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## CORE MODULE MANUAL FOR TRAINERS

# The Islamic Family House

*"And among His Signs is this: that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." [Quran 30:21]*



Written by Islamic Medical Association of Uganda [IMAU]

Illustrated by Karen Ray Brower

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# table of contents

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	IV
FOREWORD .....	V
INTRODUCTION TO <b>THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE</b> TRAINING MANUAL.....	1
1. Using <i>The Islamic Family House</i> Core Module Manual.....	3
2. Structure of the Manual .....	3
3. Structure of the Workshop.....	5
4. Principles, Values, and Concept of Islamic Family House as provided by Allah (SWT) .....	8
5. Integration of the Spouses: the Male and the Female .....	9
<b>MODULE ONE: THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Welcome and Introduction.....	11
1.2 Why the Islamic Family House? .....	12
1.3 The Foundation of the Islamic Family House.....	13
1.4 The Purposes of Marriage in Islam .....	17
1.5 Sex urges in Men and Women .....	20
1.6 The Four Pillars of <i>Islamic Family House</i> .....	21
<b>MODULE TWO: A COMPLETE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE.....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 The Walls of The Islamic Family House.....	31
2.2 The Door That Opens.....	35
2.3 Windows of Light and Forgiveness.....	37
2.4 The Roof of Consciousness .....	40
<b>MODULE THREE: LIVING IN THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE .....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1 The Marriage Bed.....	43
3.2 The Marriage Banquet in Islam .....	45
3.3 Preparing for Pregnancy .....	47
3.4 Positive Parenting .....	50
3.5 Protecting Your Children.....	52



<b>MODULE FOUR: CHALLENGES IN AN ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE.....</b>	<b>55</b>
4.1 Culture and the Houses around Us.....	55
4.2 Broken Houses .....	57
4.3 Islam and Domestic Abuse.....	58
4.4 Islam and Mercy in Marriage.....	62
4.5 Formation of Ongoing Support Groups .....	64
4.6 Closing of Module Four and <i>The Islamic Family House</i> Program.....	64
<b>5. APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1 The Broken Inner House.....	67
5.2 Temperament .....	69
5.3 Moods.....	71
5.4 Economic Empowerment.....	73
5.5 An Empty House .....	75
5.6 A Star for the Family .....	76
<b>6. REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>79</b>



# Acronyms and Glossary of terms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
Dua	Prayer; supplication
Deen	Faith; way of life
Fitrah	Divinely inspired nature
Halaal	Lawful
Haraam	Unlawful
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
Ibadah	Worship
Ihsan	Conscious
IICWC	International Islamic Committee on Women & Children
Iman	Faith
Mu'amalah	Transactions between human beings
Nikah	Legal Islamic contract
PBUH	Peace be upon him
Sakinah	Tranquility or succor
Salat	Muslim daily prayer
SAW	May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him
Sunnah	Teachings of the Prophet Mohammed
SWT	Subhana Wata Allah
Taqwa	Piety
Ummah	Nations

# Foreword

Marriage is the first institution that Allah (SWT) made and is the basic foundation of the family. The family is the center of Allah's love and the essence of the Muslim community and the nation. Allah's plan and desire is to see that all human beings live in good, healthy, and stable families.

**“It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love). When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah their Lord, (saying): “If Thou givest us a goodly child, we vow we shall (ever) be grateful.” [Quran 7:189]**

To neglect the family is to take away life. The neglect of family life has resulted in problems and challenges for our communities. Many marriages are under attack in different ways. Now, more than ever, there is a need for special attention to the family in today's society. Among those challenges and difficulties are HIV and AIDS and the great pain and suffering they bring to couples and families.

Article (42) of the Islamic Charter on Family says that local institutions play an active role in family affairs, and this role extends to include institutions that:

- Encourage and facilitate marriage
- Make people aware of the Shari'ah rulings that pertain to the family and the social and psychological studies related to it
- Provide care for mothers, children, the elderly, wives involved in marital conflicts, and youth who have problems with their parents that cannot be solved within the family

- Hold meetings for reconciliation between family members.

The role of nurseries, schools, the media, and mosques represents the external training that shapes family members within their psyche. Thus, they should be given special attention and be enabled to perform their pedagogical roles that are in accordance with the principles of Islam.

CRS in conjunction with the Islamic Medical Association of Uganda developed *The Islamic Family House* training manuals to help people with marriage challenges. They underscore the importance of abstinence and faithfulness in building strong and committed marriages and healthy families. In turn, these marriages and families become foundational in creating “civilizations of love,” which define authentic human progress, a phenomenon strongly advocated for in Islam.

Couples should attend the program together to benefit maximally from the process of *The Faithful House* or *The Islamic Family House*. These sister programs offer couples the opportunity to build their marriage for their own good and the good of their families. Further, this program will allow couples to extend help to other couples. This opportunity is especially important in the context of the challenges presented by HIV and AIDS and other issues affecting families.

May the One and Almighty Allah accept all our endeavors for the goodness of humanity.

# Acknowledgment

Most appreciation to Allah the Almighty for guiding us all through the thinking and development of this manual.

Thank you to CRS for providing the framework for developing this manual. Special appreciation to Dorothy Brewster for introducing the whole concept, listening to our voices along the way and knitting up most of our ideas. We thank CRS staff Samalie Odoy and Catherine Birungi from CRS Natural Plan Project. Also thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Lubega from Maternal Life Uganda.

Thank you to the writing team Dr. Abubakr Kalinaki and Sr. Rashida Nabukalu, Principal Nursing Officer in Kibuli Hospital, who wrote the core chapters and coordinated the pilot of this manual.

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Finally we thank Dr. Zainab Akol, the team leader, for putting the text together and editing this manual.

I am grateful for the opportunity this process gave me to provide the quality assurance of the Islamic quotations in particular and the concept of Islamic Family House in general.



Sheikh Dr. Abdu Anaas Kalisa PhD  
*Islamic Scholar and Lecturer, Islamic University of Uganda*



# Introduction to *The Islamic Family House* Training Manual

Welcome to *The Islamic Family House* Core Module Manual and workshop. Through teaching *The Islamic Family House*, you are making a vital contribution to the health and wellbeing of individuals, couples, families, communities, and society in general.

Allah (SWT) has created men and women as company for one another so they can procreate and live in peace and tranquility according to the commandments of and the directions of His Messenger.

As we discuss *The Islamic Family House*, remember the Quran.

Family life is given by Allah (SWT). Strong and intact families depend on strong and healthy marriages. In fact, marriage and family are a form of worship (Ibadah) because they are the foundation of society. We could say, “As marriage goes, so does society.” We know from looking around that a strong marriage can help bring health, stability and even prosperity to a family. We also know that the opposite is true; without the strength and support of a good marriage, a family is more vulnerable to sickness, poverty and hunger.

There are numerous Quranic and prophetic injunctions that emphasize the concept of marriage, some of which are illustrated below:

In the hadith reported by Albaihaqi, the Prophet is reported to have said: **“When a man gets married, he gets one half of the religion. Thus, he should fear Allah in the other half.”**

Furthermore, Abdullah ibun Mas’ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported the Prophet (PBUH) to have said, **“O young people! Whoever can afford marriage should marry, for that will help him lower his gaze and guard his modesty (i.e., his private parts from committing illegal sexual intercourse). Whoever is not able to marry is recommend to fast, as fasting diminishes his sexual power.” (Muhammad al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim).**

Through the implementation of *The Islamic Family House*, we want to see many families empowered with social, spiritual, moral, material, and relational tools that will help them in the realization of authentic human development.

Our journey to authentic human development is taking place within the context of the HIV epidemic. Historically, AIDS is the greatest epidemic to affect humankind since the Black Death epidemic during the Middle Ages. In the southern region of Africa, AIDS has lowered the life expectancy in some countries by nearly 30 years—

the largest known decline in human history. As frightening as these statistics are, they also take place within good news coming out of Africa; AIDS can be stopped. Unlike at the beginning of the epidemic, when we did not know the cause of AIDS or how to control it, we now know that the spread of HIV can be stopped by behavioral changes. Specifically, if young people can be taught and supported in their decision to be chaste and married couples can be taught and supported in their decision to be faithful, the HIV risk can be avoided. Abstinence and faithfulness are the most critical practices to stop new HIV infections.

Given our knowledge of HIV transmission, people living in a time of HIV and AIDS can make choices that allow them to avoid HIV. This is the essence of building and living according to *The Islamic Family House*. These choices reflect the exercise of our Allah-given capacity to know, to love, and to act in order to protect ourselves and those we love.

In promoting abstinence from sex before marriage and faithfulness within marriage, *The Islamic Family House* targets:

- Married couples, who are challenged in their couple communication, to be faithful and to pass on values of faithfulness, chastity, and respect to their children. This is in relation to what the Prophet (SAW) told the companions during his farewell sermon: “All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. **“O ye who believe, save yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is human beings and stones...”** [Quran 66:6]
- Engaged couples, helping them to understand their sexuality and preparing them emotionally, relationally, and spiritually for the gift of marriage. **“So ask the people of the reminder (knowledgeable people) if you do not know.”** [Quran 21:7]
- Young adults and singles, reinforcing chastity and assisting them in developing life skills and attitudes necessary for faithful and committed relationships. **“Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace.”** [Quran 24:33]

We are confident that this work will enable and empower young people to remain chaste and married couples to remain faithful. These values will allow them to avoid HIV infection, and experience a happier and a fulfilling life. This will honor Allah’s plan for themselves, for their marriages, and for their families.

Although CRS developed *The Faithful House* to address the problem of HIV transmission in stable couples, the curriculum uses the couple as a unit of behavior change and is capable of achieving positive outcomes across a wide range of interventions, including agriculture, nutrition, household economics, and transforming gender norms. Studies in four countries have demonstrated improvements in communication between partners in areas such as finance, gender roles, and power imbalances. The curriculum is highly adaptive. Facilitators are trained to contextualize

the general themes with examples that reflect the specific household development issue being targeted. The program is now used as an adjunct to development projects in the areas of agriculture, household economic strengthening, savings and internal lending groups, and maternal and child health, and has recently been introduced in Uganda as a strategy to expand the use of natural family planning. Prior to using *the Islamic Family House* in these areas, however, is important to conduct proper research on Islamic teachings.

## 1. USING *THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE* CORE MODULE MANUAL

The Islamic version of *The Faithful House* Core Module Manual is guided by Islamic teachings and principles that are clearly described in the text. Islam does not allow personal opinions to change Islamic beliefs and practices, so please follow the material in this manual, which has been carefully reviewed by scholars, religious leaders and CRS technical staff (Valerie Rhoe and Mohamed Dahir). This manual is written in English but facilitators are encouraged to use the local language or English as appropriate.

## 2. STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

The manual outlines the four modules that form the Islamic Family House program:

- Module One: *The Islamic Family House*
- Module Two: *A Complete Islamic Family House*
- Module Three: *Living in the Islamic Family House*
- Module Four: *Challenges in Islamic Family House*

Within each module there are between five to eight sessions that begin with an outline of objectives for the facilitator. Following the objectives, there may be pictures or Quranic/hadith quotations relevant to the part of the house to be discussed. The presentation and discussion of that part of the house is then presented in three steps (see below). In your daily introduction, remind participants that anything discussed during the program stays “in the room” and is not shared with anyone outside the class group. Ensuring confidentiality will enhance the sense of safety and openness that participants feel and enrich discussions.

### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views/ideas from the participants***

As the facilitator, your task is to ensure that there is a vibrant group discussion on the selected topic. Begin by showing a picture or reading a quotation relevant to the part of the house to be discussed. In some cases, there are instructions for a role play, which is intended to help stimulate questions and discussions. Use your discretion to choose or adapt the General Questions to the local context and the needs of the group. Encourage participants to share their thoughts and ideas.

### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views and ideas***

Build on the responses of the participants by using the Islamic quotes, personal experiences, and other relevant information. Ask participants to share their understanding of Quranic quotes, other Islamic teaching, or their own experiences.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

In this section, participants will learn how to apply the concepts they have just learned to their daily lives. Introduce the Couple Times questions to the group and allow the couples to find a quiet area inside or outside where they can discuss the topic in private. Since some couples may be illiterate, read each question aloud and make sure couples understand the questions. Allow the couples adequate time to discuss the questions, and call the class together to summarize the session. Encourage participants to share what they have learned and the decisions they have made about behaviors they plan to change. As you close this activity, encourage participants to discuss these issues further at home. If they have any questions or have not reached a mutual understanding, encourage the participants to speak with one of the facilitators.

### **Conclusion**

Summarize the main ideas of the workshop and ask participants if they have any remaining questions. Provide some information on the topic for the next class and ask participants a question or suggest a topic to consider as “homework.”

## **2.1 BEGINNING AND ENDING THE MODULES**

In addition to the three-step process with each session, the manual contains information about beginning and ending an entire module. Specifically, each module begins with an introduction involving a welcome, a prayer, and several review questions. There are also specific questions for couples, which offer couples an opportunity to present feedback about the Life Application questions. After Couple Time, facilitators can encourage couples to continue to discuss issues at home or with one of the facilitators if they feel the need.

Each module ends with an invitation for feedback from the participants about the module, asking what was good and what could be improved. The facilitator then announces the time and venue for the next module while creating a sense of anticipation.

## **2.2 FACILITATOR INFORMATION BOXES**

In the manual, there are boxes that contain specific information and reminders for the facilitator(s). Some of the boxes contain information that may be helpful in supplementing the discussion and other boxes contain information to help keep the sessions on track.

## **2.3 APPENDICES**

The last section of the manual contains several appendices that further supplement and support *The Islamic Family House* program. Several of these appendices will be used during the course, and facilitators may use them to follow up after couples have completed training under *The Islamic Family House*.

### 3. STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP

Consider these four challenges as you plan for *The Islamic Family House* couples workshop:

- The challenge of inadequate Islamic knowledge and practices among couples and the facilitators
- The challenge of language differences and illiteracy
- The challenge of low male involvement
- The challenge of limited resources, especially time and funds.

#### CHALLENGE 1: INADEQUATE ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES AMONG THE COUPLES AND FACILITATORS.

There is vast knowledge on the subject of marriage in Islam. The subject has been studied by many scholars and consensus on how it should be practiced is very clear. The challenge is to have that knowledge and the ability to put it into action and to follow it as prescribed. Many people say one thing and do another. Most errors are made early in life, or by those with limited education. Even religious people who are supposed to have adequate knowledge of Islamic Family House have challenges practicing it.

#### CHALLENGE 2: LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES AND ILLITERACY

Couples may vary in their literacy levels and their knowledge of English, so the flow of the program can be difficult to maintain. To help negotiate the differing levels of literacy, facilitators can consider the following:

- During preparation, see if you can have the basic concepts of *The Islamic Family House* translated into the local language.
- Offer post-workshop or evening sessions to recap the main points in the local language.
- Try to arrange a translator for couples who are less literate. Translators could also serve as mentors in small groups after the completion of the program.

If the whole program is being translated, you will have to examine your timetable and see what is realistic to cover during the actual workshop and what may need to be completed in follow-up sessions.

#### CHALLENGE 3: LOW MALE INVOLVEMENT

There has been an increase in the recognition of men's important contributions to improving family resilience. Ministries of health, international NGOs, and local community-based organizations are developing effective interventions to increase the engagement of the male partner in health, nutrition, early child education, and other aspects of family life. Facilitators are encouraged to contact their faith organizations, national ministries of health, or education and child welfare organizations to obtain these resources.

## CHALLENGE 4: LIMITED RESOURCES (TIME AND FUNDING FOR MATERIALS)

The following are some suggestions to address the challenge of limited resources:

- In some situations there may not be enough manuals or teaching aids so facilitators must be flexible and innovative in their presentations.
- Use flip chart paper to illustrate the basic components of the house.
- Be as visual as possible. For example, when you talk about the foundation, have a shovel or pick to demonstrate digging the foundation. Have some posts or poles for the pillar; mud blocks for the walls; and thatch for the roof. Even if they are not complete, these visual cues help spark couples' interest.

The Faithful House is ideally delivered over a five-day time frame. Five days enables couples to participate in all of the sessions and fully process the information during "couple time." However, in some settings, it may not be possible for couples to attend for this length of time, so the program must be adapted. Our experience has been that couples generally prefer the full five-day program because they feel less rushed and don't feel that important sessions are left out.

