



Muslim Mums



Salaam Alaykum

THE TEAM:

Fatema Gulamhussein,
Fatema Haji,
Sakina Kermalli,
Farhanaz Merali,
Mariam Merali &
Shaheen Merali

The beautiful name of Allah (swt) that we have chosen for this issue is Ar Raqeeb - The Vigilant, All Watchful. As mums we too are forced to adopt and encompass this name, be it during the nights (checkout the feature on routine for the nights) or as the seasons change (have a look at the health focus). However, for most mums vigilance is especially necessary as our children grow up and settle down in front of the computer screens (make sure to read on internet safety)! In addition to vigilance, mostly we endeavour to turn Him through this beautiful name to keep our families protected at all times. Ameen.



Internet Security

by Arif Govani

The internet is a wonderful place to learn about the world and an essential tool for anyone's general tuition. For children it's no different, but given how intuitive web browsing is these days, a ten-year-old with an inquisitive mind and a vague ability to spell (even this doesn't have to be anywhere near perfect) could find himself or herself on the sort of websites that no parent would ever want them to encounter.

Happily, there are a number of ways to keep your children from the less desirable aspects of the internet, and they fall broadly into three categories: education, monitoring and protection. For further details you may want to visit ceop.police.uk and iwf.org.uk, which offer advice on how to deal with the very worst aspects of online safety for children.

Education

First tell your children the dangers of browsing and let them know the risks of social networking, including chatrooms, or of clicking on things they shouldn't. For an excellent list of general safety tips, visit the page on good internet ground rules to establish with children at <http://getsafeonline.org>.

Monitoring

Many online retailers and most computer stores sell secret monitoring software that will log not only every website that anyone using your computer has visited, but also all of the programs installed or used. See www.getsafeonline.org for more information on this topic and content filtering programs. For PC based system, Windows Live Family Safety is a free monitoring software, which allows parents to monitor and control access to web sites, but also to Windows Live Messenger. Other products that work with both PCs and Macs are:

- Cyberpatrol
- NetNanny

If you do not have monitoring software, it is still useful checking the browser history for websites visited but only if you have any reason to be concerned. If you do not, then consider this: you may provoke your children into concealing their surfing as a habit. If however you have real grounds for suspicion, look especially for any time-gaps; the latest versions of the most popular browsers allow users to delete the browsing history over a period as short as an hour, leaving the rest in place and making it look otherwise normal.

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Protection

In addition to the monitoring function offered by the monitoring software, most of them also offer protection by preventing access to certain sites. However, the latest browsers and operating systems also allow password protection and the banning of certain sites by users. Although the details vary from system to system, typing in "parental controls" to the help section of a browser will always bring up instructions on how to lock



down certain sites such as internet chatrooms, or restrict access in general. There are thousands of chatrooms; usually they form part of a wider website, such as forums dedicated to a favourite football team, band or even brand of car.

Along with social networking sites, such as Bebo or Facebook, chatrooms highlight a general danger of the internet – you never really know who you are talking to, or who your child could be talking to. The only real way to be sure of heading off such problems is to control or monitor usage very carefully.

In addition to above specific guidance to parents with young kids, you should also ensure the PC or the Mac has the basic security set-up:



- **INSTALL SECURITY SOFTWARE** : Most threats to your security often appear in the form of malicious software or viruses so you need to ensure they are kept out. For this you absolutely need to ensure your computer is installed with antivirus and anti-spyware software and a firewall. Check you have installed a spam filter or have an email account that comes with filtering.
- **GET UPDATES** : Loopholes in software or computer applications are like open doors or easy windows to climb through for hackers and criminals. Software manufacturers have to constantly respond to new threats. They do so via updates that iron out any bugs or weaknesses. If you update regularly you are reducing the risks of the bad guys finding a way in. Switch on automatic update notification if you are given the option.
- **PASSWORD PROTECT** : Use strong smart passwords for log-in and network admissions. It is also a good idea not to use your computer in administrator mode if you don't need to. Have a user account for day-to-day use.
- **USE ENCRYPTION** : If you have a wireless network then use encryption to protect yourself from others looking over your communications ("eavesdropping") or just using it for free.

For more information on this, please visit <http://www.getsafeonline>

Growing Feet

Providing parents with "Pearls of Wisdom" (Islamic and Secular) through the growing years

INFANCY (0-24 Months) and THE TODDLER YEARS – Treasure Baskets

(<http://www.netmums.com/activities/arts-and-crafts/treasure-baskets>)

If you've ever wondered why your child prefers the box or wrapping paper to that shiny new toy, it's most probably because it feels better to touch, looks more interesting and makes a more exciting sound when they move it. Babies and toddlers love things that appeal to their senses which is why baskets of interesting objects and shapes provide a wonderful way for them to explore different sights, textures, sounds and tastes.

What is the purpose of treasure baskets?

Treasure baskets have been used for decades by childcare professionals as a means of teaching young babies how to select, touch, taste and feel. It's a refreshingly simple idea but one that seemingly works to delight and inspire little eyes, ears and mouths - enriching their experience of objects around them and helping them to gain confidence in making decisions. The Montessori teaching method is largely based on learning through touch, taste and sound and has proven that children can really benefit from learning in this way.

The best time to introduce a treasure basket

Babies of all ages can appreciate the sensory delights of a basket, as long as it contains the right type of objects for their age. Babies from 3 months will love watching a jar roll to

and fro (fill it with beads or anything that makes a noise to enhance their experience) whilst an 8 month old will adore a loofah they can pick out and crawl after or a whisk they can bang against a bowl. It's also important to get the timing right - a tired baby will get bored of the experience relatively quickly whilst using objects they can't touch will simply cause frustration.

Here are some top tips to enhance the experience:

- Place the basket close to your child so they can reach each object and move things around easily .
- Pick a time when they are well fed and alert - their enjoyment will last longer.
- Whilst it's really an experience for them to indulge in by themselves, it's important to be close by so you can step in if they need help. It's also a lovely opportunity for mums to watch them working their way through the basket - especially as they get older and can decipher the difference between textures, sounds and smells.
- Change and move the items around in the basket to keep the activity fresh. We have lots of different basket ideas below that you can use to create new interest in the activity.
- Check the basket regularly to ensure all of the items are still intact and therefore, not dangerous for your child to play with.
- Once your baby becomes mobile, place baskets on shelves low to the ground so they can help themselves to different objects.

Mixed basket

A mixed basket can contain any household or garden items as long as they have a stimulating texture, colour or shape. Toothbrushes, bath ducks, a soft ball, hair comb, an old remote control - the more objects and contrasting textures the better!



Kitchen basket

The kitchen is a delight for little eyes and ears so it's no surprise that these types of baskets are often the most popular. Good items to use include a pastry brush, soft spoon, ladle, old pan, wooden spatula, whisk and dish cloth. You can even include used margarine pots or clear jars containing dry spaghetti, raisins or beans - anything that makes an interesting noise or sight works wonders.



Nature basket

You can't beat a good walk around the countryside for some perfect treasure basket contents. Pine cones, bark, leaves (contrasting in colour and texture), grass, rocks, seashells, pebbles, logs, acorns and seed are all perfect additions. At first your little one will simply want to touch, smell and hold them but as they grow older the nature basket will become more of a teaching tool to increase their understanding of the world around them. These are popular in Montessori education and have broad appeal, spanning different age groups from as young as 4 months right up to 4 or 5 years+.

