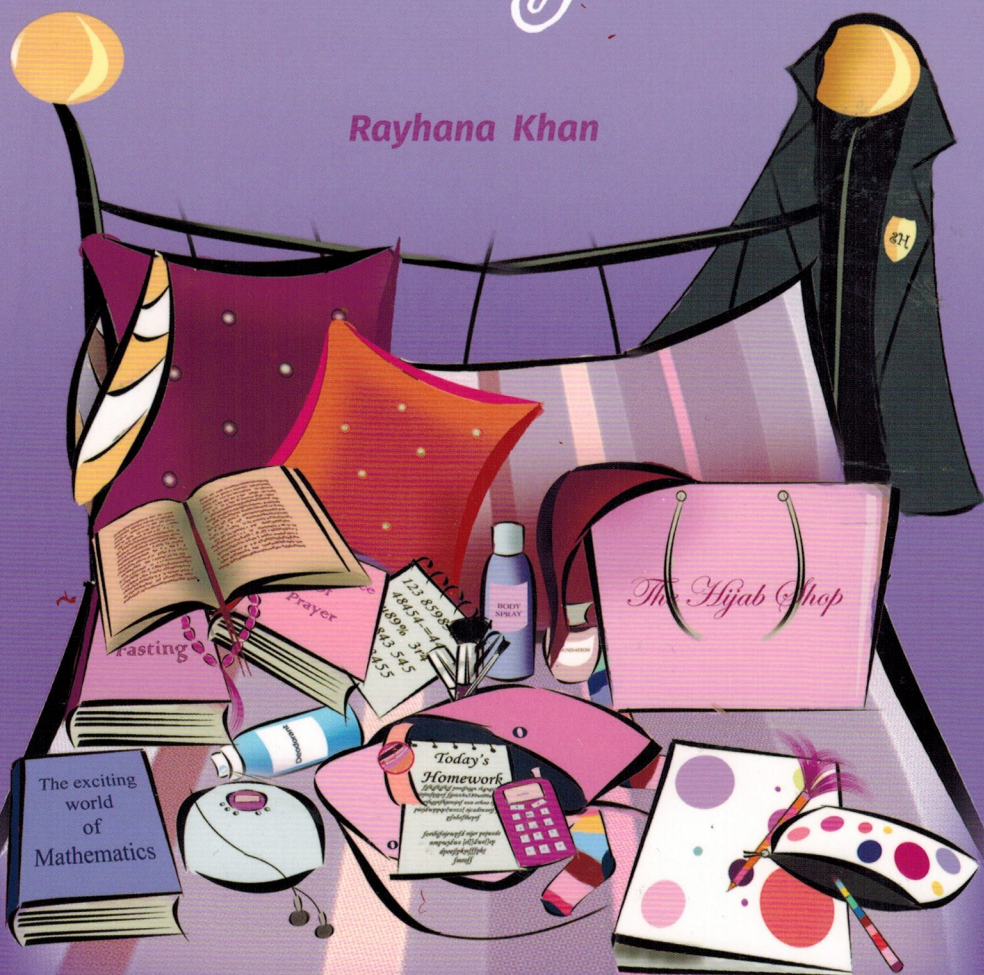


A Muslim Girl's Guide to
Life's Big Changes

Rayhana Khan



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يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

Ya muqallibal quloob, thabbit qalbee 'ala deenik

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

To my younger sister, As salaam alaikum,

Congratulations! You are no longer considered a little girl but rather a growing adult!

I am sure that you no longer 'play' anymore and are now wanting to spend more and more time with your friends, go shopping with them for the latest 'must-haves' and having fun with them. After all, this is an exciting time in your life.

Sometimes, however, you may find that life at school with your friends can be very different to your life at home and this can lead to some confusion about what to do. This does not mean that growing up has to be boring for you. What it does mean is that as a young Muslim lady growing up in a non-Muslim environment, there are many things that you need to be aware of in order to become a fine Muslim woman, insha'Allah, and this is where the challenge lies for you.

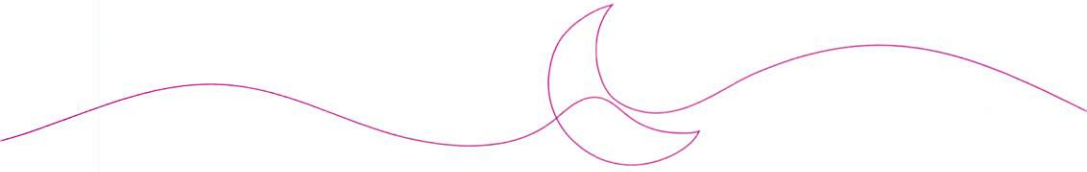
I hope that this book will help you in the years ahead by tackling some of the important issues that may affect you.

Take care and always remember my advice to you as an older sister who has been through what you are about to experience: 'Stop, think and consider all that you do in your life.'

May Allah guide you through the coming years and make them easy for you. Ameen.

Wasalaam, *Rayhana*

What do we Believe in?



What is Islam all about?

It is a complete way of life. You see, Allah has created human beings and He knows best how we function. He has given us His book, the **Qur'an**, which tells us how to live a good life. He also sent down the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and we have his example or **sunnah** to guide us in the form of the **hadith**.

Allah has told us the rules and regulations that we must stick by so that we can be happy both as individuals, and also as a society. Sometimes it might seem like there are a lot of rules and we might not understand why we have to do something. But we trust that, because Allah made us, He knows best.

Allah has explained that the life of this world (**dunya**) is temporary, but there is a life after death (**akhirah**), which is forever. Our actions in this life will determine what our eternal life will be like in the akhirah and our aim is to enter **Jannah** (Paradise).

So you must be very careful about how you spend your time in this world and the consequences of your actions, both for yourself and for others, because Allah is always watching. If you follow Allah's commands, then He will be pleased with you. However hard it may seem, Allah's pleasure is more important than the pleasure of anyone else. So whenever you do something, the first thing you must ask yourself is whether it will please Allah.

I know that this may not always be easy. When you look around you, no matter where you are – on the streets, on TV, on social media – you will see that the world has become a place where there is very little modesty (*haya*) and consideration for others – two qualities which are very important in Islam. People are only interested in themselves and doing what pleases them without thinking about others. You can see these things through people's behaviour, language, actions and through what they are wearing.

You may ask yourself, 'Who is to blame?' Is it us, society or is it the media? The answer is a combination of these things but, as Muslims, we should avoid the temptations that we face all around us – temptations that have been put in our way by Shaytan, who makes what is going on around us seem attractive and glamorous.

In the midst of all this, it is easy to forget what Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, did for us. He spent his life establishing rights for all human beings, particularly women and the poor; spreading Allah's word of justice and compassion;

being mocked and even tortured for doing this just so that we could have the privilege of practising Islam. He worried about us and shed tears for us. So how can we show our love for this great and noble man? By continuing to live according to the Qur'an and sunnah. The five basic principles or pillars of Islam are:

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

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

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

Scientists can boast about their achievements, but even they haven't been able to figure out the whole complex and beautiful universe that Allah has created.

