11 Mistakes in Raising Children – Have You Committed Them? [Translated]

Tarbiyah (nurtured development/education) is an art, science, and skill. However, many of us educate and develop our children solely through inherited, faulty methods, or deal with them based upon quick reactions stemming from anger and tribalism. The result is an education and developmental downfall that we don’t sense until it’s already too late.

There are many poor tarbiyah incidents that I’ve seen because of incorrect efforts of parents. Tarbiyah is a science that we must learn, and a skill that we must train ourselves upon in accordance to a pure methodology and firm educational foundations. Because of this, Allah, the Exalted, revealed the Noble Qur’an as a developmental methodology for purifying souls and improving society at large. Additionally, the Prophet’s life and traditions came to assist teachers in practical, detailed ways to remedy problems arising in tarbiyah. After that came life experience and experimentation in the world of tarbiyah.

Whoever reflects upon our current situation within households will find that we are quite distant from these three golden sources for prosperous tarbiyah. I’ve written about 11 mistakes in tarbiyah that I’ve noticed from many problems that are presented to me, and for the most part, many parents fall into. They are:

**1.** Consistently watching over our children like the cameras at banks and companies that work ‘around the clock’. This behaviour leads to many negative consequences such as: lack of trust, lack of respect, and reluctance to carry out orders. What is more correct to do is keep watch over them here and there, or make those observations from a distance in order not to make them feel as if we are watching their every move.

**2.** Getting involved with all the details of our children’s lives – their clothes, food, toys, and even their personal tastes! This will produce a fragile personality and weakness in resolve. In this case, a child will become dependent upon his parents for everything. What is more correct is to give them freedom of choice with subtle direction. Perhaps one of the strangest incidents I’ve seen is a very old man in age who would still call his mother to ask her about what clothes he should wear and what he should pack in his travel bag!

**3.** Going overboard in showing concern for an only child or child with a chronic illness. This can result in a child being rebellious towards his parents as well as not obeying their orders and commands. Furthermore, this can lead to arrogance and self-delusion. I’ve seen many of these cases to the extent that parents lost complete control over their children.

**4.** Forcing young children to perform acts of worship by compelling them or being too strict. That can lead to them disliking the religion and fleeing from performing acts of worship. I know of a father who would hit his six-year old son if he didn’t get up to pray fajr (the morning prayer). Now, this child only prays if his parents are watching. This tarbiyah method can nurture hypocrisy upon children. Making children love the religion is an art and skill as the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam) said: “Indeed this religion is powerful and everlasting, so bring [people] into it with gentleness.”
**5.** Many times we accuse our children of mistakes without confirming or making sure they actually made the mistake. We make hasty accusations and punish them, clouded by our own emotional state, only to soon realise that we are the ones mistaken. This  will threaten his relationship with his parents and increase in his distaste for them. If we do fall into this situation, it is incumbent upon us to apologise to them for our mistake. This is an opportunity to teach them to apologise when making mistakes or being hasty in judgments.

**6.** Constraining the desires of our children from experimentation and discovery. I know of a mother who entered the kitchen and found her daughter attempting to make sweets and she scattered about all the kitchen utensils. The mother thundered words of blame and criticism, and then banned her from the kitchen. What she should have done was speak with her child, encourage her, and support her experimentation. All children love to experiment and discover so we should invest in that by developing their gifts and encouraging their innovative mindsets.

**7.** Some parents want their children to fulfill what they themselves could not do in their youth even if it differs from their children’s desires and abilities. I know of an Arab mother who is weak in the English language yet she tried to make up for her deficiency with her children, but now she regrets not focusing on teaching her children Arabic, to the point where they cannot even read the Qur’an! I also know of a father who tried to make up for his weakness in memorising the Qur’an with his children. He forced them to memorise daily and did not pay attention to their different levels of ability, so the result was completely opposite as all of his children now dislike all aspects of the religion.

**8.** Being overprotective of our children can produce a personality that is distressed, insecure, and unfledged. He will not have ambition and will reject accepting responsibility. In fact, he is more inclined to deviate to immoral behaviour. What is more correct is to be balanced with our children when manifesting our protection for them and concealing it from time to time. The foundation of tarbiyah is for a child to eventually stand on his own feet and not be under his parents’ protection throughout his life.

**9.** Differing in dealing with our male and female children. This is something we find a lot in our society among youth and elders. What is more correct is to be just in our dealings and not cause a divide in our families because of hatred amongst siblings due to their gender. We must focus on the meaning of “…Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.” (al-Ḥujurāt, 49:13)

**10.** Inspecting their clothing and spying on their phones and devices. This will destroy the parent-child relationship and trust in them. What is more correct is to seek their permission before inspection and to come to a mutual agreement as to how it will go about.

**11.** Being careless with our children’s feelings. An example of this would be speaking in front of family or friends and saying the likes of: “My son wets his bed” or “My son has a stutter in his speech.” This can leave a negative impact upon the state of mind of the child. His condition could prolong or he may revengefully oppose his parents because of the disclosure of a private matter.

These are 11 tarbiyah mistakes that are prevalent in households and I repeat here what I mentioned above: tarbiyah is an art, skill, and science.

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