

# Raising Daughters

written by Princess R. Lakshman

She is unique  
She has unlimited potential  
She can change the world  
She is your daughter.

Raising daughters can be quite a challenge. I have a teenage daughter and I write this column today with the utmost respect for all parents raising daughters.

It is vital that we respect and understand them first before we expect them to respect and understand us. As parents, we may have the benefit of age, experience and sometimes vocabulary, however, we too are children at our core of being and we have the ability to relate to most or all of the emotional ups and downs that our daughters experience daily.

We expect our daughters to respect us. The real question is: Do we respect our daughters? Are we constantly expecting them to toughen up, or soften down, or do as we say?

What strategies do you use to cope with your daughter's mood swings, tantrums, demands and emotional meltdowns?

Our daughters are future leaders of this world. We need to put our ego aside and raise them with sensitivity, compassion, empathy, respect and understanding.

There is no doubt that you love your daughter unconditionally. However, the following strategies, when implemented appropriately, may strengthen your relationship with her. Do try them.

## **Strategies to Strengthen Your Relationship With Your Daughter**

1. Talk to her. Put away your gadgets, look her in the eye and connect with her verbally. A great way to start is to ask an open-ended question which invites an elaborate answer. For example, "What things that you did or that happened today made it a wonderful day for you?"

2. Listen when she replies. LISTEN. Do not formulate a response while she is speaking. Do not cut her off while she is speaking. Become fully engaged. Observe her body language. A lot is communicated through body language.

3. Always compliment good behaviour. If the behaviour has been negative, look for moments when she is silent and compliment on her efforts to refrain from the negative behaviour. For example, "I am very pleased with you that you are trying your best to respect our agreement on phone/screen time."

4. Speak well about those she loves. For example, you may not be close to your in-laws but that does not mean your daughter has to inherit your opinions about them. Respect her love for them. Speak well about those she loves.

5. Respect her fears and sentiments. Fear is very real to the person experiencing it. You do not have to encourage it but you need to show the sensitivity that it is real to her. For example, "I

know it makes you fearful when you think about your exams. I used to be the same. I understand that feeling. I am so pleased that you are trying your very best. That is all that matters. Allah rewards efforts, not results. Keep doing your best.”

6. Do not bring up past behavioural issues when addressing a new issue. Telling her you can no longer trust her because she lied to you last year about a fake Facebook account is NOT going to resolve anything. Instead, have a respectful discussion about having boundaries around internet usage.

7. Show good manners so that she can emulate good manners. Saying “Please”, “Thank you”, “I’m sorry” to your daughter does not mean you are weak. In fact, it displays good manners and your daughter will learn to treat you and others with the same manners.

8. NEVER laugh at her mistakes, NEVER belittle her and NEVER insult her. Never comment on her body, instead discuss health and nutrition if you feel concerned for her body. Negative comments about her body will hurt her and scar her for life. You only have to access your own unhealed childhood pain to realise that somewhere deep inside you is a memory of an adult who may have laughed at your mistakes or insulted or belittled you.

9. “I am big, you’re small...I’m right, you’re wrong” – NEVER imply or say this. Your daughter is human being created by ALLAH and deserve the same respect and joy as you or any other human being on this earth.

10. Explain yourself clearly when you set boundaries. If you need to prohibit something, get her to sit and discuss the best strategies that will benefit the entire family. Show her that you treat her with fairness and that it is a home with love and understanding, not a house with a “dictator”.

11. Never, ever compare her to her friends, cousins, siblings or daughters of your friends. Your daughter’s soul was entrusted to you to nurture and you must practise gratitude to ALLAH for entrusting you with her soul. Do not waste precious time that could be spent being grateful in being ungrateful by complaining and focusing on her flaws. Instead, nurture her to live from her highest potential. If you find it hard to nurture her in this way, get professional help or help from a wise female in your family or community.

**Always remember, you are not your experiences. You are the FORCE that overcomes them.**

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