The opposite of tawheed is **shirk**, which means not believing in the Oneness of Allah, and associating Him with someone or something else. This is the most grave and unforgivable sin in Islam.

To express our gratitude to Allah, we are required to pray or perform **salah** five times a day. Salah is an opportunity for you to take some 'time out' from whatever you are doing and remember

Allah and His blessings upon you. It is your chance to get closer to Allah and away from the stresses of this world.

You will need to perform at least one salah while you are at school, which is probably the Dhuhr or midday salah. Most schools have a small room that you can offer salah in, or if not, they will be able to provide you a space if you ask politely.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said that,

"The key to Paradise is Salah and the key to Salah is cleanliness."

(Tirmidhi)

There is no excuse for not offering your salah (except if you are menstruating – see chapter 7). It may be easy to forget when you are catching up on the latest gossip at lunchtime with your friends. This is another reason for keeping good company with those that respect that you need to pray and can remind you to perform salah if you forget.

You must perform salah even if you are on a school trip, although you can shorten it while you are travelling. Ask the teacher politely for a quiet space.

Once a year, the month of fasting or Ramadan comes around when we fast (**sawm**) from dawn to sunset. Ramadan really is the highlight of the Muslim calendar. Just before Ramadan comes around, it is often a time when the heart is feeling heavy, the body is tired and the mind is trying to make sense of life and then Allah sends us this special month to re-set, to re-focus and

re-evaluate our real purpose in this world. Ramadan allows us to hit the pause button on 'normal' life and worries; it is almost a spring clean of the mind, instead of nourishing our bellies we feed the soul.

This month is a blessing from Allah to Muslims and, in this month, we put aside some of the pleasures of this world and take some time out to connect with Allah a bit more, to think about the things that Allah has given us and how fortunate we are. By not eating or drinking during the day, we can understand what it feels like to be hungry. This makes us appreciate those that are hungry every day through no choice of their own and it makes us grateful for our blessings from Allah. Sawm also helps us develop self-control and discipline, which are two very important qualities to have.

As well as not eating and drinking during daylight hours, we must also be even more careful than usual about not lying, arguing or back-biting.

Again, it is very important that you are careful about observing sawm (except if you are menstruating – see chapter 7) and taking advantage of all the blessings that this month has to offer. Ramadan is a great opportunity to form new habits and to break old ones so really try your very hardest to persevere and to show kindness to all. Ramadan brings with it hope as we know that Allah loves us even more when we are in a fasting state. It is a month for us to ask from Allah so be sure to raise those hands and know that nothing is impossible or too much when asking from Allah!

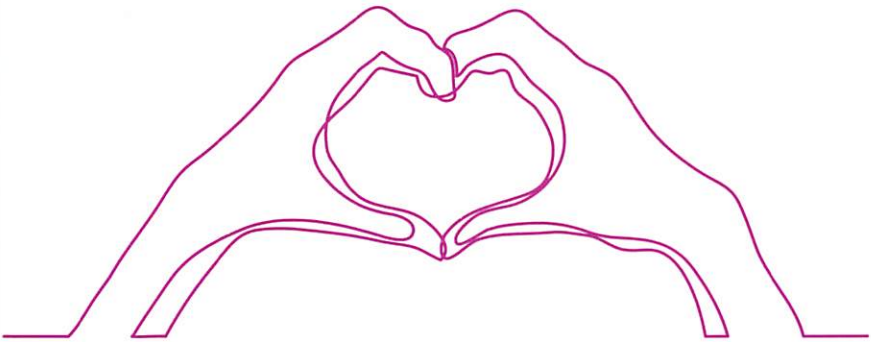
You should also try to avoid going out unnecessarily in this month no matter how tempting it may seem, and use this month to reflect more about Allah and learn something that perhaps you didn't know about before.

Ramadan can be challenging but if you view this month as a guest in your home and your heart, putting in the extra effort now will be beneficial for the rest of the year. Ramadan is a great time to work on your mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and acts as an all-round detox so be sure to fully immerse yourself in the blessings of this month before it leaves us after thirty short days.

If you take care of your salah and your fasts then Allah will take care of you, insha'Allah, and what better friend and helper than Allah?



Friends and School Life



School life is often fun as well as challenging. You will build a network of friends from all backgrounds, cultures, religions and meet many people with differing opinions from your own.

The hours spent at school can often be testing ones as you are surrounded not only by your peers but also those who are older than you.

As you go further and further into your school life, you may start to feel that the people you hang out with are your newfound 'family' since you spend most of your waking day with them.

As time passes and your friendship group grows, you want to start looking like them, talking like them and even walking like them, so that you can fit into the group. You may begin to dress as your friends do, enjoy the same things as them and hang out in the same places as they do.

'So what's wrong with wanting to be like my friends?' you ask.

Well, this depends on who your friends are. If your friends are out just to have fun – fun at parties with alcohol and music and boys – if they are often unkind and disrespectful to others, then you must ask yourself if your friends are good for you. How far would you go to fit in with them?

It is really important to choose the correct friendship group, as friends can either help you be your best or bring out the worst in you.

As time passes you will notice that your friends' views and ideas are having an impact on you. They begin to influence the way you look, speak and behave. It is guaranteed that your friends will leave a lifetime impression on you, so be mindful of whom you choose to be friends with.

The qualities you should be looking for in a true friend are honesty, and loyalty; someone who knows right from wrong and people who can overcome the pressures of looking and sounding like everyone else. You should spend time with girls who are concerned about how they behave more than how they look, who know that every action impacts on their overall character.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

"A person is likely to follow the faith of his friend, so look to whom you befriend."

(Abu Dawud)

Your peers have the unique quality of being able to mould you into something other than what perhaps is being taught at home. This may result in you leading two lives – one which is in line with your family’s ideas and another which makes you popular amongst your group of friends. We will look at this in more detail in the Double Act chapter. If you are true to yourself, you will know whether you are losing your true identity or not because you will not feel comfortable in the company of certain people.

Part of growing up is about having your independence and freedom to be able to spend time with your friends outside of school time. There is no harm in this so long as you abide by some simple rules. You must always seek permission from your parents* before going out, and also inform them of who you will be with and what you will be doing. You must ensure that you return home at the time they tell you to. It is really important that you don’t break your parents’ trust.

Everyone experiences pressure now and again when in the company of others and you may often find yourself torn between fitting in with your friends and practising your religion. Having the strength to fight peer pressure can be a difficult thing. We are not perfect but we have been given the intelligence to know right from wrong. We are all capable of fighting temptation and standing up for what we believe in and doing the right thing.

*We are sensitive to and conscious of the fact that our breadth of young readers belong to diverse family structures, consisting either of parents, a single parent, or carer(s). Throughout this book, when we say ‘parent’, we respectfully acknowledge and intend to represent all of the above.

