



MAS-SSF Newsletter

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Toward a Happy Marriage

MAS-SSF/SALAM Marriage in Islam Course to Start March 4: Financial aid available

Some Divorce Facts for Muslims in US

Divorce rates among Muslims in the United States are 31%, not much better than those of the general population, 49%. In California the rate among Muslims is even higher, 37%. This shocking statistic was the subject of a lead article "Alarming divorce rates amongst Muslims" by Sondos Kholoki in the Muslim newspaper Southern California *InFocus* last year. (<http://www.infocusnews.net/content/view/986/191/>)

In a cooperative and preventive effort to address the causes of this epidemic of divorce, MAS-SSF and SALAM Islamic Center will present a course dedicated to preparing for the work and comfort of a happy marriage.

But first: Some More Facts, Figures, and Questions

Fact: The average Muslim spends 3000 hours sleeping every year.

Fact: The average Muslim adult spends 2000-3000 or more hours working at a job or as a homemaker every year.

A Question for Adults: How many hours does the average Muslim man or woman spend learning how to work towards a happy/happier marriage?

A Question for Young People: Is it worth 30 hours and \$50 to help ensure a happy marriage for yourself and your children?

A Question for Parents: How much would you spend on your daughter's wedding? Is it worth 30 hours and \$50 to learn how to help you assist your young adult children to embark on a happy marriage so that the cost of the wedding is money wisely spent?

A Question for Engaged and Newly Married Couples: What are you spending in time and money on preparing educationally and emotionally for your life together with your new lifetime companion?

A Question for All: What is the cost in dollars and days for a wedding? What is the cost in dollars and years of happiness lost by all, including children and in-law families when a marriage fails?

Now: Course Information and Topics What, When, How Long, Where, Who, For Whom and How Much?

What: Marriage in Islam Course: Essential information, discussion, questions and answers, and learning activities about this important topic will prepare those thinking about marriage or already married to understand how to work towards a happy marriage.

When: Tuesday, March 4 6-8:30 pm

How Long: Twelve Weeks

Where: SALAM Community Center

Who: MAS-SSF counselors will teach the class.

For Whom: Single persons aged 17 and older, younger than 17 with parental permission, newly or longtime married couples, parents, or anyone interested in learning about marriage in Islam may enroll.

How do I register? Registration is by Internet at <http://www.salamcenter.org/adult-education.html>

How much? The cost is \$50 for the 30 hour class. Financial aid is available. Those who cannot afford this class are asked to please email ssf@mas-sac.org to request financial assistance.

Enrollment in this class would be a wonderful "gift that keeps on giving" for someone you know who is thinking about marriage, engaged, or newly married, or has children approaching the age of marriage.

The material will be based on respected Muslim leaders such as Sr. Shahina Siddiqui and Dr. Rida and Dr. Ekram Bashir as well as reputable publications about the fiqh of marriage.

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Materials will be presented from an Islamic perspective utilizing examples from the lives of the prophets and other Islamic references.

Topics will include:

History of Marriage in Islam
Reasons for Marriage
Conditions of Marriage in Islam
Basis for Marriage in Islam
Fiqh Rulings regarding Marriage
Questionnaires
Arranged Marriage
Rules and Responsibilities
Marriage Contract
Islamic Weddings: nikah, reception, walima
Islamic Traditions vs. Culture
Six Stages of Marriage
Parenting
Communication
Self-awareness
Personality Conflicts
Spirituality
Establishing a Healthy Relationship
Avoiding Pitfalls
Conflict Resolution
Care, Companionship, and Role-Reversals in Illness and Later Years
Finance, Money, and Values
Divorce❖

Legacy of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) Seera Class

What: This Seera class will be much more than a timeline of the life of the last prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). Social, political, economic, and religious context will be provided in order to better understand this period of Islamic history.

