

Preparing for Marriage

Every job, every walk of life needs skills. Most skills do not just come to us naturally – we have to take the trouble to learn them. Exactly the same is true for marriage. The young bride or groom will **never** be the same as their parents, although there may be similarities. They are different people entirely.

They are **younger** people. It is pointless expecting a young bride and groom to have all the skills and talents and expertise when they start out that it took their parents years to learn.

They are **poorer** people. It is pointless to expect young folk to have the earnings and status of their elders. It will come to them in due course, if they earn it. Don't forget in the UK the breadwinner may well be the wife.

They are **inexperienced** people. The young husband taking on the responsibilities of a manager in his household, will need to learn how to manage. He would do well to go on a management course, and learn how to deal with people, how to avert trouble, how to give orders without offence, how to reward those who work for him. The young wife will need to learn how to manage her part in the household – the budget, the care of the family health, cleanliness, etc.

They have been **loved and spoiled**, and need **to learn how to earn love and respect**. Your parents love you and make allowances for you simply because they are your parents. They will excuse every failing, stick up for you through thick and thin, and love you even though you are a completely horrible person. When you leave your parents and start life with your spouse, you must remember that your wife is not your mother; your husband is not your father. They will not make the same allowances for you. They will soon feel upset, offended and become critical of you, and their parents might even become their allies against you.

Helpful Checklists

Skills for a Good Wife:

- The ability to cook
- The ability to run a halal kitchen
- The ability to see to healthy nutrition
- Knowledge on health care
- Hospitality routines to avoid embarrassment
- Basic medical knowledge and First Aid skills
- Important telephone numbers

- How to do the cleaning
- How to deal with toilets, sick, and poo – to develop a ‘hard’ stomach
- How to drive
- Shopping skills – where to get good bargains etc
- Money management – how not to waste money
- Budgeting for household bills – gas, electricity, telephone, rates, water rates
- How to carry on when exhausted
- How to be aware of your own ‘women’s problems’ and make allowances
(hormones, PMT, menstruation, ‘nerves’, depression, pregnancy etc)
- Sexual skills – how to satisfy your husband so that he is content with your relationship
- Knowledge of children’s stresses
- Monitoring of children’s progress
- How to provide love, security, a safe haven, a place in which to grow and learn
- Garden skills – caring for wild life and pets.

Skills for a Good Husband

- Noble character, *deserving* of respect
- Honesty, courage, gentleness, reliability, truthfulness, good humour
- The ability to earn an honest living
- The ‘solidness’ so that the family may depend on you
- The willingness to do the ‘dirty’ jobs
- House maintenance – for example, basic repair and woodwork skills
- Car maintenance
- Money management skills – little gifts always appreciated, not irresponsible money-wasting
- Budgeting bills, and providing enough money to cover household bills

- Generous appreciation
- Being thoughtful and considerate
- Remembering birthdays and anniversaries etc
- Understanding of women's problems – hormones, PMT etc
- Endurance – to keep going when exhausted, especially during pregnancy, childbirth and infancy
- Sexual skills, to keep your wife satisfied with her relationship with you.
- Sexual control – to learn how to deal with moments of attraction and temptation outside the home. (The Prophet advised going straight home and having intimacy with one's own wife).
- Giving a noble example to your children by the way you treat your wife, so that they will properly respect her as a mother. (If you are curt and rude and not affectionate or considerate, they will copy you).

Although you do not pay your wife wages as such, if you are in any doubt as to what she is worth in money terms, try to replace her services for a month with paid employees – a cook, housekeeper, cleaner, chauffeur, nurse, secretary, lover etc. And vice versa.

Sexual Skills

In Islam, even the physical act of sex can be reckoned by Allah as *sadaqah*. It becomes *sadaqah* when it is:

- **halal** – that is, keeping within the marriage relationship and not going outside it.
- not simply leaping upon the other like an animal, but considering their needs, moods, etc.
- **Being scrupulously clean**. It is advisable to have a bath or shower, or at least wash private parts *before* sexual intimacy.
- **Learning how to physically prepare your wife for sexual intercourse** – the car won't work properly if you don't put the petrol in. It's no good kicking it!
- **putting the needs of the other before one's own**. One *hadith* was: 'He is not one of us who does not satisfy his wife's need of him before he satisfies his need of her.' (Hadith recorded by Imam Ghazzali).
- **Learned with accuracy** so that no spouse need fake satisfaction and in actual fact be suffering from severe frustration and misery. Men in particular may need to **learn** these skills – satisfying a woman is **quite different from satisfying a man**; and it is

usually nothing like what you see in the films. For example, it takes around 15-30 minutes of specific activity to bring 'the average woman' to climax. But remember that not all women need this every time. Ask!

- Making sure both parties have achieved satisfaction before going to sleep. **There is no point in complaining that women's sexual urges are never satisfied if you haven't learned how to satisfy them, and always leave her frustrated.**
- **Not forcing the other partner to do anything they do not wish to.**
- **Not insisting on sex when the other partner is ill, in pain, or exhausted.** If they are simply not 'in the mood', don't force – do something about it. The Prophet suggested 'sending a messenger' first – he meant kisses and caresses, what these days are called 'foreplay'.
- **Overcoming shyness and distaste** for what Allah has created *halal* for us. Private parts are not 'dirty' unless they have not been washed.

The Most Frequent Complaints

The most frequent complaint of women about men is that they don't listen. The most frequent complaint of men about women is that they are always trying to change them.

Blueprint for Compatibility

- Have realistic expectations. Don't expect the impossible, much less insist on it.
- Be clear about who controls the money, and what it is for.
- Solve problems together. Don't always insist on being right, which is, after all, often a matter of opinion.
- Listen, and be clear when you speak. Men are traditionally poor mind-readers.
- Ask for what you want or need.
- Give each other time together – even if you have to pencil in dates! Make it regular.
- Do an MOT test – list three nice things and three rotten things he's done to you, and you to him. Then discuss them.
- Fight to the same rules – and have 'olive branch' signals (or even twigs) to cease hostilities
- Agree to disagree
- Realise you don't have to be the same to be a success together; you don't do much need the ability to see 'eye to eye', but should know how to cope with your differences.

- Be very careful and patient in response to major changes – childbirth, new job, new home, new area, retirement, bereavement, etc.
- Be committed to your partnership, not obsessed with being right all the time. Be prepared to compromise for the sake of the relationship – so long as what is asked for is halal in Islam.
- Try to have similar attitudes and shared values – but you don't have to have shared interests.
- Tolerate each other's habits, and still love them.
- Allow each other a measure of independence – for football, shopping, etc.
- Talk freely to each other, and express your feelings honestly and with assertiveness.
(Don't say things like: 'You always.....', 'You never.....'. Use – 'When you say/do that, it makes me feel.....')
- Express your appreciation when things are done to please you.
- Support each other emotionally.
- Accept and allow the other spouse to be himself/herself. Relish your differences. Don't try to change your partner.
- Be aware of how the other expresses himself/herself and accept it.
(The answer 'yes' to the question 'Do you love me?' might come out 'I'm still here, aren't I?' Or, 'I work hard, I don't play around, I fix the car – what more do you want?')