How to fight peer pressure:

- ♥ Surround yourself with good role models as friends. Remember a small group of friends is far better than a whole gang of girls who will make you feel pressured into being someone you are not.
- ♥ Be proud and confident of who you are and what you believe in. Don't feel intimidated by other girls.
- ♥ Think twice about your actions so you can be sure you are doing the right thing, and support your friends to do the right thing as well.
- ♥ Talk and get support from older friends, aunts, cousins, siblings who will understand what you are going through.
- ♥ Always turn to Allah who will steer you in the right direction. The best way to ease your mind and keep you on the right path is to call to Allah in the form of du'a, du'a and more du'a.



How are you Spending Your Time?



Your friends may now be spending time at parties or even going to clubs where there is alcohol and smoking/vaping and where girls and boys freely mix. It is very important that you do not go anywhere where these things are happening, even if you do not drink alcohol or smoke or spend time with boys, even if this is at a friend's house. This is not a **halal** (permitted) environment to be in.

I remember that when I was at secondary school (not so long ago!), the school council organised a massive ball as a send-off after our exams. There was a tent hired for the occasion, with a DJ invited to play. Being an all-girls school, we were allowed to invite a boy to school as our dance partner. All the girls were choosing what they would wear and where they would get their hair and make-up done.

As tickets were being sold for the big night, many of my friends tried to persuade me to attend by telling me that I would be missing out on the biggest event in the social calendar and what harm would it do if I went and didn't have alcohol and brought my elder brother. Alhamdulillah, Allah gave me the courage and strength to say 'no'.

You may, by all means, go out with your friends with your parents' permission. You may decide to go to a halal restaurant for lunch, enjoy a bit of retail therapy or go to each other's houses, but always know what is halal fun and what is haram fun and be prepared to stand up and say no to anything that feels wrong or you know to be haram. Always be mindful of your salah at the correct times. Islam does not say that you shouldn't have fun, but you should enjoy yourself in a good way that does not hurt you, others or compromise your values.

Islam values education and knowledge very much for both girls and boys, therefore it is important that you work hard and do your best at school. There is no need to get sidetracked with the latest fashion, or boys, or your social life. They will also not help you in your studies and it is important that you give attention to your schoolwork.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

"Part of someone's being a good Muslim is her leaving alone that which does not concern her."

(Tirmidhi)

When studying or relaxing be mindful of needing to listen to music. Unfortunately, most lyrical music these days contains bad language, explicit words and deals with matters that are not appropriate for Muslims. Try not to have these downloaded on your device. If you feel you would like to listen to something to relax you, then there are so many beautiful **nasheeds** (non-instrumental vocals) available now that are thought-provoking, really touching and are a better choice of 'music'.

After a hard day of school and homework or revision, it can be so tempting to just flop on your bed or sofa and watch TV or box sets or scroll mindlessly through online videos. It doesn't take much effort and it is harmless, isn't it?

Unfortunately, a lot of online content and TV programmes contain explicit scenes, violence or bad language. At the very best, they show young people being disrespectful to elders or people wearing immodest clothing. It is so easy for the hours to pass in this mindless way and all of this content does have an effect on the way you think and act. There is more alternative halal content on TV and social media that you can engage with in moderation.

The same applies to the internet, which can be an excellent source of information for general knowledge and schoolwork. However, it is so easy to get sidetracked and click on websites, ads and enter chat rooms where you don't know who you are talking to. Be careful that you know what you are clicking, where you are logging on, and remember never to give out personal information no matter how safe it seems.

You are in this world to please Allah, therefore, minimise the things which will steer you away from being close to Allah. There is lots of scope for fun and relaxation within that. Always respect your parents' wishes with regards to where you should go, what you should buy and how much time you can spend on your devices and on which sites.

As with everything, it is important to strike a balance.



How you can Become Closer to Allah



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

Reading and Understanding the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the Word of Allah which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, through the Angel Jibra'il. It

is a guide given to us by Allah and so it contains plenty of useful and relevant advice about how best to live our lives. By reading it, understanding what it says and acting upon it you will become closer to Allah and, insha'Allah, a better Muslim.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

The person who has nothing of the Qur'an inside her is like an empty or ruined house."

(Tirmidhi)

Even reading a few lines of Arabic regularly every day with translation, you will find that you

can finish the whole Qur'an at least twice in a year. It is also important to memorise small chapters from the Qur'an (together with their meaning) so that you can recite them in your salah with understanding.

Du'a (Supplication)

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

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

You must not lose hope if your du'a is not answered immediately in the way you want. If that were the case, it would

mean Allah would become our servant waiting for our requests instead of our Master. For your du'a to be answered, you have to work towards becoming closer to Allah, to make sure that your food and drink is halal and to try your best in whatever it is you are asking for. For example, if you are asking to get good exam results, this would mean that you have to try your hardest to get good grades as well as asking Allah for help.

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

Dhikr

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

You can do dhikr at any time of the day, while you are walking, sitting or even when you can't sleep. You don't need to have **wudu** (ritual ablution). You can spend as little as a few seconds reciting a few words either in your mind, on your fingers or on a **tasbeeh** (prayer beads). The following words carry a great reward:

SubhanAllah - Glory be to Allah

Alhamdulillah - All praise and thanks is due to Allah

La ilaha illallah - There is no god but Allah

Allahu Akbar - Allah is the Greatest

You can also remember Allah by His 99 Beautiful Names. Why not spend some time regularly looking these up? You will get to know Allah better, love Him more and want to do more to please Him when you realise just how Merciful, Loving and Just He is.

Following the Sunnah

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

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

Sending Blessings upon the Prophet, peace be upon him

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

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

Sadaqah (Voluntary acts)

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

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

"...Sadaqah destroys sins as water extinguishes fire..."

(Mishkat)

Seeking Forgiveness (Istighfar)

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

When you seek sincere forgiveness and Allah accepts it, He removes all the evidence of your wrong action, so you have a clean record. It's as if our good deeds are written in permanent

ink and our wrong deeds in pencil so that they can be erased when we follow it up with a good action!

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

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

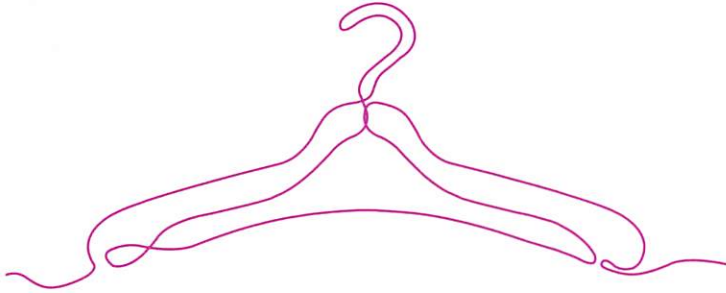
- ♥ Feel genuinely sorry
- ♥ Say, 'Astaghfirullah' – I seek forgiveness from Allah
- ♥ Try your best not to repeat that mistake again.

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

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



What are you Wearing?



