundary that prevents further harm. Gentleness must not mean abandoning the injured person's rights; firmness must not mean humiliation.

From expected behaviour to appropriate support

The PBIS initiative describes itself as a tiered framework of support, rather than a curriculum to purchase or a single day's

training. It emphasises teaching expectations and skills, using data, and supporting staff. Here we are reporting the organisation's description of its framework. We do not accept all its claims about outcomes without consulting the comparative studies discussed in the chapter on contemporary educational approaches.²⁷

The application we propose for a school is that the amount of support may vary with need. A general rule may suffice for most students, while some need additional teaching or individual help. Different support does not imply different human worth. Nor does it mean excusing those we like from a rule while holding others to it.

A student may need instructions broken into smaller parts, more time, a reminder, a less distracting place, or specialist assessment. These are possibilities to consider, not prescriptions a general book can make. Good support protects learning without lowering the student's standing among classmates or turning private circumstances into material for comparison.

Fairness does not always mean an identical procedure

It is easy to say that fairness means giving everyone the same time and the same method. Yet fairness may require taking a

27 Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 'What Is PBIS?' Introductory account of the framework, tiers, systems, data, and practices.

known limitation or a legitimate need into account. Flexibility, on the other hand, can also be used to excuse favouritism. We need a clear reason for an adjustment and boundaries understood by those responsible, while protecting the student's privacy.

If a student receives extra time because of a documented need, the details do not have to be disclosed to the class to secure everyone's agreement. The general meaning of fairness can be taught without revealing information classmates have no right to know. Support should also avoid permanently removing learning the student can manage. It should help them move towards a suitable degree of independence.

Assessment should distinguish the quality of learning from the appropriateness of behaviour. A student who asks many questions may understand well but need to learn when to take a turn; a quiet student may not understand at all. Combining these into a single impression is unfair to both. The first deserves recognition for understanding, and the second deserves help even if their silence is convenient.

Teaching teams need rules for themselves

A student may receive one instruction from a teacher and its opposite from another, then be punished for failing to anticipate the difference. Teaching methods need not be identical, but basic boundaries and ways of communicating changes should be clear. Different approaches can enrich a school; contradictory expectations about rights create confusion.

We suggest that the team agree how tasks are submitted, what completion means, whom to ask when something is unclear, and how mistakes are corrected. A student seeking an answer should not be passed between offices that cannot identify who has authority to decide. Teaching responsibility requires an institution that understands its own responsibilities too.

Teachers have a right to support when facing violence, mistreatment, or difficulties in teaching. They should not be left alone and then blamed for every outcome. They need professional channels that protect their rights and those of students, and distinguish facts from accusations. Protecting a child's dignity does not permit harm to a teacher; protecting a teacher does not place their actions beyond review.

The family is a partner, not a permanent suspect

When schools contact families only after a problem, a message from school can become synonymous with a complaint.

Communication can be broader: what is the child learning, what have they managed, and what specific help do they need?

Parents need not be overwhelmed with daily reports. They need useful information at a time when they can act on it.

Families may not have the resources a school assumes. An assignment requiring a device or a parent's uninterrupted time may measure unequal circumstances more than a child's effort. Fairness calls for clarity about what students should do themselves, what the school will provide, and what optional help must not become an unspoken condition of success.

Dialogue with a family does not remove the school's professional responsibility, just as it does not excuse the family from its part. We seek a specific point of cooperation instead of trading blame. If an agreement does not work, we ask which part was unrealistic, which information failed to arrive, and what change would protect learning and rights.

An imagined case: group work without assigned responsibilities

A teacher asks a group to prepare a presentation. Two students do most of the work. A third withdraws because their role is unclear, while a fourth merely adds their name. Everyone receives the same mark. The project may look successful because it was submitted on time, but it has not taught shared responsibility fairly.

In redesigning the task, the teacher explains what every student should learn, which tasks can be divided, and how the team will review each member's progress. Students have an early opportunity to identify gaps before the deadline. The teacher distinguishes the group product from each student's learning and contribution. Students are not asked to police one another through public blame, but to describe and agree their responsibilities.

If one member struggles, the group should not decide on its own to punish them or permanently carry their share. They take the matter to the teacher, protecting privacy and explaining the facts. The student may need further explanation or may need to

face the consequence of a clear failure to do their part.

Participation should help everyone learn, rather than make the most capable student a permanent substitute for the others.

This is a proposed educational example, not an intervention proven effective in every classroom. It illustrates why we need to assess learning and fairness as well as whether a product was completed.

How should we judge a school's success?

Fewer complaints may indicate better behaviour, or they may mean students have stopped reporting problems because they do not expect fair treatment. Fewer disciplinary referrals may result from better teaching or from a change in recording practices. A single number is therefore insufficient. We consider changes in learning, safety, clarity of rules, and teachers' ability to do their work.

We also need to hear those who do not speak loudly. A school may look peaceful while some students live with fear or exclusion. This book does not diagnose them. It reminds institutions that silence is not always satisfaction. Safe, clearly defined channels for reporting and review are part of understanding what is happening.

A school that teaches discipline does not promise a person who never makes mistakes. It teaches students to understand their responsibilities, work with others, accept fair correction, repair harm they have caused, and seek the knowledge they need. On

leaving its gates, they should carry an ability to fulfil their duties, rather than a fear that works only in the presence of punishment.

Chapter Nine: Institutions That Help People Fulfil Their Responsibilities

When the problem lies between roles

A request begins with one employee, moves to another, waits for a signature, then comes back because information was missing. Everyone may have made an effort, yet the person entitled to the service has still not received it. This imagined situation reveals an important distinction: individuals doing small tasks consistently does not guarantee that work passing between them will proceed well.

An institution therefore needs more than an appeal for everyone to take greater care. It must know where a commitment begins, who can make the decision, which information must accompany a task, and who follows it up when it stops. The failure may occur in the handover between roles, rather than in any individual's working speed.

As we understand it, institutional discipline makes commitments possible to fulfil and open to review. It connects promises with resources and authority, and brings errors to light before their effects spread. Organisation should not make people move through a meaningless network of commands. It should protect a service or a right whose many parts no single person can deliver alone.

Before asking for motivation, examine capability and opportunity

The COM-B framework proposes examining behaviour through capability, opportunity, and motivation, with these components interacting. Michie and her colleagues developed the Behaviour Change Wheel after reviewing nineteen frameworks and tested whether it could classify policy components. This was not an experiment proving that every institution using the diagram will improve. It is an analytical framework that can help keep relevant factors in view.²⁸

We use it here to ask practical questions: does the worker know what is required? Can they access the tools and information? Do their authority and time allow them to do what we ask? What encourages or discourages them? This order does not make willpower unimportant. It prevents us from explaining every mistake as a lack of it.

An employee may be capable and willing, but unable to finish a request without approval that is always delayed. The opposite may also emerge: the tools are available, but the employee bypasses a necessary procedure to appear faster. The framework

28 Susan Michie, Maartje M. van Stralen, and Robert West, ‘The Behaviour Change Wheel: A New Method for Characterising and Designing Behaviour Change Interventions’, *Implementation Science* 6, article 42 (2011): development of the framework and the method and results of classifying frameworks.

cannot reveal intentions by itself, but it can help locate responsibility in a form we can investigate.

A task needs a clear owner, not a crowd of people said to be responsible

‘The team is responsible’ can conceal the fact that nobody knows who should take the next step. Clear responsibility does not isolate people from one another. Many can contribute while knowing who leads, who checks a particular part, who can change the deadline, and who should be told when progress stops.

Delegation requires more than assigning a name. The person taking responsibility needs defined authority, suitable resources, and a clear basis for referring decisions to someone else.

Responsibility without necessary authority can leave someone answerable for what they cannot control. Authority without review can damage rights they have failed to notice.

Our earlier discussion of matching people to work considered ability and trustworthiness. Here we add the relationship between roles. Can the person who made a promise to a client ensure it is carried out? Does the person expected to deliver it even know about it? When promises and delivery become disconnected, the beneficiary pays for the failure with time and anxiety, however polite the staff's apologies may be.

Passing on information is part of doing the work

Someone who finishes one part and sends it on without explanation may simply pass the burden to the next person. A handover needs information proportionate to the task: what is complete, what remains unverified, which decisions were made, and what evidence supported them. The aim is not to narrate every action. It is to let the next person continue without having to make consequential guesses.

In knowledge work, a result without its source or limitations is insufficient. In service work, marking a task ‘done’ is insufficient if the beneficiary has not received what was requested. Completion should be defined by the purpose of the work, not an internal action that looks convenient in a report.

One proposed practice is a short check when work passes between departments. Essential information is reviewed at a known point, instead of everything being checked repeatedly at every stage—or by nobody. If the same omission recurs, the team examines its cause rather than merely exchanging more messages about it.

Being able to say there is a problem

In a field study using several methods, Edmondson examined fifty-one work teams in a manufacturing company and found an association between team psychological safety and learning behaviour. This observational relationship does not establish

that psychological safety alone caused learning, or that the finding applies to every institution.²⁹

Our proposed application is that workers should be able to report an error or shortcoming without the conversation beginning in humiliation. Safety does not remove accountability. Deliberately concealing an error differs from honestly reporting it, and repeated errors after training need attention. But if the first person to mention a problem is always treated as the culprit, an institution may reward silence instead of correction.

We need language that distinguishes describing the event, explaining its cause, and determining responsibility. Jumping to the last before understanding the first two can turn an investigation into a search for someone to blame. Equally, analysis can continue so long that affected people's rights are lost. Urgent repair should begin where necessary, while investigation of the cause continues alongside it.

Measures that do not undermine their own purpose

If workers are rewarded only for the number of cases closed, they may close cases quickly without resolving them. If teachers

29 Amy C. Edmondson, 'Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44(2) (1999), pp. 350–383. Source consultation was limited to the abstract and publication details.

are judged only by falling complaint numbers, they may avoid recording complaints. These analytical examples show how a measure can redirect behaviour away from the purpose it was meant to serve.

We suggest pairing speed with quality, output with its effect on the beneficiary, and achievement with the burden it places on others. We do not need dozens of figures that nobody understands. We need a limited set that makes superficial success harder to mistake for real fulfilment. When a measure encourages manipulation, we should revise it rather than blame people alone for what we encouraged.

Measurement must not reduce a person to a number. Circumstances and exceptions may need explanation, and some rights cannot be compensated for by high output elsewhere. Completing many tasks does not cancel the concealment of a serious defect. Completing fewer tasks because they are more complex is not, by numerical comparison alone, evidence of neglect.

A meeting that leads to a decision

Meetings can themselves become a way to postpone responsibility. A problem is presented repeatedly and discussed again, yet everyone leaves without knowing what to do. Much discussion does not prove thorough follow-up, just as little discussion does not prove a sound decision.

We suggest that a necessary meeting end with clarity about the decision, who will implement it, and what will show it has been carried out. If a decision cannot yet be made, identify the unanswered question or missing information and who will obtain it. General promises such as ‘improve performance’ should not be mistaken for a plan.

At the next review, asking whether people have worked is not enough. What has changed, what remains, and what evidence is available? This need not create a culture of accusation. The conversation can be calm and clear. Seriousness does not require harshness, and gentleness does not require leaving commitments unchecked.

An imagined case: a request circulating between three departments

An organisation receives requests for assistance. One department records the details, another checks the need, and a third approves payment. Complaints recur because incomplete applications are returned. Each department says the others are not doing their jobs, although they have never agreed what counts as complete documentation or how to handle someone unable to provide it.

In the proposed correction, they agree what information is essential and who has authority to make a legitimate exception. They stop asking beneficiaries repeatedly for information already held and authorised for use. They then follow a small

sample of requests to understand where progress stops, rather than announcing comprehensive success after the first week.

Some delays turn out to arise from insufficient training, some from demand exceeding available resources, and some from neglect in handing over files. One remedy does not fit every cause. An employee learns a procedure, the organisation redistributes work, and a known failure is addressed through accountability after the duty has been made clear. The question becomes more precise than departments blaming one another.

Data protection remains part of discipline. A beneficiary's details should not be sent to a large group merely because that is faster. A clear process should reduce unnecessary disclosure, rather than make privacy an obstacle to bypass whenever we are in a hurry.

An institution able to correct itself

A good institution is not one in which mistakes never occur. The standard we propose is that it can discover them, contain their effects, restore the rights of those affected, and learn what is needed to prevent recurrence. It may need to change an old rule, train a person in authority, or reduce a commitment it has been making without the capacity to fulfil it.