Food basket

Not only is this a great one for exploring different textures but it also allows them to experience new and interesting tastes that they might not have tried before. Fill different plastic pots with foods that they can touch, feel and taste. Not everything has to be in a pot - pieces of bread for example can simply sit in the basket, as can rice cakes, apples and grapes. Other good options include raisins, dried fruit, banana, citrus fruits, biscuits and pretzels. You can change it around (according to their age) and

add new things each week - even older children will love to see what delights are on offer and it's a great technique for tempting fussy eaters to try something new!

Soft basket

This is a lovely one for younger babies and can be utilised for older tots too, using different items. Classic objects to include are: a soft sponge, fluffy flannel, cotton wool, a soft toy, velvet powder puff, velour material, ball of wool and a soft baby brush. Let them feel the textures against their hands and skin and see how the different objects vary in their softness.

Play/action basket

A basket filled with objects that require your tot to do something is particularly exciting for toddlers - especially if they're at that 'mimic mummy' stage and love the whole notion of pretending to cook and answer the phone. A plastic tea pot filled with water can be used to 'pour tea' into cups, plastic knives and forks can be used to 'set the table' whilst a mini saucepan and bowls can be used to 'make dinner'. This interesting mixture of items make great teaching tools for toddlers and if you mix the items up now and again, it will remain a firm favourite for months to come.

Noisy basket

Children love to hear and make noises - it's comforting to the senses and gives them a great deal of satisfaction when they experience a new or interesting noise - especially if it's made by them! You can fill the basket with a variety of items - a bunch of keys, jars with beads in, bells, an old battery operated toothbrush, rainmakers...anything that makes a pleasing sound is great to include.

Try adding new objects each week to create new sounds. Jars are ideal for filling with different objects such as hair grips, mini fridge magnets, lentils and badges whilst musical instruments like maracas, a triangle

or xylophone will add lots of extra play value.

Stacking basket

Toddlers adore building things and a stacking basket can be utilised to make all sorts of weird and wonderful structures. Fill it with wooden toys, stacking rings, long tubes of old toilet rolls, used cardboard boxes - anything that has a sturdy base and can be used to build big towers with! As they get older they can start to play around with colour by painting some of the objects and gluing them together to make their own little piece of art. Perfect for harnessing their creativity.

Colourful basket

Babies are mesmerised by colour and gain great enjoyment from contrasting objects. Younger babies will be happy with a basket full of red, black and white (these colours are supposedly the most appealing in those first few months) whilst older tots up to 2 years old will love a big rainbow collection of objects. Try mixing patterned materials and clothing with block coloured ribbons, card, toys and bags. Coloured hair rollers, satin scrunchie bands and mini bean bags are also lovely to include. Creating this type of basket is easy to do - just search the house and see what you can find, mixing the items up every now and again to give them something new to search for.



THE OLDER YEARS – Learn to Roughhouse

(Summary based on Chapter 6: Playful Parenting by Lawrence J. Cohen by http://www.webgroups.biz/playful_parenting3.php)

Many parents, especially mothers, insist that they couldn't possibly wrestle – but please read this anyway. Many animals wrestle, including humans, and for a variety of reasons. Children wrestle and roughhouse to test their strength, to have fun, and to learn to control their aggression. Boys and girls, active and quiet, can all benefit from thoughtful physical play with adults. “The active ones, who are going to be in the thick of the rough and tumble in school and on the playground, need a chance to do it first with someone who can give them undivided attention, help them deal with their fears, hesitations, impulses, anger, etc. Meanwhile, children who are less physically active need roughhousing with adults so they can explore their physical power and develop their confidence and assertiveness.”



When children show their wild sides, parents need to be both persistent and calm. “If we can stay with them, physically and emotionally, we will find the cooperative, loving, joyful human being who may have been buried under a pile of angry or scary or sad or lonely feelings. Wrestling with them can help them find their true selves again.”

There are many ways to wrestle. Author Cohen has 10 rules :

- **Provide basic safety.** Set up ground rules such as no hitting, biting, punching, kicking or headlocks. Pushing and holding are not only safer than these activities, but they are also more conducive to building confidence and connection. In addition, a commitment to safety helps children feel freer in the game. Agree on a word or phrase (from “halt” to “banana cream pie”) that will make everyone stop immediately. Make sure to watch out for emotional safety too – no teasing or humiliating the child. If children push the limits, try to remind them instead of immediately quitting the game. That helps impulsive or aggressive children learn to control those feelings.

- **Find every opportunity for connection.** Insert connection wherever possible. Ex., a child who avoids eye contact can be asked to take part in “the ancient warrior custom of looking each other deep in the eyes.” Or fall down slowly right on top of the child. Take cuddle breaks. Make setting limits an opportunity for connection instead of the disconnect of breaking off the game at the first infraction.

- **Look for every opportunity to increase their confidence and sense of power.** Mostly by giving the right level of resistance and by encouraging the child.

- **Use every opportunity to play through old hurts.** If a child is unhappy with the outcome of some kind of earlier challenge, it can help to replay it. Goal is not necessarily to win but to play all out to help get rid of the frustration, humiliation and helpless feelings from the earlier hurt.

- **Provide just the right level of resistance to the child's needs.** The goal is not necessarily to win “but to let the child use their inner powerfully, in a way that does not hurt anyone.”

- **Pay close attention.** Signs that wrestling is on the right track are a) giggling and b) sweating, straining and exertion. Signs that something is wrong are

“lack of eye contact, giving up, blind rage, or the child’s actually trying to hurt you.”

- **(Usually) let the child win.** It is sometimes a good idea to ask the child if he wants you to try your hardest.

- **Stop when someone is hurt.** Pause and pay attention to injuries. This is especially important for boys who are often encouraged to keep on playing when they’re hurt. For more timid children, the challenge can be to get them to keep playing after a break.

- **No tickling allowed.** No holding people down and tickling them against their will. Tickling can be confusing – children may be laughing but not enjoying it. It can make kids feel out of control. So best to avoid it when wrestling.

- **Keep your own feelings from getting in the way.** Adults can be flooded with feelings left over from their own childhoods, giving them the urge to humiliate, tease or dominate the child; or they may feel weak and helpless and shy away from the idea of wrestling altogether. Put these feelings aside and pay attention to the child’s needs.

Personal and Spiritual Development

Parenting from Ahadith - A Class by Abbas Jaffer and Masuma Jaffer.

by Taskeen Jaffer

Abbas and Masuma Jaffer are one of the many excellent examples and role models for new parents. Apart from their own three children, they have been like parents to many others within the community – whether it be through mentoring, fostering or teaching.

Recently I was blessed with the opportunity to learn from their experience and wisdom in raising children, through a parenting class. The class focused on the teachings of the Holy Qur`an and Ahadith with regards to the upbringing of children and how we can learn from them.

Abbas Jaffer started off the class talking about the fact that when becoming parents we are all fulfilling one of the major purposes of getting married “...being a link in the great chain of populating the Earth and Ummah of Rasulullah (s)...”, so that on the Day of Judgement the Holy Prophet (s) would look at the size of his Ummah proudly.

Another really beautiful thing he mentioned was the fact that in the Holy Qur`an we find that Allah (swt) instructs us, on a number of occasions, about the rights of parents. However, there are no verses which command us to love or look after our children, and this is because it is the natural disposition of a parent (whether human or animal) to love and want to look after their child, protect him with every fibre of their being and give him everything they can - above and beyond his needs. So much so, that no matter what a child does, his parents will never forsake him. It really struck me that this is so similar to

Allah (swt)’s own relationship to us. He loves us so much, has given us life, provides for us every day, and no matter what we do, how much we disobey Him, how much we wrong Him, He will always be willing to forgive us and welcome us back with open arms.