When: Saturday, March 15 - June 7 from 6-8:00 pm

Where: SALAM Community Center

Who: MAS members will instruct the class

For Whom: For ages 12 and over

How do I register? See above for Marriage Class

How Much? \$50

Topics will include:

Why study Seerah
Revelation begins
Quraishis Response
Siege and Hardships
Al-Israa & Al-Miraj
First Al-Aqaba Pledge
Migration to Madina
Battles of Badr, Uhud, and Al-Azhab
Al-Hodayhia treaty, Umrat Al-Kadaa, and Battle of Mita,
Conquest of Makkah and Battle at Honayn
The farewell Sermon❖

How Children Grow: Part II The Preschool Years - Dr. Omar Ahmed

It has been said, "Play is the work of children." This is true in many respects, including the importance of the socialization skills children learn by playing. During the preschool years, kids gain an immense amount of knowledge about the people and things around them, and how best to interact with those in their environment. This can be a fun age for parents; hopefully the struggles of independence that characterize the "terrible two's" have dissipated, and now the child may be more willing to accept guidance from the caregiver. Preschoolers love to emulate others' behaviors; this means there is even a greater responsibility for those around them to model appropriate behaviors. Mealtime manners and routines, the use of clean or foul language, and interactions with others can all be learned by watching parents, siblings, and others around them. This is also an age for seeking approval. Preschoolers often yearn for positive feedback. Praising and complimenting them when they are acting well can go a long way to cement lifetime habits. Catch them being good!

Spirituality can become more meaningful in this age group. They enjoy being read to, so listening to the stories of the Prophets mentioned in the Quran and Hadith may become more interesting to them. Reading and listening to the Quran together can also augment language skills and develop good habits early. Children often view their parents as heroes, and kids may mimic their parents with games like dress up and playing house. It is an excellent time to let them practice praying with the family. This should be done with love and encouragement, so that it is something that they enjoy and want to do. Children also understand better the consequences of their actions at this age, so teaching them about all the rewards that Allah provides to good people will likely be more meaningful to them now. It is probably better to focus on praising and drawing attention to those actions the child does well, rather than dwelling on negativity and punishments. Children are more likely to do something to gain the pleasure of Allah and their parents than they are to stop naughty behavior just to avoid displeasure.

Parents can model cooperation, consultation, conflict resolution, mercy and forgiveness for their children in their own relationship. Some disagreements may best be resolved when children are not present and will not hear. Young children may not understand parents' words but they are sensitive to tone of voice and mood. Tension between parents will cause anxiety, even at this early age.

Children can have an active imagination during this period of development. Imaginary friends, playing house, and playing with dolls are all common. Unfortunately, too many children also develop the habit of passing the time in front of the television set. Recent research published in the medical journal Pediatrics linked early television watching to subsequent development of behavioral problems. While research continues, it is the policy of the American Academy of Pediatrics to recommend no television before the age of two; if television is watched after that, it should be limited to educational programs and to no more than two hours a day.

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This can sound idealistic in today's hectic world, but it is an ideal that should be sought.

Children in the preschool age group should be given opportunities to develop their imaginations with innovative play, and learn to concentrate on their own activities without relying on the constantly changing pictures on the television screen. They can also help with household chores. With a small broom, small sponges, and small dust cloths they can imitate parents and learn early to clean up their little messes. Since "play is the work of children," learning to entertain themselves and interact with their peers should only help them as they prepare to enter school and beyond.

For more information on early childhood development, see: Brazelton, T. Berry. Touchpoints: the Essential Reference. Perseus Books, 1992. Dr. Brazelton understands how challenging it is to be a parent and a growing child. He is very helpful and suggests realistic and workable goals for parents in his books. His work is based on observing real parents and children in their daily lives. For more information on the American Academy of Pediatrics policy on television, see: Pediatrics Vol. 107 No.2 February 2001, pp. 423-426.

Dr. Ahmed is a pediatrician working at UC Davis Medical Center and a MAS-SSF counselor. ❖

Change Your Brain, Change Your Life TV Special This Week on Brain Health and Happiness

In our first issue we reported on the visit three MAS-SSF counselors made to the Amen Clinic in Fairfield. Dr. Daniel Amen, an American doctor of Lebanese descent, now teaches at the University of California Irvine in Southern California. Now PBS has produced a special with Dr. Amen. KVIE Channel 6 will broadcast this new program several times in the next week. To learn more about new developments in our understanding of brain health tune in:

Saturday, March 1 at 10 AM or 11:30 PM
Sunday, March 2 at 4:30 AM
Monday, March 3 at 3:00 PM
Sunday, March 9 at 1:30 PM

Important Note: This program is suitable for older teens and adults. As it was made for the general public in the United States there are references to activities such as drinking alcohol. Dr. Amen sends a very strong anti-drug message with pictures of brains which have been severely damaged by illegal drugs. ❖

TEENS, YOUNG ADULTS, AND COLLEGE STUDENTS !