Honesty includes acknowledging institutional limits. This need not mean complacency. An organisation can accept a new challenge with a plan, resources, and an assessment of risks.

Turning every design failure into a test of staff sacrifice is not a fair way to sustain the work.

When honesty shapes decisions, records, delegation, and review, discipline comes closer to people's actual lives. Rights are delivered with as little disruption as possible, workers know their duties, and those responsible can see what needs repair. Uprightness then reaches beyond a slogan on the wall.

Chapter Ten: Resources and Shared Work

A resource used by everyone is not automatically cared for by anyone

A room used by several teams, a shared tool, a passage used by neighbours, money set aside for a public service: these are ordinary examples of things whose claims do not end with the wishes of the last person to use them. Someone may leave a place suitable for their own immediate purpose without leaving it suitable for the next person.

Bad intentions are not always involved. Each person may assume maintenance is someone else's job, supplies will somehow replenish themselves, or their small additional use cannot matter. Together, these decisions can diminish a shared good in a way no individual can explain from their own actions alone.

Discipline here means learning to see beyond the immediate act: who uses this after me? Who bears the cost of what I leave? Am I entitled to change it or use it all? We do not want people to fear every movement. We want them to understand the limits of use and their responsibility for keeping the resource available.

Enjoying a gathering does not cancel the rights of the road

«إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْجُلُوسَ عَلَى الطَّرِيقَاتِ»

«فَإِذَا أَبَيْتُمْ إِلَّا الْمَجَالِسَ فَأَعْطُوا الطَّرِيقَ حَقَّهَا»

«غَضُّ الْبَصَرِ، وَكَفُّ الْأَذَى، وَرَدُّ السَّلَامِ، وَأَمْرٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَنَهْيٌ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ»

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said.

Translation of the meaning: 'Beware of sitting in the roads.'

They said: 'We cannot do without it; these are our places to sit and talk.' He said: 'If you insist on sitting there, then give the road its rights.' They asked: 'What are the rights of the road?' He said: 'Lowering the gaze, refraining from harm, returning greetings, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong.'³⁰

Our enjoyment of meeting in a place does not make it available without limits. Other people have rights concerning passage, safety, and dignity, even when they are not part of our gathering.

30 Abu Sa'id al-Khudri; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on house courtyards and sitting in public thoroughfares, hadith 2465.

The educational application we suggest is to consider the rights attached to every shared use, rather than only the convenience it gives us. Using a room does not permit leaving it unusable. Driving through a place does not permit blocking an entrance someone else needs. Sharing a file does not permit exposing the private information of people named in it.

Detailed rulings vary with ownership, contracts, legitimate custom, and the applicable regulations. We do not derive a single code for every resource from this hadith. It does, however, prevent us from separating our freedom to use something from our duty to avoid harm and respect rights.

Clear rules need not imply suspicion

We can agree who may use a resource, how to reserve it, what must be returned, and whom to tell about a fault. This does not accuse users of misconduct. It can protect them from expectations they never knew existed. A rule held only in a manager's mind cannot fairly become the basis for blaming everyone else.

We should distinguish the limits attached to a resource from the limits on those entitled to use it. Money may be earmarked for a purpose we cannot change, a place may be open only at certain times, or a tool may be suitable only for trained users. Wanting to benefit people does not justify overriding a legitimate restriction or exposing them to danger.

We suggest placing instructions close to where the work happens and keeping them proportionate to the need. A simple tool does not require a whole book of instructions. Its user does need to know how to keep it safe and what to do if it fails. If a rule is too complicated for most users to understand, part of the problem may lie in its design.

What can research on shared resources contribute?

In her research lecture on polycentric governance, Elinor Ostrom explained that managing resources cannot always be reduced to a single choice between markets and the state. Relevant passages describe recurring features involving clear boundaries, rules suited to the setting, monitoring, and dispute resolution. This is a research account of experiences and models, not a guarantee that a local community will succeed unaided or an Islamic ruling on a particular form of ownership.³¹

Our use of that work is limited to this idea: we should not choose a rule merely because it looks elegant. We should consider the resource, its users, and what they can carry out. The examples that follow are our own analytical applications.

31 Elinor Ostrom, ‘Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems’, revised Nobel lecture draft, 8 December 2009, pp. 1–2, 13, 19, and 24 of the repository copy. Selected passages were consulted; not all studies cited in the lecture were read.

An agreement suited to a tool whose uses can be counted may not suit water whose reserves fluctuate, or information that can be copied without diminishing the original but whose privacy may be compromised. Calling them all ‘shared’ does not remove differences in their nature, risks, and associated rights.

Use and maintenance belong in the same agreement

People may agree how to divide time using something and forget the costs of maintenance and replacement. When it breaks, they disagree over who pays and who arranges repair. The agreement could have begun with a broader question: what is needed to keep the resource usable, and how can that responsibility be shared legitimately and clearly?

This does not necessarily mean every user pays the same amount. Ownership, the terms of allocation, ability to contribute, or the extent of use may differ. What matters is that the rule is known in advance, rather than invented when a dispute begins. Users of public funds, an endowment, or a restricted donation cannot agree to dispose of it contrary to its legitimate conditions.

Discipline also includes reporting a fault instead of hiding it. Someone fearing blame may return a damaged tool and put the next user at risk. Management needs to distinguish an accidental error honestly reported from known negligence and deliberate concealment, so that silence does not become safer than honesty.

Fairness when resources are scarce

The real rule becomes visible when there is not enough for everyone. Does priority depend on arrival order, need, the resource's designated purpose, or an agreed turn? No single answer fits everything. But leaving the matter to personal closeness to the manager or to whoever speaks loudest undermines the meaning of sharing.

We suggest making an appropriate priority rule clear and providing a way to present an exceptional case without humiliation. A particular need may be greater, but someone authorised must assess it; an individual cannot simply take possession. When disagreement occurs, review the facts and the rule. Raising an objection should not turn someone into an enemy of shared work.

Those with greater power must not consume their own share and someone else's, then call on the weaker person to be patient. Patience is a virtue everyone needs, not a means of protecting the advantage of whoever got there first. Community discipline sometimes begins with the powerful refraining from taking what is not theirs, rather than asking the injured to endure more.

Give disputes a route to resolution before they grow

Two people may disagree about a booking time or the cause of a fault. Without a clear way to seek review, the matter can become a personal quarrel or mutual obstruction. Proposed safeguards include keeping proportionate records, identifying

who will hear a dispute, and specifying who may change a rule when a recurring defect becomes clear.

A settlement does not always mean splitting the difference between two accounts. One party may be in the right, or the instructions may turn out to have been unclear. We need fairness that does not purchase peace by sacrificing the weaker person's right, and gentleness that does not cover up harm. Seeking redress should not cost more than the right at stake and force its holder into silence.

It also matters to separate a mistake from the identity of the person who made it. Someone may break a rule they did not know and be able to learn and repair the error. Someone else may repeat an infringement after explanation and require a legitimate measure to prevent harm. Gradual education does not remove safety boundaries or the rights of those who own the resource.

An imagined case: a lending library for teaching equipment

An association lends teaching equipment to teachers. Loans are arranged through scattered messages. Some teachers forget return dates, the organiser cannot locate certain items, and incomplete equipment reaches a new user. The problem is not a lack of enthusiasm for education. Enthusiasm has not been accompanied by a system that protects the resources serving it.

In the proposed arrangement, the association lists its equipment and records its condition. It defines the purpose and duration of loans and identifies items requiring training. Lending and returns now involve a short record of essential information, and faults are reported when discovered. Teachers are not asked for unrelated personal information, and late borrowers are not publicly named to embarrass them.

Review shows that the loan period does not suit some lessons and that several items need maintenance before users can fairly be blamed. The association changes what it has authority to change while preserving necessary safety and competence requirements. Where an agreed return is clearly overdue, it asks for the item back and suspends further lending until the cause is addressed under its legitimate policy.

We do not present this case as an experiment with proven outcomes. It shows how organisation supports continuity: knowing what exists, providing fair access, maintaining assets, explaining responsibility, and allowing review. If the association judged success only by the number of loans, it might celebrate an increase that wears out its equipment without the means to replace it.

Cooperation needs moral boundaries

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحِلُّوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا
الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا آمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنْ
رَبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ

أَنْ صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ
وَالتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ{.

Allah says. Translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, do not violate the sacred rites of Allah, the sacred month, the sacrificial animals, the garlanded animals, or those making their way to the Sacred House seeking bounty and pleasure from their Lord. When you have left the state of ihram, you may hunt. Do not let hatred of a people who prevented you from reaching the Sacred Mosque lead you to transgress. Cooperate in righteousness and mindfulness of Allah, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression. Be mindful of Allah; surely Allah is severe in punishment.’ [Al-Ma'idah 5:2]³²

Good management of a resource therefore does not justify using it for an unlawful purpose. Benefit to some does not justify harming people who have no voice in the agreement. We must also consider those outside the circle of users.

A team may work efficiently while leaving cleaning or repairs to someone who never agreed to take them on and has not received their due. We cannot call the arrangement successful without accounting for that effect. What appears inexpensive may merely have transferred its cost to someone else.

32 Qur'an, Al-Ma'idah 5:2: cooperation in righteousness and mindfulness of Allah.

Continuity does not require preserving every old arrangement. A rule may begin to obstruct benefit, or a resource may need a different approach. We review within our authority and in ways that preserve conditions and rights. Loyalty to the past should not become refusal to learn.

What does the user leave behind?

We suggest carrying a few questions into daily life: have I returned this as I should? Have I passed on the information the next person needs? Have I kept within my rights? Have I left a small problem that will become a large one for someone else? These questions can be useful without a large institution behind them.

When such practices become common, they do not guarantee freedom from disagreement. They give cooperation a clearer foundation than goodwill alone. Rights become explicit, mistakes have a route to repair, and shared goods have people to care for them. Discipline expands from governing the self to preserving what others will use after we have moved on.

Chapter Eleven: Public Responsibility and Accountability

When a decision reaches further

A mistake in arranging one's private affairs may affect chiefly oneself. In a public responsibility, its consequences may reach people one has never met. A statement approved, a procedure delayed, or an exception granted can open access to a benefit or withhold a right. Being seen as a hardworking person is therefore not enough. We need fairness in both the purpose and the process of decision-making.

Public responsibility does not make someone a more valuable human being. It widens the circle of matters for which they must answer. It may concern managing an endowment, a school, a team, or a service, not only holding high political office. Anyone given authority over money, information, or other people's time needs to know what that authority includes and what it does not.

The discipline discussed here does not mean carrying out every instruction quickly: refusing an unlawful instruction may be the duty. Nor does it mean challenging every rule in the name of independence. We need to understand the boundaries of obedience, authority, and the right to review, rather than adopt a slogan that recognises only one side.

The person giving an order does not determine every limit of obedience

«بعث النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم سرية، وأمر عليهم رجلاً من الأنصار، وأمرهم أن يطيعوه، فغضب عليهم وقال: أليس قد أمر النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن تطيعوني؟ قالوا: بلى. قال: عزمت عليكم لما جمعتهم حطباً وأوقدتهم ناراً، ثم دخلتم فيها. فجمعوا حطباً فأوقدوا، فلما هموا بالدخول فقام ينظر بعضهم إلى بعض، قال بعضهم: إنما تبعنا النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وفسدنا من النار، أفندخلها؟ فبينما هم كذلك إذ خمدت النار، وسكن غضبه، فذكر للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: لو دخلوها ما خرجوا منها أبداً، إنما الطاعة في المعروف»

Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, reported. Translation of the meaning: ‘The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, sent out a detachment, appointed a man of the Ansar to command them, and instructed them to obey him. He became angry with them and said: “Did the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, not command you to obey me?” They said: “Yes.” He said: “I insist that you gather firewood, light a fire, and then enter it.” They gathered wood and lit it. When they were about to enter, they stood looking at one another. Some said: “We followed the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, only to flee from the Fire. Shall we enter it?” While they were in that state, the fire died down and his anger subsided. This was mentioned to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and he said: “Had

they entered it, they would never have come out of it. Obedience is only in what is right.””³³

This principle preserves the moral meaning of discipline. Carrying out an instruction does not become a virtue merely because someone in authority issued it.

We do not derive a single ruling for every contemporary dispute from this report, or confuse a sinful instruction with disagreement over a permissible administrative judgement. The point established here is that authority does not cancel the limits set by Islam. Anyone needing a ruling on a particular case or an appropriate way to object should consult those qualified to advise, in a manner that protects rights and avoids harm.

