



Elder Care - Importance and Resources

<< Khutba Opening >>

Allah swt reminds us in the famous verses of Surah Al Israa 17:23-25 :

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
إِذَا يَبُلُغْنَ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا
فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا
وَإِخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ |
وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا
رَّبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ |
إِنْ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غُفُورًا

For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honor your parents.

If one or both of them reach old age in your care, never say to them 'even' 'ugh,' nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully

And be humble with them out of mercy, and pray, "My Lord! Be merciful to them as they raised me when I was young."

Your Lord knows best what is within yourselves. If you are righteous, He is certainly All-Forgiving to those who 'constantly' turn to Him

We have often heard talks and khutbas about the rights of parents. This is a topic that is highly emphasized in Islam.

Today, I'd like to focus on one specific aspect: caring for elderly parents. Allah swt specifically highlights this in the verse I just read:

إِذَا يَبُلُغْنَ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا

If one or both of them reach old age in your care

Why the **focus on old age**?



When our parents are young(er), they are usually looking after us. Rarely are we looking after them, it's when they get older that the children need to do more to look after their parents.

Taking care of our elderly parents is an **honorable task**, with a high degree of reward. But it also comes with a **lot of challenges**. We should understand some of these challenges, without painting a very rosy picture, so we can **practically address them**.

The Family & Youth Institute is a mental health non-profit focused on helping find solutions to challenges and issues facing American Muslim families. They have produced an **elder care toolkit**, which has many resources to help us. You can find it on the web at www.TheFYI.org. I'm going to be leveraging some of the toolkit content in my khutba today.

First, **imagine yourself getting older**. What do you fear the most?

- Would you fear losing your independence? Being dependent on someone else for many things?
- Would you fear burdening others? Not being able to take care of yourself?
- Would you fear feeling disconnected and isolated from the community, and maybe even the family?

These are some real fears – and unfortunately many of us are **not willing to face those fears**.

- When The FYI was compiling the elder care toolkit, they held **listening sessions** with community members – both the elders as well as their caregivers (usually their children).



- Many of the **elders flat out refused to acknowledge** the fact that they are or will be getting older and weaker. They refused to plan for it, or ask for help.
- And when you speak to their **children, they feel exasperated** – they want to plan and help take care of their parents, but the parents won't let them.

We all have to acknowledge that as long as Allah swt gives us life, **we will age**. With every passing day, we get older. And once we hit our prime, with every passing day we get weaker.

That is simply the way Allah swt designed our life – no one keeps stronger and younger forever.

So the first and simple advice for the elders is this – **plan for your retired life**.

- Not just in terms of pensions and money, but where and how you will physically live.
- At some point, going up the stairs will be challenging. Should you think about stair lifts? First floor bedrooms? Moving in with one of the kids?
- Plan for it so that it is not a rushed decision, when you or others are least able to make them. Create a timeline and steps for action every 3-5 years.

For those of us who are **caring for the elderly**, remember what Allah swt said. Do not even utter “**uff**” to the parents.

- You're under a lot of stress from other things. Hence planning on when/where/how to look after the elders will help a lot.
- If you happen to be a member of the **sandwich generation** – that is, looking after a person with “a living parent age 65 or older, **AND** who is also either raising a child under age 18 or supporting a grown child” – then it becomes **even more demanding and stressful**.



Have **conversations with your family** about elder care – what it means and what it involves.

- Parents and siblings should be included so everyone is on the same page.

This is not one conversation but a series over a period of time.

Think of **specific needs of the elderly** – esp some of the fears I mentioned earlier.

- As they age, they will increasingly need physical help. This the **obvious one**.
- Their ability to socialize will decrease – this will have an impact on their emotional and mental health. **Many elders suffer from depression and anxiety.**
- As they age, they may also have increasing illnesses – including dementia and memory loss.

- So how do you take care of the elders, while **maintaining their dignity and honor**?
- How can you **empower the elders to be autonomous** as long as possible, while at the same time being there to help them when needed?
- What are some signs you can pick up on, that will indicate to you they need help?
- How do you **discuss with siblings**, esp if some are living farther away?
- At what point do you suggest that **elders stop living alone** – if possible someone moves back in to help look after them, or they move in with someone who can look after them.
- What about **wills and financial planning**?
- What if the elders resist and are **unwilling to accept help**? What can you do to convince them?



- How do you, as a caregiver, **avoid burnout**, while looking after the elders?

And very importantly, how do you do all this while:

- **Honoring and respecting the elderly parents.**
- Treating them with dignity as elders, and not as children, as our faith instructs us to do.
- Keeping a strong support system around them (and you) – from family to community members.

These are **important things for us to think through and plan**. *My goal today is to raise the topic and the issue with questions in your mind*. Looking after our elderly parents is an important and honorable duty – it cannot be a haphazard, random, last-minute action.