However, what has been mentioned by the Almighty are the responsibilities we have to our children and families, for example “...O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones...”#. We see from this that we have a responsibility to ensure we are fulfilling and nourishing our child’s spiritual needs as well as physical needs. This is important from the beginning of child’s life as they are capable of absorbing and processing information right from the start. There are two things to consider about this, the first is illustrated magnificently by none other than Imam Ali (as) in a hadith recorded in Nahjul Balagha, in which he says “...I wonder at man who does not like to eat in the dark at a person’s home (so that he can see each and every morsel he puts in his mouth) but yet he is quite keen to feed and nourish his soul without switching on the light of his ‘aql...”2

It is important to note here that spiritual nourishment is taken into the soul using all five senses. We take in all that we see, hear, touch etc and Imam Ali (as) is trying to explain his wonderment at people who are so careful about what they physically eat, but take so lightly the environment around them.

The second point is something which many parents, mistakenly assume - that is that their child is too small to understand something, or be affected by it.



We have in many ahadith from the A`immah (as) in which we are exhorted to teach our children the Holy Qur`an from a young age so that it becomes and forms part of their flesh and blood. Similarly, we have in a hadith from Imam Al-Sadiq (as) that a woman who is pregnant or breast feeding should not only eat wholesome halal food, but should as a matter of precaution, stay away from foods that are “mashkuk” (i.e. food that under ordinary circumstances may be doubtful but permissible to eat under Shari`ah) in order to avoid the danger of polluting the vulnerable infant soul. To explain this point, he used the analogy of a sapling and a tree – If one was to make a small gash in an Oak sapling, as that sapling grows, so too would the gash, it would remain a part of it and become a large furrow, however if one was to make the same small gash in a big Oak tree, it would hardly affect it. In the same way, the affect on a child of something negative; grows with him and becomes a significant part of him. Both these points show us the importance of maintaining a halal environment for our children, as it is us who are totally responsible for them from this young age. This is why every good that they do is attributed to us as parents, and in the same way - any bad they do would also be attributed to us.

There are numerous ahadith which guide us for the different stages of pregnancy and beyond some of which he mentioned:



Pregnancy:

In many riwayat we are told there is a great benefit in the mother reciting Ayah Al-Nur, in which Allah (swt) says: “...Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light: Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things...” 3

In another hadith related by three of the A`immah (as) we are told of the benefit of eating pears during pregnancy, the positive effects of which include good akhlaq and kind heartedness in one’s child.

At Birth:

The Holy Prophet (s) emphasised the importance of a human coming into the world with Tawhid and then leaving the world with Tawhid. This should be the first thing a mother or father does when the child is put in his/her arms, the Adhan and Iqama recited in the child’s ear is actually the duty of the parents, as opposed to a maulana. In a hadith from Imam Al-Sadiq (as) we are told that reciting the Adhan in the right ear and Iqama in the left ear protects the child from the influence of Shaitan.

We are also told that after reciting the Adhan and Iqama, one should hold the child up and recite near the child’s ears, Surah Al-Fatiha, Ayah Al-Kursi, the last verses of Surah Al-Hashr (about Allah (swt)’s Beautiful Names), Surah Al-Ikhlâs, Al-Falq and Al-Naas.”4

Imam Al-Sadiq (as) has also mentioned that giving the child some water from the Euphrates will make the child a lover of the Ahl Al-Bayt (as). In other ahadith we are told giving the baby Zamzam water is recommended - one of the properties of Zamam is that whatever intention it is drunk with, it will have the effect

on the person, so for example; if you drink it for Shifa`ah - it will act as such.

We are told by Imam Al-Redha (as) that giving a newborn a tiny pinch of the actual turba of Imam Hussain (as) with honey also has benefits and if the turba is not available then honey should be given.

Many of these acts are there for us to learn from, for example when giving the turba or Euphrates, we should look at it with the view that we are making a commitment to Allah (swt) that we will raise our child as a lover of the Ahl Al-Bayt (as) and one who follows their path.

Amongst the duties parents have towards their child during the early years are the following:

Naming the Child:

One of the principal rights of the child is that his parents should give him a beautiful name. This is something that has been emphasised greatly in ahadith and the Holy Qur`an, for example in Surah Maryam The Almighty mentions “...O Zakariya! We give thee good news of a son: His name shall be Yahya: on none by that name have We conferred distinction before...”# Here Allah (swt) mentions the fact that He has named him and the blessings the name shall bring him.

In Ahadith from the Holy Prophet (s) we are told that of the best of names are those which indicate to the “ubudiya” or servitude man has to his Creator, those names which have the prefix “Abd” such as Abdullah, or AbdurRahman.

In another hadith by Imam Al-Sadiq (as), he states that we should consider naming our first boy with one of the names of the Holy Prophet (s) (who has over 40 different names or titles) and our first girl with one of the names of Bibi Fatimah Al-Zahra (as) (who also has more than a dozen names). We have many ahadith which state the virtues of naming our children using the names of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Again with naming a child, we should do two things,

the first is to make a commitment to Allah (swt) that we will raise our child like the person whom they have been named after and secondly to teach our child to try and emulate the personality of their namesake.

On the flip side of this, we should be careful not to name our children with those names that do not reflect goodness or are associated with the enemies of the Ahl Al-Bayt (as) or those names reserved for Allah (swt).

1" The Holy Qur'an (66:6)

2" Sharh Nahjul Balagha of Ibn Al-Hadid vol. 20 p261

3" The Holy Qur'an (24:35)

4" The Holy Qur'an (1:1-7), (2:255-257), (59:22-24), (112:1-4), (113:1-5) and (114:1-6).

5" The Holy Qur'an (19:7)



Personal Moments

The Long Road to Conception

It was raining outside the day my doctor confirmed my suspicions, probably reflective of my mood, wet and miserable. I had been called to the GP to discuss my scan results. After a year of no periods, hair growth in unappealing places, irritability and extreme weight fluctuations, it was confirmed that I did in fact have Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS).

Horrible nightmares came to life, the thought that it would be difficult for me to conceive, or possibly not even have children. I remember looking back to the time I met my husband, and saying to him the most important thing that I ever wanted to do in my life was to be a mother and now that was very questionable.

PCOS is thought to be caused by a resistance to insulin, causing a number of harmless cysts around the ovaries. The cysts are under-

developed follicles which contain eggs that haven't developed properly. Often in PCOS, these follicles are unable to release an egg, meaning ovulation doesn't take place. Many people have PCOS but have a normal functioning monthly cycle, with often no symptoms and can easily get pregnant depending on the severity of the cysts. This however was not the case for me as my cysts were particularly bad.

It was a difficult blow to take and the future looked bleak. However with a supportive husband and family behind me, I was able to take solace in the fact that modern medicine today could do a lot for people with reduced fertility. Everyday I would scour the net for success stories on people with PCOS who had gotten pregnant, read up on their journeys into fertility and what worked for them. This would lighten my heart and help me to feel that there was a ray of hope.

The first hurdle was to start ovulation, as my cysts were preventing the release of an egg. I was given Clomid, an ovulation enhancer, to boost my system into releasing those ever important eggs. As the months went by, each ending with a negative test every time, it was clear that the drugs were not working for me.

With a heavy heart each month I tried to keep optimistic, hoping and praying that soon there would be a positive at the end of the next month. It was a difficult time, often sparking that ever wandering mind to think 'why me?' while everyone around me left, right and centre was falling pregnant at the drop of a hat, even those that weren't even planning to. It was during these times that I would remind myself of great women in the eyes of Allah (swt) who had not gotten pregnant, Bibi Asiyah, the wife of Firawn, who did not conceive any children but Allah had planned for her to mother a child as pure as Prophet Musa. And Bibi Sarah, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim who did not conceive for many years. It was

their stories that helped me keep hope and helped me to hold onto the fact that perhaps through this journey there was learning for myself and that undoubtedly Allah (swt) would make the reasoning or path clear for me.