In an institutional example, a worker may be asked to hide a significant shortcoming or record work that never happened. Preserving a good relationship with a manager does not justify lying. The worker can state the facts respectfully, request corrected instructions, and use the appropriate channel. Advice must not become public accusation without evidence, and gentleness must not become participation in misleading people.

33 Ali ibn Abi Talib; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Judgements, chapter on hearing and obeying the leader except in disobedience to Allah, hadith 7145.

A benefit received because of office

Abu Humayd al-Sa'idi, may Allah be pleased with him, reported. Translation of the meaning:

«استعمل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم رجلا من الأسد يقال له ابن اللتبية - قال عمرو وابن أبي عمر على الصدقة - فلما قدم قال هذا لكم وهذا لي أهدي لي قال فقام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على المنبر فحمد الله وأثنى عليه وقال ما بال عامل أبعته فيقول هذا لكم وهذا أهدي لي. أفلا قعد في بيت أبيه أو في بيت أمه حتى ينظر أيهدى إليه أم لا والذي نفس محمد بيده لا ينال أحد منكم منها شيئا إلا جاء به يوم القيامة يحمله على عنقه بغير له رغاء أو بقرة لها خوار أو شاة تيعر. ثم رفع يديه حتى رأينا عفرتي إبطيه ثم قال اللهم هل بلغت . مرتين»

‘The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, appointed a man from al-Asd called Ibn al-Lutbiyyah—Amr and Ibn Abi Umar said: to collect the charity. When he returned, he said: “This is for you, and this was given to me as a gift.”

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, stood on the pulpit, praised Allah and extolled Him, and said: “What is the matter with an official whom I send out, who then says: ‘This is for you, and this was given to me as a gift’? Why did he not stay in his father's house or his mother's house and see whether anything would be given to him? By Him in whose

hand is Muhammad's soul, none of you takes anything of it without coming on the Day of Resurrection carrying it on his neck: a camel bellowing, a cow lowing, or a sheep bleating.” Then he raised his hands until we saw the pale skin of his armpits, and said: “O Allah, have I conveyed the message?”—twice.’³⁴

The report directs attention to a recurring question in positions of responsibility: did the person receive the benefit as a private individual, or because they control a decision affecting other people's rights?

This chapter does not make us an authority for deciding every question about gifts, contracts, or conflicts of interest. It does put forward a question that should not be bypassed: what does the giver expect, and how might acceptance affect the decision or its appearance? Depending on the circumstances, refusal, disclosure, or referral to a competent authority may be required. An official's good opinion of their own integrity is not enough.

One proposed organisational measure is to clarify the rules concerning benefits, gifts, and decisions connected with a private interest, and to provide a way to ask before acting. A known rule is fairer than punishing someone for a boundary never explained. At the same time, a lack of institutional

34 Abu Humayd al-Sa'idi; Sahih Muslim, Book of Leadership, chapter prohibiting gifts to officials, hadith 1832a.

explanation does not cancel a duty already known from Islam itself.

An outwardly valid procedure does not turn falsehood into a right

Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported.

Translation of the meaning:

«عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه سمع خصومة بباب حجرته، فخرج إليهم، فقال إنما أنا بشر وإنه يأتيني الخصم، فلعل بعضكم أن يكون أبلى من بعض، فأحسب أنه صدق، فأقضي له بذلك، فمن قضيت له بحق مسلم فإنما هي قطعة من النار، فليأخذها أو فليتركها»

‘The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, heard a dispute at the door of his chamber. He came out to them and said: “I am only a human being, and litigants come to me. One of you may be more eloquent than another, so I think he is telling the truth and rule in his favour on that basis. Whoever receives through my judgement a right belonging to a Muslim is receiving only a piece of the Fire. Let him take it or leave it.”’³⁵

The implication matters: success in a procedure does not remove a person's responsibility for the truth they know.

35 Umm Salamah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on knowingly arguing a false case, hadith 2458.

In our application, a report does not become truthful because it has passed every required signature if its writer knows that significant information was concealed. A decision does not become just simply because the form is complete. Procedures can protect and verify, but can be diverted from their purpose when separated from honesty.

Equally, we must not use this principle to set aside every procedure because we consider ourselves better informed about the truth. Rights need evidence and recognised channels. They cannot rest on private certainty claimed by each party. We should follow legitimate processes without using them to conceal a falsehood we know.

Justice does not depend on affection

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Allah says. Translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, stand firmly for Allah as witnesses in justice. Do not let hatred of a people lead you away from justice. Be just; that is nearer to mindfulness of Allah. Be mindful of Allah; surely Allah is fully aware of what you do.’ [Al-Ma'idah 5:8]³⁶

Accountability is therefore neither revenge against an opponent nor protection for a friend. We may need to correct someone we

36 Qur'an, Al-Ma'idah 5:8.

love and recognise a right belonging to someone with whom we disagree. Discipline here involves resisting our own inclinations when judgement lies in our hands.

We suggest that a person in authority ask: would I apply the same procedure if the name were different? Have we heard the person who struggles to present their case? Have we given the decision the investigation it needs? These questions can help reveal bias. They do not claim to prevent every injustice on their own.

Different circumstances may properly require different responses. Justice is not blind uniformity. What matters is that the difference rests on a valid reason that can be explained to the appropriate authority, rather than closeness or hostility. Private information should be disclosed only as far as needed for review, without unnecessary exposure.

Accountability begins with what was within a person's power

It is unfair to blame someone for a decision beyond their authority, a resource they were never given, or contradictory instructions. Nor may each person in authority refer the matter elsewhere merely to escape their own share. We need to describe what was required, what was known, what was possible, and then what choices were made.

One mistake may have both individual and institutional causes: an employee failed to check despite being able to, while the

system could not detect the fault before it reached the beneficiary. Repairing one does not remove the need to address the other. We neither sacrifice a person to conceal a system's failure nor hide a personal choice behind broad claims about complexity.

Discipline requires accountability to have a clear purpose in correcting the problem and protecting rights. Depending on the case, it may lead to instruction, a changed procedure, restoration of a right, or a legitimate sanction. It should not be reduced to an angry scene after which the manager feels their duty is done while the cause remains untouched.

Reporting a problem does not permit inventing it

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Allah says. Translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, if a wrongdoer brings you news, verify it, lest you harm people in ignorance and then regret what you have done.’ [Al-Hujurat 49:6]³⁷

The courage to speak truth requires accuracy about events. We must not merge what we saw, what we heard, and what we inferred, or turn a personal grievance into a supposedly established report of corruption. Verification protects people from the harm of a hasty decision.

37 Qur'an, Al-Hujurat 49:6: verifying reports.

At the same time, a clear report should not be dismissed because its speaker has little standing or because disclosure embarrasses the institution. Evidence and ways to verify it should be examined, while the rights of the reporter, the accused, and the injured are protected. Their interests may compete in a particular case, requiring competent handling and a fair procedure rather than judgement by an excited crowd.

Disclosure does not mean publishing everything. The responsible route may be to give information to someone able to put matters right while protecting data and people. This book does not provide legal advice for a particular case. It explains that honesty in reporting is part of honesty in decision-making.

An imagined case: an exception when allocating a benefit

An official allocates subsidised training places. A relative applies, and the official promises a place before checking the conditions. They then discover that others applied earlier or have a stronger claim. They can search for wording that makes their promise appear compliant, or acknowledge that they used authority in a way they were not entitled to use it.

Under the proposed response, the decision returns to the published eligibility criteria. The official apologises for a promise they cannot fulfil at other people's expense, rather than making another eligible applicant pay for their embarrassment. The organisation then reviews how applications are received

and who may promise a place, so that the same conduct is not repeated in the name of good relationships.

If the system allows a legitimate exception, it need not be closed merely from fear of favouritism. It should operate under its conditions, through an authorised decision-maker, with appropriate records. An exception differs from personal privilege in having a reason, boundaries, and review. Personal privilege takes shape around the name we want to favour.

This educational example shows that discipline may require enduring an uncomfortable apology and losing a relative's approval, rather than fulfilling a mistaken promise at any cost. Honouring a right takes precedence over preserving our image before those we love.

A rule open to review is not necessarily weak

An administrative procedure may need changing because it obstructs its purpose, treats a group unfairly, or repeatedly imposes unnecessary costs. Commitment to the aim does not mean treating the method as sacred. A rule can change within the limits of authority and Islam, after considering its effects and consulting those involved.

Change should not be applied retrospectively to erase an established right or excuse a known error. We distinguish improving the future from manipulating the account of the past. An honest record preserves what happened and then explains

what changed and why. An institution does not need an unblemished history to be capable of learning.

Ultimately, a disciplined person in authority is not someone who never revises a position. It is someone who does not make authority a barrier against the truth: they keep within their remit, fulfil rights, accept correction, and do not ask to be excused from accountability because their intentions are good or their achievements many.

Chapter Twelve: Continuity Across Generations

What remains when the person is no longer there?

A good work may begin with one person's resolve: a lesson taught, money spent, a library organised, or experience passed on. It then grows until others depend on it. A new question emerges: does it still depend entirely on that person's presence, or does it now have the clarity, support, and maintenance that can help it continue?

Not every individual effort needs to become an institution, and not every ending is a failure. Work may be temporary and limited in purpose. But when people acquire rights through it or its aim is lasting benefit, a good beginning does not remove the need to consider what follows. Long-term discipline looks ahead to when a founder's enthusiasm subsides, their ability changes, or they die.

No arrangement can guarantee survival. Circumstances may change, resources run out, and unforeseen events occur. We can take legitimate steps to preserve knowledge and rights and reduce dependence on one person's memory or mood. We then hope for Allah's acceptance and for the work to benefit others.

The text points to lasting benefit without certifying acceptance

«إذا مات الإنسان انقطع عنه عمله إلا من ثلاثة: إلا من صدقة جارية، أو علم ينتفع به، أو ولد صالح يدعو له»

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said.

Translation of the meaning: ‘When a person dies, their deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge from which benefit is gained, or a righteous child who prays for them.’³⁸

This draws attention to forms of benefit that outlast a lifetime. It does not guarantee that every project bearing the name of charity or knowledge will be accepted or endure. The purpose and the work must be sound, and their governing requirements observed.

Here we examine practical means: how can we preserve something whose benefit we hope will continue? We do not measure reward by the number of copies or beneficiaries, or judge sincerity by how long a project survives. Work reaching few may be great in Allah's sight, while something unsound may spread widely. Numbers reveal part of its use, not its standing in the unseen.

38 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Bequests, chapter on rewards that reach a person after death, hadith 1631.

Beneficial knowledge is more than an accumulation of files. It needs accuracy, clarity, access, and a way to know what supports it. A book with confused references may leave later readers having to verify everything afresh. Careful documentation is part of serving knowledge, not decoration added at the end.

An endowment as an example of preserving an asset and directing its benefit

«أصاب عمر أرضاً بخيبر، فأتى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يستأمره فيها، فقال: يا رسول الله، إني أصبت أرضاً بخيبر لم أصب مالا قط هو أنفس عندي منه، فما تأمرني به؟ قال: إن شئت حبست أصلها وتصدقت بها. قال: فتصدق بها عمر أنه لا يباع أصلها، ولا يبتاع، ولا يورث، ولا يوهب. قال: فتصدق عمر في الفقراء، وفي القربى، وفي الرقاب، وفي سبيل الله، وابن السبيل، والضيف، لا جناح على من وليها أن يأكل منها بالمعروف، أو يطعم صديقاً غير متمول فيه. قال: فحدثت بهذا الحديث محمداً، فلما بلغت هذا المكان: غير متمول فيه، قال محمد: غير متأثل مالا. قال ابن عون: وأنبأني من قرأ هذا الكتاب أن فيه: غير متأثل مالا»

Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported.

Translation of the meaning: ‘Umar acquired land at Khaybar and came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, to

ask what he should do with it. He said: “Messenger of Allah, I have acquired land at Khaybar, and I have never acquired property more precious to me. What do you instruct me to do with it?” He said: “If you wish, retain the property itself and give its benefit in charity.” He said: Umar gave it in charity on condition that the property itself would not be sold, bought, inherited, or given away. Umar gave its benefit to the poor, relatives, the freeing of slaves, the cause of Allah, travellers, and guests. There was no blame on whoever administered it for eating from it reasonably or feeding a friend, without treating it as a means of acquiring wealth. He said: I related this hadith to Muhammad, and when I reached “without treating it as a means of acquiring wealth”, Muhammad said: “without accumulating property from it.” Ibn Awn said: Someone who had read this document informed me that it contained the words “without accumulating property from it”.³⁹

This gives a clear basis for combining the aim of continuing benefit with provisions for protecting and administering it.