The following are some suggestions to address the challenge of time:

- Examine the tables below, which provide an overview of which sessions should be covered in either three-day or five-day formats. Be sure to factor this into your planning.
- To the extent possible, preliminary items should be completed before the workshop begins. For example, if couples are taking a pretest, arrange for this to be completed ahead of time.
- The program does not have to be given on consecutive days. Some organizers have presented the program over a series of two-hour sessions.
- Allow for additional sessions to be completed in small groups after completion of the main body of the workshop.

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Avoid cutting out or significantly reducing couple time, because this is key to the process of *The Islamic Family House* program. The three-day session cuts out "The Purposes of Marriage" and "Paths of Islamic Family House." In the three-day format there generally would not be time for additional sessions.

## THREE-DAY WORKSHOP TIMETABLE

DAY	ITEM	TIME
<b>One (morning)</b>	Welcome and Introduction (Including Opening Ceremony)	30 minutes
<b>One (morning)</b>	Expectations and Norms of Behavior	30 minutes
<b>One (morning)</b>	The Foundation	1 and a half hours
<b>One (morning)</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Pillar of Being conscious of Allah (SWT)	1 and a quarter hours
<b>One (afternoon)</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Pillar of True Love	1 hour
<b>One (afternoon)</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Pillar of Faithfulness and Chasity	1 hour
<b>One (afternoon)</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Pillar of Respect	1 and a half hours
<b>One (afternoon)</b>	Recap and Evaluation of Day One	20 minutes
<b>Two (morning)</b>	Recap and Questions	20 minutes
<b>Two (morning)</b>	The Walls of Our Values	1 hour
<b>Two (morning)</b>	The Door	1 hour
<b>Two (morning)</b>	The Windows	1½ hour
<b>Two (afternoon)</b>	The Roof of Consciousness	1 hour
<b>Two (afternoon)</b>	Marriage Bed and Banquet	1 hour
<b>Two (afternoon)</b>	Two Paths	30 minutes
<b>Two (afternoon)</b>	Recap and Evaluation of Day Two	20 minutes
<b>Three (morning)</b>	Recap and Questions	20 minutes
<b>Three (morning)</b>	Culture and Houses Around Us	30 minutes (couple time – at home)
<b>Three (morning)</b>	Broken Houses	30 minutes
<b>Three (morning)</b>	Islam and Mercy	30 minutes
<b>Three (morning)</b>	Economic Empowerment	1 hour
<b>Three (afternoon)</b>	A Star for the Family	1 hour
<b>Three (afternoon)</b>	Small Group Formation and Follow-up	1 hour
<b>Three (afternoon)</b>	Closing Ceremony	1 hour

## 4. PRINCIPLES, VALUES, AND CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE AS PROVIDED BY ALLAH (SWT)

### 4.1 THE DIVINE MISSION OF MAN: WORSHIPPING AND SPREADING CIVILIZATION ON EARTH

**“I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.”** [Quran 51:56]

**“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: “I will create a vicegerent on earth.” They said: “Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?” He said: “I know what ye know not.”** [Quran 2:30]

### 4.2 PROVIDING MAN WITH THE NECESSARY QUALITIES TO UNDERTAKE THIS MISSION

In order to accomplish his mission on Earth, Allah granted man the necessary intellectual, psychological, and physical abilities. Likewise, He sent messengers to lead man to the straight paths of guidance and success, in this life and in the Hereafter.

**“We assuredly sent amongst every People a messenger, (with the Command), “Serve Allah, and eschew Evil.”** [Quran 16:36]

### 4.3 POSSESSION OF MENTAL FACULTIES AND THE WILL TO CHANGE

Allah (SWT) created man with the innate tendency to believe in Him. At the same time, He granted man the intellect and will that allow him to stray from his fitrah (divinely inspired nature), or to develop his abilities according to his knowledge, spiritual gifts, and social conditions. It is the existence of this intellect and will that is the precondition for the reward or punishment in the hereafter.

### 4.4 EQUALITY IN THE ORIGIN OF CREATION AND THE VARIATION OF SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

**“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).”** [Quran 49:13]

Allah (SWT) created all mankind equal in the origin of their creation from one soul. It follows that they are equal in their general characteristics. Despite this, wisdom dictated that they should differ in some of their individual characteristics such as strength and weakness, talents, and psychological, mental, and physical abilities. This human variation is the foundation of life, as it causes individuals and societies to get to know, cooperate, and complement each other, as opposed to being an invitation to animosity and hatred.



## 5. INTEGRATION OF THE SPOUSES: THE MALE AND THE FEMALE

**“O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.”** [Quran 4:1]

Despite man’s unity in the origin of his creation from one soul, with His Infinite Ability, Allah created a couple from this soul; male and female. Only through contact, cooperation, and complementing each other, can life continue, civilization be spread, and the human race proliferate; this is the way that has decreed for all of creation and things in this life.

It is only by way of the connection between man and woman that the family is formed, and the family is the first nucleus of human society.

**FACILITATORS’ NOTE:** Conducting a successful *Islamic Family House* workshop requires more than just a facilitating couple. The program can be greatly enhanced by the presence of other couples who provide different forms of service. For example, experienced couples can serve as mentors and translators, sitting with participant couples during break or at meals. They can help them with questions, especially if English is not their first language. Mentor and translator couples can also support couples in small-group follow-up sessions.

Other couples may assist with meal preparation, lodging, and in preparing any special events or prayers. The experience of the participant couples will be enriched by the active participation of couples who have already completed *The Islamic Family House*. As the adage says, “Many hands make for light work.”



# Module One: The Islamic Family House

## 1.1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Islamic Family House* Training: Building Strong Marriages to Affirm Life and Avoid Risk. Through training, you will realize the blessings of a loving and lasting marriage and you will learn how to avoid HIV and how to help your children receive the same blessings.

Since the family is the nucleus of Islamic society, and marriage is the only way to bring families into existence, the Prophet (PBUH) insisted upon that his followers enter into marriage. The Shari'ah prescribes rules to regulate the functioning of the family so that both spouses can live together in love, security, and tranquility. Marriage in Islam has aspects of both Ibadah (worship) and mu'amalah (transactions between human beings). **“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.”** [Quran 30:21]

Marriage is an act pleasing to Allah (SWT) because it is in accordance with his commandments that husband and wife love each other and help each other to continue the human race and raise their children to become true servants of Allah (SWT).

These aspects are beautifully explained in the tradition of the Prophet. It is narrated by Anas that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, **“When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear regarding the remaining half.”** (*Albaihaqi*)

The Prophet (PBUH) considered marriage for a Muslim as half of his religion because it shields him from promiscuity, adultery, fornication, etc., which ultimately lead to many other evils like slander, quarreling, homicide, loss of property, disintegration of the family, and sometimes death. According to the Prophet (PBUH) the remaining half can be saved by Taqwa [faith]

As we go through each component of the Islamic Family House, we will follow a three-step process.

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** For the participants to gain as much as possible from the program, the facilitators should help them develop group norms and guidelines such as:

- Commitment to attend all sessions
- Turning cell phones off or putting them in silent mode
- Respecting others' opinions
- Appointing a timekeeper to enable the program to stay on track.

If the facilitators think it is appropriate, he or she can suggest that the husband introduces the wife, and vice versa. Depending on the context, the facilitators can ask couples where they are from and what they hope to learn from the program.

**The first step** consists of Gathering Views. In this step, we will show you a picture or read an Islamic quotation from the Quran, hadith, or Sunnah related to what we are about to discuss. We will then ask you a few questions to gather your thoughts on what it represents.

**The second step** consists of Supplementing Views. In this step, the facilitators add Islamic teachings from Quran and hadith and other ideas to the ones you have presented.

**The third step** consists of Life Application. In this step, the facilitators ask you as couples to reflect on and discuss with each other one or more Couple Time questions about the topic. After the reflection, the facilitators will summarize that topic and move on to the next.

Our hope is that the three-step process of Gathering Views, Supplementing Views, and Life Application will allow for a meaningful and thorough discussion of Islamic Family House. By the end of the three-step process, couples should have a good understanding of the topic and how it applies to their lives and to their marriages.

## 1.2 WHY THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE?

The illustration below will help couples better conceptualize the Islamic Family House and its practice, and to build and strengthen their marriages.

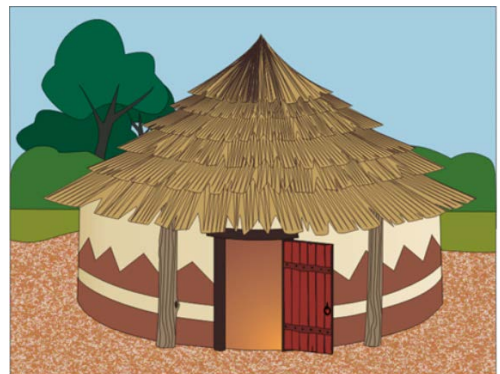
### SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand the definition of marriage according to Islam
- Identify the importance of marriage
- List different parts of the Islamic Family House
- Distinguish between a physical house and a marriage house.

One of the first things you will need to do as a married couple is to build an Islamic family house. We should know that a house is a blessing from Allah the Exalted. **“It is Allah Who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you; and made for you,...”** [Quran 16:80]

This house may be made of bricks, stone, cement or mud. The roof may be made of tiles, iron sheets or grass thatch. As you build this house, you will want to make it special. With time, we hope the house will become a home with children and fond memories of your shared life together.



**FACILITATOR'S NOTE:** The parts of the house, including the foundation, pillars, walls, windows and roof should come up in the answers. If they don't, the facilitators should probe further—for example, by asking the class to name the different components of a house.

Keeping in mind the comparison of a physical house with a marriage house, we will examine each component of the house and how it is to be constructed in accordance with Allah's plan.

Although we often think and plan in great detail about the physical house we will live in, we may neglect something far more important—the kind of marriage house we will build. In building a marriage house, we have to prepare, plan, and work together just as we have to prepare, plan and work together to build a physical house. As we build our marriage house, we have to consider very important questions:

- What is the importance of a physical house?
- What are the different features of a marriage house?

Just as it is important that we construct our physical houses well, it is important that we construct our marriage houses well. A well-constructed marriage house will enable our marriages to be strong and our families to flourish.

### 1.3 THE FOUNDATION OF THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE

Article 32 of the Islamic Charter on Family teaches Building the Family on Religious Principles. Building the family structure on the principles of religion and its fundamentals in each person's selection of a spouse provides a firm foundation for this structure and its continuity.

#### SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Describe the foundation for a strong and healthy marriage.
- Identify Allah (SWT) as the foundation of marriage.
- Realize that many marriages may be built on the “wrong foundation.”

#### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on the foundation***

##### **General Questions**

- When you want to build a good marriage, what would you consider important to have and why?
- Looking at the situation in our society today, what is the foundation of most marriages?
- What are the different types of marriages in our society and what is the foundation of each?
- What problems would you see if a couple did not build a marriage house on a foundation of Allah?
- What are the advantages of making Allah the foundation of our marriages?

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Choose and give the most appropriate questions to the participants for group discussion, followed by presentations.

#### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the foundation***

The strongest and most basic part of a house is its foundation. If the foundation of the house is strong, it can support the remainder of the house, while resisting the wind, the rain, and forces of nature. If the foundation of the house is strong, the rest of the house can be constructed properly. Its pillars will be straight, its walls thick, and its roof even. Yet if the foundation of the house is weak, eventually it will sag and crumble. A house without a strong foundation will not be safe to live in.

The foundation of the Islamic Family House is Allah and His great love. It is Allah who ordained the ritual of marriage, sealing the unity of husband and wife with his own divine seal of love and mercy. Allah says **“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.”** [Quran 30:21]

Knowing that marriage is a form of worship (ibadat), we should enter into this ibadat with the right intention, which is to please Allah (SWT). Recall the hadith narrated by the leader of the faithful, Umar Ibn Khatab (RA), who reported that he heard the Prophet (SAW) saying **“Actions are judged by the intention.” (Bukhar and Muslim)** Therefore, from the onset, the intention of one’s entering into the Islamic marriage must be to please Allah (SWT).

The divine nature of marriage means that we must build our houses as Allah intended and not how man and woman alone might intend it. Remember that the Prophet (SAW) said, **“When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear (Allah) regarding the remaining half.” (Alibaihaqi)**

The foundation of Islamic Family House entails total submission to the will of Allah. It is He who ordained the institution of marriage as a divine union between man and woman. **“.... He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect”** [Quran 30:21].

Religion as a foundation for choosing a spouse is very important. Allah (SWT) says **“Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and he knoweth all things.”** [Quran 24:32]

Trial marriages are not allowed in Islam. The pre-condition to have sexual relations is nikah, the marriage contract. A hadith related by Uqbah bin Amir says that the Prophet (SAW) said that from among all the conditions which you have to fulfill, the condition which makes it legal to have **sexual relations (i.e. the marriage contract) has the greatest right to be fulfilled (Sahih Bukhar Vol. 3 Book 50, No. 882).**

**The conditions for an acceptable Islamic marriage include acceptance of both bride and groom, permission from father or male guardians of the bride, mahr (marriage gift to the bride) and witnesses.** [Quran 4:25]

Islam teaches that consent from both man and woman is a must before a marriage can take place. **“If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed, Ye are one from another: Wed them with the leave of their owners, and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable. This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that ye practise self-restraint. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”** [Quran 4:25]

The Quran states **“O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness.”** [Quran 4:19]

The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) is reported to have said: ***“The widow and the divorced woman shall not be married until her order is obtained, and the virgin girl shall not be married until her permission is obtained.”*** (al-Bukhary, 67:42)

The next chapter of the Sahih al-Bukhary states: ***“When a man gives his daughter in marriage and she dislikes it, the marriage shall be repudiated.”*** (al-Bukhary, 67:43) Further hadith provides examples of the Prophet Muhammed (phuh) cancelling such marriages in which the daughter’s consent was not sought. Also read Quran 4:24.

In relation to witnesses, Sheikh M. S. Al-Munajjid, a prominent Saudi Muslim lecturer and author, states: In order for a marriage to be valid, it is essential to have two Muslim witnesses of good character, because the Prophet (PBUH) said: ***“There is no marriage except with a wali and two witnesses of good character.”*** (Reported by Al-Bayhaqi from the hadith of `Imran and `A`ishah; classed as sahih by Al-Albani in Sahih Al-Jami`, No. 7557

With the Islamic understanding of marriage, we realize that a husband and wife are to be co-builders of the house, working with Allah to build a house strong and worthy of His love. With a strong Islamic foundation, we realize that our married lives are not just physical lives, but spiritual lives and community lives as well.

The importance of the institution of marriage receives its greatest emphasis from the following Hadith of the Prophet: ***“Marriage is my Sunnah. Whosoever keeps away from it is not part of me.”*** (Meaning that he/she is not one of the Prophet’s followers.)

With these Quranic injunctions and the guidance from the Prophet (PBUH) in mind, we shall examine the institution of marriage in the Shari’ah. Since the family is the nucleus of Islamic society, and marriage is the only way to bring families into existence, the Prophet (PBUH) insisted upon his followers entering into marriage. The Shari’ah prescribes rules to regulate the functioning of the family so that both spouses can live together in love, security, and tranquility. Marriage is an act pleasing to God because it is in accordance with his commandments that husband and wife love each other and help each other to continue the human race and raise their children to become true servants of Allah SWT.

The Prophet of Allah (SWT) stated: ***“Whoever chooses to follow my tradition must get married and produce offspring through marriage (and increase the population of Muslims) so that on the day of resurrection I shall confront other Ummah (nations) with the (great) numbers of my Ummah.”*** (Ibun Maaja 3)

Marriage being a lawful response to the basic biological instinct to have sexual intercourse and to procreate children, Shari’ah has prescribed detailed rules for translating this response into a living human institution reinforced by a framework of legally enforceable rights and duties of the spouses and their offspring. These aspects are beautifully explained in a tradition of the Prophet (PBUH).

It was narrated from Abu Dharr that some people from among the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): **“O Messenger of Allah, the rich people will get more reward. They pray as we pray, and they fast as we fast, but they give in charity from their excess wealth.”** He said, **“Has not Allah given you things with which you can give charity? Enjoining what is good is a charity. Forbidding what is evil is a charity. Having intercourse (with one’s wife) is a charity.”** They said, **“O Messenger of Allah, if one of us fulfils his desire, is there reward in that?”** He said, **“Do you not see that if he does it in a haraam way he will have the burden of sin? So if he does it in a halaal way, he will have a reward for that.”** (Muslim 7/92)

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- What is our marriage like today in relation to Allah [SWT]?
- What steps will we take as a couple to make Allah [SWT] the foundation of our marriage?