Send us your news and thoughts for Muslim teens growing up in Sacramento. Each issue of the MAS-SSF newsletter will feature items of interest to teens. Anyone, including teens, wishing to submit an item should send it to: ssf@mas-sac.org

Summer Internships for Youth at Muslim organizations in Sacramento and India

Summer volunteer Internships are a great way to grow as a Muslim, contribute to the community, and gain work experience in the non-profit sector. Volunteer hours can contribute to the minimum 100 hour requirement of the University of California on college applications. Volunteer work improves a resume. A job well-done can translate into a good letter of reference from a supervisor for a college, scholarship, or employment application.

MAS-SSF will have summer internships. The experience will be supervised in a healthy Muslim environment. Projects may include computer web design, marketing, and fundraising, office work, and planning and staffing community outreach events. Look for more information in our next newsletter.

CAIR Sacramento will also offer internships for youth 18 years and older. College credit is available. Call CAIR at 441-6269 for more information.

IMRC (Indian Muslim Relief and Charities) in Palo Alto will offer a summer volunteer experience in India as they have for many years. For more information go to <http://www.imrc.ws> and www.summervolunteer.org. ❖

Food for Thought

The poet Jalaluddin Rumi lived over seven hundred years ago but his poems still resonate. He was able to capture great meaning in a few words:

A Subtle Truth

If you want money more than anything, you will be bought and sold.

If you have a greed for food, you will become a loaf of bread.

This is a subtle truth.

Whatever you love, you are.

From A Year with Rumi: Daily Readings, a collection of Rumi poems edited by Coleman Barks edited by Harper San Francisco, 2006. ❖

More on Confidentiality and Appointments with MAS-SSF Peer Counselors

Have you ever needed to talk to a friend or family member about a problem?

Most people have had this experience sometime in their life. Sometimes we ask our family member or friend to keep the conversation private. Or perhaps we have a spiritual question for a religious person, an imam or sheikh. We expect them to protect our privacy. When we go to the doctor we expect that our medical records will be kept confidential. We would be upset if our doctor told our child or someone we know about our medical condition without our consent.

MAS-SSF understands these concerns for confidentiality. We respect and protect clients' privacy just as we want our own privacy respected and protected. From the first phone call clients can depend upon our commitment to confidentiality. When a person calls MAS-SSF he or she will be asked to leave a message describing the reason for the call and a number we can call them at. We will return the call only to that number.

Appointments are scheduled far apart so clients will not see other clients coming and going. Our office is at least a mile from any Islamic center yet is conveniently located and accessible by bus. It is also accessible to people with disabilities and babies in strollers. ❖

More Food for Thought

Angry? Frustrated? Annoyed? Upset? Irritable?

Think first of this Hadith:

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Messenger said,

"The strong is not the one who overcomes people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger."—From Sahih Al-Bukhari.

This hadith does not mean that people should allow others to harm them. Anger held in check will turn to bitterness or may be turned on others, especially loved ones. Learning techniques for conflict resolution may be helpful. Techniques for defusing tension in the family, at work, and at school before it becomes destructive to relationships can be learned. Call MAS-SSF at (916) 486-8626 if you would like to learn more.

For Our Readers

Do you Have Questions About Parenting, Marriage, or Being a Muslim Teen in America?

Dear Readers,
Each issue of the MAS-SSF newsletter will print a thoughtful question about parenting, marriage, or teen issues submitted by a reader. MAS-SSF will seek out a qualified person to answer the question. Please submit questions to ssf@mas-sac.org.

Do you know...? Please help us find...

If you know a licensed mental health professional who would like to volunteer (possibility of paid work later, as we grow) to work with MAS-SSF a few hours a week or more, please contact us at to ssf@mas-sac.org.

Family Development Circle: We Need Your Input

MAS-SSF will be asking you to join the new Family Development Circle in the next issue. Members will make a commitment to support SSF work with a small monthly donation. No volunteer time will be needed. Sign-up will be easy at the MAS-SSF website. Members will receive certain benefits, such as receiving this newsletter by e-mail and free attendance at certain SSF events. \$20 a month has been suggested as an affordable amount. (Of course more would be possible) What do you think? Please email us at ssf@mas-sac.org.

Name this Newsletter: \$50 Prize to the Winner! Entry Deadline April 15

We need a name for this newsletter. Please send your name, contact email, and suggestion to ssf@mas-sac.org. The winner will be chosen by the MAS-SSF Board of Directors. MAS-SSF members and family are not eligible to enter. ❖