The chapter does not turn this report into an endowment deed ready for every country or asset. The rules of endowments, their conditions, changes in their benefits, and their supervision require learning and qualified advice. The point we need here is that lasting benefit rests on more than feeling. There is an asset

39 Abdullah ibn Umar; Sahih Muslim, Book of Bequests, chapter on endowments, hadith 1632a.

to preserve, a designated benefit, responsibility for administration, and limits on disposal.

One administrative application is to distinguish a project's money from its manager's money, and expenditure serving its purpose from expenditure serving the manager's image. Work may need fair wages, maintenance, and operating resources. Sustainability does not mean people working without their rights. Nor do administrative needs permit restricted funds to be spent on anything we find appealing.

Knowledge held by only one person can be lost

A founder may carry the whole method in their head: contacts, selection criteria, maintenance dates, reasons for exceptions, and passwords. When they are absent, others face results without knowing how they were produced. Telling them to follow the same approach is insufficient if that approach cannot be understood.

We suggest recording what a successor needs: the purpose, rights, resources, principal decisions, verification method, and matters that cannot be changed unilaterally. We do not seek an enormous archive nobody can use. A short, accurate, current document may help more than neglected volumes.

In scholarly work, distinguish the source, quoted text, inference, and example created for teaching. Those who follow should know what they can verify and what reflects an editorial choice.

Their trust in a project's name should not replace a clear route to checking its work.

Training a successor does not diminish your worth

Someone may keep an entire task to themselves because they fear becoming unnecessary if others learn it. Yet a good work they want to preserve requires some ability to pass to others. Delegation is not dropping an undefined burden on them. It begins with teaching, practice, and review, followed by authority that expands with competence.

One proposed way to pass on knowledge is to explain a real decision: what information was considered, what alternatives existed, and why one was rejected. The learner then has room to make a suitable decision, which both can review. They learn more than the movements of a procedure; they begin to understand the reasoning that can preserve its purpose when circumstances change.

A successor need not be a copy of the founder. Their style may differ while they remain faithful to the purpose and to people's rights. Treating every difference as betrayal is mistaken, as is using renewal to discard legitimate conditions or earlier commitments. We distinguish a lasting aim from a method open to improvement.

Continuity needs resources, not wishes alone

A project providing a regular benefit should know its cost and how it expects to meet it. This does not close the door to reliance on Allah or voluntary service. It means being honest about the commitments announced. Promising a permanent service without considering its resources can leave beneficiaries facing a disruption for which they were never prepared.

We suggest distinguishing the cost of starting from the cost of continuing. Buying equipment differs from maintaining it; producing material differs from updating it; opening a place differs from running it. Some projects look successful on launch day, then struggle with needs that went unmentioned because they were less exciting than the beginning.

When necessary, reducing activity should be a considered decision that protects what matters most, rather than a sudden collapse. A smaller project offering a sound benefit may be better than a broad promise it cannot fulfil. Reducing its size, however, does not erase the rights of staff, contractors, or beneficiaries whose entitlements have become established.

Reviewing benefit without abandoning the purpose

Educational material may remain in circulation after methods have changed or errors have come to light. Loyalty to its author does not require preserving a mistake out of respect for their name. We can retain the historical edition, explain the

correction, respect authorship and publishing rights, and offer readers something more accurate.

Nor should we attribute new ideas to a founder merely to keep their name in use. We identify what they produced, what we added, and what we changed. Honest continuity keeps the boundaries between generations clear, so that an earlier person's reputation does not become cover for a later person's judgement.

We suggest a review interval suited to how the work changes, rather than more meetings without results. Is the intended benefit still reaching people? Have any rights been neglected? Does a source or procedure need updating? What must be retained for comparison? These questions make an archive a means of learning rather than a store of forgotten material.

An imagined case: an educational library after its founder

A teacher creates a collection of learning materials and sends files from a personal computer. Only the teacher knows which version is current, and errors are corrected without a record. Students benefit for years. Then the teacher falls ill, different versions circulate, and volunteers cannot tell which one to use.

In the proposed arrangement, originals are gathered in an authorised location, with a clearly identified governing version, change log, and source records. Replacements require review, an earlier version is retained for recovery, and at least two people learn the limits of their authority and how to verify files.

Student information is not published within the archive, and access permissions remain limited to what is needed.

The team then distinguishes older material that remains useful from material needing an update, recording who made additions and their extent. These methods do not make the team incapable of error. They reduce dependence on an absent person's memory and make corrections traceable.

This is an educational illustration, not a report of a project that occurred in precisely these circumstances. It shows how discipline can serve a purpose extending beyond one person's day: preserving the original, attributing work honestly, teaching successors, reviewing benefit, and protecting rights.

When is a responsible ending better than survival in name alone?

Work may reach its goal, lose the means to continue, or impose costs on people's rights greater than its benefit. Preserving the name alone is not a virtue. Ending it still requires responsibility: settling commitments, informing those who depend on it, transferring what may legitimately be transferred to a trustworthy body, and retaining what must be kept under the applicable rules and conditions.

Someone administering an endowment or restricted funds cannot decide according to personal inclination merely because enthusiasm has faded. Their authority differs from that of the owner of an ordinary private project. They must know its limits

and refer matters beyond them to the competent authority. Discipline applies to stopping just as it applied to beginning.

Some lasting effects may lie outside the institution: a student who learnt to cite honestly, a worker who learnt to protect another's rights, or a child who saw an example of faithfulness. A life's effects cannot be reduced to what bears a person's name. We do what we can, hope Allah makes it beneficial, and cannot count every fruit.

A trust reaching people we have never seen

When we record information accurately, preserve money for its purpose, or teach someone how work is done, we address a future whose details we will not know. We cannot guarantee that future, but need not leave it at the mercy of neglect we can put right today.

This is a broad aspect of discipline: fulfilling a present right and leaving what we hope will benefit others in an honest, usable form. Wanting to leave an effect is not enough. We need patience in the work that keeps it sound, so that continuity remains faithfulness to the purpose rather than attachment to appearances.

Chapter Thirteen: Self-Regulation Is Not a Single Concept

When one word covers different tasks

At an imagined school meeting, one teacher describes a student as undisciplined because they forget their equipment. Another says the problem is interrupting classmates. A third adds that the student starts many projects without finishing them. These sound like one description, yet concern different tasks: remembering what is needed, stopping an impulsive response, and sustaining a goal over time. Each may require different teaching, even in the same child.

This is our starting point for reading psychological research on the subject. Translating every term into ‘discipline’ loses some precision. Searching for one word across hundreds of papers may bring together findings that do not measure the same thing, which we then mistake for repeated confirmation of a single idea.

We will not try to turn readers into specialists in psychological measurement. A few questions can protect against misunderstanding: what ability does the paper describe? How was it measured? How far is that measure from the activity we want to improve? These questions make reading a little slower, but richer and less vulnerable to misleading headlines.

A map of terms, not a list of exact synonyms

In this book, we use ‘self-regulation’ broadly when discussing how action is organised, directed, and reviewed in relation to a goal. We use ‘self-control’ when the question concerns inhibiting a response or managing a conflict between a desire and a chosen commitment. These definitions clarify our usage. They do not imply that all researchers agree on identical boundaries.

In Diamond's review, ‘executive functions’ are higher-level cognitive processes needed when automatic performance is insufficient. She describes three core components: inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. In some of its forms, the first involves resisting an inappropriate response; the second involves holding information in mind and working with it; the third involves changing perspective or approach when the situation requires it.⁴⁰

‘Habits’ concern repeated action, its relationship to context, and its degree of automaticity, which we discuss later.

‘Perseverance’ may concern sustaining effort towards a goal. A task measuring it need not resemble one measuring response inhibition. These terms can share a place in ordinary

40 Adele Diamond, ‘Executive Functions’, *Annual Review of Psychology* 64 (2013), pp. 135–168: definitions, inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility.

conversation, but combining their scores into one result requires evidence, not merely similar wording.

Ability is not action, and action is not its purpose

A person may be able to refrain from an immediate reply, then deliberately choose a harmful one. Another may be highly skilled at planning unlawful work. Both may possess an ability to regulate their behaviour, yet effective regulation alone is not uprightness. This follows from distinguishing means from ends; it is not an empirical judgement drawn from a psychological test.

Throughout this series, the standard of right and lawful conduct comes before the question of efficient execution. Execution itself then requires knowledge, skill, and ability. We therefore do not ask psychological concepts to carry the meanings of intention, divine acceptance, or reward. Those are not the variables measured by the tasks in these studies.

A student scoring highly on an attention test should not be told that they are more mindful of Allah than a classmate. Nor does an error on a cognitive task show less sincerity in worship. The ability studied may help learning and work, but its usefulness does not erase the distinction between describing performance and judging the heart.

What does it mean to hold information in mind and work with it?

Imagine a learner hearing four-step instructions. They may understand each step separately but lose the sequence when starting. Repeating the command more forcefully does not necessarily help them retain the order. In this example, we could write down or divide the steps, then see whether performance improves.

The example does not diagnose a working-memory difficulty or make a written list a universal treatment. It distinguishes not understanding what is required from struggling to retain its details, and lets evidence close to the task guide support. If clearer steps help the learner succeed, we have learnt that clarification helped in that setting, not discovered the secret of their whole personality.

External support does not always undermine independence. An employee using a checklist for a sensitive procedure may fulfil the task more faithfully than one who insists on relying on memory. In this organisational example, accurate performance is the aim; the means should suit the task and the risks of error.

Inhibiting a response does not erase a feeling

Someone may feel a strong urge to interrupt, buy something, or leave a demanding task. Noticing the urge does not mean acting on it, and resisting it does not mean it has vanished. This helps us distinguish feeling, decision, and the behaviour that reaches other people.

In an imagined family discussion, one person manages not to raise their voice but stops speaking altogether to avoid acknowledging a responsibility. One aspect has improved while another still needs repair. The aim is not merely a quieter outward response, but a sound response that preserves clarity, courtesy, and responsibility.

‘Calm’ is therefore not a sufficient description of a good interaction. Calmness may reflect self-control or avoidance of a necessary conversation. Volume alone cannot tell us which. We consider action in relation to its purpose, the rights involved, and the context, rather than expecting one indicator to answer every question.

Flexibility is not changing goals whenever they become demanding

A worker may need to change a method after discovering it is mistaken, or persist with a sound method that has not yet had enough time. These actions look opposite, but our judgement depends on the reason for changing. Flexibility is not always indecision, and persistence is not always wisdom.

We suggest recording what has changed in the information, resources, or requirements. A change based on a known reason can be reviewed. If the method changes whenever effort is required, the question is different. We praise neither flexibility nor persistence in the abstract; we ask which suits the situation.

When reading a review of executive functions, we should not turn the description of a cognitive process into a comprehensive judgement about life's decisions. Switching between the rules of an experimental task is not the same as changing a field of study, honouring a contract, or repenting of wrongdoing. A relationship may deserve investigation, but similar language does not establish equivalence.

What do comparisons between measures reveal?

Duckworth and Kern's review combined 282 samples with 33,564 participants to examine convergence among self-control measures. The pooled correlation under a random-effects model was about 0.27, with substantial differences between measures. Relationships involving executive-function tasks were generally weaker than some involving rating measures.⁴¹

The methodological lesson we draw is that shared terminology does not guarantee identical instruments. A questionnaire may ask about typical behaviour over several weeks, while a task tests brief performance in a controlled setting. Different results do not by themselves invalidate either measure or prove that one is more valid for every purpose.

When choosing a measure, ask what decision will rely on it. To find out whether assignment submission has improved, we can

41 Angela L. Duckworth and Margaret L. Kern, 'A Meta-Analysis of the Convergent Validity of Self-Control Measures', *Journal of Research in Personality* 45(3) (2011), pp. 259–268.

examine submission records, quality, and context. We need not begin with a general test and then try to extract an answer it was not designed to measure directly.

Self-reports and other people's accounts

When people describe themselves as always putting things off, their account matters for understanding their experience, but examples are needed. Which tasks, over what period? Do they postpone everything or one kind of work? Their overall impression may be accurate, or it may hide important differences between settings.

A teacher's or parent's account also needs context. We neither reject it because it is a judgement nor treat it as absolute fact because it comes from a responsible adult. We can ask about describable situations: how often were instructions clear? What opportunities were available? Did the requirements change during the task?

Suppose a student forgets laboratory equipment but remembers everything needed for their sports team. We should not immediately infer that the first omission is deliberate. We can examine differences in timing, lists, location, and reminders. They may have a skill in one setting without knowing how to transfer it to another. The contrast then becomes an opportunity for learning, not merely grounds for accusation.