If you look at any of the magazines for teen girls or for women, then you will see glossy pictures and read articles about the latest beauty products, trendiest styles of clothing, must-have fashion accessories and latest hairstyles of the season. Turn to any social media channel and there are literally hundreds of selfies, images and videos of impossibly 'perfect' women that the rest of us desire to look like.

So we feel that the only way we can have any acceptability is to try hard to beautify ourselves for the attention of others, or to feel like we fit in. Then we post the perfect picture of our beautified selves online, gaining confidence from all the likes and comments. But we equally have our confidence defeated when we don't get the type of attention we desire from our followers. This is the addictive, never-ending cycle of online beauty. Make sure you dress modestly, ensuring that you do not wear tight-fitted clothes (i.e. covering your chest, arms and buttocks well, and advisably your hair too).

Perhaps you think that it is uncool, unflattering and old-fashioned to wear loose and covering clothing. Anyway, what could be the harm in dressing in the latest fashions and wearing make-up, you may think. After all, everyone else is doing it and it makes you feel good about yourself, so how can that be a bad thing?

You might ask whether the way you dress is all that important – after all, you perform your salah regularly and fast every Ramadan. Surely it's what's inside that counts. Well, a part of having faith and loving Allah is by pleasing Allah in the way you dress.

So, let's start by looking at what the Qur'an and the hadith say about how a Muslimah should dress and come across.

This depends on who you are with. If you are with Muslim ladies, very young children and **mahram** men (mahrams are men that you can never get married to and these are your grandfather, father, father's brother, mother's brother, your brother and nephew), then you can wear perfume, make-up, jewellery and trendy clothes, but make sure everything except your face, neck, hair, hands and feet are covered.

If there are **non-mahrams** present (that includes your male cousins), even in your own home, or you are going out, then you should dress modestly and stay in their company idly for a minimal amount of time. These are the basic requirements of **hijab** according to Surat an-Nur ayah 31 and various ahadith.

So when you go out, you should check to see if your clothes are not short, tight or see through; whether everything except your face and hands are covered; whether you are wearing make-up and/or perfume. It is also important that your dress and hair do not imitate that of males. This also means that you should not get changed in front of anyone at home or in a changing room for sport or when trying on clothes in a shop.

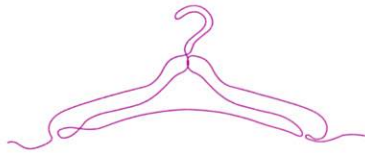
So why are the rules for Islamic dress so detailed? You see, by dressing in a particular way, you give an impression of yourself to other people: fellow Muslims, non-Muslims and boys. What about the value of modesty on us, personally?

By dressing Islamically:

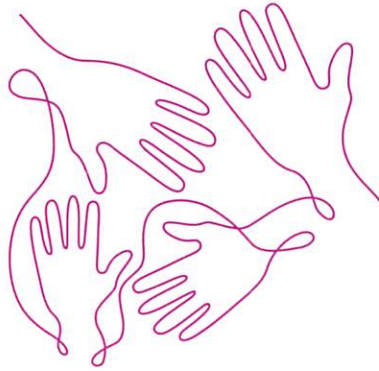
- ♥ You are identifying yourself as a Muslim to your fellow Muslims.
- ♥ You are showing non-Muslims that you are proud to be a Muslim.
- ♥ You are showing people that you are an intelligent and independent young lady who is not pressured into 'looking like everyone else' and that you want to be respected for your personality and your brains rather than your body.
- ♥ You are effectively telling members of the opposite sex that you are a respectable girl not one that tries to attract male attention.
- ♥ Most importantly, Allah will be pleased with you.

I realise this is not easy, especially if your family do not dress Islamically. In fact, why not be a role model to your friends and family, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, who will respect you and perhaps be inspired by your strength, character and ability to be your own, independent, free-thinking person?

As Muslim girls, we should not be embarrassed to dress modestly. So next time you open your wardrobe, think about how you wish to be seen by the world and how you want Allah to see you.



How are you Behaving?



We have just looked at how appearances send out impressions about you, but equally important are your language and behaviour. There is not much point just dressing Islamically if that doesn't come with an Islamic character. So what does Islam say about how to behave with different people?

Parents

Parents are given the highest respect in Islam. You must never ever be rude to them, shout at them or answer back to them. You might see your friends or young people on TV or social media being rude to their parents, but this is very damaging and wrong. Your parents have done so much for you that you should not hurt their feelings. Your parents love you very much and are always concerned about what is right for you. You should always try to please them, provided of course that what they ask you to do does not go against Islam.

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

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

Teachers

Teachers are like your parents in school. Islam tells us to always respect them and to value them. Avoid answering back to them or making sarcastic comments to them or about them just to impress your friends. Teachers are valuable people. Building a good relationship with them means you can turn to them for help, support and guidance regarding matters both in and outside of school.

Boys

You may notice that the girls in your class are starting to take an interest in boys now. They are starting to change the way they dress. Islam is very clear that a Muslim girl should have no relationship with a non-mahram boy of any kind or be involved in friendships groups where boys and girls mix freely.

Some girls spend a long time sending out signals, trying to make themselves look attractive for boys and trying to catch their attention, in real life and also online. Then once they have his attention, they get into tricky situations and are left feeling

emotional and upset at the very least, if not hurt and in serious trouble. They do this because they think that they need the attention of boys to feel good. They think that it is alright to use their body to have fun with boys.

As a beautiful Muslimah, you do not need a boy to tell you that you look nice or that you are attractive. Your body is far too precious to be used for fun and games by someone who does not know its value. Your body is Allah's gift to you, you must look after it and that means keeping it safe and protected.

General

You must always be very polite and respectful to anyone that is older than you, regardless of their race or religion. Equally you must be very kind to those who are younger than you. Be mindful of your emotions and how you deal with negativity in your life. After all, Islam is a kind and gentle religion.

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

It is important that you do not use bad language at any time, that you do not say anything offensive or hurtful when it comes to others. It can be so easy to be drawn into talking about others (backbiting), spreading rumours and gossiping for fun. However, this is strictly forbidden be it online or in person.

As well as showing love and respect to our fellow human beings, Islam also teaches us to treat animals and the environment with the same respect. It is our duty to treat all animals (including insects that don't harm) with love and to ensure that no harm comes to them while they are in our care.

Because Allah has created the world and all that is in it, we must not abuse our surroundings by creating unnecessary pollution and we must try not to be wasteful of resources such as water and paper.

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

Let's become more mindful about:

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

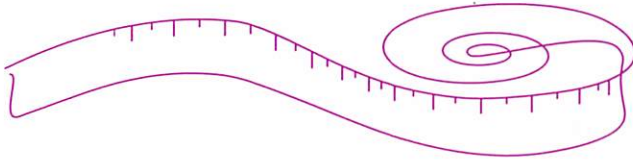
The wives and daughters of the Prophet, may Allah be pleased with them, all led a very simple life with very few possessions. We can be closer to these ideals by adopting a simpler lifestyle.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

"The most beloved of Allah's servants to Allah are those with the best manners."

