

MARITAL CONFLICT AND THEIR ISLAMIC SOLUTION

Marital conflict is one of those “make you or break you” phenomena. It has the ability to destroy a couple and land them in a heartbreaking divorce, or it has the ability to deepen a couple’s bond to the extent that they feel something that seems like a taste of Jannah. On an individual level, marital conflict can lead a person toward maturation and self-improvement. What most couples fail to realize is that conflict doesn’t have to drive them. People are not the pawns of their emotions, destined to argue and fight because they can’t help what they feel, unless they choose to be.

Conflict is inevitable in any close relationship. It’s impossible for two people to be emotionally close without some inherent differences, which lead to anxiety. This anxiety is characterized by feelings of fear, anger, frustration, or disappointment and it is very natural.

Differences that you can live with when it comes to a friend or even a relative can rock your world when it comes to your spouse, because you have to live with this person every day—you want to be extremely close to them, yet the love you share with them is not unconditional. Having a difference with a spouse may also be a bit of a reality-check, because it makes you realize that just because you believe something, that doesn’t make it right. Even though we logically know that some differences can be valid, we still feel insecure having a difference like that with our spouse.

These differences can be related to faith, family, upbringing, culture, politics, intimacy, or even something as trivial as food or favorite book genres.

In regards to handling conflict we first need to stop focusing on our spouse and start focusing more on ourselves. Even when our spouse is doing something we believe is blameworthy, we still first focus on our own reactions as a means to rectifying the situation

The Remedy for Marital Conflict (Nushuz) When it is From the Wife

When a wife is in a state of nushuz, the husband can address it with the following three steps:

1. Admonition and guidance.
2. Boycotting
3. Striking her

What follows is a detailed discussion of each of these three steps.

The First Step: Verbal Admonition and Guidance

The first thing a husband should do when his wife commits nushuz or the steps that lead to it is to attempt to warn her verbally, using Quran and Sunnah to remind her of her duties toward Allah and toward her husband.

Allah said:

"As to those women from whom you see ill-conduct, admonish them..." [Noble Quran 4:34]

Admonition is a cure that is gentle and mild. Its goal is to replace estrangement and rebellion with love, compassion and togetherness in obedience to Allah Most High. All of the scholars early and late have agreed that this admonition is only as long as it is in agreement with the Shari'a. Otherwise, the husband has no such right according to the principle: *"There is no obedience to the created if it involves disobedience to the Creator."* (sahih hadith)

From the sunnah, it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"If you fear nushuz on their part, then advise them, boycott them in their beds and strike them in a way which is not injurious..." [Musnad Ahmad]

The Second Step: Boycotting and Avoidance

Sometimes verbal admonition may have no effect on ending her state of estrangement and disobedience. In fact, it may increase her abstinence due to some emotion that has overtaken her, a defiant reaction or perhaps she has been deceived by position, wealth or beauty to consider herself better than her husband.

Linguistically, this "boycotting" (al-hajr) is defined as "avoiding, cutting off and not having contact with the one who is being boycotted." Allah recommends this using the additional phrase: "in sleeping places" (fiy al-madhaji'). This could mean either avoiding her entirely and sleeping somewhere else or it could mean sleeping in the same bed but keeping away from her and not speaking, etc.

The Quran, the Sunnah, consensus of the scholars and sound reason indicate its permissibility and it being one of the means of disciplining the estranged wife when verbal admonition brings about no positive result. Allah said:

"...And avoid them in sleeping places..." [Noble Quran 4:34]

The Third Step: Striking Her

In some cases the solution to the problem may require some harshness and toughness. This is because there are some people who cannot be set straight when they go wrong by good behavior and soft advice alone. Kindness and softness just make such people more arrogant and ignorant. Some such people, if met with toughness, respond by cooling down and ending their defiance. Generally speaking, it is not recommended for a husband to ever strike his wife and it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said about those who do so that "they are not the best of you".

It should be made clear that "beating your wife is NOT permissible in Islam. The striking mentioned above shouldn't be anything more than a tap with a Siwak.

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Apostle ﷺ as saying: *"He who believes in Allah and the Hereafter, if he witnesses any matter he should talk in good terms about it or keep quiet. Act kindly towards woman, for woman is created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its top. If you attempt to straighten it, you will break it, and if you leave it, its crookedness will remain there. So act kindly towards women."* (Sahih Muslim, The Book of Marriage (Kitab Al-Nikah), Book 008, Number 3468)"

The Remedy When marriage conflict Nushuz is By the Husband

Islam has provided remedies for cases when nushuz is from the husband in ways consistent with both her feelings and sensitivities as a woman and their respective roles, rights and obligations as husband and wife. She can look for the reasons for his behavior and admonish him with Islam in an attempt to make things right between them. However, Islam has not given her the right to address this problem by boycotting him or beating him as has been given to the husband. This is because her nature is different from that of the man and because she does not have the same kind of power and authority in the marriage as he has.