**The facilitators thank the participants for their responses and insights. Prepare them for the next session and remind them to keep in mind the following:**

- The image of the foundation of an Islamic Family House is deen/iman/faith (total submission to Allah).
- Marriage is acceptable after a legal Islamic contract (nikah); husband and wife are co-builders of the marriage house.
- Even if your relationship is not currently built on the foundation of Islam, Allah always awaits with his love, mercy and forgiveness to accept repentance and guide you through the right path to the Islamic Family House.



## 1.4 THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session participants should be able to:

- Identify the three fundamental purposes of marriage
- Respect the cultural, family and religious influences on the purposes of marriage.

### *STEP ONE: Gathering views on the purpose of marriage*

#### General Questions

- What is the purpose of marriage in traditional culture?
- What is the purpose of Islamic marriage?
- If a couple cannot have children, is their marriage still valid?

### *STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the purpose of marriage*

As a man and woman prepare to enter into marriage, they must consider the fundamental purposes of marriage. Are they coming together to build a house for children, for companionship, for continuation of their family and clan life, or for economic reasons?

In the Quran Allah (SWT) says, **“Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among yourselves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and he knoweth all things.”** [Quran 24:32]

The Quran also instructs us as follows: **“And in no wise covet those things in which Allah Hath bestowed His gifts More freely on some of you than on others: To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn: But ask Allah of His bounty. For Allah hath full knowledge of all things.”** [Quran 4:32]

What about having sex? Is sex only for producing children? Or for pleasure and intimacy? There may be many different answers to these questions.

In many traditional African cultures, the primary purpose of marriage and sex is to beget children so that the family or clan will continue.

In the West, the opposite is happening in many places. Men and women cohabit or get married primarily for companionship, including sexual intimacy, and children are often secondary. Many couples choose not to have any children, or only one or two children.

In the Quran Allah (SWT) says, **“It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love). When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah their Lord, (saying): “If Thou givest us a goodly child, we vow we shall (ever) be grateful.”** [Quran 7:189]



Marriage in Islam has two main purposes: To ensure preservation of the human species and to fulfill religious requirements.

**“O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.”** [Quran: 4:1]

Marriage also provides spiritual and legal foundation of the family. The conjugal relationship between men and women becomes lawful through marriage. Islam regards sex as natural and good, but restricts it to married partners to ensure the responsibility for its consequences.

Marriage provides spiritual, physical, emotional and psychological companionship. This companionship generates and sustains love, kindness, compassion, mutual confidence, solace and succor (sakinah). It lays a spiritual and legal foundation for raising a family.

**“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.”** [Quran 30:21]

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) hence declared: **“When the servant of Allah marries, he has fulfilled half the (responsibilities laid on him by the) faith; so let him be Allah conscious with respect to the other half.”** (Mishkat).

Marriage has also been commended as the way of the prophets: **“We did send messengers before thee, and appointed for them wives and children: and it was never the part of a messenger to bring a sign except as Allah permitted (or commanded). For each period is a Book (revealed).”** [Quran 13:38]

Marriage is specifically considered the tradition (Sunnah) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and he said: **“Marriage is my Sunnah; whoever disregards my (Sunnah) path is not from among us.”** (ibn Majah) Islam discourages celibacy and encourages marriage, as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recommended: **“Whoever is able to marry, should marry.”** (Bukhari)

Marriage serves to rightly order sexual desires. The sexual urge allowed in Islam is very good, yet it should not go or be wild, with men and women having sex with whomever they want. Through marriage, a couple's sexual urge fits into Allah's guidance, where sex leads to the right ordering of sexual desire through the unity of the spouses and the procreation of children.

It well may be that there are other valid reasons for marriage, including economic security and ensuring that the life of the community, both living and dead, continues

in the life of the couple and their children. However, we cannot let these reasons overshadow the two primary purposes of marriage. Marriage in Islam has two main purposes: To ensure preservation of the human species and to fulfill religious requirements.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- As a couple, how do we see our marriage? Is it primarily for children, for companionship or both?
- What other purposes does our marriage have?
- What parts of our marriage may have lost their purposes and need to be improved?
- In our marriage, are we open to the gift of children? Have we worked to raise our children well so that they have a strong faith and good character?
- Have we rightly ordered our sexual desires so that we respect each other and find joy and meaning in our sexual lives?

In conclusion, the facilitator may note that the problem of infertility is often raised in this session. The facilitator can add: "Many couples bear the pain and suffering of infertility. A marriage without children is just as valid as a marriage blessed by children because Allah (SWT) in the holy Quran says. **"To Allāh belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows female (offspring) upon whom He wills, and bestows male (offspring) upon whom He wills. Or He bestows both males and females, and He renders barren whom He wills. Verily, He is the All-Knower and is Able to do all things."** [Quran 42:49-50]

In a future session we will talk more about the challenges of Islamic Family House when couple is experiencing infertility.

Allah (SWT) also says **"It is not your wealth nor your sons that will bring you nearer to Us in degree: but only those who believe and work righteousness. These are the ones for whom there is a multiplied Reward for their deeds, while secure they (reside) in the dwellings on high!"** [Quran 34:37]

Why is that? Because: **"Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes."** [Quran 18:46]

## 1.5 SEX URGES IN MEN AND WOMEN

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To understand the sexual urge that comes naturally to men and women
- To understand the importance of chastity to human development.

#### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on sex and Islam***

##### **General Questions**

- In general, is a man or woman more likely to take the path to unfaithfulness?
- What word or words describe the power that allows a man or woman to control their sexual drive and stay faithful?
- Is it a cultural value for men to control their sexual drives?
- How are men taught to control their sexual drives?
- How are women expected to control their sexual drives?
- What does Islam say about the control of our sexual drives?

#### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the two paths***

As we discussed in the previous session, Allah gave man and woman a strong sexual urge. Its verses directly relating to sexuality also invoke divine mercy [Quran 7:189] thereby precluding any notion of sexual abuse or coercion as practiced by some Muslim husbands and communities against their wives.

**“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.”** [Quran 24:30]

In many cultures, the sexual promiscuity of men is accepted and tolerated. Yet this tolerance must be challenged. Allah (SWT) cautions us **“Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).”** [Quran 17:32]

Sexual urges can easily lead husband or wife down the wrong path, especially if they are having troubles in their marriage. We use the word “lust” to describe the sexual urge that is only concerned with its satisfaction and release. This power of lust must be overcome—but how?

Chastity is a virtue, a noble way of being and a measure of human excellence. Chastity is controlling oneself from forbidden desires due to the love of the Almighty in response to His command, as well as for seeking His reward in return. This excellence is to be part of our deen and as believers and vicegerents of Allah SWT. A chaste young person directs the energy of his or her sexuality to

loving others without being sexually intimate. **“If a man whose religion and moral character are pleasing proposes to marry your daughter, then marry her off to him.”** (At-Tirmithi)

He further clarified the characteristics that are religiously required in a woman that we can consider for marriage: **“Choose the religious one, you will prosper.”** (Al-Bukhaari and Muslim)

A married couple must be mutually faithful to each other. Practicing chastity is a difficult and lifelong task. Yet the alternative of being “unchaste,” inevitably leads to trouble—from broken marriage, to diseases like AIDS. Let us acknowledge the truth and goodness of our sexual desire.

### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

- How do we practice chastity in our marriage?
- How do we model chastity to our children?
- What cultural practices or values can help teach and support chastity?

Ask participant couples to set aside at least one hour when they will have time, space and privacy to talk to one another. The next meeting date, place and time are announced. During this time, the participants are encouraged to discuss further the questions they were given during the sessions.

In conclusion, the facilitator may note that chastity equals happiness. Through chastity, we take the passion of our sexual energy and direct it to the good of others. Chastity is a way of excellence, a habit and a virtue in which we walk the right path, directing our sexual urge to true love, to excellence and to sexual self-control.

## 1.6 THE FOUR PILLARS OF ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify the spiritual pillars of *Islamic Family House*
- Recognize the importance of the pillars in *Islamic Family House*
- Examine their own marriages to see what pillars need to be strengthened.

Rising from the foundation of the house are four strong pillars. These pillars give the house strength and allow its walls to be laid and its roof connected. If these pillars are well placed, the house will be strong and long lasting. Yet, without these pillars, the house will collapse.



### The four pillars of Islamic Family House are:

- Being conscious of Allah (SWT) and communicating with Him and with each other
- True love
- Faithfulness and chastity
- Respect for human life and dignity.

With these four pillars grounded in Allah (SWT), Islamic Family House takes shape as a house that will be well built, strong and lasting. Yet, without these pillars, the House will collapse. As the picture indicates, the husband and wife are co-builders and they have to work together in order to build an Islamic Family House. We will now look at these pillars one by one.

### PILLAR ONE: BEING CONSCIOUS OF ALLAH (SWT) AND COMMUNICATING WITH HIM AND WITH EACH OTHER.

Allah says **“O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women.”** [Quran 4:1]

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Understand how to be conscious about Allah (SWT) in all aspects of our life
- Understand the importance of communication in marriage
- Describe the relationship between vertical and horizontal communication
- Recognize areas in marriage that are difficult to discuss
- Commit themselves to improved communication in their marriages.

### STEP ONE: Gathering views on communication

The session on communication is introduced by two contrasting role plays. In the first role play, a couple has good communication with each other and with their children. In the second role play, a couple has poor communication skills with each other and their children.

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** The facilitators lead the participants through an exercise of identifying the four pillars.

*After building the foundation, what is the next step in building an Islamic Family House?*

Once the participants mention pillars, the facilitator proceeds to mention the functions of pillars in the physical house, as in the picture above.

*What are these pillars in the Islamic Family House?*

The facilitators evaluate the participants' answers and lead them to identify the four pillars noted below.



## General Questions

- What are the qualities and benefits of good communication in marriage?
- What are the consequences of lack of communication?
- As a couple, what areas do we find difficult to share?

## **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on communication**

This first pillar on communication is very important. Communication is both verbal and non-verbal and involves two levels: vertical and horizontal.

**Vertical:** The vertical dimension is our communication with Allah (SWT). It is important to maintain this relationship through fulfilling the five pillars of Islam and the six pillars of faith, through praying together as a couple, through mutual forgiveness and being mindful of the commandments of Allah.

**Horizontal:** The horizontal dimension is communication between husband and wife in the course of their day-to-day lives. This horizontal communication involves empathy, attentive listening, compassion, sharing compliments, openness, transparency and spending time together.

The vertical and horizontal dimensions of communication should be maintained. One complements the other.

If a couple does not pray and cultivate their relationship with communication, the gap between them widens. On the other hand, if a couple performs regular prayer (salat) and cultivates their relationship with communication, they grow closer to each other. In this way, a couple that prays together strengthens their Islamic Family House.

In addition to containing a vertical and a horizontal dimension, communication is an art that involves a two-way process of careful giving and receiving of information.

**Giving:** Giving refers to our willingness to share with our spouses the little and big things that are part of our day-to-day life together. Through this giving, you are sharing the deepest part of yourself and not withholding information or concerns.

**Receiving:** Receiving refers to your willingness and ability to listen. This is often where communication breaks down, as one spouse says, "He or she will not listen to me." To love your spouse is to listen to him or her! This listening should be done respectfully and carefully.

Both in giving and in receiving, couples must have honesty at the heart of their communication. Therefore a husband and wife must be truthful with each other. They should not lie or hide things from one another. In turn, honesty in marriage will lead to honesty in family life, so children can learn to be honest.

Communication is an ongoing challenge. There are many areas in life that couples do not easily share: money, health, sex, time, last will, children, relatives and their relationships with Allah (SWT). This could be because of the different personalities, fear of rejection, lack of trust, and a lack of independence. Thus, we have to work hard to build this first pillar of communication, recognizing how decisive it is for the well-being of the Islamic Family House.



### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

1. What areas of my life do I find difficult to freely share with my spouse, and what am I going to do about it?
2. When my spouse is communicating with me, am I a good listener? What can I do to improve my listening abilities?
3. Are there areas in which I have not been honest with my spouse? How can I change that, in order to be completely honest in the future?

This first pillar of communication is very important. Many marriages in our society break down because of poor communication. If we have been failing in our communication in marriage, we must work hard to rebuild it.

The facilitator asks participant couples to set aside at least one hour when they will have time, space and privacy to talk to one another. The next meeting date, place and time are announced. During this time, the participants are encouraged to further discuss the questions they were given during the sessions.

### PILLAR TWO: TRUE LOVE

Allah (SWT) ordained the institution of marriage as a legal union between man and woman. **“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.”** [Quran 30:21]

#### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Describe the characteristics of true love
- Distinguish true love from false love
- Understand why love and sex are not equivalent
- Commit themselves to true love in their marriages.

### STEP ONE: Gathering views on true love

#### General Questions

1. How do people understand love in our society today?
2. What is true love and how is it different from false love?
3. What are the practical ways of expressing love to each other?
4. What are the obstacles that hinder couples from experiencing true love?
5. What hinders couples from expressing true love?





### **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on true love**

Some people have misconceptions about true love and how to express it. Love is not just about sex. It is important to note that true love is much greater than sex and true love is more than just a feeling. To better understand true love, we can contrast true love with false love, as shown in the table.

TRUE LOVE	FALSE LOVE
Sincere	Insincere
Founded on teachings of the Quran	Founded in self
Directed to Allah and His messenger	Directed to self and misappropriated
Respects the other	Uses the other
Attraction with commitment	Attraction without commitment
Responsible	Irresponsible
Unconditional	Conditional
Self-control	Lacking self-control
Patient	Impatient
Based in the whole person	Based in lust or infatuation
Chaste	Unchaste
Mutual sexual satisfaction	Selfish sexual satisfaction

True love that forms the pillar of marriage is a deep, binding commitment between a husband and wife in which there is sincere, total, self-giving love of one spouse for the other. True love seeks the other's good; it is selfless; it welcomes happiness; and it endures suffering.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- What are some practical ways of expressing true love to my partner?
- What are the ways in which true love is currently being expressed?
- How do I want my partner to express true love to me?
- In our marriage, where is true love lacking and where has false love taken over?

#### **FACILITATORS' NOTE:**

Facilitators may supplement the discussion on true love by using Quranic verses (like 4:19) and prophetic traditions.

Thank the participants for their responses and insights and recap how important this second pillar of true love is. Husbands and wives are co-builders with Allah's guidance and are meant to communicate with each other with sincerity.

## PILLAR THREE: FAITHFULNESS AND CHASTITY

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Define what chastity in marriage means
- Understand the consequences (physical, marital and spiritual) of unchastity
- Commit themselves to establishing or re-establishing chastity as fundamental pillar to their marriage.

### *STEP ONE: Gathering views on chastity*

#### General Questions

- What are the factors that lead to unchastity in marriage?
- How does society react to unfaithfulness in marriage?
- What factors, if practiced, would enhance chastity in marriage?
- Why is it important for married couples to remain chaste to each other?
- What are the consequences of unchastity?

### *STEP TWO: Supplementing views on chastity*

Man's creation from male and female reveals the divine will in making marriage a human instinct, a social necessity, and an essential system to form families and social bonds between people. The manifestations and means of marriage developed according to the extent of man's elevation over the rest of the creation; becoming a means of purifying man's sexual, behavioral, and social attributes.

In Islam, sexual relationship is allowed between man and woman who are legally married. Fornication and adultery breaches chastity and opens doors of moral corruption in society and family insecurity. Allah says **“Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).”** [Quran 17:32] Also read Quran 24:2, 24:19, 4:15-18

The breach of chastity not only leads to the collapse of the Islamic Family House but also opens our houses to HIV and AIDS. To keep chaste is to realize that Allah made us different from animals. For example, a male goat can have sex with any female goat; a rooster may mate with any hen that comes its way. As we work to keep chaste, we have to be aware that there are many influences, actions and attitudes that can break our chastity. For example, friends who are engaged in sexual relationships outside of marriage, or sexually explicit images on television or on the internet may influence a person to be unfaithful. In the African context, infertility or the desire for a male child may lead to unfaithfulness if a spouse tries to fulfill these goals outside of the marriage. Finally, a person who has been unfaithful in the past may be tempted to return to old ways.



Despite these influences and temptations, we must know how much He desires our chastity. He wants nothing more than for us to be faithful to Him and to our spouses. If we have been unchaste, Allah's forgiveness still persists and still beckons to us.

