

## Self-Care and Clarity of Mind...a weekly column by Princess Lakshman (Sister Iqra)



Welcome to my weekly column on **Self-Care and Clarity of Mind**. If you're taking time out to read this, pat yourself on the back because you have shown commitment to taking care of your mind and body.

Today, In Shaa ALLAH, we will explore the topic: **Nurture Your Relationship With Your In-Laws**

Before you read this column, it may be a good idea to make yourself a hot beverage, sit back, relax and then begin reading. Banish all preconceived notions of how in-laws should be with you or how you should be with your in-laws. This column will only serve you good if you read it with an open mind and embrace it without judgments about yourself and your in-laws.

It is becoming increasingly common that every time there is a challenging situation in a marriage, the reasons for these challenges are attributed to having a weak relationship with the in-laws.

It is vital that for your marriage to be healthy and joyful, your relationship with your in-laws is healthy and joyful. There is no secret formula to it. There is simply a daily practice of self-awareness and understanding that your happiness, your joy, your respect for your in-laws and your respect for yourself come from one person - YOU.

Some of my clients groan at me at this and retort by saying, "Oh, but Sister Iqra, you don't know how terrible these people are to me..."

Another common one I hear often from daughters-in-law is: "Islam says I don't have to obey my in-laws". Technically that is true but not the whole truth. It is incumbent on every Muslim to be respectful to each other and to say Salaam. There are homes where the members of the family are not even exchanging salaams. That is not what Islam is. That is what Shaitaan is - to attack and break relationships, especially marriages.

It is this perception that needs to be examined. As Muslims when we deconstruct our Ummah, we find that every Muslim home has the greatest potential to impact the entire Muslim population. It is the collective efforts of all Muslim homes that make our Ummah what it is today.

And yet, our Ummah is suffering. We only need to look within our own home to find that our little micro-Ummah, our family, is in turmoil, begrudging each other over petty things and petty emotions. We are spending precious time in engaging in "I'm right, you're wrong" arguments that are not only repetitive but sucking the joy out the family unit...our very own little ummah within the Ummah is disintegrating.

Self-awareness is vital when it comes to nurturing your relationship with your in-laws. When you take account of your own behaviour patterns, when you take care of your mind, body and soul, you will live a life of peace and joy. You will pray on time, you will practice more ibadat and spend less time in blaming others for things that are going pear-shaped in your home. When you self-reflect and become self-aware, you will be able to transform your habits and your perceptions in order to cultivate a joyful and harmonious relationship with your in-laws.

## 11 Ways To Nurture Your Relationship With Your In-Laws

1. **Take time out to spend with your in-laws by yourself.** Your spouse and children do not have to be there. Spend that time to converse with them and ask them to share some wisdom from when they were younger. You would be amazed at how wonderful your connection can be if you spend this alone-time with them regularly. Do not spend this time discussing about people or your children or your marriage. Simply spend this time to gain wisdom from your in-laws.
2. **Show a genuine interest in the activities that your in-laws participate in** and enquire about how it is going for them. Do not give your opinion about whether you agree with the activities or their interests. Simply listen and be happy for them.
3. **Organise a family activity once a month** where you all get to spend time together as a whole family and experience real joy. If it is difficult to come up with what activity suits everyone so get inputs from your in-laws, spouse and children. Make it a monthly commitment. It can be as simple as having a picnic in the park or reciting meaningful poetry in the living room. Make it creative, maybe even have a poetry session where each one of you are creating couplets impromptu.
4. **Find a way to connect with your in-laws daily with a genuine smile and a heartfelt Salaam.** Your own energy is important and your joyful, positive vibration will spread joy in the home. If they have a grumpy nature, do not give up with your daily connection attempts. Practice Sabr. Your patience and persistence in being kind and joyful will ultimately yield you the desired results.
5. **Clarify respectfully instead of jumping to assumptions and negative conclusions.** If there is a matter that seems unclear and is causing you anxiety or disturbance, approach your in-laws respectfully and discuss it with them in a tone that is kind and shows that you wish to understand them, not accuse them. Tone is everything. Even if you say something beneficial in an accusing tone, the message is lost and people get hurt.
6. **Children do as we do, not as we say.** Remember how you respond or react in the home and with your in-laws. Your behaviours are being watched by your children. Reflect on your life and see if your behaviours are as a reflection of your parents' behaviours. Most times they are, unless you have consciously chosen to change them. If you treat your in-laws well, whether they are in the same home as you or whenever you meet them, your children will imbibe those values in their own lives. Your in-laws too will mimic this positive behaviour. It is human nature to do so.
7. **Set your boundaries. Do not impose them on others** but set them for yourself so that you know when to walk away or when to remain quiet. If you know yourself better, you can control your responses instead of reacting on another person's anger or disrespectful ways. Knowing your boundaries means having self-respect and understanding your rights, values and doing what pleases ALLAH, not what pleases people, even if they are your in-laws, your parents or anyone else for that matter.
8. **Monitor your words.** Once they leave your lips they can NEVER be retracted or unspoken. Be mindful of what you are saying when you converse with people. If your in-laws disappoint you, do not abuse your tongue by getting even with them or by slandering about them. Speaking ill about them to others will only reflect on your poor character, not theirs.
9. **NEVER blame your spouse for anything that is said to you by your in-laws.** Your spouse has his/her own mind. Blaming one for another's actions is highly unfair. What is better is to discuss with your spouse about all that was said and done and find a way to resolve this as a couple, without blame or accusation. Your marriage is not just to your spouse but to the entire family. Remember

that the spouse that you love so dearly is here because your in-laws loved and cared for your spouse in his/her childhood.

10. **Be fair to your in-laws and to yourself** by expecting from them what you expect from others - **Respect and Understanding**. You must demonstrate respect and understanding in order to expect these from others.
11. **Get help from a professional** if matters are becoming too challenging for you. It is your birthright to be happy. Alhumdolillah, the Muslim community is always helpful to each other. Visit a trusted professional and discuss ways to deal and manage your challenges with your in-laws. Do not speak about your challenges to people who do not have the expertise to help you.

Focus on yourself to transform your behaviour so that everything you think, speak and do is pleasing to ALLAH. Your relationship with your in-laws is ultimately about your relationship with humanity. Respect, understanding, kindness and compassion - practise these virtues on yourself and practise them with others.

In Shaa ALLAH, next week we will explore the topic: **Taking Care Of Yourself While Going Through Separation or Divorce**

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If you wish to know about a specific topic with regards to Self-Care and Clarity of Mind, please text or email me or visit [www.muslimahmindmatters.com](http://www.muslimahmindmatters.com). If you wish to have a FREE one hour **Finding Clarity** telephone session, contact me on 0451977786



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