(Bukhari)

What's Happening to Your Body?



You will find that your body is changing now that you are a young lady. This phase is called puberty and happens between the ages of 9 and 15 and lasts for between two and four years.

So what are these changes?

You will notice thicker and darker hair growth under your arms (underarm hair) and private parts (pubic hair).

Your breasts will start to enlarge and when this happens it is time to invest in a bra which will support your changing shape as you become more curvy.

The biggest change...

You will start to menstruate or have 'periods' every month. For about seven days each month, you will experience blood flow from your vagina.

When you first start to have periods, your blood flow may be light one month, heavy the next, you may bleed for more or less days each time and you might find yourself feeling all types of emotions. Feeling irritated, a little grumpy and snappy is all normal as your body is experiencing a BIG change from childhood into adulthood. As the months pass, you will notice things beginning to settle down and you learn to manage your symptoms better.

Stomach cramps, light headache and feeling tired and sluggish are all possible symptoms. You may find that you go off your food or even overeat at times, you may have a sudden urge to binge eat or crave more sugar than normal. Your skin may appear oilier, your hair greasy and the odd spot may pop up to greet you too. Your breasts may feel tender and sore and your body temperature may rise. Aaaaaah I hear you scream! Don't panic this is all NORMAL, I promise you. A simple lie-down, a hot water bottle, a nice warm bath followed by a hot drink and an early night will most likely have you feeling more like your old happy self. Hydrating and eating healthy and laying off the greasy fried foods will help too.

After a few months of coming on your period you will begin to know what is normal for you. If something changes and you are worried about anything, speak to an adult who may feel the need to get in touch with your healthcare practitioner. For example, if you experience unbearable constant stomach cramping or super heavy periods then this may need to be looked into further.

It is important to remember that a period is not an illness, nor should it be looked upon as something un-natural or dirty. It is a natural process and a part of growing up and is considered a blessing from Allah.

For the duration of your blood flow, you cannot:

- ✘ perform salah
- ✘ you cannot fast
- ✘ you cannot touch the Qur'an
- ✘ perform tawaf around the Ka'bah (if you are on hajj or 'umra)
- ✘ enter the mosque.

However, you can:

- ♥ send blessings on the Prophet peace be upon him
- ♥ busy yourself in dhikr
- ♥ make lots of du'a.

You should not stop remembering Allah just because you cannot pray salah. You do not have to make up the missed salah, but you must make up any missed fasts of Ramadan at a later date ideally before the next Ramadan.

Having a period and ensuring you don't 'leak' through on to your clothes can be quite daunting, but it need not be if you follow these simple steps:

- ♥ When you start your period make sure you have a pack of period pads that match your level of blood flow. These cleverly slip into your pants and often have sticky glue on the underside of the pad which ensures they stick and

stay put in your underwear. Period pads are designed to catch your blood and prevent your underwear and clothes from becoming blood stained. If you happen to come on at school and don't have a period pad with you, don't feel embarrassed to approach a staff member who can obtain one for you from the school office – take a friend with you if it helps.

- ♥ Be sure to change your period pad regularly. Day 1-2 of your period may be light in colour and flow, day 3-5 may be heavier and the colour of blood will be a darker red. As your period nears the end, the flow will become lighter and lighten in colour from red to a brownish colour. Ensure you change your pad as often as needed as this will get rid of any unpleasant odour. Changing your pad before you sleep at night will ensure that your bedding sheets don't become stained, and you will most likely sleep better too. If you find you have a heavier blood flow at night, you can purchase specific night time pads.
- ♥ When your period pad needs changing, make sure you dispose of this responsibly into the waste bin and NOT down the toilet as this will clog up the system.
- ♥ Hygiene when on your period is important. Wash using water after using the toilet (a practice carried out by Muslims anyway) and take a shower to leave you smelling and feeling fresh. If you wish to feel more secure on days when your bleeding is heavier then you may want to wear two pairs of underwear – no-one will know! You must wash

any clothing that has blood stains on it to purify it just as you would wash clothing with any other stain on it.

So why is this happening?

All of these changes are a blessing from Allah and mark your transition from childhood into adulthood. These changes physically prepare your body to have a baby when you get married, insha'Allah.

Watching your body change can leave you feeling a little unsettled and worried. You may find that you feel a little anxious and self-conscious as you may not be developing at the same rate as your friends.

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

Your body is Allah's gift to you and so you should look after it as best you can because you will return to Allah one day. For example, if you borrow a book from the library, the librarian will expect that you return the book in its original condition, without scribbling in it or bending the pages. In the same way, Allah expects that we will return our body to Him in the best possible condition.

To do this, it is important that you keep your nails short. Many girls like to keep their nails long and manicured but this means that dirt can collect behind the long nails and this is unhygienic especially when you eat. You should also not paint your nails with nail polish as this will invalidate your wudu.

You should remove the hair under your arms and on your private parts regularly, this must be done within a forty day time frame. You may remove the excess hair from your legs, arms, upper lip and chin if you feel it is necessary. There are a number of ways of getting rid of this hair, including plucking (for facial hair), shaving, waxing and using hair removal cream. Always discuss these options with a trusted adult.

It is not allowed in Islam to change your appearance, so this means you must not shape your eyebrows, have hair extensions or any add-on hair pieces, or dye your hair a different colour (apart from using henna or a natural based colouring). You are not allowed to make any marks on your body such as tattoos, even the temporary ones. This includes stick-on dots on the forehead. The only exception to this is the use of henna designs (mehndi) on the hands and feet.

It is important to pay special attention to the mouth as bacteria builds faster here than anywhere else in the body. A **miswak** (soft stick used as a toothbrush) is an excellent way of keeping the mouth clean and smelling fresh.

*Allah has said in
the Qur'an that
He loves the pure
and clean ones
(9:108)*

Personal hygiene is extremely important in Islam. You should try to keep your body as clean as possible by bathing/showering regularly and by doing wudu before salah five times a day. It is sunnah to bathe on a Friday before Dhuhr salah.

Wudu refreshes you and cleans parts of the body that you may not normally think about such as the nostrils and behind the ears. Did you know that if you make wudu regularly, those parts of your body will shine on the Day of Judgement? (Muslim).

At the end of your period, you need to take a special bath or **ghusl** to purify yourself. This is done in a specific way to ensure that the body is completely clean. You cannot begin to pray or fast until you have performed your ghusl correctly. When you perform ghusl, you are not just purifying yourself outwardly but also cleansing your inward self, which insha'Allah will lead to a clean heart and soul.

How to perform ghusl:

Before starting your ghusl you should remove any rings, earrings or other jewellery. This ensures that absolutely no part of the body is left dry during ghusl, otherwise it is not valid.