Below are some of the valuable sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) regarding chastity:

A chaste person has been given guarantee of entry into Paradise by the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) who said, ***"A person who assures me of guarding his tongue and his sexual organs, he is assured of entry into Paradise."***

In the books of traditions, many events have been mentioned when the Prophet Sallallahu alaihi wasallam reprimanded young persons to avoid any approach to fornication and learn to appreciate their valuable honour and chastity. Sallallahu alaihi wasallam said: ***"O young men of Quraish! Guard and protect your organs. Do not commit adultery. Listen! Who so guards his organs, he shall have his abode in Paradise."*** (Sunan Ibun Maaja)

Haracluss, the Emperor of Rome asked Abu Sufyan when he visited him: ***"What are the teachings of the man you are so ruthlessly opposing?"*** Abu Sufyan said: ***"He enjoins prayers, charity, chastity and love and regard for close relations."*** (Musnad Malik)

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said that ***"a man who is invited by a beautiful, dignified woman of high status to have sexual relation with him but he refuses to commit the sin for fear of Allah, he shall be among those who enjoy the shade of the Throne of Allah on the Day of Judgment when there will be no other shade against scorching heat."***

That chastity can attract the mercy and help of Allah is proved by a story mentioned by the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) who said: ***"Three men were on a journey. On the way they took asylum against inclement weather in a cave. A very heavy stone fell down and closed the opening of the cave, imprisoning the three travelers. The three travelers agreed to beseech Allah for help by inviting His attention with reference to some extraordinary good deed performed by each in his life. One of them narrated that he had, for fear of Allah and for no other reason, desisted his evil desire to co-habit with his cousin girl who was extremely beautiful and attractive. His prayer was heard and the stone slipped away from the mouth of the cave and gave them an exit for escape."***

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** There may be different cultural or local understandings of the meaning of chastity. To ensure a uniform understanding of faithfulness, the facilitator can ask the group to define faithfulness and to share the words in the local language that best express what chastity is. After this is done, the facilitator can share these examples to illustrate the importance of a proper understanding of chastity:

- Culturally, there may be different standards of chastity for men and women.
- Chastity may be falsely defined in the eye of the beholder. For example, some might attribute chastity to a man who gives his wife most of his time, attention, and money and gives his girlfriend less time, attention, and money.

The group can share other examples. The facilitator should then summarize and emphasize the importance of chastity as "the essence of marriage." Facilitators may supplement the discussion on faithfulness by referencing adultery, e.g. Quran 17:32.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- What would I do if my partner were unchaste in marriage?
- How can we support each other in being chaste?
- What can I do to be chaste?

**Thank the participants for their responses and insights and recap how important this third pillar of Faithfulness and Chastity is.**

## **PILLAR FOUR: RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE AND DIGNITY**

### **SESSION OBJECTIVES**

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Define what it means to have respect for one's spouse
- Define what it means to have respect for human life and dignity in society
- Understand the consequences of disrespect in marriage and in society
- Commit themselves to furthering respect in their marriages and in society.



### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on human life and dignity**

#### **General Questions**

- How do couples show respect for one another?
- What are the consequences of disrespect in a marriage?
- How does a person, especially a spouse, feel when his or her dignity has been violated?
- What are ways in which our society today violates human life and dignity?

### **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on human life and dignity**

Pillar four of Islamic Family House is the respect we hold for the life and dignity of our spouses and for human life. **“Him Who created thee. Fashioned thee in due proportion, and gave thee a just bias.”** [Quran 82:7] **“It is He Who gave you life, will cause you to die, and will again give you life: Truly man is a most ungrateful creature!”** [Quran 22: 66]

What does respect mean? It means first of all that a husband or wife is a person and not a thing. In your house you may have many things: cooking pots, tables, chairs, pictures, maybe even a television. Outside of your house you may have many things:

cows, goats, plants, and vegetables. Yet both inside and outside, all of these objects are things—they can be bought or sold; they can be thrown away when they are no longer of use. Your spouse is different. Your spouse is a person, possessing an infinite value and dignity. You cannot treat a person the same way you treat a thing. A person is not to be abused. People have an infinite spiritual value that should never be compromised.

To see your husband or wife as a person is to see him or her as “the lovely one” and recognize in him/her a brilliance that shines like the sun. Your spouse is to be beloved, worthy of your love and respect.

In Islam there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship with Allah is concerned, and both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct.

**“Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.”** [Quran 16:97]

**“O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may take away part of the dower ye have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.”** [Quran 4:19]

The Prophet (PBUH) was most emphatic in enjoining upon Muslims to be kind to their women when he delivered his last sermon, **“... fear Allah regarding women. Verily you have married them with the trust of Allah, and made their bodies lawful with the word of Allah. You have got rights over them, and they have got rights over you in respect of their food and clothing according to your means.”**

**“Among my followers the best of men are those who are best to their wives, and the best of women are those who are best to their husbands.”** (Albukhary & Muslim)

Without this respect, we see serious problems in our society. What do you think of a husband who comes home, wakes up his wife, and forces her to have sex with him? Is he treating her as a person or a thing? What do you think about a husband or wife who has sex with another person outside of the marriage? What do you think about domestic abuse or violence in which a person physically, psychologically and verbally assaults his or her spouse? In a time of HIV and AIDS, to respect your spouse as a beloved person is to realize that you would never risk infecting him or her by your decisions and your behavior. If you truly respect the life and dignity of your spouse then you would never risk causing him/her disease or harm.

In addition to respecting the life and dignity of our spouses, we must also look at issues in our society that threaten the life and dignity of any person. Among these issues are: abortion, human sacrifice, euthanasia, artificial means of birth control, forced marriage and male superiority and dominance.

The practice of abortion is a tragic and sad destruction of innocent human life. Abortion not only kills an unborn child, but ultimately harms the woman who has aborted. In our society we must work to build a culture of life in which there is enough love for both a mother and her unborn baby.

**“Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.”** [Quran 17:31]

**“When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned—for what crime she was killed.”** [Quran 81:8-9] **(Then) shall each soul know what it has put forward.** [Quran 81:14]

**“Say Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from: Join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want. We provide sustenance for you and for them; come not nigh to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.”** [Quran 6:151]

**“On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person—unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land—it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.”** [Quran 5:32]

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

***Quran 95:4 “We have indeed created man in the best of molds.”***

- Having learned that my spouse is made in the best image, by God or Allah (SWT) does this change my view of him or her? Why?
- How can we show respect for each other’s dignity every day?
- As we examine our marriages, our families and our communities, how can we better create an environment of respect for human life and dignity?

In the fourth pillar, a husband and wife realize how important it is that they respect each other throughout their lives. Through respect, they learn to value one another as beautiful and worthy people and not as things or objects. Through respect, they avoid anything that would harm or disrespect the other, like gossiping, heavy drinking, adultery or abuse.

To symbolize this respect, we have emblazoned the third pillar with an image of the sun, as a reminder to couples that they should continually see one another as people “shining like the sun.” This sun should shine not only on our spouses, but on all people: the unborn, the sick, the handicapped and the elderly, for all are artwork of Allah’s manifestation.

# Module Two: A Complete Islamic Family House

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Begin with a welcome, a prayer, and a recap of Module One. Ask participants to briefly comment on the main themes of Module One:

- Who is primarily responsible for the construction and maintenance of an Islamic Family House?
- What is the foundation of the Islamic Family House?
- What are the four pillars of the Islamic Family House?
- Were you able to spend time talking about the questions we left you with?
- What part of your Islamic Family House needs the most work?
- Is there anything that you are doing differently in your relationship with each other after having learned about the frame of the Islamic Family House?

Note that in Module Two, they are going to add to the framework of the Islamic Family House so that by the end of the module, their houses will be complete.

## 2.1 THE WALLS OF THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Identify the current societal values for marriage
- Decide to choose Islamic values for their families
- Understand and apply the five priorities/values to their own lives.

### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on walls of the Islamic Family House**

#### **General Questions**

- What priorities should a couple have in order to build a strong wall?
- What do people value most in their marriages? Why?
- What values do you think Allah (SWT) wants us to build into the walls of the house or Islamic Family House?



**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Ask the participants to imagine what the next stage of building is and lead them to mention the elements of the Islamic Family House and their function.



## **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on walls of the Islamic Family House**

Having built the foundation and the four pillars, we now want to fill in the frame of the house by adding the walls. The walls represent the values held in a marriage. Your values protect the house, keeping inside what is most important and keeping outside what is harmful or destructive. A value is a belief or a principle that you treasure. Your values reflect your priorities and guide your decisions and your behavior. If you value something—if it is a priority—then you will dedicate time and energy to it and treasure it. In an Islamic marriage, there are many values that need to be put in order. However the following five areas are priorities:

### **1. DEEN, LOVE, AND FEAR OF ALLAH (SWT) AND OBEYING THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAW)**

Allah (SWT) has created us and given us deen as guidance through all the many prophets with Rasulullah (PBUH) as His last messenger. So He wants us to obey and worship Him only as guided by Quran and Sunnah of Rasulullah (PBUH). He makes this very clear in the guidance for example:

**“Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious.”** [Quran 4:36]

**“O Ye who believe! Put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger; but fear Allah: for Allah is He Who hears and knows all things.”** [Quran 49:1]

**“Say: If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: For Allah is Most-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** [Quran 3:31]

**“As to those who believe and work righteousness, Allah will pay them (in full) their reward; but Allah loveth not those who do wrong.”** [Quran 3:57] The first requirement in our lives is to love Allah (SWT) with all our hearts and he has guided us.

### **2. SPOUSE**

Read Quran 30:21

**“The most perfect of believers are those most perfect of character; and the best of you are those that are best to your spouses.”** (Tirmidhi, Ibn Hibban)

**FACILITATORS’ NOTE:** Introduce the supplemental material with a role play in which a couple walks into the room with their clothes on backward. The woman has her veil wrapped around her neck, her hair uncovered and her slip over her dress; the man has his shirt over his coat and his socks over his shoes. The facilitator asks the participants, “What do you notice about how the couple is dressed?” Then the facilitator draws upon the remarks to point out what happens when a couple gets their priorities mixed up. Even though none of the items the couple is wearing is wrong, when they are not applied in the right order, they are less effective. The same holds true with our priorities



### 3. CHILDREN

**“To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan), Or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He will: for He is full of Knowledge and Power [Quran 42:48]**

The Holy Prophet said to Ali (a.s.): ***“O Ali, there are as many rights of children incumbent upon parents as there are rights of parents incumbent upon children.”***  
Also read [Quran, 4:11]

### 4. JOB

Islam is a religion that orders its followers to be part and parcel of a working and productive society. **“...And help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah.” [Quran 5:2]**

**“Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes.” [Quran 18:46]**

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself, who is considered a paragon of virtues in Islam, used to pray seeking God’s refuge from laziness or idleness. Even before he was chosen as a messenger of God, he was a hardworking person. This earned him the respect of his employer, Khadijah, who later proposed marriage to him because of all the merits and virtues she saw in him.

In his instructions to Muslims on this aspect, the Prophet (PBUH) strikes a balance between worship and work. So, as Muslims have to be constant in their acts of worship, they also have to work hard to make a living, as it is recorded in one of the famous sayings of scholars: ***“Work hard (for making a living and survival) as if you are going to die.” (Al-Albani)***

Also, in exhorting Muslims on the importance of work, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made it clear that getting one’s sustenance from one’s work is one of the praiseworthy acts of worship. It is recorded in his traditions how he turned a man who came to him begging into a productive member of the society by teaching him how to work and provide for himself.

Al-Ghazali also mentions the Prophet’s companion Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who used to stress the point of working by telling people, ***“Never should anyone of you think that dua (supplication) for sustenance without work will avail him, for heaven never rains gold nor silver.” (The Book of Provision, Chapter 1)***

## 5. OTHER PEOPLE

The Messenger declared: ***“I have been sent to perfect the noble character.”*** Another time, he said. ***“The most perfect of the believers in the faith is the one who behaves best.”*** *Al-Bukhari*

Abu Barzah al-Aslami related that he said: ***“O Messenger of Allah, tell me of a deed that will lead me to Paradise.’ The Prophet Allah be upon him said: ‘Remove harmful objects from someone’s path.’”***

Abu Hurayrah stated that the Prophet (PBUH) said, ***“A man came across a thorn in the way, and he said to himself, ‘I must remove this thorn so that no other Muslim is hurt by it.’ For that he was shown mercy.”***

In any society, many challenges emerge if these five values are not in order. For example, a person’s job becomes more important than the relationship with his or her spouse, or other people become more important than one’s spouse and children. Just as you should not put your shoes on before your socks, a man should not put his friends ahead of his children. And, just as a woman can’t wrap her veil around her neck instead of the head, she shouldn’t put her in-laws above her marriage. It is a constant task for married couples to keep these five values in the proper order!

### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

- As we examine our priorities, are we following the order of, spouse, children, job and other? If not, what is out of order?
- Are we suffering in our marriage and family life because our values are out of order?
- What must we do differently to put our values in the proper order?

The facilitators can ask the participants if any of them would like to share with the group the values they have identified.

After a brief discussion, the facilitator concludes, “It is important for a married couple and a family to name their values and to live by them. These values are to reflect the priorities of our Islamic lives and marriages. Taught and lived by, the values of our houses will be passed on to our children, who in turn will build houses/Islamic Family Lives that are pleasing to Allah.”

## 2.2 THE DOOR THAT OPENS

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Tell the significance of the door that opens to positive influences and closes to negative influences in *Islamic Family House*.
- Define authority, responsibility and accountability as they relate to the door of *Islamic Family House*.
- Understand how authority, responsibility and accountability are realized and exercised in *Islamic Family House*.

### STEP ONE: Gathering views on the open door

#### General Questions

The facilitators help list and analyse the responses from each of the groups. The following general questions will help in enlisting commentary:

- What problems will the couple in the first role play likely experience?
- What problems will the couple in the second role play likely experience?
- What does the list of the jobs and tasks tell us about roles and responsibilities in the house?
- Who do you think is carrying the heavier load in regard to the daily jobs and tasks of the house?

### STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the open door

In a house, the door allows people to enter and to leave. Through the door of your marriage house, both positive and negative influences may enter. As a couple makes decisions about opening and closing the door, they must come to agree about three key areas in their marriage: authority, responsibility and accountability

**Authority:** Is it the husband or the wife who has authority to open and close the door? Or is it both?

**Responsibility:** Who is responsible for ensuring that which enters the House is consistent with the values of the couple and family?

**Accountability:** How are husband and wife to honour the authority and responsibility they invest in each other?

The issues of authority, responsibility and accountability are very difficult ones in our society. In traditional African society, women were often given no authority; only the man could decide to open or close the door. Islam defines the position of husband and wife as co-builders of marriage.



**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** This session, the door, is introduced by dividing the participants into four groups:

- Group one (composed of couples): Role-play the husband holding all of the power and authority in the house.
- Group two (composed of couples): Role-play the wife holding all of the power and authority in the house.
- Group three (composed of men only): Write down all of the jobs and tasks, small and large, that women are responsible for in the house.
- Group four (composed of women only): Write down all of the jobs and tasks, small and large, that men are responsible for in the house.

As Islam discourages free mixing of sexes, group discussions should be organized with men on one side and women the other.

This responsibility is important to both the family and society and it is no less important than that of man's responsibility. In fact the woman's responsibility has even greater effect on the morale and morality of the family than the man's.

Importantly, husband and wife are there to complement each other for the good of their marriage and family. They have mutual rights and responsibilities, among which include cooperation in marital responsibilities, striving for understanding, and avoiding conflicts and mutual respect.

From the time of marriage contract, women are entitled to a gracious gift from their husbands. **“And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, Take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.”** [Quran 4:4]

Men have the obligation of spending on their family, within their financial means.

**“Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.”** [Quran 65:7]

**“The mothers shall give such to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child. Nor father on account of his child, an heir, shall be chargeable in the same way.”** [Quran 2: 233]

### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

- What influences should we say “yes” and “no” to in our Islamic Family House?
- What are your roles and responsibilities to your partner and what do you expect from him or her?
- Does our authority and responsibility reflect what the Islamic Family House intends for a married couple? How?
- How do I account for money, time and friends?

In this session, we have discussed how important it is for couples to understand and exercise authority, responsibility and accountability in the Islamic Family House. As they do so, they can make wise and loving decisions about what to let in and what to keep out of their Islamic Family House.