I was next sent for keyhole surgery, an ovarian drilling procedure, the thought being that often when the ovary is traumatised it shocks its self back into action. It was a day surgery procedure that allowed me to go home in the evening, with little to no pain. This method has helped many PCOS sufferers to restart their ovaries into releasing eggs, however this wasn't the case for me. I realised with PCOS its severity, nature, symptoms are all individual and therefore each treatment may or may not work with different people.

It was at this time my Mussallah and my Dua book came to the rescue. Fertility treatment is a bleak tunnel to crawl through and holding onto the Rope of Allah was the most secure thing that helped me get through. I would read the Dua of prophet Zakariyyah, 'Oh Allah grant me an inheritor from your grace, although You alone are the best of inheritors', having comfort in the fact that Allah (swt) indeed was the greatest inheritor.

With the months passing by and lots of research being done into PCOS and fertility - Dr. Google to the rescue - I read up that acupuncture had a significant effect on helping to boost fertility and also helped to sustain conception and prevent miscarriage. Dr Google again helped me to find an acupuncturist a couple of roads away from me that was a fertility specialist. Indeed it's true that when Allah brings a trial to you he also sends you the tools you need to help you along the way - I subsequently discovered that this lady had helped a lot of ladies already within the community. I felt more and more confident as I heard of success stories of real ladies that I knew.

In search of more complimentary therapies I sought out an iridologist and a massage therapist that helped me to feel like I was actively working to solve this imbalance in my body in a holistic way. None of this was the fast solution I was hoping for however, wherever I went the reoccurring theme was 'this would take time – have patience', possibly the thing I had least. There was no two ways about it – I had to slow down and I had to learn to have patience, and trust in Allah (swt).

I was introduced to a doctor in India with whom I had consultations with over the phone. He suggested I try Metformin, a drug mainly used for diabetic patients, that would help me deal more effectively with the insulin in my body and therefore fight the cause of the problem rather than just look for a surface level booster. I started taking this and continued my holistic treatments, almost as a last attempt before I went for IVF that was now being suggested to me by my consultants.

It was after this that I saw Allah's Mercy and Rahma, for the next month was a busy month of family weddings, visitors and other such occasions. My husband and I decided to leave the worry about getting pregnant aside and to put everything on hold for a month or so until our scheduled IVF consultation appointment. During this month I truly left everything up to Allah, with the thought that whatever Allah's will was I would try and find solace in the fact that there must be something better planned for me. It was a day before our IVF consultation when I randomly decided to do a pregnancy test. No one was home while I waited out the three minutes, already in my head thinking that this was another negative test. How those two lines in the positive box made me feel that day I can never even express. For a moment dumbfounded, unable to believe that this was actually true. After a few more tests just to make sure I wasn't

dreaming, I knelt down in front of my Lord and thanked Him for his bounty, His ease after all the struggle and for His absolutely incredible timing.

Nine months on from there, holding my newborn in my arms, cradling his small body against mine and breathing in his soft sweet baby smell, I realise that I was now ready to be a mother - not a year or two ago when I started my journey, not even six months before I got pregnant, but that now was just perfect, and that Allah willed that through my journey and struggle I would learn patience, forbearance, courage and trust in Him - all of which I would need on my new journey of motherhood.

** To get in touch with the author, please contact a member of the Muslim Mums team.*

Special Needs Focus

Promoting Children's Speech and Language

By Azra Hassanali

Singing along to 'The Wheels On The Bus' with my daughter at the local library's baby rhyme time, a grandmother jokingly told the group that she'd heard that the words of the song had changed. Rather than 'chatter, chatter, chatter', apparently,

'the mummies on the bus go text, text, text'. There's no denying the advantages that technological advances have brought us. But what happened to good old talking or getting down on the floor with your child and playing? Yes, actually playing with a bunch of pots and pans; going camping with a blanket over some chairs; using chalk on the patio for hopscotch; letting your imagination and conversation wander into space?

Communication is free.... but absolutely priceless and a vital skill that we often take for granted. Be it through speech, gestures, writing, typing, pointing or the look on your face, you send out thousands of important messages every day. Communication is the key in helping you build relationships, express your feelings, make requests and learn new information.

As parents, one of the greatest things you can do is to ensure you do what you can to help your child achieve their potential and develop this vital skill, in whatever way suits them best. This is particularly important for children with special needs such as developmental delay, hearing impairment, visual impairment, autism and downs' syndrome, whose speech and language may be delayed.

SI MADRESSA

LEARNING SUPPORT DEPARTMENT



WHAT DO WE NEED ?

Recruitment drive

- Male and female volunteers
- Commitment of 1-2 hours per week (on a Sunday or during the week)
- Help with:
 - Supporting students during the Madressa day
 - Providing training
 - Admin/making phonecalls
 - Making resources



Any help is much appreciated!

Please also get in touch if your child has any special needs.

If you are interested please contact:

admin@madressa.net

Here are some ideas for ways you can help your child develop their communication skills, during your everyday routine activities:

1. Talk to your child about **what you are doing** (eg. sorting laundry, cooking) and during everyday activities (eg. dressing, bathing, eating). This will help them to learn words related to their environment.

2. Have 5-10 minutes **1:1 time** with your child everyday, playing with a toy or reading a book of their choice. Give your child lots of time. **Observe** what they are interested in and how they communicate.

3. **Copy** sounds and words that your child uses. This will encourage them to try to talk more and is the start of conversations.

4. Use words to **comment** on what your child is doing or what they are interested in, rather than bombarding them with questions.

5. When your child points, reaches or and makes a noise, **interpret** what they might be trying to say, using language at their level (eg. Child: 'mmmmm!' (pointing at a ball), Adult: 'Ball? Oh, ball! You want ball!')

6. Expand on what your child says by **adding a word or a new idea** but remember not to go off on your own complicated tangent.

7. **Use objects and actions** with your words. This will help your child to relate what they see and do with language.

8. If you cannot understand what your child says, be patient and **give them lots of time** to try again or to show you. Encourage your child to use actions, objects or gestures to reduce frustration and praise them for doing so.

9. **Read books together** but remember that describing the pictures is just as good as reading the story.

10. Leave a pause, but keep looking at your child, encouraging them to **complete** the sentence of familiar stories and rhymes.

11. If your child mispronounces something, repeat it back to them slowly and correctly, **rather than correcting them**.

12. Use puppets, pictures and objects around the house to **make up stories** with your child, adding to their language and ideas as you go.

13. If you speak a language other than English at home then keep doing so. Don't worry that your child might struggle if they don't learn English before they start school. Being bilingual has lots of advantages, metalinguistic and otherwise! What is important is that you **speak to your child in the language you are most comfortable and proficient in**, whatever that might be. If you try to speak to your child in a language that you don't speak very well, then your child won't learn to communicate very well either. Most of all, make communicating fun and an integral part of your day with your treasured ones. Give your child lots of praise for communicating in whatever way they choose. The gift of communication is a precious one and one that you can be a part of developing. Talk away!



<http://londonsigbilingualism.co.uk/>

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk>

Cheese no more!

7 Tips for Capturing Memorable Photos of Your Kids

By Mehdiya Jaffer

No matter what kind of camera you have, you can capture great photos of your little ones. In this article, we visit some easy, practical and fun ways to take better pictures.