When moral associations distort a research term

‘Conscientiousness’ is sometimes rendered in Arabic with words suggesting a ‘living conscience’. That wording can imply a judgement about honesty and religious commitment much broader than the instrument intends. We should read the scale's items and its authors' definition, rather than fill its name with our own moral associations and attribute them to the researchers.

Credé and colleagues' review finds a strong relationship between the research construct called ‘grit’ and conscientiousness, while distinguishing between components of grit. We return to its findings in the relevant chapter. Here the point is that related concepts may overlap, and a new name does not necessarily identify a new, independent ability.⁴²

Psychological research helps when it illuminates a specific aspect of behaviour. We misuse it when we turn it into a moral stamp: this person has a conscience; that person has none. A research score cannot support such a sweeping judgement, still less a judgement about intention or faith.

42 Marcus Credé, Michael C. Tynan, and Peter D. Harms, ‘Much Ado About Grit: A Meta-Analytic Synthesis of the Grit Literature’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 113(3) (2017), pp. 492–511.

An imagined case: three reasons for the same late report

Consider three employees who miss the same deadline. The first did not understand the required data format. The second understood but lacked access permission. The third had the data and chose to keep browsing instead of working. The outward result is similar, but repair does not begin in the same place.

The first needs explanation and learning, the second needs a system obstacle removed, and the third needs to examine their conduct and change how they use the available time. Other causes may exist or overlap, so the example cannot replace investigation of a real event. Its purpose is to make ‘poor organisation’ the beginning of a question rather than the end.

We then check what has changed close to the task. Can the first explain what is required? Has the second obtained access? Has the third begun at the agreed time? These questions concern identifiable changes, rather than an attempt to assign a single score to a person. Each can then learn what will help prevent recurrence.

From a concept to a modest, precise decision

When reading a new study, keep three levels separate: the concept's name, the instrument used to measure it, and the outcome associated with it. Then add a question from your own circumstances: what does this evidence allow me to conclude about the case I have in mind?

You may find encouraging evidence about a specific skill, try suitable teaching, and observe its effects. You may find a broad association insufficient to choose a particular programme. You may find no answer to your question. Recognising these differences does not diminish the value of research. It prevents us from taking an answer it never gave.

The discipline we need in reading research resembles the discipline we need at work: clarity about the task, honesty in carrying it out, awareness of limits, and willingness to correct mistakes. We do not need a new term for every difficulty. We need a more precise understanding that leads to fairer, more useful action.

Chapter Fourteen: What Can Longitudinal Studies Teach Us?

The child whose future we should not reduce to a score

Imagine a parent hearing that children with greater self-control tend to fare better in adulthood. The news may encourage them to teach and support their child. It may instead create anxiety that turns every movement into a prediction of the future. The difference begins with how the evidence is understood.

Longitudinal studies follow participants over time, allowing researchers to ask how an earlier measure relates to a later outcome. They do not turn an individual's life into a closed path or erase the teaching, resources, relationships, and decisions between beginning and end. We read them to identify what deserves attention, not to pass verdicts on children.

We introduced some of these studies earlier in the series to show why the question matters. Here we return to their design and the limits of applying their findings to education, so that the study's reputation does not exceed our understanding of what it actually found.

Dunedin: a long follow-up, not a sweet-waiting test

Moffitt and colleagues followed the Dunedin birth cohort in New Zealand, originally numbering 1,037, with about 96%

retained at age 32. Childhood self-control indicators came from several ages and sources, rather than one waiting task. Early self-control was associated with later health, financial, and criminal outcomes after accounting for intelligence and social background. The paper also examined 509 same-sex fraternal twin pairs in a British sample, relating an age-five measure to some age-twelve outcomes. That component was not another follow-up into adulthood.⁴³

The design has an important strength: it looks across years rather than relying on a person's description of themselves on one day. It does not prove that a particular training method causes all those outcomes, or that circumstances omitted from the model cease to matter.

We should separate two kinds of statement: 'This measure was associated with a later outcome in the sample', and 'This outcome will occur for this child'. The first describes a research relationship. The second predicts an individual life and requires information and precision a general summary cannot provide.

What does accounting for other variables add?

Consider a numerical example unrelated to any particular study's data. A researcher finds that students who revise regularly obtain higher marks. Regular revision may help, but

43 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), pp. 2693–2698.

these students may also have quieter places, more time, and stronger prior education. Including some of those variables in the analysis attempts to identify the relationship that remains after accounting for them.

This is valuable work, but depends on what was measured, how it was measured, and the model's assumptions. Reading 'after controlling for social background' is not enough to conclude that all social differences have disappeared. A family is more than an income figure, and previous learning is more than a single score capturing every experience.

Multiple influences are not, on the other hand, a reason to disregard individual behaviour. A skill can be useful and the environment can matter at the same time. A fair reading does not force a choice between people and their circumstances. It asks how each operates and what can improve.

Comparing siblings does not make their lives identical

Comparisons between people sharing aspects of family life can reduce some sources of confusion. Sharing a home does not make siblings' experiences identical: friends, treatment, illness, and opportunities may differ, and their differences may themselves influence adults' responses.

In the paper discussing Dunedin, the British twin design contributes additional evidence, but its findings must not be extended to ages they did not cover. We say that relationships

appeared in specified outcomes up to age twelve in that part of the study. We do not merge them with the age-thirty-two findings as if the two groups had followed the same course.⁴⁴

Such precision protects the research's value. A finding need not be exaggerated to deserve attention. Educators benefit from knowing that an ability deserves teaching and support, not from believing one paper provides a complete map of a child's life.

The marshmallow test: a question smaller than its fame

In 2018, Watts, Duncan, and Quan re-examined the relationship between delaying gratification in childhood and some later outcomes. The analyses included 918 children and focused on 552 whose mothers did not have a university degree. Waiting was measured at 54 months using a task capped at seven minutes. Associations with achievement became much weaker after early family and cognitive characteristics were included, and strong behavioural relationships did not emerge in the outcomes examined. Distinguishing children who waited only a very short time from those who waited longer mattered to interpreting the association; the finding was not simply about adding successive minutes.⁴⁵

44 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), pp. 2693–2698.

This does not mean patience is useless or that an experiment proved teaching children to wait is harmful. It re-examines a particular relationship within a specific sample, task, and measurement range. The sample does not represent all children, and the task alone cannot describe everything called self-control.

The lesson is not to move from celebrating the test to mocking it. A research task may help answer a limited question, then be misused in popular accounts as a test of a child's future or the quality of their upbringing.

What should we make of a test's ceiling?

When a test stops at a set limit, it cannot reveal differences beyond that limit among those who reach it. Some may be able to wait longer, but receive the same recorded result. This is a property of the instrument, not a shortcoming in the children.

Consider a simpler imagined example. If a group receives ten easy problems and most answer all ten correctly, the test may identify those needing initial help but be unsuitable for ranking higher levels of mastery. Participants are not to blame for the instrument's inability to distinguish them.

45 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) (2018), pp. 1159–1177.

We therefore ask about a measure's range before interpreting an association. An instrument may suit one age or purpose and lack sensitivity for another. Readers need not replace researchers; they should simply avoid assigning a test a role beyond its design.

A person who changed is not a randomised experiment

A longitudinal study may observe that people whose scores improve with age also improve on some outcomes. This matters, but does not turn the improvement into a randomised intervention. Schooling, family circumstances, illness, or resources may have changed alongside it, and reciprocal influences may affect both the measure and the outcome.

We should not turn an association between change and outcome into an advertisement for our programme: increase your score with these exercises and every life prospect will improve. A proposed programme needs its own testing, suitable indicators, and a comparison that can help estimate its actual effects.

The practical volume stays with what readers can observe in their conduct and plans. More consistent submission of work is valuable progress in that area. We do not need to attribute to it automatic protection from every health or financial outcome mentioned in a large study.

A later paper may follow the same people

When gathering references, we may find a paper on outcomes at thirty-two and another on middle age, and think they provide independent evidence from two groups. Some papers, however, follow the same cohort to a new age. Richmond-Rakerd and colleagues' follow-up of the Dunedin cohort to age forty-five is an example.⁴⁶

This does not diminish the follow-up's value: it adds knowledge about the course over time. It changes how evidence is counted and how its independence is understood. We should not say that two independent groups reached the same result when the participants belong to one cohort, or count every new analysis as an independent experiment.

Careful research records therefore include the cohort name, country, and measurement period alongside author and year. With several papers, ask whether the people changed, the question changed, or the follow-up lengthened. Each can contribute something useful, but not the same kind of contribution.

46 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) (2021), article e2010211118.

Poverty and illness are not moral scores

An association between an early ability and a financial or health outcome cannot be reversed into a judgement about someone with that outcome: poor, therefore lacking self-control; ill, therefore negligent as a child. The statistical relationship does not support such reasoning. It disregards different causes, trials, and circumstances.

Nor should teaching self-regulation replace improvements in education, care, and the removal of obstacles. If a family lacks a safe place to sleep or a stable routine because of work, more blame will not create those resources. Educators can teach appropriate skills while also seeking to improve the environment.

People should be held responsible in their actual circumstances for what they know and can do, rather than burdened with an imagined history constructed from a general finding.

Knowledge that helps prevention should make our judgement more precise and compassionate, not give us new language for shaming others.

An imagined case: a school deciding who deserves support

A school proposes offering an additional programme to students with the highest waiting scores, arguing that they are most able to benefit. A measure has become a gate excluding those who may need support most. An association is insufficient to justify that decision.

Instead, the school could define the target skill and barriers to learning it, offer basic support to everyone, and provide more help according to need and performance close to the task. It can observe whether a student learns to organise materials, begin a task, or ask for clarification, while protecting them from a permanent label.

If the school wants to evaluate its programme, it should define the question, comparison, duration, and privacy arrangements. Students' scores must not be presented as moral rankings. These steps remain a proposal needing evaluation in the school that uses them.

What remains within parents' and teachers' reach?

There is work we can do without predicting the future: give clear instructions, provide opportunities to practise, correct fairly, notice obstacles, and encourage a return after mistakes. We need not know every adult outcome to do these things better today.

Longitudinal research retains a useful role. It broadens education's horizon, directs attention to factors that may relate to distant benefits, and exposes exaggerated interpretations of one test. It helps when we respect its design; we undermine it when we turn it into an infallible judgement about an individual.

A child is not a score awaiting its result thirty years later. A child is a person learning now, entitled to education, care, and

another opportunity. We hope discipline will help them fulfil their responsibilities and use their abilities well, rather than become a name for anxiety surrounding them on every side.

Chapter Fifteen: Habits, Planning, and Monitoring

Three tools that do not replace one another

Someone may make a good plan without beginning. Another may start repeatedly until beginning becomes familiar, then stop at a new difficulty. Another may keep an attractive record without improving the work recorded. These situations invite us to distinguish planning, habit, and monitoring instead of combining them into a single recipe called organising life.

As used here, planning specifies an action and its setting and prepares for obstacles. Habit concerns the ease and automaticity that repeated action acquires in a known context. Monitoring returns to what happened to inform the next decision. These tools can support one another, but are not identical. None can create a sound purpose or an ability that does not exist.

The practical volume offers examples of these methods. This chapter examines the grounds for using them and the limits of the evidence, so that we do not claim research has tested every detail of our own training design.

An easier beginning is not the whole of learning

Imagine a reader who now opens a book each evening with little effort. That is a useful beginning. But a new book is harder, and the reader passes over pages without understanding. Treating

opening the book as complete success preserves the appearance of the work while losing part of its purpose.

We can distinguish a habit of beginning from the quality of what follows. The first needs a reliable setting to return to; the second needs questions, explanation, review, and perhaps material at a different level. Sitting down does not produce understanding merely because it has become easy.

We therefore suggest looking for evidence of learning alongside regular attendance. Can the learner explain the idea, identify what is unclear, or correct a mistake? These are not standardised measures. They are questions close to the purpose, helping keep the method from taking its place.

Habits do not all appear on the same day

Lally and colleagues followed repetition of a chosen behaviour in a daily context for about twelve weeks, then modelled changes in automaticity. Estimates differed greatly between participants. Some often-quoted durations are estimates derived from the curve, not periods observed in full. A widely repeated number of days is therefore no guaranteed deadline for every action to become habitual.⁴⁷

47 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) (2010), pp. 998–1009; first published online in 2009.