## 2.3 WINDOWS OF LIGHT AND FORGIVENESS

Allah is oft forgiving and most merciful, as He says, **“and seek the forgiveness of Allah, certainly Allah is most forgiving, most merciful.”** [Quran 4:106] Also read 5:39, 6:145, 9:27, 18:58, 24:5.

Just as it is important to believe in Allah’s mercy and forgiveness, it is also necessary to base human relations on forgiveness. We cannot expect Allah’s forgiveness unless we also forgive those who do wrong to us. Forgiving each other, even forgiving one’s enemies is one of the most important of Islamic teaching. In the Quran, Allah has described the believers as: **“Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, when they are angry even then forgive.”** [Quran 42:37]

Later in the same chapter Allah (SWT) says, **“The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree), but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.”** [Quran 42: 40]

**“And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient. And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots.”** [Quran 16:126-127]

In one the famous sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) it is reported that he said that God commanded him about nine things. One of them he mentioned was **“that I forgive those who do wrong to me.”**



#### FACILITATORS’ NOTE:

Lead participants in considering these two questions:

- What is the role of a window in a house?
- If there is no window in a house, what is the house like?

## SESSION OBJECTIVES

- By the end of this session, participants should be able to:
- Recognize the windows of the Islamic Family House as windows of light and forgiveness.
- Experience the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in their marriages.

### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on the windows***

#### **General Questions**

- What hinders couples from exercising forgiveness?
- What common conflicts do couples face? Demonstrate in a role play.
- What are the consequences of not forgiving?

The facilitator leads the couple to identify the importance of forgiveness in marriage.

### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the windows***

The windows of the house open it to the light and sun. Without windows, the house would be dark and cold and no one would want to live in it. These windows of light let in the fresh air of reconciliation. When these windows are put in place, the soft warm light of the sun enters and removes the darkness that has gathered in our hearts and homes.

As we consider these windows, we realize that each and every one of us is not perfect. The marriage path is not smooth throughout and most often one may find some weaknesses in one's spouse. Islam urges people to look at the good side of our spouses and overlook the unchangeable weakness we find in them. This calls for reconciliation whenever things don't move as we wish. We should always advise each other with kindness and sincerity in the bid to change for the better.

One of the greatest achievements for Satan is to see a previously happy couple separated. It's upon a dedicated couple to maintain a strong commitment to protect the interests of marriage. Opening up windows of forgiveness and reconciliation are some of the most important ways.

Allah calls upon believers saying, **“O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will and don't treat them with harshness. And live with them honourably. If you dislike anything in them, it may be that you dislike a thing and brings through it a great deal of good.”** [Quran 4:19]

Repentance with continuous sinning is of no effect in the sight of Allah. (4:18)  
Therefore, wronging your spouse repeatedly may be a poisonous arrow in marriage even if it is coupled with continuous seeking of forgiveness.

However, Allah forbids suspicion and spying on each other [Quran 49:12] as this can destroy trust among the married couples. This window should be closed.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- For what actions would I like to be forgiven by my spouse?
- For what actions would I like to forgive my spouse?

Ask Allah to bring to mind anybody you are finding hard to forgive, including yourself, your spouse, a neighbour, relatives, in-laws, institutions, organizations, etc., and decide by Allah's grace to forgive them.

Through our discussions, we realize how important it is to have windows of forgiveness and reconciliation in our houses. It is a guarantee in marriage that there will be problems and difficulties—small ones and big ones. Only the light and grace

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** This is an appropriate time for facilitators to encourage couples to open the windows of forgiveness through repentance and seek reconciliation. The facilitator should carefully and thoughtfully lay out the following steps in the process:

**Step One:** I look deep into my own heart to see where I have sinned and where I have contributed to conflicts in my marriage. This step involves examining myself—not blaming myself or my spouse or others.

**Step Two:** I pray to Allah for sincerity of desire, that Allah may take my desire for forgiveness and healing, and open my eyes completely to my sins and failings.

**Step Three:** I ask with all of my heart for forgiveness from Allah and from those I have harmed, especially my spouse.

**Step Four:** I pray to Allah for the strength and love to forgive those who have wronged me, especially my spouse. (On a practical level, we need to reconcile with our spouses in order to restore our relationships and live in harmony.)

**Step Five:** Having sincerely searched my heart and reflected on my actions, I acknowledge and repent of my sins and pray for the strength not to sin again.

**“But seek the forgiveness of Allah; for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”**  
[Quran 4:106]

shining through the windows of forgiveness and reconciliation can allow our houses to be redeemed. Let us always keep these windows open!

The facilitator concludes by giving out the evaluation forms (see Appendix Five). He or she asks participant couples to set aside at least one hour when they will have time, space and privacy to talk to one another. The next meeting date, place and time are announced. During this time, the participants are encouraged to further discuss the questions they were given during the sessions.

## 2.4 THE ROOF OF CONSCIOUSNESS

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session participants should be able to:**

- Understand the importance of a roof to both our physical and marriage houses
- Understand human consciousness as a deep, loving awareness of Allah and others
- Understand human consciousness and its importance in preventing HIV and AIDS.



**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Begin with these two questions.

- As you look at the house with its foundation, four pillars, walls, door and windows, what is missing?
- Without a roof, what will happen to the house?

With these questions the facilitator should lead the participants to an understanding that without a roof, the house is incomplete. Similarly, a person who does not use his/her mind is incomplete. Full use of our minds is found in our capacity for consciousness, a concept we will discuss in detail.

### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on the roof of consciousness**

#### **General Questions**

- How are human beings different from animals?
- What factors can influence our human consciousness and subsequently our behaviour?

As you look around, do you think most people are acting out of consciousness when it comes to their sexual behaviour?

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Some of the answers for question two will include: witchcraft, money, condoms, alcohol, and media. Discuss how these affect our consciousness.

### **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the roof of consciousness**

Without a roof, those living inside the house are unprotected. The protection offered by the roof is especially important in a time of HIV and AIDS. If HIV enters our houses, it will bring death and despair and the houses will never be the same.

The roof that will complete and protect the Islamic Family House is our human consciousness. This consciousness is a gift to us from Allah. It is the roof that will shelter us from harm, including the harm that can come to us from HIV.



Consciousness is our deep, loving awareness of Allah, of others and of things around us. When we become Conscious (Ihsan), then we have attained the highest level of faith, the Messenger of Allah described the above state as ***“worshiping as if you see Him and even if you see Him not then know well that He sees you.” (Hadith Vol. 1, book 2: No. 47)***

Everybody should strive to attain the level of Ihsan. By that no one will sin against Allah and no one will hurt his or her spouse intentionally. You will love and serve others to earn the pleasure of Allah.

If we look carefully at the HIV and AIDS crisis, we realize that it is a crisis of consciousness. Many people are acting out of instinct or ignorance or need instead of out of a deep, loving awareness of Allah and others. Without this deep, loving awareness, people will continue to act in ways that put them at risk, and the HIV and AIDS crisis will continue.

In a time of HIV and AIDS, to act in deep, loving awareness of Allah and others is to be completely faithful to your spouse. If you stray outside of this consciousness and sleep with someone else, you may turn your Islamic Family House into a life that displeases Allah SWT. Your consciousness, in which you are completely faithful to your spouse and he or she is completely faithful to you, reflects the deep, loving awareness of Allah and others that protects you from HIV and AIDS.

How will we remember to act out of our consciousness, our deep, loving awareness of Allah and others? Perhaps we can learn from Surat Maryam, who carried with her memories of her son Isa; they were always with her and they shaped her “knowing, acting, and loving.” Can we do the same?

Think about having to carry something, be it cut and carry large trees for firewood from the forest or pails of water in your hand. As you carry something, you are aware of it—you feel its weight and presence. We are each to “carry our consciousness.” We are to be aware that inside of our hearts we always have this capacity to know, to act and to love. Unlike a load of firewood or a pail of water, we never want to set down our consciousness in the face of temptation or want.

As you “carry your consciousness” on life’s journey, you will make good decisions. Like Maryam, you will be acting out of the memory and the treasure of Isa, and his consciousness will become your own.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- What factors have helped to form your consciousness?
- Can you think of a time when you wished you had acted more out of consciousness?
- How will you better use your consciousness in order to strengthen your marriage?

In this session we learned how important our consciousness is in Islamic Family House. By knowing, loving and acting in faithfulness to each other, we can always keep HIV out of our houses. Let us always “carry our consciousness” in our hearts and let it shape our decisions and our actions.



# Module Three: Living in the Islamic Family House

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** The facilitator begins with a welcome, a prayer and a recap of Module Two. He or she briefly reviews the components of the Islamic Family House, beginning with a foundation in Allah and ending with the windows of light and forgiveness. The facilitator can then allow couples to share their experiences using the following questions:

- What are the five important values and priorities that make up the walls of our houses?
- Did anyone discuss in more detail whether their values/priorities are in the proper order?
- Did anyone discuss the door of your Islamic Family House and to what it should be closed and opened?
- Did anyone re-examine and discuss authority and responsibility in relation to the door of your house?
- Did anyone think more about what consciousness is and how important consciousness is in a time of AIDS?
- Did any couples talk about the need to open a window of forgiveness and reconciliation in their marriages?
- Has anyone decided to get an HIV test? How did you make that decision?

After the review of Module Two, the facilitator introduces Module Three: “Now that we have built the Islamic Family House we want to discuss how we are to live within it.”

## 3.1 THE MARRIAGE BED

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session the participants should be able to:**

- Tell the significance of the marriage bed in the Islamic Faithful House
- Recognize the sacredness of sex in marriage
- Tell the importance of a couple being open and willing to share their sexual lives and concerns with each other.



### STEP ONE: Gathering views on the marriage bed

The session is introduced by asking the group two questions:

- What does sex in Islam symbolize?
- What are the purposes of sex in the Islamic Family House?

The facilitator then divides the participants into groups of men and women. The men are given this question:

*“What do we, as men, do that hinders or minimizes satisfaction for our wives in the marriage bed?”*

The women are given this question:

*“What do we, as women, do that hinders or minimizes satisfaction for our husbands in sex?”*

The facilitator then asks the groups to share and discuss their responses. The discussion can be supplemented by asking a final follow-up question:

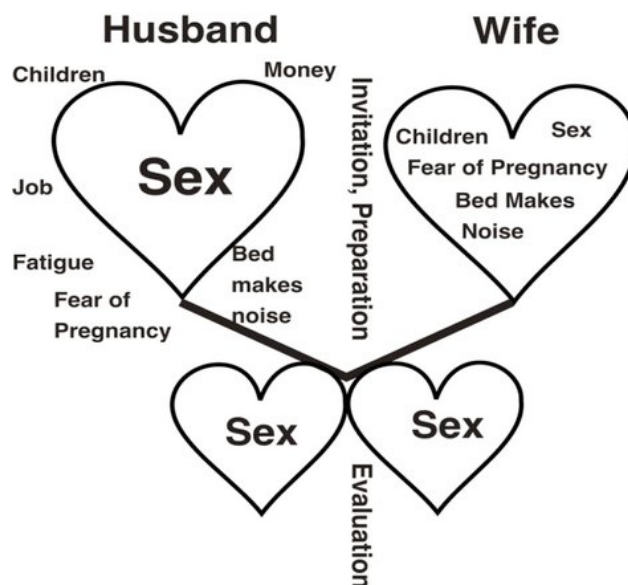
*How are men and women different in their attitudes, responses and behaviors in regard to sex?*

### STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the marriage bed

The marriage bed is where you will sleep together and make love with each other. Although we may be comfortable talking about building our houses, we may not be as comfortable talking with each other about our marriage beds—sex and sexual lives. Yet, especially in a time of AIDS, we must be willing to do so.

If you have constructed your house well, the marriage bed will be a special place for you. However, if you have not constructed your house well—if it lacks a foundation in Allah, if it lacks pillars of love or respect or if there is not a deep, loving awareness of Allah and each other—then your sex life will be troubled.

Sex life holds a special place in your family. The Quran treats sexuality as a divine bounty. It recognizes human impulse of love and mercy. It allows the members of either sex to have admiration for a believing member [Quran 2:223] Its verses directly relating to sexuality also invoke divine mercy [Quran 7:189] and heedfulness of Allah (Taqwa) thereby precluding any notion of sexual abuse or coercion.



A couple that enters the marriage bed with respect for each other's dignity and with an understanding of the goodness of their bodies and the sacramental nature of marriage should be open to discussing their sexual lives. They should not hide what may be troubling them.

For example, a wife may find that she is too tired for sex because she gets little help or support from her husband in caring for the children. She should discuss this with him. Perhaps a woman or man may find that she or he is not sexually satisfied. The man may say he cannot keep an erection or a woman may say she cannot have an orgasm (a climax). Other problem areas include poor communication, high expectations from the spouse or comparisons with previous partners. Although it may be difficult to talk about these things, a couple—knowing that their bodies are good and their union together is good—should discuss such issues if they arise.

### 3.2 THE MARRIAGE BANQUET IN ISLAM

The practical dimension of making love can be further appreciated through an understanding of the “marriage banquet,” in which making love is compared to a banquet and involves the same steps of invitation, preparation, feasting and gratitude. If a couple can understand these steps, their sexual lives can be more satisfying. At the outset, we must note that often men and women view the banquet differently. Men are looking immediately at the food and the feasting whereas women are much more sensitive to the preparation of the meal and ensuring that there is a proper invitation and expression of thanks!



#### INVITATION

A couple must learn to communicate about inviting one another to the marriage banquet.

How will either the husband or wife learn to convey in a loving way that he or she would like to make love? What factors make the invitation desirable and what factors make the invitation undesirable? For example, at a given time, there may be fatigue or fear of pregnancy.

A woman may be menstruating and not be comfortable with intercourse or there may be concern about the door being open or the presence of children. All of this must be considered as the husband invites the wife or the wife invites the husband. The invitation should be mutual. Both husband and wife should learn to communicate their intentions in kind, affectionate and sensitive ways.

#### PREPARATION

A couple must learn to prepare for the banquet in a manner pleasing for both spouses.

- Preparation involves bodily cleanliness; you need to clean up thoroughly. Brush your mouth and teeth, wash your nose, earlobes, breasts, genital areas, vagina/penis, cut your nails, shave unwanted hair or whiskers.

- Preparation involves preparing your soul. Look at what conflicts need to be resolved and if a window of forgiveness must be opened, ask for Allah's grace to be pleasing and satisfying to one another.
- Preparation involves the right time and place. Be in a clean environment. Create a space where you can walk together or sit together or even bathe together. Talk about your partner's needs and desires. Let there be emotional intimacy before genital intimacy.

## FEASTING (MARRIAGE BED)

The Prophet (PBUH) said, **"If anyone of you on having sexual relations with his wife said (and he must say it before starting) 'In the name of Allah. O Allah! Protect us from Satan and also protect what you bestow upon us (i.e., the coming offspring) from Satan,' and if it is destined that they should have a child then, Satan will never be able to harm that offspring."** Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 143

The act of sexual intercourse should be done with deep awareness of each other. The couple should be attentive to signs of excitement and arousal. They should focus not just on pleasing themselves, but also on pleasing the other. They should be attentive to the signs of orgasm. Most of the time, the husband will reach the climax before his wife. Then he must do his best to ensure she is also satisfied. As at a banquet, one should observe good manners; one should not simply gorge oneself and forget about how others are faring. With time and with deep awareness of Allah and the body of your spouse, you will learn from each other what is pleasing and satisfying.

## GRATITUDE AND EVALUATION

### One should take a bath after intercourse

Dua (prayer) after intercourse: ***In the name of Allah, We praise Him, seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. Whoever Allah guides none can misguide, and whoever He allows to fall astray, none can guide them aright. We bear witness that there is no one (no idol, no person, no grave, no prophet, no imam, no nobody!) worthy of worship but Allah Alone, and we bear witness that Muhammad (PBUH) is His slave-servant and the seal of His Messengers.***

The sexual act and climaxing do not represent the end of the banquet. Can you imagine if, at a banquet, everyone ran out of the room as they finished eating, not stopping to thank the hosts? Rather, there should be time for gratitude in which a husband and wife thank each other for this special time together and for having shared with one another the deepest part of themselves. Couples can clean each other if needed, discuss in a kind and sensitive way any issues with the sexual act. Then after the bath (ghusl janabat) may pray or not pray. Finally, with deep, loving awareness of Allah and each other, they should offer a prayer of thanksgiving for having enjoyed sex.

### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

- Is anything lacking in our marriage bed? What can we do about it?
- How can we make our sexual lives as a couple better? What should we do differently in regard to:
  - Inviting one another
  - Preparing ourselves
  - Feasting
  - Gratitude.
- What turns you on/off sexually? Have you communicated to your spouse the parts that arouse you sexually? If not, why not?

We realize that talking about the marriage bed and our sexual lives is not easy. Yet sex is a gift from Allah (SWT) to us and is very much a part of who we are as people. Our challenge is to see sex as Allah intended it: as beautiful, as sacramental, as an image of His life-giving union. As we go forward, we ask Allah to help us see our sexual lives in a new light. We ask Allah (SWT) to redeem what is broken in our marriage beds, so that it may be pleasing to Him.

## 3.3 PREPARING FOR PREGNANCY

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Recognize that women can die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Recognize the importance of good care before and during pregnancy, labor and delivery. Understand how the letters in the word VITAL can help them prepare for pregnancy.

### STEP ONE: Gathering views on preparing for pregnancy

#### General Questions

- What factors lead to the death of mothers during pregnancy and childbirth in our society?
- How do couples prepare themselves for pregnancy and childbirth?
- Where is the safest place for mother to deliver? Where is the most dangerous place for mothers to deliver their babies?
- What are the Islamic teachings for preparing for pregnancy?

In preparing for pregnancy, the Muslim Pious predecessors considered praying for the offspring they intended to have. For example, **“At that time Zakariya (Zechariah) invoked his Lord, saying: ‘O My Lord! Grant me from you, a good offspring. You are indeed the All Hearer of invocations.’”** [Quran 3:38] **“My Lord! Grant me (offspring) from the righteous.”** [Quran 37:100 and 14:35, 14: 40, 3:35-38, 25:74 19:25-26]



## **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on preparing for pregnancy**

In preparing your house for a new baby, you must think about certain things and make certain preparations. Just as you prepare your physical house to receive a child, a wife, with the help of her husband, should prepare her own body for conception, pregnancy and delivery. This preparation helps ensure that a woman will be healthy during pregnancy and avoid risking her life during her labor.

A couple can prepare this part of their house through understanding the word VITAL. The word “vital” has two meanings. The first meaning of vital is “with life” and the second meaning of vital is “very important.” In medicine, we talk of a person’s vital signs (the breathing, the heartbeat, and the blood pressure). Vital signs signify life in a person. The word vital applies very well to women. Women play a vital role in giving birth and seeing that children are raised with love and with care. Whereas we hope that everything goes well during pregnancy, we know that the opposite can happen—that a woman may have serious complications during the course of pregnancy, labor, and delivery that may threaten her life or the life of her baby. In its extreme, a serious, untreated complication, such as heavy bleeding after the birth of the baby, may lead to the death of the mother. Her vitality—her life—may be lost in giving life to her child. This should not happen. Couples can prevent this tragedy by following the recommendations in the letters of the word V-I-T-A-L.

**V = Vitamins:** Good nutrition is essential for good pregnancy outcomes. Women who are of reproductive age and could become pregnant should be eating a well-balanced diet with enough protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals. Women should also be taking vitamins that have folic acid and Vitamin A. Folic acid helps prevent certain birth defects and anemia (lack of enough healthy red blood cells). Anemic women often feel weak, tired, or dizzy and may not tolerate the normal blood loss associated with delivering a baby and be at a higher risk of death. Vitamins containing folic acid should be taken on an ongoing basis—before, during and after pregnancy. In food, folic acid is found in greens and citrus fruits like oranges. For more information on proper nutrition speak with your health advisor. ***“O you who believe, eat of the lawful that we have provided you with, and be grateful to Allah, if it is indeed He whom you worship.”*** [Quran 2:172]

**I = Iron:** The majority of pregnant women in Africa are low or deficient in iron, which can lead to anemia. Pregnant women should ideally take iron as a supplement throughout pregnancy. Natural sources of iron are millet, liver, red meat, chicken and fish.

**T = Testing:** Couples planning for pregnancy should have an HIV test. This will help a couple decide if the woman should become pregnant and, if they are HIV positive, and they decide to have a child, what they should do to prevent mother-to-child transmission. In addition to an HIV test, the couple should ideally be tested for other diseases such as syphilis or malaria. Testing before pregnancy will allow them to be treated before the woman becomes pregnant.



***“And spend in the cause of Allah and do not throw yourselves into destruction and do good. Truly, Allah loves the good-doers.”*** [Quran 2:195]

**A = Antenatal care and Attendant:** Couples who are contemplating becoming pregnant must decide in advance who will attend the births. In so doing they must decide whether to go to a skilled birth attendant (nurse-midwife, nurse, or doctor) or a traditional birth attendant (TBA). If they have risk factors, they should not go to a TBA. If they do choose to deliver with a TBA, they should be confident that the TBA will be able to refer them quickly and efficiently to a midwife or doctor if any problems arise. ***“So her Lord accepted her with goodly acceptance. He made her grow in good manner and put her under the care of Zakariyya. Every time he entered Al-mihrab to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said; O Maryam! From where have you got this? She said: ‘This is from Allah.’ Verily Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills without limit.”*** [Quran 3:37]

**L = Location:** Couples who are contemplating becoming pregnant must decide where they will have their babies. It is best if they give birth at a health center or hospital where good emergency obstetrical care can be given should they develop complications. If they are delivering their babies at a location that is remote from a health center or hospital, they must have a plan for getting to such a location if complications arise. ***“Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make difficult for you.”*** [Quran 2; 185]

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- If you have had a child, talk about your birth preparation and birth experience. Were there any complications or difficulties? What would you do differently in future pregnancies and deliveries?
- If you are preparing for marriage or do not yet have a child, how will you best prepare for pregnancy and childbirth?
- Re-examine the word VITAL, recalling what each letter stands for. Are you following the recommendations represented by VITAL?

A very important part of maintaining our Islamic family House is the physical and emotional care a woman receives in preparing for pregnancy, in carrying the child and in giving birth. This VITAL preparation and care help ensure that the Islamic Family House will be a house of life.

When this preparation results in the blessing of a child, it is important that the Parents bring up their children upon righteousness, so that the Parents will benefit from them during their lives and after their death. Allah’s Messenger (SAW) said, ***“A servant will have his rank raised and will say, ‘O my Lord how has this come about for me?’ He says, ‘through your sons after you seeking forgiveness for them.’”*** (ibn Maajah)

## 3.4 POSITIVE PARENTING

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Recognize that parents are the most important positive forces in their children's lives
- Describe the principles of positive parenting.

#### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on positive parenting**

##### **General Questions**

- Who are the most important people in a child's life? Why?
- What are the challenges of parenting today?

What is the role of parents in teaching their children about sexuality and HIV and AIDS?

#### **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on positive parenting**

***"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones."*** [Quran 66: 6]

***"Whoever takes care of two girls until they reach adulthood, he and I will come together on the Day of Resurrection (like this)—and he interlaced his two fingers." (Muslim)***

As a mother or a father, you are the most important teacher for your children. They will learn more from each of you than from any other person in the world. From you, they will learn lessons that they will carry with them the rest of their lives. Thus, it is extremely important that you teach your children well and be a role model for them. Although we do not have time to give a complete session on positive parenting, we will present seven principles from the first seven letters of the alphabet that can help remind us of how we can be positive parents.

**A is for Attitude:** We should have a positive attitude toward our children and continually strive to see the good inside them. Attitude is part of consciousness, and we should cultivate a deep, loving awareness that our children are a gift. Many children are treated with a negative attitude and are seen as a problem and not as a gift: ***"Verily, Allah will not change the (good) condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves."*** [Quran 13:11]

**B is for Being Present:** To love your child is to spend time with your child. Many children are raised without their parents present and involved in their lives. Parents should spend quality time with their children and celebrate important events like passing exams, Idi festivals, birthdays and holidays. Quran 18:46,8:28,64:15

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Introduce the session on positive parenting by presenting a role play in which a 6-year-old boy tries to talk to his mother and father, but they are too busy to talk and play with him. The role play goes forward 10 years and the boy is being wild, getting drunk and misbehaving. Now the parents can't communicate with him. Facilitators ask participants to share about lessons learned in the role play.

**C is for Communication:** Just as you learned about communicating with your spouse, you must learn to communicate well with your child. This first Involves willingness to listen closely to them and understand their concerns.

**D is for Development:** As a positive parent, you should have an awareness of a child's developmental stage. We cannot expect a three-year-old to behave like a 10-year-old. We must be attentive to developmental stages such as puberty, when children have special needs and issues. [Quran 23:1-5 also 24:59]

**E is for Expectations:** A positive parent sets clear and high expectations for a child—for their behavior, for their school performance and for their generosity toward others. Parents must first discuss expectations with each other and then communicate them to the child. Parents should reward or affirm their children when they do well. Parents should have a clear plan of discipline for when expectations are not met. If discipline is needed, it should be consistent from one parent to the other. [Quran 3:35-37]

**F is for Failure and Forgiveness:** There will always be times when we disappoint and fail our children and when our children disappoint and fail us. We must be willing to forgive and be forgiven. If a child fails we cannot burden them with guilt, but must forgive them and love them with unconditional love. ***“And if you call them to guidance, they hear not and you will see them looking at you, yet they see not. Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the foolish.”*** [Quran 7:198-199]

**G is for God and Grace:** Our greatest hope for our children is that their lives will be centered in God and that they will know the faith, hope and love that is our baptismal promise. Daily, parents should help children cultivate their relationships with God through their example and through their priorities. In doing this, they will model the fruits that flow from those relationships.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- What positive parenting did I experience as a child?
- What negative parenting did I experience as a child?
- What can we do to become more positive parents?

In this session, we have outlined the importance of positive parenting, beginning with a positive, loving attitude toward your child and ending with an emphasis on helping your child understand his or her own life in God. We have many models of positive parenting: those we may have experienced in our own lives, the models of Ibrahim and Ismael 37:101-102. Most importantly, the model of Allah who always loves us completely and unconditionally.

### 3.5 PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN

#### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session participants should be able to:**

- Understand that any child could be at risk for sexual abuse.
- Teach young children to protect themselves from abuse by using the “No Touch Rule.”
- Teach older children the meaning and importance of chastity.

**FACILITATORS’ NOTE:** Introduce this session by asking participants to role-play a mother and father teaching their 5-year-old son about HIV and AIDS, and the “No Touch Rule.”

#### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on the “No Touch Rule”***

##### **General Questions**

- What positive parenting skills did you see in this role play?
- What dangers exist for little children in our society today? How should we protect them from these dangers?
- Who should be primarily responsible for teaching children about HIV and AIDS?

#### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on the “No Touch Rule”***

One of the most basic and important lessons you will teach your children is how to be safe and protect themselves from sexual abuse. This is especially true in a time of HIV and AIDS, when we want to do everything possible to ensure that our children do not become infected with HIV. Although we may feel comfortable talking with our children about some dangers—for example, the danger of running out into the road if a car is approaching—we may not feel comfortable talking with them about sexual issues. Furthermore, we may not know the best time to teach them and what words and expressions to use.

One way of speaking with smaller children about the dangers of HIV and AIDS and how to avoid them is by teaching them the “No Touch Rule.”

The “No Touch Rule” is based on the developmental stage of a child. At an early age, children cannot reason and think as well as they can when they are older. Thus, they must be taught with clear and simple directions. Because a small child’s level of reasoning is not yet well-developed, the explanation of the reasoning behind the rule does not have to be as thorough as it would be for a rule given to an older child.

All children, by five years of age, should be taught the “No Touch Rule,” which says: “No person should ever touch my private body parts. If anyone—a stranger or even a family member—tries to touch my private body parts, I must do three things:

1. Shout “No!”
2. Run away from the person.
3. Tell an adult.”

The only exception to the “No Touch Rule” is when your parent is helping you wash your private parts or helping you after using the toilet.

### ***STEP THREE: Life application***

#### **Couple Time**

- Imagine that one of you is the parent and the other the child. Explain the “No Touch Rule” to the child.
- How can you protect young children from abuse?

The facilitator can summarize this rule by telling parents to teach their children three steps: “No!” Run. Tell. Participants can present a role play practicing how a parent should ask the child, “What would you do if a stranger came and gave you a toy or sweets and asked if he or she could touch your private parts?” Or ask the child, “What would you do if a cousin came and told you he was supposed to put his finger on your private parts?”



# Module Four: Challenges in an Islamic Family House

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Begin with a welcome and a prayer. Briefly review the information from Module Three by asking the couples the following questions:

- Did you find it easier to talk about sex after our last session?
- What do we mean by the marriage bed? Did anyone discuss it further?
- What are the four steps of the marriage banquet?
- What do you think the purposes of marriage are?
- Why is it important to have sexual self-control?
- What are cultural values and practices that help with sexual self-control?
- What do we mean by the idea of chastity?
- What are the key steps in preparing for pregnancy/ labor/ delivery?
- How would you define positive parenting?

After the review of Module Three, the facilitator then introduces Module Four, as noted below.

## 4.1 CULTURE AND THE HOUSES AROUND US

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session participants should be able to:**

- Realize the influence of culture on their family Islamic lives
- Identify cultural and modern influences that pose a risk to the Islamic Family House
- Identify cultural and modern influences that affirm life and avoid risk to the Islamic Family House.



## ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on culture and the houses around us***

### **General Questions**

- What are the cultural and modern influences (knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviors) around you that will *decrease* the risk of acquiring HIV and AIDS?
- What are the cultural and modern influences (knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviors) around you that will *increase* the risk of acquiring HIV and AIDS?

If time allows, role-play an example of a cultural or modern influence.

## ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on culture and the houses around us***

Our houses don't stand alone. They are influenced by the houses around them. One of the deepest influences on our houses comes from the culture around us. The role of culture is especially important in a time of HIV and AIDS. There may be cultural practices and traditions that put our house at risk of acquiring HIV infection and there may be values and traditions within our culture that can help protect us against HIV and AIDS. Therefore, cultures must be carefully examined to discover their influence on values, behaviors and lifestyles of Islamic Family House.

### **Cultural influences that relate to AIDS include:**

#### **Houses in which cultural or modern values or practices *increase* HIV risk:**

- Widow inheritance and purification
- Women proving their fertility before marriage by having a child
- Men proving their manhood by having sex before marriage
- Seeing women as property or objects instead of people
- Indulging in pornography on the internet or on TV.

#### **Houses in which cultural values or practices *decrease* HIV risk:**

- Teaching and supporting chaste in young men and women
- Emphasizing respect for the dignity of women
- Dressing modestly
- Mwalimus, Sheikhs, and Imams involved with teaching children to be chaste
- Associating with other couples and families that share your values
- Seeking spiritual support.

## ***STEP THREE: Life application***

### **Couple Time**

- If there were one thing that you could change in your culture to decrease the risk of HIV, what would that be? What are you going to do about it as an individual?
- What positive, cultural and modern influences can you encourage in your marriage, family, and community that will help decrease the spread of HIV?



In summary, as we work to ensure that our houses are safe, we must be aware of how our culture can either negatively or positively influence our own houses. In order to counteract the negative influence of certain cultural values and practices, we must be sure that our own values and beliefs are strong and not broken down. We must also realize that through our example and through our faith we can positively influence culture so that it helps promote the life and dignity of all people as well as reducing HIV risk.

## 4.2 BROKEN HOUSES

Articles 28-31 of the Islamic Charter on Family deal with the undesirable subject of broken houses and families.

**Article (29) is on Combating Relationships That Are not Sanctioned by Shari'ah.** By protecting noble moral and social values and combating sexual relationships and unsanctioned so called forms of marriage, the Muslim community protects the family from breakdown, and achieves happiness and stability for it, so that it becomes a suitable nest for the new generation, in addition to being a source of encouragement for people to seek Shari'ah sanctioned marriage.

**Article (30) is on Confronting Deviant Ideas.** The Muslim community must confront deviant ideas that debase the relationship between a man and a woman, lowering it to one of conflict and competition; a material partnership wherein each partner's gains are at the other's expense. Likewise, the Muslim community should spread awareness that the relationship between men and women is one of cooperation and mutual fulfilment.

**Article (31) deals with Spreading Awareness of the Value of the Marriage Relationship and its Etiquettes.** Spreading awareness of the value of the marital relationship in Islam and the fact that it is based on love, mercy, psychological security, bearing the burdens together, and consultation regarding affairs of marital life, protects the family from the causes of disagreement, division and breakdown.