The FYI toolkit goes into details on each of these with practical tips to help us prepare. The FYI is also in the middle of their Aging With Dignity project - whereby they are compiling resources that caregivers and elders can use to help them in this extremely important journey. We need to benefit from all these resources to help ourselves and our loved ones.

Let us stop and reflect. Each and every one of us gets older with each passing day. **We will either need help, or we will need to offer help to others.** Have we thought about this? Are we planning for it? Allah swt decreed that we look after our parents and be kind to them. Are we ready to stand before Allah swt and answer that question?

May Allah forgive me and you.

Break between first and second khutba

<< 2nd Khutba Opening >>

We're discussing today the important decree from Allah swt where he commands us to worship Him and look after our parents, esp in old age. (Al-Isra 17:23-24)

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
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 فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا
 وَخَفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ |
 وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honor your parents.

If one or both of them reach old age in your care, never say to them 'even' 'ugh,' nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully

And be humble with them out of mercy, and pray, "My Lord! Be merciful to them as they raised me when I was young."

Taking care of our elderly parents is an **honorable task**, with a high degree of reward. But it also comes with a lot of challenges. We should understand some of these **challenges**, without painting a very rosy picture, so we can **practically address** them. We specifically spoke about 3 fears elders may have.

1. Fear of losing independence:

Recognize the importance of giving your parents help while also honoring their preferences.



Empowerment and autonomy are key needs for elders, regardless of their living situation. They need to feel like they have autonomy in their lives to maintain a healthy level of well-being.

- Encourage them to make healthy life choices by presenting them with relevant information and asking their opinion on major decisions, especially those that concern them
- Know how to facilitate a decision in a safe and appropriate manner
- Encourage them to do as much as they are able. If they can no longer perform a whole task, let them to do what they can before assisting with what's left

2. Fear or not being able to care for themselves anymore and burdening others,

Your parents may not want to ask you for help for fear of burdening you, so ask them what they need. But also make an effort to notice their needs.

- Does their house or yard need care?
- Do they need help managing their medications? Are they going to their check-ups?
- Are there broken appliances in their home that aren't getting fixed?
- Have you noticed changes in mood or extreme mood swings?
- If your parents or elders are struggling with some of these tasks, they may need more of your support.

But what if they are **unwilling to accept** it?

- It's not always an easy conversation for you or them but its an important one.
- It may take time for them to accept help. Realize that you will need to have more than one conversation, sometimes spanning a few years. Not



everything can be taken care of all at once. As you begin having these conversations with your parent(s), remember that you do not need to cover everything all at once.

- When you introduce the subject to your parent(s), make sure you explain the reasons for your concern with respect and consideration, rather than by making demands. Its likely that they will get defensive if it feels like you are taking away their freedoms.

3. Feeling disconnected and isolated from the rest of the family and the community.

Family is a **strong support system** but they may need more than just that.

- Help them to find people like them (ethnically, religion, background, gender, race, socioeconomic status, interests etc in/near their community) so they can feel like they belong. Belonging is a key need for any human being and sometimes we forget that our elders need to feel belonging too.
- In this ever-changing world, we rely heavily on technology and that can leave our elders behind. Make sure to take time to teach your elder parents “how to fish” so they can “feed themselves” without constantly needing you.
- Help them get to Jumu’ah or to the mosque. If you can’t give them a ride, organize some kind of carpooling effort because there are probably others who have the same needs and families who want to give their elders these opportunities too. So find those people and do something together. Organize volunteer activities that they can join at the masjid or in their social groups. Allow your parents to feel that they can offer something to the community and be connected to it.



These are just **some issues and tips** on what we can do. As I mentioned earlier, **The Family & Youth Institute has an Elder Care Toolkit** on their website that goes into a lot more details with many more examples and ideas we can utilize. I urge everyone to check out the website at www.TheFYI.org and go to the elder care toolkit. The FYI is also in the middle of their Aging With Dignity project - whereby they are compiling resources that caregivers and elders can use to help them in this extremely important journey. We need to benefit from all these resources to help ourselves and our loved ones.

And a final reminder.

Abu Hurairah (ra) relates that the Prophet (saw) said "*May he be disgraced, may he be disgraced, may he be disgraced.*" "*Who?*" *The Sahaba enquired. "The person whose parents, or any one of them, attain old-age during his life-time and he does not earn Paradise (by being kind-hearted and dutiful to them)!"* (Sahih Muslim)

Looking after our elderly parents is an immense honor and a means of getting to paradise. But it is also a duty and may be a source of disgrace. The choice is entirely ours.

I ask Allah swt to guide us to be merciful and kind to our elderly parents.

May He swt allow us to look after our parents in the best of ways, and enable all of us to gain entry to paradise because of it.

<< *Khutba Close and Dua* >>