

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: **Saying No...Please ALLAH, Not People**

Seeking approval is a natural personality trait. It's human nature to hear pleasing comments about one's self. It tends to encourage us to repeat that behaviour that earned us a compliment in the first place, in order to receive more praise and encouragement. Over time, we have been conditioned to accept this reward-based perception as a measure of our self-worth. As a result, we now live in a world where the disease to please has become the norm, and honest communication is compromised in the name of appeasement, diplomacy or political correctness.

In the search for more praise and acknowledgements, we have gotten into the habit of "agreeing" for the sake of agreeing, so as not to offend anyone. In our yearning to feel acceptance and a sense of belonging, we are saying "yes" just to fit in, instead of evaluating the situation for what it is and responding with awareness and compassion to self and others.

As Muslims, remember that we are here to PLEASE ALLAH, NOT PEOPLE. This doesn't mean that you need to be rude or disrespectful. It means that you need to be honest with yourself and others. An honest life is far better than a resentful one.

Four-Step Process For Saying "No"

"No" is a full sentence. It doesn't need justification. If something is not within your capacity and if it intuitively doesn't feel right, it is best to say no. Saying yes to please people will eventually take a toll on your physical, mental and emotional health, whereby you will begin to resent the people to whom you are saying yes. The following four-step process may help in developing greater awareness in how to say no to people.

1. **Take your time. Consider the proposal.** Do not be intimidated or pressured into responding immediately. This step allows you to think about whatever has been proposed to you. If the person is in front of you, say that you will consider their words and respond shortly. If it's over text or email,

respond with a polite note saying you will consider the proposal and respond shortly. Think about it with a cool, calm and collected mind so that you are in fact giving the proposal honest consideration. If you feel confused about it, write down pros and cons to find clarity. Or seek professional help if required.

2. **Ask yourself these four key questions and answer them honestly.** If you answer NO to even one of the first three questions, then you will know with greater clarity that it would be wise to say NO to the proposal at hand:

1. Do I WANT to be, do or have this?

2. Will being, doing or having this MOVE ME IN THE DIRECTION OF MY GOAL?

3. Is being, doing or having this IN HARMONY WITH ALLAH'S COMMANDMENTS?

4. Will being, doing or having this VIOLATE THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS?

3. **Contact the person in question.** It is always best to communicate directly with the person rather than through another person, in case of miscommunication.

4. **Thank the person for thinking of you in this situation (very important step).** Say that you have had a good think about things and at this point in your life you are going to say NO to the proposal or invitation. Thank them again and leave it at that. Keep it short and direct. Remain calm and confident at all times in your posture and voice.