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

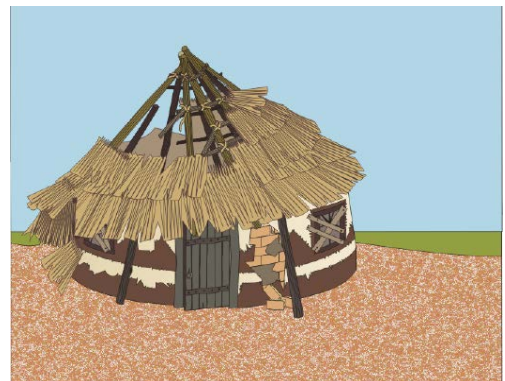
**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Understand factors that may lead to the breakdown of the Islamic Family House
- Understand how the breakdown of the Islamic Family House increases our risk of HIV transmission both in and outside of our family.

### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on broken houses**

#### **General Questions**

- What do you see that is different about this house?
- What factors can lead to the breakdown of our houses?
- What are the consequences of our houses breaking down? What can happen to the husband or wife? What can happen to the children?
- In our society, what do you think are the three most common causes of houses breaking down?



### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on broken houses***

As much as possible, we would want our Islamic Family Houses to be perfect. Yet because of the reality of sin, all of our houses are broken to some degree. Our challenge is to identify where such breaks occur and ask ourselves how we can repair them.

Some of the breakages in our Islamic Family Houses are caused by not doing what Islam has instructed us to do or not obeying Allah fully. This can be caused by lack of deen, bad relatives, house helpers, friends, in-laws, bad company, poverty, and poor stewardship of the family. People who do not abide by Islamic teachings may have sex outside marriage and acquire diseases like HIV.

### ***STEP THREE: Life application***

#### **Couple Time**

- What is the difference between this house and the Islamic Family Home you have built?
- What things are threatening to break down our Islamic Family Home? What are we going to do about it?

After hearing the responses, the facilitator can summarize what leads to broken houses.

At this time the facilitator will have to make a decision about how to proceed. The facilitator can continue to the text on Allah's mercy in marriage, or there may be a need for more detailed discussion on common causes of broken Islamic Family House and homes in the next session.

## **4.3 ISLAM AND DOMESTIC ABUSE**

### **Session Objectives**

- To bring to light the reality of domestic abuse or violence
- To bring healing to situations in which abuse or violence is occurring.

### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on domestic abuse and broken houses***

#### **General Questions**

- What do you see happening in the picture?
- What do we mean by domestic abuse?
- What kinds of domestic abuse exist in society?
- Who commits abuse: men to women, women to men?
- What factors lead to husbands abusing their wives?
- What factors lead to wives abusing their husbands?



## ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on domestic abuse and broken houses***

As the participants have described, there are many kinds of abuse: domestic violence, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, and abuse by neglect. All of these are great wrongs in our societies. There is absolutely no justification for this in any religion.

**“They are your garments and ye are their garments.”** [Quran 2: 187]

As the above Quranic verses indicate, the wife is responsible for the proper management of her husband’s possessions and property, for the guarding of his honor, dignity and respectability, and for reserving her sexuality exclusively for the man she has married.

Some men may have learned that abuse is acceptable based on their own upbringing or cultural belief systems. In some circumstances, their fathers may have abused their mothers. For some men, deep frustrations may arise from the sense that they have failed as providers. We also know that there is a great overlap between alcohol, drug use and domestic violence.

Similarly, a woman may take her own frustrations out on her husband. She may feel he has failed her as a spouse, as a father or as a provider. Abuse can take the form of any violent, coercive, forceful, neglectful, insulting or threatening act, or word, inflicted by one member of a family or household on another. Violence is not only a physical act. It can be verbal or psychological as well. Finally, abuse can be sexual,



such as when sex is forced or coerced. **Quran says men and women are equals because as Fazlur Rahman (Islamic scholar) asserts: “Equality of the sexes is instituted in the Quran.”** [Quran 4:1, 7; 60:12; 49:10;]

Sahih al-Bukhari, 7:62:132 and Quran 4:34 teach that husbands should take care of their wives, with whatever [the bounties] Allah has given. To some He has given more than others and they should spend out of it according to what they have. Righteous wives are devout and guard what Allah would have them guard in the husbands’ absence.

How do we fix this broken house? How do we get beyond the pain of being abused by our spouse or the violent behaviors of inflicting abuse on our spouse and move toward a new way of being with each other?

**Forgiveness:** Forgiveness is to be understood by both the perpetrator of the abuse and the victim of the abuse. The person who is the abuser must be truly repentant and committed to never abuse again. He or she may likely need further counseling and spiritual guidance in order to handle anger and frustration. The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it. **“The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.”** [Quran 42:40]



The proprietors of abuse must realize that forgiveness is not forgetting the abuse or pretending that it did not happen. Neither is possible for the victim. Forgiveness is NOT permission to repeat the abuse. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim chooses to continue to work toward healing in the relationship and at the same time resolves not to tolerate further abuse. **“There is no blame on you if ye make an offer of betrothal or hold it in your hearts. Allah knows that ye cherish them in your hearts: But do not make a secret contract with them except in terms Honourable, nor resolve on the tie of marriage till the term prescribed is fulfilled. And know that Allah Knoweth what is in your hearts, and take heed of Him; and know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing.”** [Quran 2:235]

All people should treat each other with respect as a sign of fear of Allah; for those in marriage this is even more needed. **“Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing.”** [Quran 2:263]

**True Understanding:** An abused woman or man may see his or her suffering as just punishment for a past deed for which he or she feels guilty. He or she may try to explain suffering by saying that it is “Allah’s will” or “Allah’s way of teaching me a lesson.” This image of a harsh, cruel Allah who allows such abuse is wrong (Sahih al-Bukhari, 7:62:132).

Abuse also must be brought out into the light. Although we may feel ashamed or embarrassed about sharing these ugly facts about our private lives, it is important to tell your sheikh, a trusted friend, or a family life counsellor. You are not the only person in your community in this situation, so for your sake as well as the sake of others, bring an abusive relationship to light.

**Transformation:** Allah knows what you are going through. He knows why you are hurting. He knows what or who caused the pain. Allah understands even your deepest inexpressible feelings. Whatever you are going through be sure that Allah knows better what is good for you than you do. **“And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.”** [Quran 2:216]

At the right time, He will restore everything you have lost. He will mend your broken heart. He will renew your fainting spirit. He will wipe away your tears. He will put joy in your heart and a smile on your face. Put your trust in Allah because for Him there is nothing difficult that he cannot make easy.

**“Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!”** [Quran 41:34]

In this transformation, we confront ourselves and ask Allah to give us the strength to end any behaviors and attitudes that lead to abuse: anger, impatience or jealousy. What may seem impossible for us is possible with Allah for He is the Creator and knows everything. The broken house of abuse can be repaired. It may require outside help, professional assistance, or counseling. However, as the house is repaired, you will realize great peace and happiness!

### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

- Has there been abuse in our marriage?
- How can we end any abuse and restore the well-being of our house?

How can we help others in our family and community confront, heal and end domestic abuse?

## 4.4 ISLAM AND MERCY IN MARRIAGE

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, the participants should be able to:**

- Understand and appreciate Islam and mercy in marriage which is open to all
- Realize our own need for Allah's mercy
- Recognize how our Islamic Family House as part of Allah's Mercy.

As you enter this glorious house, the host will greet you. He will kiss your hand and give you a new robe. As you enter further, he will lead you to a banquet room where guests are feasting on very fine food. On entering this house, any pain or guilt or suffering you are carrying is lifted from you and you are warm, free and loved. **“O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** [Quran 39:53]

All of us need to enter this House of Mercy. We enter this house through our prayers and total submission and obedience to Allah. No sin is bigger than Allah's House of Mercy. If we accept his gift of mercy, He can redeem our lives. If we change our sinful ways and we can again live as Allah intended, one with Him and one in Him.

Allah (SWT) Almighty is full of love and kindness to His creation. All blessings and goodness in this world and the next are clear proofs of His Mercy. Indeed, Islam teaches that Allah (SWT) is most merciful as shown by some of his names (attributes); The Acceptor of Repentance; The Loving; The Compassionate; The Forbearing One; The Most Gracious; The Most Merciful; The Source of Goodness; The Most Generous; The Bestower. These names all indicate that God is characterized by mercy, goodness and generosity. They testify to the vastness and perfection of His Mercy, with which He blesses all of His creation.

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Lead the participants to prayer, allowing time for reflection and reconciliation between couples: “As we close our final session, we ask you to imagine one more house, a house bigger and more beautiful than any house you have ever seen. This house has room for every single person in the universe! This house welcomes with an open door a married man and wife working each day to be faithful to each other. This house welcomes a couple that has been bearing pain of different kinds in their marriage. And this house welcomes those who are HIV positive and those who are sick and dying of AIDS.”

**Quran 16:18** says ***“If ye would count up the favors of Allah, never would ye be able to number them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”***

The whole of the Chapter (Surat 55) repeatedly lists and asks which favors of Allah can we deny.

In Hadith Qudsi 34, ***on the authority of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: Allah the Almighty said: O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.”***

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: ***“Our Lord (glorified and exalted be He) descends each night to the earth’s sky when there remains the final third of the night, and He says: ‘Who is saying a prayer to Me that I may answer it? Who is asking something of Me that I may give it him? Who is asking forgiveness of Me that I may forgive him?’”***

As we think back to our meetings, we have come a long way in building our Family Islamic Life. We end in the very place where we began—in Allah’s love and mercy. Our challenge is to become more and more aware of this love and mercy, which may enter and infuse our own houses.

In An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadeeth: No. 13; On the authority of Abu Hamza Anas Ibn Maalik, reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: ***“None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”*** [Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Let us close with a prayer, calling to mind Allah’s infinite mercy:

***Oh Wonderful Originator, Unprecedented and Incomparable Inventor, Absolute Cause, The Deviser, The Wonderful Originator, The Unprecedented and Incomparable Inventor, The Absolute Cause, The marvelous One who originates, commences, invents and creates all that exists, without any model or material, The One whose incomparable will-power first brings into existence all of the unique and amazing creation without any similarity to anything else that has ever existed, The One who creates in wonderful, awesome, amazingly original ways that have no precedent whatsoever. Help our family to become better because with you there is nothing difficult that you cannot make easy, you make the difficulty easy, oh Rab ya Allah.***

When at home recite Surat 36: Yasin and Allah (SWT) will answer your needs. Do Dhkir (frequent repetition of Allah’s 99 names), e.g., Ya-Badi’u.

## 4.5 FORMATION OF ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS

Form small groups of three to five couples who have completed *Islamic Family House*. This small number of couples allows each member to have adequate time to share. It is better to divide these people by geographical location—that is, by parish, sub-parish, or village. The members of the small groups should meet at least once a month for two hours, in one another's homes on a rotating basis.

### Activities should include:

- Praying together
- Sharing how they have been living after Islamic Family House program (the joys and challenges)
- Mutual support and encouragement
- Expanding on the talks given in *The Islamic Family House* program (Speakers can be invited to address these topics.)
- Sharing on other issues related to marriage and family houses (nutrition, hygiene, development, etc.)

Couples should understand that strict confidentiality must be observed.

Avoid big feasts because some members may fear hosting the group in their homes. In general, it is better to avoid eating because:

- Some members may spend most of the time preparing meals instead of sharing with the group.
- Some members of the group might be reluctant to accept guests because they wouldn't know what to feed the group.

However, once in a while the group can eat together, with each couple bringing a dish (packed food). In this way, no burden is placed on the host couple.

**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Introduce the idea of support groups (see Appendix Two) and urge participants to form such groups in this manner.

"Some of you may be interested in forming small groups or associations that can support one another in living a faithful married life. These groups and associations can help ensure that couples surround themselves with families and houses that share the same values. These associations can also be a source of support and wisdom in addressing the problems and challenges of married and family life."

## 4.6 CLOSING OF MODULE FOUR AND *THE ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE* PROGRAM

Once the physical house has been built, it is not the end of our work. We must continually care for the house to ensure it is clean and maintained. The same is true with our Islamic Family House. It requires ongoing work and maintenance. Thus, while we are formally concluding the sessions on *The Islamic Family*, we want you to keep working to maintain and strengthen your houses.



All of us must take the basics of what we have learned and build on them. Let us be changed by the knowledge we have accumulated in building an Islamic Family House enough to change our situations. Allah (SWT) says, **“Allah does not change a people’s lot unless they change what is in their hearts...”** [Quran 13:11]

If we did not pray before, let us pray now. If we did not respect our spouses before, let us begin to respect them now. If we were not faithful before, let us be faithful now. Allah (SWT) loves those who repent and do not repeat their mistakes.

The facilitator should use the Evaluation Form in Appendix Five to evaluate the program.

Conclude the program with a simple celebration like a closing prayer, sharing a meal, or renewal of marriage vows. The couples can give gifts to each other or be invited to honor each other before other couples and share how they have benefited from the program.



# 5. Appendices

## 5.1 THE BROKEN INNER HOUSE

### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on broken inner houses***

#### **General Questions**

- What things could lead to a person being “broken” or “wounded” within their “inner house”?
- Would a person who was abused (physically, mentally, and sexually) or neglected as a child necessarily talk about this? Why or why not?
- How does a person who has suffered or is suffering from a distant or near trauma to their “inner house” find healing?

### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on broken inner houses***

In reality, there are vast numbers of people who suffer as a “broken” within their “inner house.” We know that many children have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused. Many adults entering marriage were neglected physically or emotionally as children. Other people have suffered trauma from being victims of violence or witnessing acts of violence. Others have trauma from illnesses such as AIDS, from living in poverty or from being discriminated against. The list goes on.

We can visualize within this “inner house” something called “the pain body.” Each of us carries within our person a “body of pain,” an accumulation of the wounds and trauma of our existence. For many, this “pain body” is huge, and they stagger under its great weight. Unconsciously, many people see the world and respond to it through their “pain body.” To them, the “we” of other people may not necessarily be trusted or relied on. Unconsciously, they may blame themselves for the “pain body” within their inner house, never realizing it was thrust upon them by a force beyond their control.

We must realize that couples may bring the pain bodies of their inner house with them into their practice of the Islamic Family House. Left unrecognized or unattended, the pain body has the potential to disrupt every part of the house. For example, a wife who has been sexually abused as a child or adolescent may experience a great deal of anxiety and fear in the marriage bed. A husband who was neglected as a child may not bond with and nurture his own children.

### **THE HEALING “WE”**

Imagine yourself digging the foundation of your house. You encounter a large rock, which must be removed. Try as you might, you cannot dislodge and lift the rock out of the way; it is simply too heavy. The rock is your pain body and it cannot be lifted alone. To dislodge and lift the rock you need the help of others. The weight of the rock—the burden of your pain body—must be shared. Here again we see the two dimensions of human personhood:

- As an “I” person you must be willing to look at the rock, its weight and dimensions. You did not put it there, but you must help remove it for your own well-being. As an “I” person you ask, “How can I do my part—through reflection, through seeking counsel, through prayer, through appropriate medications—to lift the rock?”

- As a “we,” the rock must be lifted. The “we” may be your spouse, the “we” may be a trusted family member or friend, the “we” may be a spiritual counselor or guide. The “we” can use help, use the levers of understanding, acceptance and even forgiveness to lift from your being any guilt, any self-hatred, any shame, any fear.

The “We” of Allah can help lift the rock. Remember that Allah (SWT) is all around and is bigger than this rock, both in our inner selves and in our practice of the Islamic Family House.

**“Nay, seek (Allah’s) help with patient perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit.”** [Quran 2:45]

**“O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer; for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.”** [Quran 2:153]

**“Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!”** [Quran 2:214]

If we consider our previous discussions, we can see how the woman who had been sexually abused was able to use the “I” and the “we” to find a degree of healing.

As an “I,” she decided to share her history of being abused with a close friend. She was able to reflect and move beyond denial or shame to seek help.

As a “we,” she reached out first to her friend and then to her husband to “lift the rock” of her pain body. Their listening, their understanding and their unconditional love helped move her toward healing.

## THE RELEVANCE OF THE PAIN BODY

As a facilitator of Islamic Family House, you may wonder why it may be important to understand these notions of personhood and pain body. We are not expecting, nor is it appropriate, that you be considered to be a marriage, pastoral or mental health counselor (unless of course you are one of those by profession). However, the reality is such that you are working with married couples who bring to you their problems and their stories of a “broken house.” As you offer attentive and compassionate listening to these couples, an awareness of the pain body may help you direct a couple toward the help they need.