Singh and colleagues' 2024 review brought together twenty studies of health habits involving 2,601 participants. Eleven studies were rated at high risk of bias. Only four reported mean or median time to habit formation, with wide variation. The review also analysed changes in habit scores before and after intervention. A pooled increase alone should not be treated as a clean causal estimate for each intervention component.⁴⁸

The practical conclusion we choose is to abandon the magic deadline, not replace it with a longer magic number. We can review a particular behaviour over a suitable period and adjust obstacles without accusing someone of failure for not matching a popular figure.

What does a habit score mean?

A measure may ask how automatic an action feels, while a record may count how often it occurred. Increased repetition is not necessarily increased automaticity, and neither equals good performance or a sound purpose. Before using a finding, we need to know what changed in the measure itself.

A student might record daily revision while rereading the same line without testing understanding. Repetition exists, and sitting down may have become familiar, but the intended learning

48 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) (2024), article 2488.

needs other evidence. We do not reject the record. We recognise its proper place and add the missing question.

This distinction matters still more in worship. Regular remembrance or attendance at prayer is an outward practice deserving care, but cannot replace learning the correct form or attending to meaning. A tracking sheet does not measure sincerity, humility in prayer, or divine acceptance.

A plan tied to a recognisable situation

Research on ‘implementation intentions’ examines linking an anticipated situation to a specific response. Here we refer to Sheeran, Listrom, and Gollwitzer's review of 642 tests of this kind of planning. We do not conclude that every ‘if this happens, I will do that’ statement helps regardless of content or context.⁴⁹

Consider an example from work: ‘When I receive a new task, I will check the requirements, deadline, and resources before confirming acceptance.’ It connects a cue with an action close to a likely cause of difficulty. ‘When my life becomes peaceful, I will become committed’ identifies neither a clear situation nor a beginning that can be reviewed.

49 Paschal Sheeran, Olivia Listrom, and Peter M. Gollwitzer, ‘The When and How of Planning: Meta-Analysis of the Scope and Components of Implementation Intentions in 642 Tests’, *European Review of Social Psychology* 36(1) (2025), pp. 162–194; first published online 27 March 2024.

A plan may be precise yet impossible to carry out. Someone may tie an action to a tool they do not have or a time that conflicts daily with a prior duty. We should examine ability and resources before polishing the wording. Good phrasing cannot replace the possibility of action.

A fallback is not permission to discard a duty

Personal planning may include a shorter alternative for an optional project on a disrupted day. A deadline involving someone else's right is not ours alone to change. Deciding privately that delivery may be delayed whenever we are busy is insufficient. We need to honour the commitment, communicate, and obtain agreement where required.

Nor do we change the time or form of worship through a personal organisational choice. We learn the relevant ruling and concession, then make planning serve correct performance.

We might shorten an optional learning session while preserving its benefit, or arrange preparation for a binding appointment in advance. Both adjust the means. Neither gives us authority to remove an obligation we have no right to remove.

Monitoring that changes decisions rather than multiplies boxes

Harkin and colleagues' review included 138 randomised studies of adults. Interventions increasing progress monitoring produced a pooled standardised effect of 0.40 on goal attainment—not a 40% increase in success. Health-related

domains predominated. In a sensitivity analysis addressing publication bias, the goal-attainment estimate fell to 0.19, with the authors discussing limitations of that adjustment in heterogeneous data. Analyses of some intervention features also did not randomly isolate each feature from the others.⁵⁰

These findings support taking monitoring seriously, but not applying one effect to every act of worship, family programme, or institution. Nor do comparisons favouring reported progress make sharing a record obligatory. Sharing requires a separate judgement about privacy, purpose, and rights.

Our design does not collect data for its own sake. If recording changes no understanding, decision, or timing of help, its value can be questioned. A short sheet actually used may help more than a large dashboard whose owner mainly admires its appearance.

Before-and-after comparisons are insufficient on their own

Suppose a family starts a morning-preparation record during a quiet week and gets out more smoothly than during the previous week of illness and visitors. It cannot attribute all improvement to the record: other circumstances changed. It can still say the

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

plan was used, identify what seemed helpful, and continue reviewing.

This does not ask every household to become a laboratory. It asks that words fit evidence. ‘Our performance improved during the period when we used this arrangement’ is narrower and more accurate than ‘We proved this method works for every family.’

When evaluating a programme for widespread recommendation, suitable comparison, a predefined outcome, and attention to harms, withdrawal, and differences between participants become more important. Broader claims need broader evidence.

Why can we not add effect sizes as though they were profits?

It may be tempting to add a figure from habit research to another from planning research and a third from monitoring, then claim to know the effect of combining all three. That is incorrect. The figures come from different measures, settings, and comparisons, and the methods may already overlap within studies.

Consider an imagined example: arranging tools improves starting work, and a reminder also improves the same beginning. Combining them need not produce the sum of their separate effects. Both may address the same difficulty, or their combination may add unnecessary burden.

We should say that a programme combines methods with varying evidence, then test the combination where possible. We must not borrow an unmeasured numerical outcome for it. Distinguishing evidence for a component from evidence for the whole programme protects honest design.

An imagined case: a record of honesty rather than perfection

A translator wants to meet deadlines more reliably. In the first week, five tasks are recorded: three were delivered complete, one arrived on time but needed substantial correction, and one was late because approval had not been requested early enough. Writing ‘80% completed’ would hide differences in quality and the cause of delay.

We suggest separating complete, timely delivery from work needing reworking and work blocked by an earlier omission. The translator then makes a specific change: request approval at the start of a task and check quality before sending it.

In the next cycle, one aspect may improve while another remains difficult. The translator does not erase the record to create a cleaner picture, or add so many indicators that the task disappears among them. What do these events teach? Which decision is mine to change? Who needs early warning if a commitment cannot be met?

Privacy is part of good monitoring

A shared report may suit a team whose members depend on one another. That does not permit gathering every detail of a worker's or child's life. Requested data should relate to the purpose, be retained only as needed for the work, and come with clarity about who can see it and why.

In personal worship, support should not become an excuse to disclose what is better kept private or create competition over numbers. People can ask for help arranging time or learning a ruling without exposing their spiritual record to everyone.

We also suggest reducing monitoring when practice becomes established and detailed records become less useful. The aim is learning, not permanent dependence on a dense schedule. If a difficulty returns, useful observation can resume without treating that return as defeat.

Tools that support fulfilment and still need review

Habits, planning, and monitoring meet in serving a defined activity. We choose what addresses a real need, protect the activity's purpose and the rights of those affected, and leave aside what has become a burden without benefit. Fulfilling a duty may require resisting a desire, repairing the environment, learning a skill, or asking for help.

The aim is not to make everything automatic. Some activities benefit from conscious presence and renewed reflection. We want starting to become easier where possible, good

performance to remain important, and return after a mistake to become more accessible and honest. That practical aim deserves effort without a promise that one tool can put all of life right.

Chapter Sixteen: Perseverance, Waning Enthusiasm, and Procrastination

Staying on the path rather than staying with an error

In an imagined educational example, a learner spends months trying to master a skill through a method unsuited to their level. Each difficulty leads to more hours of effort, while returning to simpler foundations feels like weak perseverance. The effort is real, but continuing has become the goal instead of a means to learning.

Another learner changes projects whenever reaching the part that demands patience. Each change has an attractive explanation, yet no attempt receives enough time. The two do not need identical advice. The first needs to review the method; the second needs honesty about enduring the work they chose.

This distinction protects the meaning of perseverance. It is not a virtue independent of purpose, lawfulness, and ability, or a name for refusing correction. The patience explored throughout the series concerns holding oneself to what is right, not merely keeping effort visible.

Grit is a research concept, not the whole meaning of patience

Some psychological research uses ‘grit’ to describe perseverance and passion for long-term goals, measuring aspects such as sustained effort and consistency of interests. That definition does not encompass all the meanings of patience, practising patience, and striving against the self in Islamic texts. Someone may patiently fulfil a duty never chosen as a personal long-term project, or rightly turn from an unlawful desire towards obedience.

Credé and colleagues' review combined 584 effect sizes from 88 independent samples involving 66,807 people. The proposed higher-order structure of the construct was not confirmed. Its relationships with performance and retention were moderate, and overlap with conscientiousness was very strong.

Perseverance of effort related more strongly to some outcomes than consistency of interests. This review concerns relationships among variables; it is not a direct experiment proving that every perseverance intervention fails.⁵¹

The lesson is not to remove perseverance from education. It is to avoid promising that it is the sole key to success or a wholly

51 Marcus Credé, Michael C. Tynan, and Peter D. Harms, ‘Much Ado About Grit: A Meta-Analytic Synthesis of the Grit Literature’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 113(3) (2017), pp. 492–511.

new ability separate from what researchers had already studied. We need to teach well-directed effort and recognise when stable interests serve a purpose and when they should change.

Changing an interest can be a mature decision

Someone may begin a field of study, then discover through learning and advice that their abilities and needs point towards a more useful path. Changing need not show inability to remain committed. Someone else may flee every path at the first difficulty. Information, time allowed, the kind of obstacle, and existing obligations distinguish the cases—not the fact of change alone.

We suggest considering what has been learnt about the task, what has changed in ability or circumstances, and what costs the decision places on others. These questions make revision an understandable responsibility, rather than an impulse or a prison built in the name of commitment.

Where a religious duty or an established right is involved, flexibility in personal goals does not authorise abandoning it. People should learn what is required and, when necessary, change the lawful means of fulfilling it. Choosing a project differs from honouring a duty or a trust.

Waning enthusiasm does not always mean lost meaning

Excitement may settle as work becomes familiar. A quieter feeling does not necessarily mean the aim has lost its value. We

can renew our intention and continue what is beneficial instead of waiting for the emotion that accompanied the beginning.

Waning enthusiasm may also signal an unsuitable arrangement: too much work, an unhelpful method, neglected responsibilities elsewhere, or a legitimate need for rest. We neither praise enduring fatigue without qualification nor treat every tired moment as a reason to withdraw. We examine what recurs and what can be repaired.

As in earlier applications, the quality of action remains important. A student spending hours in front of a book without understanding or asking questions does not necessarily need more hours. They may need the courage to acknowledge confusion and return to a teacher.

Naming procrastination does not choose its remedy

Late work may involve voluntary delay despite expected harm, inability to start without information or a tool, or competing obligations that exceed the available time. An unfinished result does not make these situations equivalent.

In one imagined example, a researcher delays sending a draft because they do not want anyone to see mistakes. In another, necessary approval has not arrived. The first may need a clear agreement about a draft open to correction; the second may need follow-up and an appropriate route for escalating the

request. More general exhortation does not address that difference.

This does not excuse us from responsibility. A person may understand a cause and use that understanding as a permanent excuse. They need to move from describing the cause to taking suitable action, then check whether the action happened. A good explanation of delay is not enough.

What do procrastination intervention trials show?

Rozental and colleagues' 2018 review included twelve randomised studies of psychological interventions for procrastination, involving 718 participants and twenty-one comparisons with inactive controls. The pooled effect was 0.34, with relatively high heterogeneity. The initial cognitive-behavioural subgroup estimate was 0.35, with a confidence interval crossing zero. Removing one small study in a sensitivity analysis raised the estimate to 0.55, so the latter should not be presented as the only finding. Student samples and self-reports predominated, and long-term follow-up was limited.⁵²

The findings allow reasonable hope for some interventions, not a guarantee that a general exercise will resolve every kind of

52 Alexander Rozental et al., 'Targeting Procrastination Using Psychological Treatments: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis', *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018), article 1588: methods, results, discussion, and limitations.

delay. Comparing an intervention with no intervention also differs from comparing it with another active programme offering similar time and attention.

This chapter offers neither individual psychological treatment nor a diagnosis based on the word procrastination. When persistent, serious difficulty disrupts life, seeking suitable assessment and support does not betray the effort to improve oneself. Individual causes require understanding a general book cannot provide.

Why does the comparison matter?

Consider an illustration: one group receives lessons, follow-up, and weekly contact, while another waits without support. If the first improves, we need to ask what helped: the particular content, attention, practice, or their combination? The difference matters, but interpreting it requires care.

Comparison with another active method may show a smaller or different effect. That does not make the first method useless. The question has changed from whether providing support helps to whether this support is better than a suitable alternative.

A large number of trials therefore does not remove the need to examine them. We consider who participated, what they received, what was measured and when, and who was lost to follow-up. These questions protect readers' right to a recommendation that makes its conditions clear.