1) Golden hours

Although this tip may not always be practical, it is helpful to keep in mind that dawn and dusk are mother nature's helping hand for beautiful photos. When the sun is low during the early hours of the morning or during the hours before sunset, the light is softer, warmer and generally much more flattering in photos and portraits. You may have noticed that photos taken at high noon on a sunny day seem harsh, shadowy and too bright. So, get out there with the kids during the early hours or in the evening for some fantastic looking light in your photos. If you do happen to be out at noon, look for shady areas to take pictures in.

2) Rule of thirds

The Rule of Thirds, also referred to as the Golden Ratio, is used in many aspects of art, including photography. Following the rule achieves artistic results that are pleasing to the eye. The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine

An advertisement for Mehdiya Jaffer Photography. The background is a textured, light brown paper with decorative floral patterns in the corners. The text is centered and reads: 'MEHDIYA JAFFER PHOTOGRAPHY' in a serif font. Below that, 'i take {great} pictures.' in a smaller, lowercase serif font. Then, a list of services: 'wedding • engagement • family • new born couples • maternity • lifestyle • studio'. Below the list, 'Need some photos? Get in touch!'. At the bottom, the website 'mehdiyajafferphotography.co.uk', email 'mehdiya@mehdiyajafferphotography.co.uk', and phone number '+447702737901'. At the very bottom are icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

breaking down an image into thirds (both horizontally and vertically) so that you have 9 parts (as seen in the illustration). Endeavour to place your subjects at the points where these lines intersect. Studies have shown that when viewing images people's eyes are drawn to the areas of intersecting points rather than the center of an image. Most digital cameras have the option for you to turn on this grid so you may want to start experimenting with it! The next time you feel like centralizing your subject, think Golden Ratio! Tip: Please don't think that every photo needs to follow this rule! It is only a guideline to experiment with.



3) Don't make the flash your trustee!

Simply put, avoid using your camera flash if you can use available light. The flash that pops up on your camera is admittedly very handy in low light situations. Unfortunately it can leave you with very flat, plastic looking images that lack detail. Try taking photos near large windows or switch on the lights to avoid using the flash. However, when used effectively, the flash on your camera can be very useful to fill in shadows and compliment the available light, such as in bright sunshine. And of course, if your pictures are turning out too dark or blurry you may not have any other option but to resort to the flash but before you do that, play around and check the results you get without it.



4) Tell a visual story

Rather than harassing your kids to smile and say cheese for the camera (lets face it we all do it!), try a more sneaky approach. Give them a little assignment (eg: "why don't you go and smell that flower") or simply let them carry on playing whilst you sneak some photos from a distance. This strategy often results in photographs that have meaningful visual stories. The next time you force your kids to sit still for a photo, consider giving them a purpose or activity (eg: "lets paint a picture") - you may surprise yourself with the gems you capture and the best part is, years later, the photos will tell you a cute little visual story that will most likely hold some genuine memories!

5) Shift your perspective

As tempting as zooming into your child's face is, stop and think for a moment - Consider the different options you have. Each photograph can be approached from so many different angles and perspectives to maximize the visual interest of the photo! Consider the different results you might get if you choose to shoot from up above, down below, at eye level, from a distance, at a close range, from behind your subject...the options are literally endless! Remember also to capture the smaller details you never want to forget – the adorable stomach rolls, chubby thighs and tiny toes. So the next time you are about to click the shutter, take a quick moment to consider your options. Tip: Don't think for too long, you might miss the moment! ;)

6) Don't be lazy, print it!

I have seen way too many people store their beautiful photographic memories on iPhones, hard-drives and computers! Please do yourself a favour and PRINT your favourite images- when it comes to photos, there is nothing like a hard copy! Make albums or scrapbooks! Frame some pictures! Stick them up on the fridge! Send prints to the gramps! Displaying your pictures effectively and sharing them with friends and family will motivate you to keep taking good pictures through all the phases of your child's life.

7) Have fun!

Taking things too seriously is never a good idea! So, keep all of the above tips in mind, but most importantly, pack your camera everywhere you go, relax, snap away, and have fun capturing your special memories.

Mehdiya Jaffer is a professional wedding and lifestyle photographer. You can find more information about her work by visiting her website: www.mehdiyajafferphotography.co.uk



Health Focus

TACKLING HAY FEVER IN YOUR CHILD

Hay fever is one of the most common allergic conditions. It is estimated that there are more than 10 million people with hay fever in England. Hay fever usually begins in childhood or during the teenage years, but you can get it at any age. The condition is more common in boys than in girls. Around half of people report some improvement in symptoms after several years and in around 10%-20% of people, symptoms go away completely.

Symptoms of hay fever include :

- Frequent sneezing, a bunged up or runny nose.
- Itching on the roof of the mouth.
- Coughing.
- Wheezing or a burning sensation in the throat.
- Itchy and watery eyes.

The symptoms of hay fever are caused by having an allergic reaction to different tree and grass pollens (or house dust-mites) and by having a genetic predisposition to 'atopic' conditions like asthma and eczema. Pollen contains proteins that can cause the nose, eyes, throat and sinuses (small air-filled cavities behind your cheekbones and forehead) to become swollen, irritated and inflamed.

Complications : Hay fever is often regarded as a trivial problem but studies have shown that it severely affects people's quality of life. It disturbs sleep, impairs daytime concentration and the ability to carry out tasks, causes children to miss school, and has been shown to affect pupil's school exam results. Children who suffer from hay fever are at increased risk of developing asthma. Asthmatics who also suffer from hay fever have less severe asthma and less A&E and hospital admissions if their hay fever is treated effectively.

Treatment : There is currently no cure for hay fever but one can relieve most symptoms with treatment, at least to a certain extent. In an ideal world, the most effective way to control hay fever would be to avoid exposure to pollen, but it is impossible to avoid this altogether. Hay fever symptoms caused by house dust mite allergy can improve by reducing exposure, again impossible to avoid completely.

Self-help tips :

It is possible to reduce the symptoms of hay fever by taking some basic precautions, such as:

- Wearing wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into eyes when outdoors.
- As peak levels of pollen occur 6-8pm in rural areas and 10pm-midnight in towns, schedule outdoor activities for early afternoon.
- Change clothes and showering after being outdoors to remove the pollen on body.
- Rub Vaseline inside nose before going outside.
- Close windows in the evening.
- Try to stay indoors when the pollen count is high (over 50).
- Avoid walking through open grassy spaces especially in evenings.

- Keep car windows closed and use air conditioning fitted with suitable filters.
- For house dust mite allergic children, wash all bedding at 60 degrees, minimise soft toys in bedroom and try and use anti-allergy mattress and pillow protectors to reduce exposure. Regular cleaning/dusting of upholstery, curtains, carpets your child is exposed to.

Medicines : There are a range of treatments available. If your child is getting regular symptoms then it is worth giving them anti-histamines regularly. Piriton (Chlorphenamine) is the most common medicine known to most but it can cause drowsiness and there are other non-sedating antihistamines available (eg Zirtec/Cetirizine). Do get advice from your pharmacist and/or GP.

Nasal decongestants:

Decongestant tablets such as Sudafed and nose drops (eg. Otrivine nasal spray, Sudafed decongestant nasal spray) can be bought over-the-counter to treat a blocked nose. They should only be used for a few days, otherwise they can cause 'rebound congestion' when you stop using them. They aren't recommended in younger children. If despite taking regular anti-histamines, your child is still getting particular eye or nasal symptoms then the following treatments can be added, but you will need a prescription from your GP:

Nasal sprays: A steroid nasal spray can help prevent symptoms, especially a blocked nose, but sometimes isn't very good at treating symptoms swiftly once they have started. A nasal steroid works best taken before your symptoms start and then every day during the symptoms causing season. Ask your GP for advice. These sprays must be given with the correct technique, putting the head forward, so nostrils are almost facing up, (like doing Sajdah) and the spray directed towards the outer aspect of the inside of the nostrils, NOT the middle bit between the two nasal passages (the septum) as this can cause septum thinning after prolonged use.