It is liked by Allah to carry out the following before the ghusl:

1. Begin with the name of Allah and make the intention (**niyah**) while washing your hands up to the wrist.
2. Remove filth (if any) from the body.
3. Wash your private parts.
4. Perform wudu by washing your hands three times, washing your mouth out three times, taking water up your nose three times, washing your face three times, washing from your wrist to your elbow three times (starting with the right side), passing your wet hands over your head once, wiping

your ears inside out once, and finally washing your feet, starting with the right foot.

5. Wash your entire body three times, starting each time from the head, followed by the right side of the body, then the left, till the toes. You should rub your body the first time you wash it.

By the time you have finished your ghusl, there should be no hair or area the size of a hair that is left dry.

When performing your ghusl try your best not to face the direction of the Qiblah or waste water. It is also recommended to cut your finger and toenails as well as removing the underarm and pubic hair.

As well as taking care of our bodies from the outside we also need to take care of our body from the inside.

You can do this by making sure that you are eating a balanced and healthy diet with not too much junk food.

This helps to maintain a healthy weight and may prevent serious problems such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes in later life. You must also take care that everything you eat is halal and **tayyib** (wholesome) and that means that you need to read the labels on food packets to see that they do not contain anything haram, e.g. alcohol, animal gelatine, animal rennet.

As well as eating healthily, you also need to ensure that you take regular exercise. In fact, it is a sunnah to exercise and to

keep fit and healthy. If you go to the gym, a sports club or a swimming pool, then do be careful to make sure you attend women only sessions.

You may be bombarded with images of thin girls on TV and social media and made to feel that you should be on a diet so that you too will look like whatever size is in trend at the moment. What you see on social media is not a normal or realistic way to live. Often images are photoshopped, filters are used to modify and beautify faces, influencers go through the crazy task of having operations, fillers and botox to feel accepted in society and as a result young impressionable young girls like yourself are made to feel inadequate and less than beautiful. In fact, a lot of what you are viewing on Instagram and Snapchat is unrealistic. When it comes to weight, you need to know that thin does not necessarily mean beautiful. If you eat a healthy and balanced diet and get a moderate amount of exercise, then you are beautiful no matter what your shape or size. It is your character that matters. As long as Allah is happy with us, then why should we care what other people think of how we look?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

"Allah does not look at your outward appearance but only your hearts and deeds.

(Muslim)

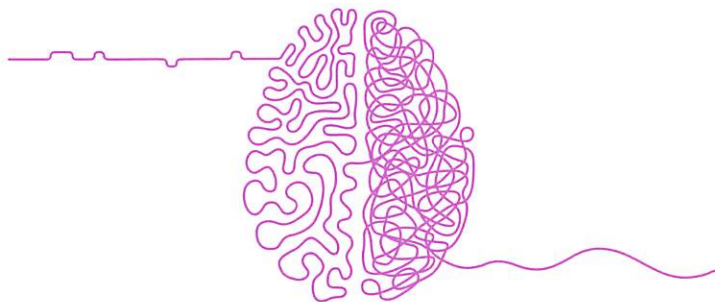
The best way to keep a healthy weight is to eat nutritious food regularly and combine this with a moderate amount of exercise weekly. Some girls eat large quantities of food (binging)

and then throw up or take laxatives (purging) as a way of controlling their weight. Some girls do an excessive amount of exercise to control their weight. Some girls binge when they are hungry, stressed or feeling low and then once they have eaten, they feel guilty and so they purge. The cycle continues. This is called bulimia. It might seem as if this is a harmless way to enjoy your food and not gain weight. Please know that bulimia is a serious condition that needs medical help. It can lead to grave health problems in the future including eroding teeth, weak bones and damaged organs. It will affect your physical health, your mental health and your studies, so please do not be tempted to do this, even occasionally.

Some of the people in your school may smoke, vape, drink alcohol and even take non-prescription drugs (even pills like laxatives or slimming pills that you think might be harmless), thinking that they are mature or cool. But the only thing that they are doing is destroying their bodies and making themselves ill. Drinking makes you lose control of the situation you are in and that is definitely not cool. Smoking discolours your teeth, makes you smell and can often lead to heart disease and cancer – how can that be a good thing?

The more you read up about the dangers and harms of some of these behaviours, the easier it will be to stand up to them and say ‘no’ and respect your body.

Mental Health



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

However, when we find ourselves dipping and feeling really unhappy, full of stress, anxiety, despair and getting irritable with people around us, then this is the time to take note and work on our mental state to get back to feeling better. Some ways in which to do this are:

- ♥ **Talk about your feelings** – Having a good chat with a trusted or family member can be just what is needed to feel better. After all, a problem shared is problem halved

- ♥ **Writing your feelings** – Another great way to release emotions is to keep a journal or diary of your thoughts and feelings on a regular basis. You can choose to keep it private or to show it to someone trusted.

- ♥ **Exercise** – It's all too easy to stay curled up in bed with your phone when you are feeling low. Exercise, even a gentle walk, will help your body create endorphins or 'happy hormones' to make you feel better immediately

- ♥ **Enjoy nature** – Spend time admiring Allah's creation. It might be the local park or just down the road. Really focus on what you can hear, see, smell and feel. When you focus in detail on what is around you, it takes the focus off what is inside you and helps you gain perspective. Just try it. You might like to combine that with drawing or photographing what you see.

- ♥ **Busy yourself with something you enjoy / are good at** – Focus on what makes you happy. Create something. Team up with likeminded people who share your interests and get stuck into a project.

- ♥ **Carry out an act of kindness** – When we do something good for someone else, we in turn feel great about ourselves. We can't help it! So check in on an elderly neighbour or sick relative, offer your services and reap the benefits.

- ♥ **Eat healthy** – There is a strong link between what we eat and how we feel. If we fuel our bodies with nutritious food

and drinks when we feel hungry, then this is a great start to feeling more productive.

- ♥ **Take a break, change your scene** – If you are lucky enough to have extended family nearby or close family friends who would welcome you for an afternoon or a weekend stayover, then do it. Changing your scene, being around different people and letting people fuss over you is a great way to pick yourself up again and make you feel valued.

- ♥ **Step away** – Social media and games are very powerful psychological tools. They are made by people who know how to get you addicted. If being online is draining you and making you unhappy, then step away. Take a break from your devices, block or delete apps, remove comments etc. Do whatever it takes to filter out external influences on your mind until you feel strong enough to handle things again.

- ♥ **Your company** – The company you keep will affect your mood. So surround yourself with respectful, supportive, God-conscious people.

- ♥ **Turn to Allah** – I cannot stress this enough. I might have put this last on the list, but it certainly is the most important and first port of call. Allah loves you multiple times more than even your parents, so turn to Him always. Turn to Him when you want to thank Him, turn to Him when you want to share your happiness, turn to Him when you are feeling sad and overwhelmed and angry and confused. Because He will get it. He will understand. He will listen and He will respond.