### STEP THREE: Life application

#### Couple Time

- Am I carrying a heavy pain body from any trauma?
- If I am carrying a heavy pain body, who can I talk to about it?
- What fears do I have about sharing my pain body?
- How can my faith and spirituality be a part of healing my pain body?

### DIFFERENTIATION AND PROJECTION

Two terms are helpful for describing the interplay between our inner house and our relationships:

*Differentiation* is a healthy psychological mechanism whereby a person can make a distinction between what is happening in the “I” of their human person and what is affecting them externally. For example, differentiation is a part of self-insight that allows a person to say to themselves, “Yes, I feel angry because of \_\_\_\_\_,” or to say, “I am experiencing fear because of a certain event.” Through differentiation, they identify the source of the problem or emotion within the correct sphere.

*Projection* is an unhealthy psychological mechanism that occurs when a person does not have sufficient self-awareness or insight to properly locate the source of their emotions. Instead of examining themselves, they project or blame the problem or emotion on something outside of themselves.

Consider this example: A man has a problems as a result of illiteracy. He insists his wife must produce many children as he wills. When the wife does not comply he marries another wife. When asked, “Why he has done so when his income is small? Can’t you see it is hurting your family?” the man replies, “I married another wife because of disappointment from my wife”. The man fails to differentiate what is an internal problem and projects it onto his wife. Although there may be “stress” related to issues with his wife, the man can only face and resolve the issue of polygamy by looking at his inner house and the pain body inside of it.

Helping couples develop differentiation and avoid projection can be a part of resolving problems within *The Islamic Family House* program.

## 5.2 TEMPERAMENT

At times there are “structural” problems in a couple’s Islamic Family House. For example, the foundation may not be in Allah or one of the pillars may need work. In other situations, a couple’s Islamic Family House may be challenged by differing temperaments and moods within a person’s “inner house.” Helping couples understand and respect differences in mood and temperament can make for a happier Islamic Family House.

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of “know thyself,” as part of being a whole person
- To understand the differences in temperament, moods and personalities in spouses
- To help couples appreciate and respect differences in each other.

### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on temperament***

This exercise is introduced by a role play in which five people are on a walk from one village to another. They take a different route than usual and encounter a rapidly flowing river with no bridge to cross. What do they do?

#### **General Questions**

- The first person wants to jump into the river and swim across. He encourages others to follow and stresses how important it is that they reach their destination.
- The second person is concerned about the danger of crossing the river. She fears for everyone's safety and urges that they turn around, not cross the river and head back to the village they left.
- The third person thinks carefully and decides it would be best to build a bridge. He urges the others to gather logs and get rope to begin the building process.
- The fourth person is captivated by the beauty of the river and the trees and foliage around it. She admires the scene and begins to paint a picture of it.
- The fifth person notices a large, slow-moving pool of water farther down the river. He thinks it would be a great place to swim and relax and urges others to join him for a refreshing swim in the pool.

In this example, we can get a glimpse of the different personalities of human beings.

- The first person is more of an aggressive risk taker.
- The second person is more cautious and does not want to take chances.
- The third person is a practical problem solver.
- The fourth person is artistic and focused on the present moment.
- The fifth person is looking for what pleasure might be present in the situation.

None of these temperaments are right or wrong. Yet, as you might imagine, if people didn't recognize and respect different temperaments, then problems could well emerge. The first person would argue with the second person about whether they would continue. The third person, who is intent on building a bridge, would be upset at the fourth person for wanting to paint rather than build; perhaps all of them would be unhappy with the fifth person who wants to just swim and play in the river.

People may not be aware of their natural temperaments. They do not consciously know themselves. Many times people are also not aware of the temperaments of their spouses, which can lead to difficulties in marriage. For example, men by nature are often risk takers and thus want to make decisions, such as leaving a job or moving, based on the perceived benefits of the change. The wife by nature may be more interested in being cautious and not risking the current well-being of the family. She would rather stay and not risk the family's security. Unless a couple recognizes and

has respectful communication around these different temperaments, the house will be strained.

One of our unconscious human tendencies is to think our spouses should have a temperament just like our own. Without appreciating differences in temperament, a couple may clash over decision making. On the other hand, knowing and respecting your spouse's temperament can help you have better communication and make better decisions.

### ***STEP THREE: Life application***

#### **Couple Time**

- Pretend you and your spouse were at the river's edge. What would you do? (What person in the role play would you be like?)
- How would you describe to each other your basic temperaments?
- Have you had a situation in your marriage in which your different temperaments clashed?

## **5.3 MOODS**

### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on moods***

#### **General Questions**

- What do we mean by the word "mood?"
- How is a person's mood different from their temperament?
- Do all people have the same mood?
- How do people deal with "bad moods"?
- What are healthy ways to deal with one's moods?

One of the challenges of living together as husband and wife is to understand and work with our moods. Just as people have different temperaments, they are prone to different moods. Moods are temporary changes in feelings and emotions. Moods are part of our "inner house," though they can also be influenced by external factors.

As you have noted, there are differences in mood from person to person. Some people have wide variations in moods, while others' moods are steady. Just as it is important to be aware of temperament, it is critical to be aware of one's mood—one's current emotional state.

Without an awareness of moods, several problems may emerge:

- Husband and wife may avoid each other if they suspect one is in a bad mood. (What is needed is not avoidance but communication.)

- A person who is dealing with depressed mood (or depressed temperament) may deal with the mood in unhealthy ways: striking out at others, projection, alcohol, drugs, nicotine, or excessive distraction with television or internet. (What is needed is not distraction or “covering up” the mood, but rather self-insight and communication about one’s moods.)
- Moods may affect adherence with medication and care guidelines. A person who is habitually in a depressed or negative mood may not care about taking medications. If they have an underlying disease such as HIV, tuberculosis, diabetes, or high blood pressure, this lack of adherence can have serious health consequences. (What is needed is not apathy or indifference but self-insight and communication.)

It is important to know that our moods don’t “have the last word.” As humans, we have a will. In our will we can make decisions and take actions. Although our will can be influenced by our temperament and mood, our will is also informed by our intellect and our soul. We don’t have to act out of our feelings alone; as humans we have the capacity for decision making based on the integration of our temperament, mood, intellect, and soul.

As a final exercise, the facilitator can build on the participant’s responses to question five and generate a list of things that can help improve a person’s mood, including:

- Adequate sleep and rest
- Regular exercise (Exercise generates chemicals in the brain that elevate a person’s mood.)
- Sharing your feelings and stresses
- Time for prayer, meditation and self-reflection
- Healthy recreational activities
- Avoiding bad habits (For example, alcohol may temporarily improve a person’s mood but over the long term it is a mood depressant.)

### ***STEP THREE: Life application***

#### **Couple Time**

- Name three words that describe your moods and share them with your spouse. What is your usual mood?
- What are three things that can upset your mood? Share them with your spouse.
- Do you feel your spouse understands your moods?
- What are three things each of you can practically do to improve your moods?



## 5.4 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To examine our ideas about what it means to be rich or poor
- To reflect on choices we make that can harm our family's economic security
- To reflect on choices we make as a couple that can improve our family's economic security
- To examine how we may be programmed to fail economically
- To agree as a couple on our future economic plan, including a plan for savings.

#### ***STEP ONE: Gathering views on economic empowerment***

The participants are divided into four groups. Each group is asked to respond to the following questions.

##### **General Questions**

- What are the rich like?
- What are the poor like?
- What factors hinder a couple's economic security?
- What factors, if promoted, improve a couple's economic security?

#### ***STEP TWO: Supplementing views on economic empowerment***

The facilitating couple asks a representative from each group to present the group's points. Participants are asked to hold their comments until the rich and poor sides are presented.

While acknowledging the reality of structural poverty, the facilitators should help couples realize that they can exert some control over their economic circumstances. Specifically, couples who work together and share finances and other resources are much more likely to be secure economically than couples who are not working together, and who squander their resources.

Couples should examine the reality of how their attitudes toward security and prosperity may be programmed. By way of illustration, the facilitators can show how two numbers can be programmed differently:

$$9 - 5 = 4, 9 + 5 = 14, 9 \div 5 = 1.5, 9 \times 5 = 45$$

Our attitude toward money and resources may determine how things are programmed. If we share and save we can add and even multiply our savings and resources (just as  $9 + 5 = 14$  or  $9 \times 5 = 45$ ). If we subtract or if we are "divided," our resources and security will be much less (just as  $9 - 5 = 4$  and  $9 \div 5 = 1.5$ ).

Finally, couples should be challenged to examine "10 Commandments" for financial and time management. (See box.) These commandments can be a good beginning for couples who want to work together to manage their resources better.

If the facilitating couple has had an experience with changing their habits in regard to one or more of these "10 Commandments," they may want to share that experience with the group.

As a further exercise, the group or individual couples can be asked to pick out which three commandments are most relevant to their lives or the life in their community. They can also be asked to add one or two commandments that may be important to them or to others.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- Do you feel we are working together in the management of our money and assets?
- Examine each of the commandments. Are you, individually or as a couple, breaking any of these commandments?
- Discuss and then write down five things you as a couple can do to better program your economic future.

Economic empowerment is not a goal in itself. Rather, economic empowerment is a way of achieving success for the well-being of your family and your community. Success can never be achieved in a way that is dishonest or unfair, but must always be done with integrity. Let us strive then to be economically empowered and to use the gifts of time, knowledge and life that Allah has shared with us.

#### **10 COMMANDMENTS FOR FINANCIAL AND TIME MANAGEMENT**

1. Avoid wasting time. (The facilitators can ask for examples from the local community where able-bodied people are wasting time on lifestyle choices.)
2. Never carry more money than you need. (Ask why.)
3. Don't buy items, especially expensive items, on impulse.
4. Do not spend more money than you earn. (Ask for any stories or illustrations that validate this point.)
5. Do not buy just because others are buying.
6. Never borrow money for luxuries.
7. Do not buy or use alcohol or drugs. (Ask for any stories or illustrations.)
8. Save at least 10 percent of what you earn. (Ask if this is realistic and how a family could actually do it.)
9. Do not give out loans. (Discuss the issues of 'interest and loans')
10. Be charitable and wise with your finances. (What does this mean?)

## 5.5 AN EMPTY HOUSE

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To understand the situation of infertile couples
- To understand how difficult infertility is for couples emotionally, relationally and spiritually
- To better understand how to respond to infertility in a way that is life-giving.

#### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on empty houses**

##### **General Questions**

- What do you notice about this house?
- What do you think the house represents?
- How do you think a couple in this house feels?

#### **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on empty houses**

Infertility is a common and difficult situation. There are many negative emotions and behaviors that may arise from infertility. A wife may become deeply depressed. The couple may blame each other. The empty house may become an angry house or a sad and silent one. A husband may leave his wife and take others, hoping to find one who will bear his child. In this way, he may acquire and then transmit HIV.

The group can be divided into three groups to discuss these questions:

- What are positive things a couple can do to when they are faced with infertility?
- What are negative things that may occur in the context of infertility?
- How can the Islamic community support couples who are infertile?

The facilitator should then process the responses with the group. Further comments may include the following:

A couple is still to give life to each other and still to give life to the community around them. If it is possible, a couple can consider adoption. A couple without children can see how they can be involved in reaching out to others within their extended family, to nieces, to nephews and even to orphans or disadvantaged children.

Such loving responses are difficult, yet they are what lead to life. Other responses—unfaithfulness or seeking other partners—may lead to death through HIV. Berating each other, fighting with each other and isolating each other are responses that also



**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** Begin this session with a role play of an empty house in which a couple has been struggling with infertility for four years.

The facilitator then asks, "Is it possible to keep the faith and maintain a good marriage under this condition, or has Allah given us a situation too difficult to bear?"

Based on the responses, the facilitator can discuss with the participants the emotions, challenges and dynamics that arise in the situation of an "empty house."

lead to a kind of death; the death of marriage as a life-giving, lovemaking union.

In addition, couples who are struggling with infertility should be sure that they understand basic fertility awareness and should try to seek medical attention from a qualified health professional. Their situation should call forth our understanding, compassion, and support.

### **STEP THREE: Life application**

#### **Couple Time**

- Are we bearing the pain and suffering of infertility?
- Do we know couples who are struggling with infertility? How can we better understand and support them?

The facilitator can refer those who are interested for training in fertility awareness.

## **5.6 A STAR FOR THE FAMILY**

### **SESSION OBJECTIVES**

- To discuss important themes that lead to happy and successful family life.
- To identify areas that a couple can have control of within their family life.
- To arrive at a plan for improving the health and well-being of the family.

### **STEP ONE: Gathering views on a star for the family**

#### **General Questions**

- Which family would you like to be part of?
- Which family is more likely to be poor?
- If each of these families is poor, which family is most likely to improve their well-being?
- What do you think are the secrets to good family life?

### **STEP TWO: Supplementing views on a star for the family**

We believe that within the family, there are five things that are very important. If a couple can consciously make these things a priority, their family life will be much better.

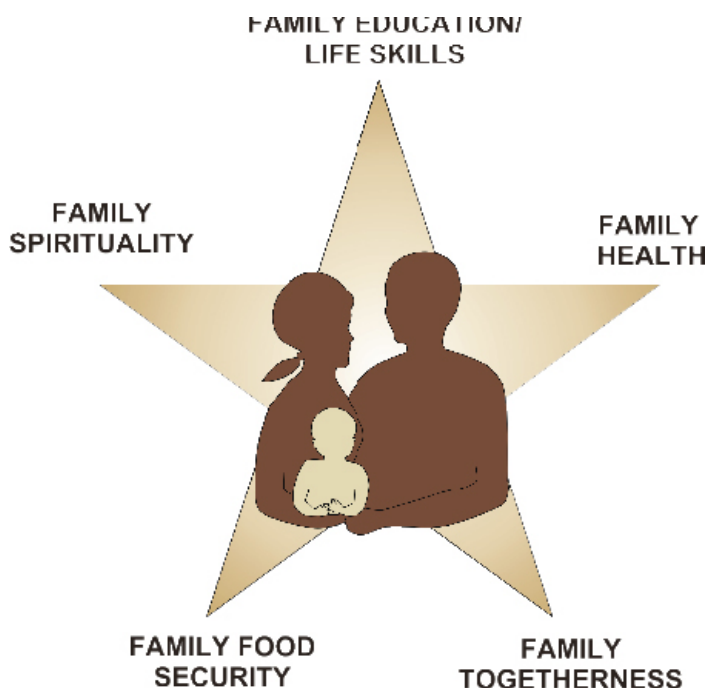
**FACILITATORS' NOTE:** To introduce this session, use a role play about two families.

In family one, there is arguing and fighting. The father goes out drinking and the children are left to care for themselves. The family must struggle to get food and one of the children comes down sick with malaria, yet they don't take him for treatment.

In family two, the husband and wife are consciously trying to work together and care for the children. They eat together and pray together. The couple ensures there is local food available so the children don't go hungry.

**Family Spirituality:** How does your family pray together? Remember, the family that prays together, stays together.

## STAR WITHIN THE HOUSE



**Family Togetherness:** To be a family is not always easy. There may be different needs and expectations. There may be stress related to poverty, hunger or sickness. The family may have had to take in relatives and so forth. As a family, you must have a plan for how you will solve and reconcile such problems.

**Family Food Security:** In many circumstances there is a shortage of food because of drought or poor harvest. How will you as a family plan in order to avoid hunger and malnutrition? Are you able to plant your crops for food before cash crops? Is there a way you can make the land you farm more productive and more sustainable?

**Family Health:** What factors can you control to improve the health of your family? We have talked about HIV and avoiding its risk through abstinence and chastity. What other areas can you take control of? Do you live where there is malaria? Can you prevent malaria through draining any nearby pools of water or using insecticide-treated nets? Can you be sure your child receives his or her immunizations? Can you recognize common illnesses such as diarrhea, dehydration, or pneumonia?

**Family Education/Life Skills:** Can your children attend school? Can you help them do well in school by supporting them and setting appropriate expectations? Are there other skills or trades besides formal schooling that they can develop in order to have economic livelihood?

### ***STEP THREE: Life application***

#### **Couple Time**

- Which one of the points on the star is the hardest to put into place?
- Have you known a family that was really working to put these five points in place?  
What was different about them?
- Do you think it is possible to act out of consciousness and influence these five points of the star for the better?
- What will you do differently in your family to better realize these five points?

The facilitator may know someone who can present a supplemental section on generating small income. This may be one way of assisting families who are struggling and a way of helping them with food security and education.

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