A demanding exercise does not prove general strength

The idea of strengthening willpower through an unpleasant daily task can be appealing. Yet Friese and colleagues' review, discussed earlier, found a small effect of self-control training, with estimates changing after bias adjustments and according to the comparison group. Such evidence is insufficient to promise that enduring an invented hardship will solve every problem.⁵³

Our design favours practice within a useful task a person actually needs: completing a review, regulating a response, or following steps that protect a trust. We do not need dehydration, sleep deprivation, or bodily harm to find opportunities to practise patience. Daily responsibilities provide enough.

Success in one task does not establish automatic transfer to every other task. Better email management may leave a person still needing to learn to listen at home. We value specific progress and then build a connection to other settings, rather than assign it a sweeping label ahead of the evidence.

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

An imagined case: a draft that never leaves the computer

A researcher delays sending a chapter because she wants it free of every flaw. Each week she adds a source and rewrites the introduction, while the intended reader sees nothing. She and her supervisor agree on a first version with a defined purpose: show the argument and the order of the evidence, while identifying areas still needing work.

The deadline now concerns a defined output rather than an inward feeling of perfection. She separates review of the reasoning from language and layout, instead of restarting at the first page each time.

Review shows that part of the delay arose from wanting reassurance about how she would appear to others, and part from a genuine gap in a source. The two receive different responses: accepting a revisable draft for the first, targeted reading for the second. Work remains, but it is now defined and manageable.

Firmness that leaves a way back

A person may succeed for a week and then falter. If a plan succeeds only when there is no mistake at all, the first error becomes a reason to destroy it. Our design instead provides a way to repair what was missed and resume, without erasing rights or polishing the record.

Returning does not mean lowering requirements whenever they become difficult. A duty may remain unchanged while preparation, support, or the order of steps changes. In an optional project, adjustment may mean reducing an unrealistic amount. We name the change and its reason rather than place every alteration under the word gentleness.

Firmness must not become humiliation. A person can more readily correct a specific event they understand than respond to a judgement covering their whole personality. Describe the delay, its effects, and what repair requires, then leave the way to action open.

Well-directed effort means more than effort that lasts

Perseverance can mean patiently receiving correction, returning to a foundation not yet mastered, or giving another person's right priority over one's desire for personal achievement. These may look less dramatic than staying up all night, but are closer to the purpose we seek.

We need resolve that does not turn every obstacle into an excuse, and discernment that prevents blind persistence. Honest monitoring helps bring them together: what happened, what have I learnt, which obligation remains, and what should I do next? Strong desire is insufficient, and extensive analysis cannot replace action.

When patience serves what is right, review serves the work, and returning means repair rather than staging another fresh start, discipline moves beyond appearances towards a life others can rely on. We hope for this fruit of perseverance without making it the sole explanation of every success or failure.

Chapter Seventeen: Research on Worship among Muslims

A research question does not encompass the meaning of worship

We read research on worship with two connected aims: to learn from the effects it can observe, and to preserve the meaning of worship beyond a psychological or health indicator. The prescribed status of prayer, fasting, and Hajj does not depend on a test result. Nor does every desirable effect become an independent legal basis for changing a religious ruling.

Research may examine response speed in a computer task, changes in religious practice after Hajj, or sleepiness at a particular time of day. Such questions can illuminate part of an experience. They do not measure divine acceptance or a person's mindfulness of Allah. The distance between these questions must remain clear throughout our reading.

These studies ask different questions and use different designs. We will consider examples concerning Ramadan and Hajj to understand what they add to knowledge of practice and what remains beyond their scope.

Why is comparing people who fast with those who do not insufficient?

Two groups may differ in fasting and also in sleep, work, meals, relationships, and motivation. A difference on a test cannot

automatically be attributed to abstaining from food alone. We need to know what the design attempted to account for and what remained unresolved.

Comparing people with themselves before and after Ramadan reduces some stable differences between individuals, but does not stop time passing, daily routines changing, or repeated testing having an effect. This is a general methodological observation about the comparison, not an accusation that any particular study ignored every factor.

We should also define fasting as described in the research: a religious practice with prescribed times and boundaries, within a social life that may change during the month. It is not automatically equivalent to every health programme called intermittent fasting. Findings about one should not be transferred to another without explanation.

A study of improvement across the month

A study by Salari Rad, published online in 2025, compared 173 Ramadan-fasting participants with a comparison group of 222, using inhibitory-control tests before, during, and after Ramadan. The abstract reported faster and more accurate responses, with larger gains for those fasting on some indicators and variation

associated with perceived self-control. The durability of the effect remained unresolved.⁵⁴

The finding raises a worthwhile research question and provides an indication that should not be dismissed. It does not establish that fasting created a general ability transferring to every action. Having a comparison group does not, by itself, mean people were randomly assigned to fast.

Our proposed educational application is to draw on attending to the times and boundaries of worship when reviewing a specific behaviour, then examine that behaviour itself. We do not need to claim automatic transfer before choosing honesty, fulfilling a promise, or refraining from harm in the next situation.

A study of a temporary cost in a particular setting

Rad, Ansarinia, and Shafir used repeated measurements with 190 people fasting in a study published in a 2023 journal issue after appearing online in 2022. The abstract reported that making food salient was associated with slower and less accurate performance on a cognitive-control task during Ramadan compared with afterwards, with differences related to the time since the last meal.⁵⁵

54 Mostafa Salari Rad, ‘Self-Deprivation and Cognition in Ramadan: Could Fasting Practice Improve Inhibitory Control?’, *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 16(3) (2026), pp. 234–259; first published online 16 June 2025.

This does not show that fasting is generally harmful, or necessarily contradict every finding of gains over a longer period. The question, timing, task, and circumstances may differ. Those details matter before announcing that science has proved fasting strengthens willpower—or the opposite.

Acknowledging a possible temporary cost does not diminish worship. Beneficial activities can involve difficulty at one time and bear fruit in another way. That general observation still does not excuse us from checking each specific claim or permit inventing explanations for what was not measured.

Sleepiness and response time

BaHammam and colleagues' 2013 paper studied eight healthy young men across non-fasting, fasting outside Ramadan, and Ramadan-fasting periods. It monitored sleep, controlled aspects of laboratory lighting and meals, and assessed sleepiness and response time in the morning and afternoon. No statistically significant differences appeared in the specified measures. The sample was small, however; the sequence of periods was not fully randomised; meals at home were unrestricted; and working hours changed during Ramadan. The finding therefore does not

55 Mostafa Salari Rad, Morteza Ansarinia, and Eldar Shafir, 'Temporary Self-Deprivation Can Impair Cognitive Control: Evidence From the Ramadan Fast', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 49(3) (2023), pp. 415–428; PubMed abstract.

prove complete equivalence or apply automatically to patients or other age groups.⁵⁶

The study is useful because it examines some surrounding factors instead of stopping at the word fasting.

The methodological lesson we draw is that no significant difference in a small sample is not proof that no difference is possible. A difference observed in another setting also needs to be read in that setting, rather than automatically rejected by appeal to this paper.

Three findings cannot be reduced to a vote

The examples examine improvement across phases of the month, a cost when food is made salient, and sleepiness and response measures under partly controlled conditions. We should not count them as votes: two studies for fasting, one against. They did not ask the same question or measure worship in the full educational sense intended here.

When comparing studies, we suggest recording the task, timing, sample, and comparison before the result. With these visible,

56 Ahmed S. BaHammam, Samar Nashwan, Omeima Hammad, Munir M. Sharif, and Seithikurippu R. Pandi-Perumal, ‘Objective Assessment of Drowsiness and Reaction Time During Intermittent Ramadan Fasting in Young Men: A Case-Crossover Study’, *Behavioral and Brain Functions* 9 (2013), article 32: methods, results, discussion, and conclusion.

some apparent contradictions become understandable and remaining questions can stay open. We should not fill gaps with an attractive explanation and attribute it to the researchers.

This approach also helps public communication. We neither select only supportive findings to strengthen an exhortation nor only contrary findings to weaken trust in worship. Evidence is presented within its limits, with our educational inference kept distinct.

Hajj: a design using the visa lottery

Clingingsmith, Khwaja, and Kremer's study compared applicants who succeeded in Pakistan's Hajj visa lottery with those who did not. Its published 2009 abstract reported increases in some Islamic practices, including prayer and fasting, and changes in attitudes towards other groups after Hajj.⁵⁷

This differs from simply asking a group of pilgrims whether they benefited: the lottery provides a basis for comparison deserving closer study. Yet the abstract does not establish that every change in every pilgrim was caused by one aspect of the journey. Attitude measures do not judge the soundness of a pilgrim's beliefs or the acceptance of their Hajj.

57 David Clingingsmith, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Michael Kremer, 'Estimating the Impact of the Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam's Global Gathering', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124(3) (2009), pp. 1133–1170.

For our subject, the study opens a useful possibility: research on worship need not be confined to the body or computer tasks. It can ask about sustained practice or changes in dealings with others. Variables still need precise definitions, and social description must remain distinct from theological and religious judgements.

An effect on dealings needs evidence from those dealings

To investigate punctuality after an educational programme connected with prayer, measuring button-press speed or a general feeling of improvement is insufficient. We should examine the appointments themselves, the quality of what those entitled receive, and what happens when duties conflict or a valid excuse arises.

To understand an effect of fasting on speech, completing the hours of fasting alone cannot establish every kind of verbal conduct. Suitable observation must respect privacy, define the situation, and avoid turning assessment into spying or competition in appearing righteous.

This preserves the connection between claim and evidence: we examine what we say improved, rather than borrow a result closer to another subject merely because worship appears in its title.

An imagined case: a team working during Ramadan

A service team notices more errors in some handovers on certain days. One manager blames fasting; another says a fasting person should not make mistakes. Neither statement is enough. The team can begin by examining when and what errors occur, shift arrangements, instruction quality, and workload.

In the example, some handovers lack a complete account of what has been done, and a lengthy meeting has moved close to closing time. The team changes the handover process and meeting time, then monitors service quality. It need not judge employees' worship to repair a clear procedural problem.

If fatigue or a real safety risk emerges in sensitive work, employees should not be asked to conceal it to prove faith or discipline. Safety, health needs, and religious rulings belong with the appropriate qualified authorities. Organisation should serve people's rights, not become a harmful test of the self.

Do not invent a mechanism the study did not measure

A discussion section may propose a biological or psychological explanation, which a popular summary then presents as directly established in the participants. We must ask whether the variable was measured in the study or offered as a possible explanation informed by other research.

Our examples do not require an all-encompassing account of the brain to understand their limits. We need to know what was measured, when, and against what comparison. Mechanisms not tested in that sample remain research possibilities and should not enter an exhortation as certainties.

Nor should we confuse animal findings with human experiments, prolonged deprivation with prescribed fasting times, or a momentary feeling with behaviour sustained for months. These are boundaries on comparison, not a rejection of learning from different sciences.

Building a programme without borrowing certainty

We can propose training that draws on the recurrence of worship to practise preparation, attention to time, and returning after difficulty, while keeping worship and its rulings independent of the programme. We then acknowledge that the training sequence, duration, and indicators are authorial choices needing evaluation, not new religious prescriptions or proven outcomes for the whole package.

We do not postpone a duty to establish a baseline, ask someone to abandon worship to create a personal comparison group, or intensify deprivation to increase a ‘dose of discipline’. Lawfulness and safety come before admiration for an experimental design.

Legitimate evaluation can examine teaching, reminders, or preparation and their immediate effects, with necessary permissions and privacy protection. Improving conduct remains a useful aim, not a route to claiming measurement of the heart.

Research that deepens understanding and worship that does not await applause

These studies call for more precise questions, not larger slogans. They may reveal a limited effect, differences between circumstances, or insufficient evidence. Each can help readers who distinguish description, explanation, and judgement.

Muslims remain commanded to worship in the prescribed way and protect people's rights while fasting, praying, travelling, or at home. We hope research can improve teaching, remove obstacles, and assess methods. It should not reduce worship to a contest in reaction times or a psychological recipe that diminishes its purpose.

Keeping these levels distinct allows reverence for worship and honesty in research to stand together. We do not reject a result because it differs from our expectations or give a limited result authority over matters it never studied. We worship Allah with understanding, read research with evidence, and work for good effects where they actually belong.

Chapter Eighteen: Contemporary Educational Approaches

Do not buy a name in place of teaching

In an imagined example, a family visits three schools. One speaks of Montessori, another of social and emotional learning, and a third of positive behavioural support. The names carry different promises, but the family wants to know what will happen to their child: what will they learn, how will mistakes be corrected, and what will the school do when its method struggles?

The name alone cannot answer. Behind it may be a complete programme, a framework guiding practice, or a single borrowed activity. A successful application in one study does not establish that every institution using its name implements it in the same way. We therefore read the definition from those responsible for the approach and the evidence of effects in studies, keeping the two distinct.