Eye drops: If your child suffers from itchy or sore eyes, antihistamine or sodium cromoglycate eye drops can help.

Nasal douching: Using a nasal spray to irrigate the nose free of pollen (eg Neilmed, Sinus Rinse)

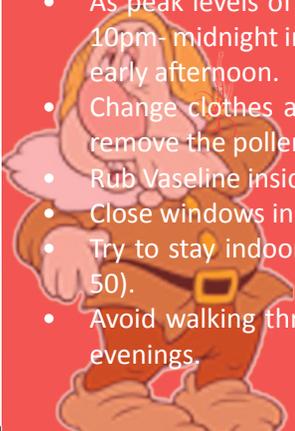
Immunotherapy: If all other treatments haven't improved your child's hay fever symptoms, ask your GP to refer your child to an Allergy specialist who may offer immunotherapy after skin prick testing to find out which particular pollens are causing the symptoms. This usually involves having daily tablets of a small amount of the particular pollen over a period of three years.

Remember: If your GP isn't familiar with prescribing some of the above sprays and medicines for children, ask them to refer you to an Allergy specialist sooner. Skin prick (allergy) testing can be done and you can find out what particular pollen or allergen your child is allergic to and the appropriate advice given. Don't ignore Hay fever symptoms that persist despite a regular anti-histamine! There is help out there...

More information on

www.allergyuk.org

Daily pollen update 0800-556610 (pollen season only)



BLOGSPOT

My sister has often accused me of being very emotional and sentimental when I mention my children in these blogs. She used the word "gushing". I think she's probably right, but I blame it on two things; firstly, I always write my blogs at night when my kids are sleeping and look like angels- thus permanently deleting any evidence in my mind of any...shall we say...mishaps that occurred during the day! Secondly my sister was not yet a mother. Now Alhamdulillah that she is one, she "gushes" all day long!

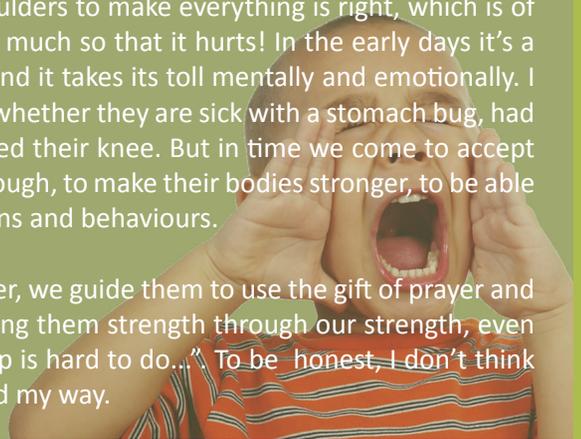
Seeing her adjusting to motherhood has brought my own joys and experiences flooding back into my mind. Many hours endlessly staring at my babies, amazed at each and every development from staring their own hands to cooing sounds and gurgles. First smiles...I don't think any mother can forget the first smile (I know...I'm gushing again!).

Who would have thought that poops, pees and burps would play an instrumental role in how our day would go! Then there's the hard part, the crying, the not-settling, starving but not feeding, the screaming, the colic phases...the list is endless and probably different in some way for every mum. 'Googling' the problem, as most mums resort to in desperation, only makes it worse as it would seem there are thousands of webpages/blogs/articles to suit any one situation! It's mind boggling, confusing and often scary! As each day passes however, they are a day older...moving through the different stages of development each bringing new challenges and more importantly plenty of joy for the mum (and dad!).

A midwife at the hospital said to my sister, "you can read all the handbooks and listen to all the advice and you'll hear it all over the years, but be sure that only you can write the handbook for your child - trust your instinct". Wise words!

As the mother, you feel this incredible responsibility...a heavy weight on your shoulders to make everything is right, which is of course impossible to do all of the time and this tests our patience to the core, so much so that it hurts! In the early days it's a guessing game at times with babies to solve the problem, trial and error almost-and it takes its toll mentally and emotionally. I guess that feeling remains for life...we all want to make things better for our child, whether they are sick with a stomach bug, had a rough day at school, had friendship issues, not performed well in a test or gashed their knee. But in time we come to accept that not only can we not 'fix' everything but that it's something they have to go through, to make their bodies stronger, to be able to cope with failures and disappointments and to control and handle their emotions and behaviours.

In the meantime, we smile, we comfort, we offer hope that everything will be better, we guide them to use the gift of prayer and du'a to give spiritual strength and calmness in the heart. We keep it together, giving them strength through our strength, even though inside we're worrying and aching for them. As the saying goes "growing up is hard to do..." To be honest, I don't think that 'growing up' ever ends - Even now, as a parent, I'm still learning...trying to find my way.



Out of Interest

Part II - Routine for Peaceful Nights *By Aaliya Mavani*

I would have to look high and low for a parent who does not associate a 'good baby' to one who sleeps long periods at night. On the arrival of a new baby, sleep takes on a whole new meaning in life and for most parents, this is probably the hardest adjustment in the newly acquired role, simply because babies do not have a sleeping clock similar to their parents. They have lived in a time-free, snugly wet womb for their entire foetal life - so why adjust to a restricted dry, relatively colder and noisy environment? There is a massive period of adjustment for the baby (not to mention the zombified mum and the oblivious dad!); some do it in a few days while others can take years. Falling asleep is a learned activity, which requires some structure, planning, execution and repetition to continue its performance until it becomes second nature. Note, I am not claiming that 'sleep' isn't natural to human beings but the process of falling asleep needs to be mastered. Many experts refer to it as 'sleep training'.

I thought I had understood sleep in babies until my second one arrived, was I wrong or was I wrong?! He opened a whole new world of challenges and endless figuring-him-out moments so I could make sense of my life, which had pretty much turned upside down. I have re-written this part of the article after coming across an invaluable book called 'The babysense secret' by Megan Faure, a must-read for all new mums and mums-to-be. If only it was published in 2010 it would have been an absolute lifesaver! Megan Faure, who also happens to be an Occupational therapist, has fluently managed to put some of my own findings into better words and contexts therefore I will be referring to her work extensively after exploring some concepts about sleep and sleep routine.

Sleep occurs in five stages. Stage 1 is moving from drowsiness to light sleep where muscles start to relax, breathing becomes more regular but baby is easily aroused at the slightest stimulus. Stage 2 is when the head tilts back, breathing slows down, they feel heavier but can still be easily aroused. It is at this stage that the right environmental set-up is paramount in enabling babies to progress onto the deeper stages of sleep. Stages 3 & 4 are the deeper stages where it is difficult to arouse and proximities feel limp. The last stage, also called the REM (rapid eye movement) stage, is the light sleep stage where dreaming occurs as there is increased brain activity, with the secretion of growth hormone. All five stages complete one sleep cycle with an awakening period after each cycle. A change in environment is not received well by babies during the awakening period and this is when they wake up demanding to be put back to sleep how they were put to sleep in the first place. A good bedtime routine and consistent sleep

training methods are important tools that will ensure that babies reach the fifth stage where growth hormones are secreted, the body is refreshed and equipped with a new burst of energy. I have personally found that “sleep begets sleep” (Faure, M, 2011) – the more a child sleeps the more he wants to sleep to their requirement, relating to experts opinion, that naps should be encouraged and facilitated as they make the child look forward to sleep at night. Another important finding is that both my kids appear to internalise a sleeping clock that lasts a couple of days, they usually want to sleep and wake up around the same time as they did the day before. This information has helped me adjust their sleep times to accommodate any special events so there is minimal disruption. A lot of researchers agree that about four to six months is a good time to start sleep training. This gives both baby and new parents a chance to adjust to their new life together. A strict routine is probably not a good idea as unlike adults babies’ needs are variable, for example, during a growth spurt they may want to sleep more than usual whereas during bone developmental stages active play that puts pressure on bones is what babies need, therefore, use timings as guidance but look out for signs of I-have-had-enough-and-want-my-cot. It is never too late or too early to start a sleep time routine, but the older the baby/child the harder it gets. Although, the gold standard is the twelve-hour sleep through the night, some children are in primary school before this happens. In general, they should be getting a reasonable period of uninterrupted rest (usually about 7-8 hours) and the total amount of sleep they require corresponding to their age (see www.babycentre.co.uk/sleep for more information).