*"Remember Me
and I shall
remember you."
(2:152)*

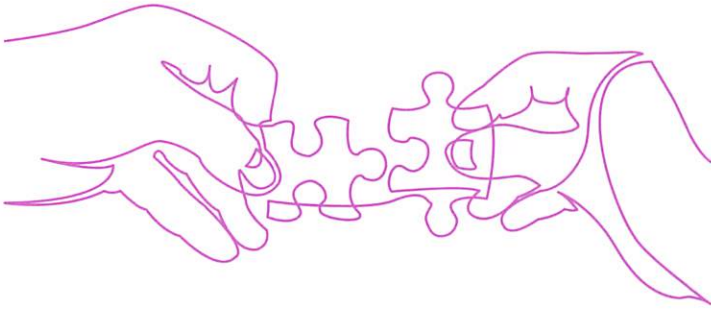
You have to do your bit by keeping firm on praying your salah, making du'a, staying in the state of wudu, busying your tongue with dhikr. That is the deal when Allah says,

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

If you find you are unable to manage your feelings, if you feel like you want to harm yourself or are having overwhelming thoughts, then please let a trusted adult know this. You do not have to manage this alone.



Double Act



With so much conflicting pressure from various quarters to look or behave in a particular way, it can sometimes be much easier to just give in to the pressure and be like the people you happen to be with at the time. This is the ‘chameleon’ Muslimah. At home she is the modestly dressed, soft-spoken and quiet daughter, who performs her salah when her parents ask her to.

But outside the home, when she is with her friends, she wants to feel like she belongs with them. So she whips off her hijab and changes into that tight top she stuffed into her bag just as she was leaving the house. She might be a little louder and less modest in her speech and not so careful about her prayers. Sometimes, it can go further and the ‘chameleon’ Muslimah hides the truth from her parents about where she is, who she is with and what she is doing.

You don’t always need to be out of the house or wearing different clothes to lead two lives. So many young Muslimahs dress and behave according to the Qur’an and sunnah, are proud

of their identity and present a consistent face to everyone they meet. Then it all changes when she logs on to the internet and she morphs into 'cyber' Muslimah.


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

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

So where might 'cyber' Muslimah hang out? YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are all great pastimes for 'cyber' Muslimah. Performing, texting, creating music videos and uploading pouting selfies all seem like harmless fun. Then there are the chat rooms and forums to get to know new people in and catch up on all the gossip or connect with people who actually get you as opposed to your lame family. All this time, 'cyber' Muslimah's parents are happy because they think their dear daughter is glued to the computer screen slaving over her latest assignment.

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

Ask yourself: Would you be happy for your parents to see your 'cyber' persona or to bump into you when you are out with your friends or would you be ashamed? If you minimise a window on your laptop when your parents come into the room or cross the road to avoid them, then that means you are cheating yourself and the people around you. Is it right to take advantage of the fact that Mum and Dad trust you to get on with your schoolwork or be at a friend's house when you might actually be on social media collecting 'subscribers' and likes or out and about? You may be able to hide your double life from your parents or the community, but Allah is Al-Baseer, the All-Seeing. You will never be able to hide from the One who is All-Knowing.



*"And nothing
is hidden from
your Lord."
(Surah 10:61)*

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

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

However, if you feel that you really need to have an online presence, then please be cautious about what you relay and show about yourself. Be sure to implement privacy settings by restricting viewing access, only accepting and sending requests to those you know or those you can truly benefit from. Please, please do not ever send out selfies or pictures of yourself to anyone on social media. You never know where these will end up and how they will be used. Do not ever feel pressured to take a picture of yourself or to respond to a request for one.

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

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

A note to those of you who know a 'chameleon' or 'cyber' Muslim: Alhamdulillah you are true to yourself and realise the value of upholding the 'real' you to everyone around you. But

that doesn't mean that you can sit back and be smug! You have a duty to let your friends know if they are going down a path that will earn them the displeasure of Allah or will compromise their dignity and safety.

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

All I am saying is that you must be mindful of the pitfalls with having an online presence, because it can be hard to see how far you can fall in and then it is so hard to come out. An increasing number of people are spending the majority of their waking day compulsively using social media, neglecting face-to-face interactions and other responsibilities. Night and day rolls into one as hours and hours are frittered away checking your status, uploading content, following people and worrying about why they haven't liked you or replied to your message. This has a negative impact on your health and wellbeing.

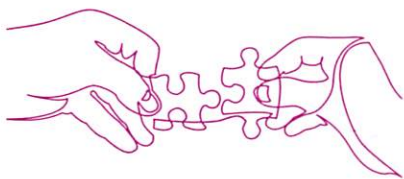
Insecurities arise when you begin to believe that your life is dull, average and unappealing as you see account after account littered with holiday pictures, good food, must-have expensive

clothes, endless followers, likes. You are made to believe that these influencers, these social media 'stars' have it all and your once happy contented life is lacking all of this.

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

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

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



Heroines



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

Asiyah was the Queen of Egypt. She had everything that her heart desired: fine dining, beautiful clothes, a huge palace, stunning jewellery and maids were just a few of the bounties

that she possessed. Yet, despite all this, her heart did not find peace in these things or the harsh rulings of her husband – Pharaoh. Having met and cared for Musa, on him be peace, Asiyah’s heart softened towards his message of believing in One God. She kept her beliefs secret from her husband who would order his army to torture those who believed in the Oneness of God. Finally, her secret was known to the Pharaoh, who did his best to persuade her to believe otherwise. However, Asiyah’s love for Allah grew stronger and she gave up her status as Queen. She ran away to seek guidance from Allah but was soon arrested, tortured and burned. The Pharaoh ordered his men to nail her to the ground and put a heavy boulder on her chest under the scorching sun, yet before her death, she made a du’a to Allah by saying, “My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Jannah and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds.” (Surah 66:11)

Asiyah, was a remarkable lady who gave up her fame, fortune, freedom and endless luxuries for the sake of Allah and, as a result, has been described in the Quran by Allah as, “An example for those who believe” (Surah 66:11). She was, without a doubt, a true role model for us all to follow.

Another great lady of the past was described by the angels in Surah Al-Imran as the one whom Allah “has chosen, made pure and exalted above all women in the world”. It is none other than Maryam, the mother of Isa, upon them be peace. No other woman has been given more attention in the Qur’an. Maryam has been mentioned 34 times, with an entire chapter named after her.

Maryam placed her complete trust in Allah during a time that her family and community shunned her and accused her of being unchaste. However, she remained patient to Allah's Will. Her sincerity, strength, piety and purity to Allah are qualities that all Muslims aspire to and act as a reminder to us not to give up hope or be dragged down by gossip and lies, when in fact, we know the truth about our given situation.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said,

"The four best women of Jannah are

*Khadija bint Khuwaylid,
Fatima bint Muhammad,
Maryam bint 'Imran and
Asiyah bint Muzahim,
the wife of Fir'aun."*

(Ahmad)

Other great women of the past include the Prophet's beloved wives and daughters, may Allah be pleased with them all, who gave up the luxuries of this world to live a life of simplicity and dignity.