This chapter selects three prominent examples to teach a useful method of comparison, not to rank every educational approach in the world. Lawfulness, rights, and dignity remain part of our judgement. Benefiting from an educational method does not mean automatically adopting its entire intellectual background.

Montessori: a prepared environment and an adult who understands their role

Association Montessori Internationale describes core elements including a prepared adult who understands the developmental stage, an organised environment suited to it, mixed-age groups, and activities supporting independence and responsibility. Its account of the environment emphasises ordered, accessible materials and room for choice within shared life. This is the approach's own institutional definition, not an independent effectiveness study.⁵⁸

It raises useful questions: can children reach the materials we ask them to use? Do we teach the method and then offer a genuine opportunity? Do they understand how their actions affect others? Educators can benefit from such questions without claiming to implement the whole Montessori approach at home.

Independence does not mean leaving a child without boundaries or protection. Educational choice varies with age, ability, risk, and rights. In our Islamic understanding, a child's choice does not authorise abandoning necessary teaching or safeguards for their safety and other people's rights.

58 Association Montessori Internationale, 'Montessori Programmes' and 'The Prepared Environment': official programme and environment descriptions.

What did the Montessori review find?

Randolph and colleagues' 2023 review included thirty-two studies comparing Montessori with conventional education, requiring evidence of baseline equivalence or adjustment for differences. Pooled effects were about 0.24 for academic and 0.33 for non-academic outcomes, with evidence quality varying by outcome. Only six studies used random assignment, and some reports came from one earlier study. Searches covered literature through February 2020. Some authors disclosed professional or personal Montessori connections; that information belongs alongside scrutiny of the methods, rather than automatically invalidating the results.⁵⁹

We conclude that encouraging evidence deserves consideration and that implementation, comparison, and the outcome measured matter. An average does not make every Montessori school better than every other school. Nor does it separately establish the effect of furniture, materials, or freedom to choose.

Social and emotional learning: what does the framework mean?

The CASEL framework presents five areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and

59 Justus J. Randolph et al., 'Montessori Education's Impact on Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: A Systematic Review', Campbell Systematic Reviews 19 (2023), article e1330: inclusion criteria, methods, results, discussion, and disclosures.

responsible decision-making. It connects learning across classroom, school, family, and community, stressing practice of defined skills rather than exhortation alone. This describes an institutional framework, not every programme called social and emotional learning, and does not establish outcomes for all its materials.⁶⁰

These areas suggest familiar educational questions. Can a learner name a problem instead of hitting a classmate? Have they learnt to ask for a turn or disagree respectfully? Do they recognise that decisions affect others? The meanings of ‘responsible’ and ‘right’ still require a framework of values; a domain's name cannot supply them alone.

We therefore do not import theological or moral content merely because training in listening or recognising emotion is useful. We distinguish a usable skill from its underlying assumptions, examine activities and examples, and respect parents' rights. A programme's title or declared good intentions are insufficient.

Many studies do not make every programme alike

Cipriano and colleagues' 2023 review brought together 424 studies from fifty-three countries, covering 252 universal school-based interventions and 575,361 students. The abstract reported pooled improvements in skills, behaviour, school-

60 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, ‘What Is the CASEL Framework?’: five areas of competence and settings for social and emotional learning.

related, and academic outcomes relative to controls, with variation associated with content, context, and implementation characteristics.⁶¹

This breadth encourages taking organised skills teaching seriously. It does not justify treating hundreds of programmes as one body of material. Selecting a particular programme requires knowing its content, participants' ages, and how it is implemented, rather than merely citing the broad review.

The number of countries does not guarantee every example suits every community. A specific skill may help while the text teaching it needs adaptation in values and language. We should explain what we took and changed, then evaluate the adapted application rather than automatically assigning it the original version's outcome.

Positive behavioural support: a school system, not just posters

The Center on PBIS defines this work as a multi-tiered framework bringing together practices, systems, data, and outcomes. It is not presented as a single curriculum to buy or one day's training sufficient on its own. It includes teaching

61 Christina Cipriano et al., 'The State of Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning: A Contemporary Meta-Analysis of Universal School-Based SEL Interventions', *Child Development* 94(5) (2023), pp. 1181–1204.

clear expectations and offering universal support, followed by more specific assistance for those who need it.⁶²

The idea matters when adults assume a rule is obvious although children have never been taught how to practise it. Rather than appearing only after mistakes, a school asks how it prepared appropriate behaviour and helped those still learning. The framework does not remove the need for fair rules or critical examination of what is measured.

Practice can undermine the idea if it consists only of token rewards or referral counts. Fewer complaints may indicate improvement, or fear of complaining, or changed records. More than one indicator is needed to assess the quality of the environment.

A school trial and the limits of its findings

In Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Leaf's trial published in 2012, thirty-seven elementary schools were assigned to study conditions, and data on 12,344 children were followed across four school years. The abstract reported improvements in some ratings of behaviour, concentration, and social skills, along with a reduced likelihood of disciplinary referral to the office.⁶³

62 Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 'What Is PBIS?': introductory account of the framework, tiers, systems, data, and practices.

The school was the unit of assignment; individual children within one classroom were not each choosing different programmes. Teacher ratings and school referrals are relevant to the research question. They are not measures of faith or the whole of good character.

This example alone cannot establish that a new application in another school will achieve the same result. Training and support are needed, along with knowledge of how rules were implemented, how differences in ability and need were addressed, and what effects a pooled headline may omit.

The three examples are not interchangeable alternatives

Montessori is an educational approach with a particular environment, materials, and adult role. Social and emotional learning names a field, frameworks, and varied programmes for teaching skills. PBIS is a framework for organising support across a school. Placing them in a simple race and declaring one winner for every purpose is therefore misleading.

A school may need to consider its physical environment, the teaching of interpersonal skills, and support for those who need it. Methods may overlap, but combining them requires clarity so

63 Catherine P. Bradshaw, Tracy E. Waasdorp, and Philip J. Leaf, 'Effects of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Child Behavior Problems', *Pediatrics* 130(5) (2012), pp. e1136–e1145.

expectations do not conflict or place duplicated burdens on teachers and children. Selecting useful practices is more than collecting attractive names in a prospectus.

Our proposed comparison begins with the need. Are instructions unclear? Are opportunities to practise missing? Are handovers between adults unreliable? Is the content unsuitable for the developmental stage? We choose a method from the question, rather than start with a famous name and look for a problem to fit it.

What should precede adopting a programme in our setting?

We suggest four successive checks. First, content: what values, assumptions, and examples does it contain? Second, skill: what will children actually learn to do? Third, implementation: who will teach it, with what training, time, and support? Fourth, evaluation: what evidence would allow us to say learning improved?

The first check does not reject all knowledge from outside our own setting. We can use an arrangement of space, a presentation method, or listening practice while keeping our reference framework clear. A good result in a limited area does not endorse every philosophical or social element within the programme.

When adapting material, we should not retain the original name in a way that implies unchanged implementation. We identify it

as a borrowed or adapted application, explain its components, and take responsibility for evaluating it. Honest attribution applies to modern programmes as much as to old books.

Training needs more than a file

A good manual may reach a school while teachers remain unable to use it under their workload. Blaming them for not implementing something without the means is unhelpful. Our organisational design needs time for learning, practice, and feedback, and fewer conflicts between classroom and administrative rules.

A teacher may know the steps but need an example of handling a difficult situation: a child who has not understood, one who is late, or a disagreement between classmates. Learning a skill requires observation, practice, and correction, not merely receiving a list of terms.

Teachers still have responsibility to seek clarification and avoid harmful use of a method. Support and accountability are not opponents. Work improves when expectations are clear, resources known, and correction possible without humiliation.

An imagined case: starting with transitions between activities

The end of each lesson has become disorderly, and a school proposes buying a comprehensive programme. Before purchase, it describes the situation: do students know when the activity ends, where materials belong, and what to do next? Does

guidance come early enough to prepare? Do teachers use reasonably consistent routines?

The school chooses a short teaching trial: demonstrate the steps, practise them at a calm time, and provide a clear signal before transitions. It places materials within easy reach and gives additional help where needed. It uses general principles without claiming to have implemented any of the three models in full.

The school follows completion of transitions, time lost, and the kind of help needed. It asks about harm and exclusion, not speed alone. If the class improves, it describes that change as observed, rather than proof of a global educational approach or a judgement on all children. If it does not improve, the school returns to a specific cause instead of adding more posters.

Fair measurement protects against superficial success

A school may appear calmer because it has removed children who are difficult to teach, reduced activities inviting participation, or made students afraid to ask questions. We therefore suggest pairing measures of order with questions about learning rights, participation, and safety. Calm is a means, not a sufficient end in itself.

Measurement should not become a public ranking of children's moral worth. Schools can monitor a skill or procedure, protect information, and communicate with families as needed. A child

need not be embarrassed for us to recognise a need for reminders or support.

We should also distinguish fewer mistakes from easier tasks. A child given no opportunity to try may make few visible errors and learn little. We want an environment allowing safe mistakes and correction, not a lifeless image of perfection.

From learning from others to building our own approach

These models offer methods, questions, and evidence of varying strength. We benefit by reading their definitions, content, and results, comparing them with our needs, and leaving aside what conflicts with what is right, exceeds our capacity, or serves no clear purpose. Wholesale imitation and wholesale rejection are not the only choices.

Our approach returns to the themes gathered throughout the series: a sound purpose, teaching before blame, practice suited to ability, responsibility protecting others' rights, patience with improvement, and review that permits a return. This expresses our own approach. It is not a claim to be another name for Montessori, CASEL, or PBIS.

The study volumes now lead towards action. We leave with more than a list of names: a more honest ability to choose a method, question evidence, and consider the learner. Individual, family, and professional exercises, twelve-week follow-up, and what comes afterwards belong in the separate practical volume.

We turn there to practise what we have understood, without turning a proposal into a guarantee or a measure into a judgement of the heart.

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Ahmed S. BaHammam, Samar Nashwan, Omeima Hammad, Munir M. Sharif, and Seithikurippu R. Pandi-Perumal. Objective Assessment of Drowsiness and Reaction Time During Intermittent Ramadan Fasting in Young Men: A Case-Crossover Study. *Behavioral and Brain Functions* 9 (2013), article 32: methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. Eight healthy men, mean age 25.3. Visits were not randomly ordered; meal and sleep controls applied within the laboratory, not throughout home life. Non-significant sleepiness

and response-time findings are not proof of equivalence, a universal conclusion, or a measure of worship's moral effects.

David Clingingsmith, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Michael Kremer.

Estimating the Impact of the Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam's Global Gathering. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124(3) (2009), pp. 1133–1170. Uses a Hajj visa lottery in Pakistan for inference. The abstract's findings about worship and some social attitudes do not establish general discipline or outcomes for every pilgrim and society.

Association Montessori Internationale. Montessori Programmes; The Prepared Environment. Official programme page and description of the prepared environment. The organisation's description is neither independent experimental evidence nor endorsement of all its philosophical foundations. Applications are selected and reviewed within the series' approach.

Justus J. Randolph et al. Montessori Education's Impact on Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: A Systematic Review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 19 (2023), article e1330: inclusion criteria, methods, results, discussion, and disclosures. Thirty-two studies, six classified as randomised, with some reports from one trial. Pooled Hedges' $g = 0.24$ for academic and 0.33 for non-academic outcomes, with varying evidence strength. Searches ended in February 2020. Some authors disclosed Montessori connections. The review is not described as entirely independent, nor are its results automatically dismissed on that basis.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

What Is the CASEL Framework? Five competence areas and contexts for social and emotional learning. An original framework definition,

not proof of every programme's effectiveness or endorsement of all its philosophical or theological applications.

Christina Cipriano et al. The State of Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning: A Contemporary Meta-Analysis of Universal School-Based SEL Interventions. *Child Development* 94(5) (2023), pp. 1181–1204. 424 studies, fifty-three countries, 252 interventions, and 575,361 students. Variation in programmes and settings is part of the finding. Large numbers neither guarantee every application's effectiveness nor endorse all its underlying assumptions.

Catherine P. Bradshaw, Tracy E. Waasdorp, and Philip J. Leaf. Effects of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Child Behavior Problems. *Pediatrics* 130(5) (2012), pp. e1136–e1145. A cluster trial in thirty-seven schools involving 12,344 children over four years. Results concern the programme, sample, and named measures. No claim is made to have inspected all implementation details and complete instruments or to convert the result into a global success rate.