There is plenty of literature on good bedtime routines and its benefits in settling a baby to sleep. The common hymn sheet goes like this: bath, massage, bedtime story and finally a milk feed, with a calm and consistent approach holding the choir together. I have personally found this to work well with both my kids with the occasional disruption on weekend nights out, family visits and mosque nights. Babies learn through association and you need to decide what works for you and baby to help him identify sleep time. Dana Obleman – a Canadian child sleep expert insists on calm time an hour

before bedtime and strictly no toys in bed. For me, calm time is rare, as kids get overly excited to spend the precious last hour of their day with their dad. Allocate a winding down time with talking about the day, planning tomorrow, stories, surahs and duas to ease into the resting mode. In my opinion, soft toys create a cosy environment in bed and keep them entertained in bed just that little bit longer giving me a few more minutes lie in. It is pricelessly amusing hearing my daughter feed lunch to her rag dolls and teddies pretending to be mummy. But it is how she has learned to put herself to sleep – a learned behaviour which can be repeated in the middle of the night by herself, resulting in happy nights for both of us.



Understanding sleep would be meaningless if one doesn't understand a baby's personality. Megan Faure analyses babies into four categories: the social butterfly – who finds it difficult to sleep with all the stimuli around, the settled baby – one who adjusts to falling asleep and sleep routine easily, the slow-to-warm baby – who really does things at her pace and finally the sensitive baby – who is just sensitive to everything that is going around and just won't sleep! My second child is a sensitive baby who found it hard to process all that went on around him and things just fell apart for him most of the time. To make matters worse, he was an unusually gassy baby with severe colic, and the long periods of crying just made him even more bloated. The downward spiral continued for seven long months but it was time to put an end to it!

Whilst sleep training, especially if the baby is older, starting to differentiate environments and knows that crying wins the battle, choose two to three quiet weeks with fewer evening/night activities and at the usual sleeping environment. Start with the Almighty's name and

do not waver. The two main common methods of sleep training (explained in depth in numerous books and online literature) are gradual withdrawal and controlled crying. Controlled crying is my least preferred method, but one that can work instantly. Due to my son's sensitive personality and his unbeatable relentless crying situation, we had to go cold turkey. With the gradual method, the environmental changes such as gradually moving further and further away would have been too much for him to deal with. A controlled environment with no noise, minimal light and away from his older sister, was necessary to give him the opportunity to learn to self-sleep. I cringe every time I think about the day he cried himself to sleep, but it really did it! Life has been so much easier and happier for all of us since, he doesn't seem very tired all the time and has since been able to engage in play and desensitise himself to people and environment. For my daughter, the gradual method worked just fine. She was too happy to engage in her cot environment to notice that on the fourth day I was actually behind the door waiting for her to go to sleep.

How much stimulation we require to optimise our engagement and performance in activities can be traced back to our nervous systems. It is believed that if one has an under-active nervous system, they will require more stimulation to reach their activation stage, and vice versa for an overactive nervous system. This is quite important concept, which brings me to emphasise that one successful way to enabling your child to sleep peacefully and long periods is to control their environment, and the stimulation they receive from it. Using Megan Faure's categories, a social butterfly who thrives on lots of stimulation probably has an under-active nervous system and therefore may require a longer time to shake off their excitement and energy to descend to a calm state, i.e. an increased winding down time. Where as, a sensitive child with an overactive nervous system will require maximum control of environment to let him fall asleep. Light and sound should be well controlled to create a conducive sleeping environment. In a busy and noisy household use some soothing background sounds and nothing beats the beautiful Qur'an and dua recitations. Soon your baby will get accustomed to listening to the recitation and the

outside noise will become secondary stimuli. Where possible, night time sleep should be in a dark room with few disruptions, as darkness stimulates the production of melatonin (and subsequently serotonin) – the well being hormones in our body. Blackout lining and blinds are readily available and a must-have during the long light days, alternatively portable blackout blinds come very handy for holidays or visiting family.

Both my kids have been very sensitive to variation in temperature during their sleep. Inevitably, the blankets get kicked off not long after they are tucked in, they could be spending long periods uncovered and feeling cold which easily wakes them up.

Sleeping bags such as grobags are excellent to ensure one achievement of peaceful nights. Another thing I have noticed is that terry cot sheets are warmer than cotton sheets, an extra layer of fleece or terry blanket securely tucked on top of the bed sheet or a mattress protector helps keep babies warmer for longer. Do refer to the recommended temperature and tog guidance as babies are poor temperature regulators and can easily overheat. The other obstacles like teething and short-term illnesses are probably my worst enemies as a mum. The pain and discomfort from teething can be so intense that it wakes babies up and makes it difficult to sleep. There are lots of over the counter medications but hardly any have worked for my kids. Its just one of those things makes you cringe as a mum and you're left to let them just get on with it. Short-term illnesses like coughs, colds, raised temperature are also very common especially during the colder months. Remember to use any analgesics at least half an hour before bedtime so they have started taking effect when it is sleep time.

Wind and colic are also huge obstacles in keeping babies awake. I could probably write pages and pages on colic from my utter wretchedness and despair after having seen my son cry endlessly in the evenings for the first six months. Whatever works for you and your baby, be it gripe water or tummy play, start at least an hour before bedtime. I have heard of a hadith of our Holy Prophet (SAWW) that sleeping a baby on their right relieves them of gas and wind easily but I haven't found a validated written source. Prayers of a mother give a few excellent duas and ayats to recite in case of colic, which have unflinching effects.

Both my kids often retreat back to not wanting to fall asleep by themselves. During those off days I try and reinforce the same sleep training method or simply give in and enjoy the moment when they fall asleep in my arms. When they just won't go to sleep in the middle of the night, we bring them to our bed so they know we are there to comfort them. However, before it becomes a habit we slip them back into their routine. There is no easy way to achieve a happy sleep routine. All different factors like baby's personality, baby versus adult biological sleeping clocks, environmental stimulation and the various obstacles, which if controlled and refracted properly can form a beautiful rainbow. Perhaps that is why with all the other challenges of bringing up a child, the Almighty has granted Jannat under our feet. I cherish the priceless moments when my arms become the safe haven for my babies to fall asleep and applaud myself when they are able to make themselves feel safe in their own beds.

“Our Kids Say the Funniest Things...”

“Mummy, when we talk, where are the speech bubbles?”

Ruqayyah: Whose birthday party are we going to?

Mum: Arif uncles.

Ruqayyah: How old is he going to be?

Mum: 40 years old.

Ruqayyah: That's a lot of old!

Two 3 yr olds playing with the farm set in nursery. One picks up the farmer and says to her friend, “I'll be the pharmacist and you be the lady.”



Hanah: Papa is getting old.

Mum: Umm....ok.

Hanah: So will we get a new one?

Mum: Well what do you think?

Hanah: I think we should keep him and maybe he'll become okay again.