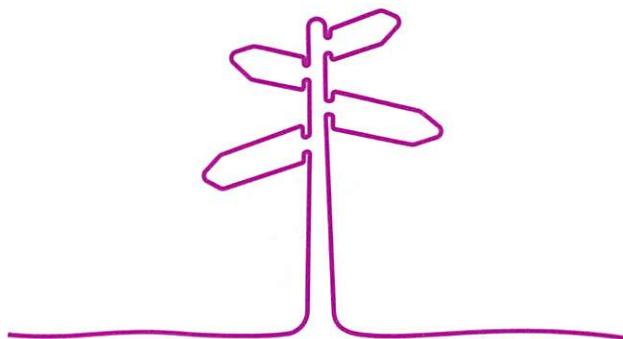
Not all role models can be found in history books or are famous. Our next outstanding role model is one who works round the clock. Regardless of her qualifications, she manages to be a great teacher, Michelin-star chef, accountant, referee, peacemaker, diplomat, has mastered the art of playing doctors and nurses, runs a successful laundrette, taxi-service, a lost and found service as well as being the one who happily neglects her own needs in the hurry to protect, comfort, love, nurture, console

and be your pillar of support. I am, of course, referring to your mother – an incredible lady who often is the unsung heroine.

No one other than a mother will have the natural ability to stop and drop for their child, be it day or night, whether she is well or sick, happy or not! What motivates her is not money but rather knowing you are safe, healthy and happy. Take some time to stop and realise what a gem of a person you live with. Learn to appreciate your mother. Don't just take hot meals, clean clothes and money from her, but instead take from her the lessons of patience, selflessness, humility, determination and strength that she shows you each and every day.



Why All These Rules?!



It is very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Islam is just a long list of rules to follow. Why does Allah need to tell us how to dress? Why can't we just do whatever we feel like, whenever we feel like?

Well, the answer has two parts:

Firstly, Allah is our Creator and the Creator knows best how the creation should function. When you study a text in English literature, you need your teacher and other resources to help you understand it fully. You cannot figure everything out for yourself. You need to go outside of yourself to find the answer and it's a blessing to have someone to ask.

So in the same way, we need to look outside ourselves for the answer on how to live. If we try to figure it ourselves, we would get it wrong and it would take too long for us to work it out. So in His mercy, Allah tells us. He tells us how to live to get the best out of our lives in this world and the next life in the hereafter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Allah has said about what awaits in Jannah,
"I have prepared for you things that no eyes
have seen, what no ears have heard and what
no heart has felt." (Surah 32:17)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

All your loved ones who made it to Jannah will be there too. Elderly grandparents, family members and friends who may have

left this world already will be restored to great youthful health. In Jannah there is no sadness, no anxiety, no jealousy, no fear, no danger, no gossiping, no competitive behaviour. No one will feel shy, embarrassed, inadequate, insecure, unconfident. No one has more power over another – everyone is happy for each other. Nothing but calm and peace will fill your heart and mind.

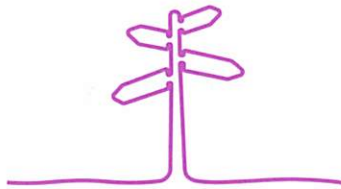
Rivers will be made of milk, fresh clear sparkling water, and honey. Fruits and all food and drink will be permissible to eat and drink. They will be delicious, and the second bite will taste better than the first and the third better than the second! You can eat as much as you wish and you won't ever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

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

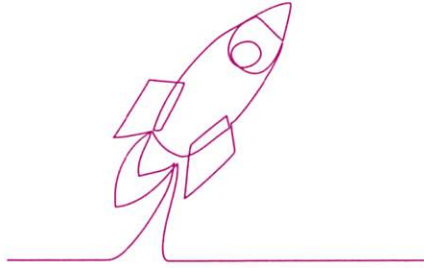
Now imagine that! You have worked so hard to please The One whom you cannot see. You have worshipped Him and trusted Him and believed in Him as if you can see Him. Your reward is that the Great and Majestic King will reveal Himself to you. That is the Ultimate Privilege, reserved for the elite – a sight no eye can imagine and so beautiful that your eyes will never want to look away.

Our lives here on Earth are momentary. Our desires are illusions. So make the most of the your time in this world and sow the seeds of a beautiful eternal life where you can sit with the great women we have talked about and many more, insha'Allah.

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



Parting Words



So we have taken a brief journey into what you can expect while you are growing up.

You may be feeling a bit scared about what is happening, and you may also be feeling confused about your identity as a Muslimah. The best advice I can give you is to keep remembering Allah through the good and happy times as well as the difficult times.

The simplest but most effective thing you can do at any time is to pray to Allah for direction and remember your purpose and goal in life. Be proud to be a Muslim and stand up for your beliefs. Remember your aim in life is to please Allah not your friends.

Islam is about respect, kindness and decency. You should keep clean, dress decently, keep good company and speak good language. This is what makes you beautiful – the kind of person you are and how you treat people – not the way you dress and your accessories. You should try to learn what is in the Qur'an and the hadith and follow it with certainty.

I pray Allah showers you with the very best in both worlds. May your every action be governed with the remembrance of the Almighty. May Allah give you the ability to flock to good gatherings allowing you to receive, act upon and deliver what you learn to the people around you and beyond – making you true ambassadors of the Deen.

I pray you are amongst those who express **shukr** (gratitude) in times of joy and **sabr** (patience) in matters which upset you. May you be of service to all those you meet and fulfill the duties towards your parents in the most pleasing of ways. May you be forever rightly guided and be amongst the best of creation who self-evaluates before judging another.

I pray you keep firm in your **ibadah** (worship) and hold tight to your Muslim identity. Enjoy these precious years to come and be sure to build a good solid foundation which you will base your lifelong decisions upon. May your every thought, move and saying mirror the beauty, purity and compassion employed by Allah's own Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

*"Fear Allah wherever you may be;
follow up an evil deed with a good one
which will wipe (the former) out,
and behave good-naturedly towards people."*

(Tirmidhi)

Quick Quiz

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

1. Do you perform your salah five times a day?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

2. Do you read the Qur'an every day?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

3. How often do you dress modestly?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

4. Are you careful about who you chose to be friends with?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

5. Do you show respect for your elders by not answering back to them or being rude to them?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

6. Are you careful about not listening to inappropriate music?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

7. Are you mindful about what you say (not swearing, backbiting, gossiping)?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

8. Are you careful about how much time you spend on social media?

- Always
- Mostly
- Sometimes
- Never

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

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

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

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

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

(Surah 16:53)

"Whatever blessings
and good you have,
it is from Allah ..."

(Remember always.)

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

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

Rayhana Khan has drawn on her solid Islamic upbringing and her experience of working with Muslim children for over 20 years to write this indispensable book. She lives in Oxford and is a mum of two children. Her role as a Trustee at the A'ishah Mavis Foundation motivates Rayhana to get her students involved in some incredible charitable works all around the world which is of great importance to her.

Recommended for ages 10-14



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