She should use some or all of the following steps:

- Try to discover the reason for his estrangement and/or bad behavior.
- Admonish her husband and remind him of his responsibility in front of Allah towards his wife such as good behavior and kind treatment.
- Try to please her husband in order to make things right. This can be just by showing kindness and concern and can also include compromising some of her own rights for the sake of harmony.

"And if a woman fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part there is no sin upon the two of them if they make terms of agreement and agreement is better..." [Noble Quran 4:128]

Problems of the Modern era and ways to tackle them.

A Cheating Husband.

Remember that what the man is doing of having a haraam (an unlawful) relationship with a woman who is not his mahram is a betrayal of the rights of Allah before it is a betrayal of the rights of his wife. If you see that he still loves you and there is a chance of him repenting from the traps of Shatyaan he has fallen into, then below steps are advisable: -

1. Talk to him and remind him this is Haram and the punishments from Allah.
2. Do not let many people know about this as he might repent and you might choose to forgive him.
3. Offer lots of Dua.
4. Do not let him alone for Shatyaan - Fill his time with useful things (Islamic & Social)

Finally, if what is mentioned above does not succeed in putting a stop to that haraam relationship of his with that woman, then you have two options:

- You can advise him to marry her in accordance with the laws of Allah, may He be exalted, so as to save him and her from this haraam relationship, on condition that his relationship with her has not reached the level of zina (adultery) – Allah forbid – because it is not permissible to advise someone to do something that is haraam, as their getting married will not be permissible until after they repent (from zina).
- Or you can ask for a divorce (talaaq), but start by threatening to ask for it, then if he remains as he is you have the right to seek a way out of the calamity you are faced with by asking for a divorce. It will protect you and your children from the possibility of fitnah (tribulation) because of your husband's misbehaviour and his haraam relationship, whether that protection has to do with your religious commitment, honour or health.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

One of the rights of spouses is that trivial mistakes should be overlooked, especially words and deeds by which no harm was intended. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *“those who repress anger, and who pardon men; verily Allaah loves as muhsinoon (the good-doers)”*. [Aal Imraan 3:134]

The Prophet ﷺ said: *“Every son of Adam makes mistakes, and the best of those who make mistakes are those who repent.”* (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 2501; Saheeh al-Jaami, 4/171).

Anger is one of the most powerful weapons of the Shaytan against us. It causes people to lose control and to say and do things which they regret severely merely moments later. This is more so in case of anger between spouses. Shaitaan loves it when there is Discord between Husband & Wife (based on a hadeeth in Sahih Muslim). In general terms, to become angry easily is a characteristic which is disliked in Islam, and a disease of the heart.

A man said to the Prophet ﷺ: “Advise me.” He ﷺ said: *“Do not get angry.”* He repeated his question several times and he said: *“Do not get angry.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5765)

General rules to keep in mind to avoid marital discord

- 1. When talking to the spouse, don't point fingers.** The moment you point the finger, (even if it is not pointing back in the same direction it is still connected to you), that's the moment conflict starts.
- 2. Fight eye to eye.** If the fighting has already started, sit down, and discuss it eye to eye. If your spouse is not willing to sit down, be the 'bigger person' in the conversation and ask them nicely to sit down.
- 3. Do not pick at the other for little things.** For example, your husband might move some of the pillows on to the other chair when he comes home from work everyday and everyday you put them back. Make it a habit! Do not pick at your husband for doing that.
- 4. Appreciate one another.** A thank you for something nice here and there didn't hurt someone. Also, saying sorry to someone, even if they made the mistake, can make a big difference.
- 5. Let the other make mistakes.** No one is perfect, people make mistakes. Do not hold down the other when you wouldn't want to be held down for a mistake.
- 6. Try not to always plan to annoy, because the only one who is to be annoyed is you more.** Okay, we all have our evil days but make sure the spouse is not having a bad day before hand.
- 7. Spend quality time together.**
- 8. Understand one another.**
- 9. Do not snoop in the other's past life.** The moment you have tied the knot is the moment you start a new life. Snooping in their past will lead to miss conceptions.
- 10. Let it go!** The bravest thing one can do is forgive the other person and move on like nothing happened. It may be hard but if you do forgive them, the world will look like a better place to you and you will feel much better.
- 11. Do not keep an Idle mind.** Yes spending time alone once in a while alone is good but too much time by yourself, is not good. When you are by yourself and thinking of what the other 'has done me wrong', the anger

inside tends to pent up and you could blow. So best thing to do is invite or go out with some friends and release some of the tension. You and your buddies with both find relief and laughter.

12. Stay clear from the people who try to control your marriage.

14. Be honest with each other. If there is something you disagree on with other, politely say "I do not agree with you on that. The reason being..."

15. Here is the big one: CHOOSE HAPPINESS OVER BEING RIGHT! Okay, we all want to be right but sometimes being right at the wrong moment can destroy a relationship. Let the other person get away with being wrong and thinking they are right half the time.

16. When fighting, do not drag others in. It is a conflict between you and your spouse. Not you, your spouse and best friend/mother/father/child/etc. They probably do not know the whole story anyways.