On a long drive, mum and all the children are praying their surahs.

Zainab: Mummy, why do we have to pray surahs?

Mum (in an American accent): We pray all these surahs for safety, to ask Allah to keep us safe, because we're 'musalman'

Zainab: (flexing her arms) and I'm 'muscle woman'!!

While playing with his little sister, 6 year-old Husayn was getting upset she was using up all the blocks. Watching this, mum gently reminded him: I can see you're getting upset, what should you remember to pray right now?.....

Allahumma....

Husayn: **Allahumma wa malaikathu yu salloona alan nabi.**

Struggling to keep a straight face, mum: **Allahumma ma'as sabireen (Allah S.W.T is with the patient ones)**

Kids Quotes:

“They didn't see it -- it was all cut off!” -- 2 year old son, when his mother was asked how his grandparents liked his new haircut!

“I didn't look much -- I've only got little eyes!” -- 7 year old, about to be scolded for peeking at her Eid presents.

“Then drive sloooowwwlllyy!” – 3 yr old daughter, when her mother told her it was STILL 5 hours too early to pick her brother up from school.

“Oh, but can we eat if it's raining?” – Question by a little girl after being explained that when we fast, we cannot eat or drink during the day till the sun has set.

Travel Focus

Camping - Caravan Style

By Tehseen Mustafa

When I initially told my family I had booked a 'caravan holiday' I had a mixed response. "Will we be sleeping in a tent mummy?" asked my oldest child; "I don't do communal showers" responded my husband whilst raising his eyebrows.

Then I began to think, were my childhood memories of staying in a cosy caravan along with all the facilities needed for self-catering better than the actual reality of it all? After all, I had grown up, travelled the world and tasted the luxury of five star accommodations. What if all my memories were really about the fun-filled times of a family holiday as opposed to the reality of a **BRITISH** break complete with bad weather and overcrowding?

I had booked the holiday with Tesco points during the May half terms holidays - our destination, East Yorkshire for 4 nights. The caravan park was nestled in a lovely green field and had beautiful beach views. On arrival, we were welcomed by staff that were friendly and then shown to our caravan. The caravan was clean, airy and of a very good standard. The children were especially pleased with their own room complete with two single beds and a little cupboard for their things. The rest of the accommodation consisted of a master bedroom, a living area, open plan kitchen and a bathroom.

Like any self-catering holiday - planning needed to be meticulous, OR so I thought! Caravan parks are often situated in areas away from town and do not have much in the way of places to eat within the site. However, where we were, not only was there a fish and chip shop but a local supermarket for essentials and a couple of restaurants! In any case, I decided to make a detailed list of things I would need from

breakfast items to snacks including the all important thermos for 'chai'. I marinated and froze steak and fish, bought 'throw away' barbeques and added a few cooking utensils, 'just-in-case'.

I later found out that depending on the caravan site, big supermarkets will often deliver groceries to your door and save you the hassle of carrying food for a 4-hour plus journey. We also realised, once we began to explore, that coffee shops existed on the beach front and while we sat sipping 'chai' out of a thermos the old fashioned way, the little old ladies in the vicinity had moved on and were carrying Costa cups!

There were many sites to see in and around East Yorkshire. During our time there we visited the biggest aquarium in Europe and a (confectionary) rock making factory, where the children were able to see how rocks are made and given the opportunity to make their own. Very near the caravan site was a large farm with play areas and trails and a short drive away, a beautiful haven for migrant wildlife called Spurn's point.

Although a British holiday is not entirely comparable to holidaying abroad as the weather can be unpredictable (we had sunshine all the way!) and the beaches are not as good as the Mediterranean or Middle East, caravan holidays do have their pros. It was a fairly inexpensive way to holiday and could be done for a short period of time. Surprisingly, we found we were able to spend more quality time with the children - especially in the evenings where activities were limited - playing board games and catching up on the days activities.

I would definitely say it was a holiday my family enjoyed - in fact after seeing the portable caravans with tents attached where people were camping 'properly' my boys were fascinated. "Mummy, we want to



do that next time!" they exclaimed. I guess the only difficulty with that would be getting round the communal showers!

A few points to consider!

- Check the facilities available in the caravan - especially important is individual room heating.
- Star rating - Some Bronze accommodations allow pets to stay and so it maybe worth paying a little more to stay in caravans that have not been previously used by animals.
- Find out what activities there are to do in and around the site.
- Evening activities could be limited so packing a variety of board games is often a good idea.
- Take scooters or bikes are there are often trails or mapped out bike routes that can be done.



Product Reviews

Plasma Car

Al-Ghadeer Azan Clock

Growing up in the Middle East, the one thing I sorely missed when I moved to the West was the sound of the Azan when it was namaaz time. Not only did it prevent me from 'forgetting' it was namaaz time, it was spiritually uplifting to hear. Having resigned myself to the fact that my children would not grow up with this beautiful and melodic call to prayer around them, I was more than a little happy when I was gifted the Shi'a Azan clock. With pre-programmed timings for 1,500 cities that are easy to adjust if necessary, a choice to have the Azan for the prayers that you want (e.g. at Fajr, Zohr and Maghrib only), daily alarm function, a hijra and Gregorian calendar function as well as temperature display and yet more extra features, this is one product that should be a part of every household!



Boys love playing outdoors and the Plasma car is ideal for them (not to say the girls can't have fun too!). It is one of the coolest ride on toys I have seen for a while. It has won countless awards since it has become more popular.

The car has 6 wheels but, the front 2 are only for stability and don't even touch the ground. They are used in case the rider goes over something like a curb or object on the ground. The next 2 wheels move when the rider turns the steering wheel and cause the PlasmaCar to pull forward. Since the 2 wheels are at the back of the actual steering wheel, physics make them propel forward using Newton's "action/reaction" law.

The car works best on a flat surface like tile. But, it works fine on flat pavement outside too. It is for ages 3 and up and costs around 40 pounds.



Canon EOS 600d

Everyone always told me that if you want a high quality, dependable SLR, then the Canon EOS range is a good place to start.

The 3-inch display is larger than average and high quality, offering more than a million pixels of detail, as well as natural colours and good contrast levels. It's great for viewing your snaps after you've shot them.

The 600D offers a good optical viewfinder to squint through. It has approximately 95 per cent coverage and features a useful selection of read-out data, including auto-focus points and ISO sensitivity.

The 600D is relatively easy to use and comes with many features that will be appreciated by casual snappers and those seeking to learn the ropes as they go. A full auto mode is available. Many of the camera's functions come with useful on-screen explanations to help you make the most of what it has to offer.



Paddle Pak

I'm sure many of us think fab ride-on suitcases for children when we think about Trunki, but they have added to their product range! One of those products is the PaddlePak, which is a very cool fish shaped swimming bag that I think every child would delight in carrying to the pool.

It is made with a waterproof, lightweight and durable material but it's the clever fastening at the top that impressed me. With three twists the wide top opening is quickly fastened with a safety buckle, making sure the contents don't leak. I know from experience how annoying soggy swimming bags can be when left on the back seat of the car! It also features a neoprene tail fin which doubles as a dry pocket, **hi-visibility** reflective trim to keep sunglasses or goggles close to hand.

PaddlePak is available for around 20 pounds.



Program, aperture-priority and shutter-priority modes are all available, as is full manual control. These settings are all selectable via the top-mounted dial, along with 'auto depth of field', portrait, landscape, macro, movie and other modes. The camera's menus are all logically arranged and easy to navigate.

The Canon EOS 600d is around £630 for the body only and £700 for the camera together with an 18-55mm lens; the 600D is reasonably priced for a fairly high-end dSLR.