

MODULE 2

Class Title: KISS it

Aim of Lesson: To learn how to apply the “Keep-it-simple-stupid” principle in our lives

Category: Personal Development

Lesson Format: Power point presentation with narration. Discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

(Slides 1 – 2)

Who likes to kiss? Why are you looking at me like that for? What did you think we are going to talk about today? Let me explain then.

KISS is an acronym. What **did** you think I was going to talk about - you guys!! Do you know what an acronym is?

When each letter in a word stands for something: that's called an acronym. There are abbreviations and there are acronyms.

KISS is an acronym for Keep It Simple Stupid and I didn't make it up by the way.

This acronym was first coined by a person named Kelly Johnson. He is an aircraft engineer at a U.S company that manufactures aircrafts. He gave his team of designers some basic tools and he told them that the design of your jet aircraft should be such that any average mechanic can fix this aircraft in combat conditions since they mainly designed aircrafts for U.S Army. That's how he came up with it. So we are going to see;

(a) What is this principle about, and, (b) How we can take advantage of it.

I find this principle extremely exciting and this is something that I want to learn because I love to a muah muah.

(Slides 3 – 4)

It's a simply simple idea. There are other ways of expressing it:

Keep It Simple and Stupid,
Keep It Short and Simple,
Keep It Simple and Straightforward,
Keep It Simple Sweetheart.

So different people use it in different ways but the most popular one is Keep It Simple Stupid.

(Slide 5)

It basically means we avoid all sorts of unnecessary complications in every aspect of our lives. For e.g. if I tell one of you to walk across the room, is it straightforward or not? So if you choose a straightforward way of following my instruction and simply walk across the room instead of hopping or somersaulting, you are applying the 'KISS' principle.

(Slides 6 – 8)

So basically it is to avoid complications in everything whether it is in your writing, in your decoration, in decision-making, in meetings, in coming to class etc. For e.g. how do you avoid an unnecessary complication in class? If the teacher has asked you not to speak in class, the instruction is simple and straightforward, no twisting is required. So basically you have to KISS every situation you are in, KISS every activity that you are in.

If you look at this I have written it down. Which do you think is the simplest? The first one: is there any need for all of this the fancy fonts? If you are submitting an assignment in school, what do you need to focus on more? The content right? So, for that you can type it in simple Times New Roman or simple Arial and focus more on the content rather than decorating it all around the place and having nothing meaningful in the content.

You have to KNOW what simple means for you to keep it simple. Easily understood, problem-free, down-to-earth, straight-forward, clear cuts, unpretentious, plain, unfussy, this is simple. Simple is not equal to easy. That is what we must understand. For example: if you get an assignment, it will be easier to decorate it, use smileys and cute fonts or make all sorts of hearts on it or make *chirya* (birds) or *kawwey* (crows) that will be easier than focusing on getting the content right. Similarly, if we talk about those engineers, do you think it's easy to design an aircraft in a way that can be fixed by an average mechanics using a handful of tools? Is that an easy thing? No! Simple designs are the most effective but the most difficult to attain.

(Slides 9 – 10)

If we compare simple with easy, then easy is something that you do with minimum amount of effort to produce a result. That's what easy means. Simple is the removal of everything unnecessary except what that matters. That's what simple is.

(Slides 11 – 12)

You know the art of origami, of making things out of paper? That's unbelievably simple. You're given a piece of paper and you make something amazing out of it. Is that easy? No. Is it simple? Yes. You could have been given huge amounts of material, colored paper, glue and glitters and

what not and asked to make something, that would have been easier rather than making something simple and pure out of a piece of paper. That's another example to understand the principle.

That is why Leonardo Da Vinci said, "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication". Most effective designs are the least complicated.

Teacher: How many of you recognize that symbol up there? How many of you recognize that? What does it stand for?

(Slides 13 – 14)

Everybody knows that. Why? It's a simple straightforward logo. Is it fussy? Complicated? No. Do you think it was easy to come up with something so easy? Not at all? Everybody recognizes that symbol. Always remember that most effective designs are the least complicated.

Teacher: What is this?

Student answers. A paper clip.

This is the most simple and brilliant solutions for taking care of a stack of papers. Could there be anything simpler than this?

Teacher: What is this here? Paper clip. Simple solution. Simple solutions are not easy but they make our lives easier. So please, don't equate simple with easy or simple with ease. They must have taken a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of energy to come up with this paper clip. It's commonly available, cheap and does the job.

(Slide 15)

Let's look at this e.g. you want to bake a cake. Let's compare two recipes.

In the first recipe you have a list of ingredients. There are 11 over here. What have you got? Read it out. Sugar, flour, eggs, unsweetened coca powder, vanilla extract, vegetable oil, baking powder, milk, boiling water, salt.

(Slide 16)

Now if you look at the steps listed to make the thingie midgie, how many are there? Three.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour two nine inch round pans.

2. In a large bowl, stir together the sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add the eggs, milk, oil and vanilla, mix for 2 minutes on medium speed of mixer. Stir in the boiling water last. Batter will be thin. Pour evenly into the prepared pans.
3. Bake 30 to 35 minutes in the preheated oven, until the cake tests done with a toothpick. Cool in the pans for 10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.

Three steps.

(Slides 17 -18)

Let's see the second recipe now. Ingredients pretty much the same. In fact ingredients over here are 10 and look at the directions.

1. Preheat oven to 350F degrees with a rack in the middle. Butter and flour an 8x8 square cake pan (I've also had success using a 9x9 pan, just adjust your baking time).
2. Sift the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl.
3. In a separate medium bowl whisk together the melted butter and maple syrup until it looks like caramel.
4. Whisk in the eggs, vanilla, and then the coconut milk.
5. Pour the maple syrup mixture over the flour mixture and stir until barely combined.
6. Add the chocolate and stir until everything comes together and is no longer dusty looking - avoid over-mixing.
7. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan and bake for 30 - 40 minutes.
8. This is a cake I like slightly under-baked, so I pull it out when the center is still a bit under cooked - the toothpick doesn't quite come out clean when testing. If you are going to use it for a layer cake - then bake it all the way (clean toothpick).
9. Remove from oven and allow to cool (absolutely completely) in pan before frosting (frosting recipe below).

Whoa – nine steps. And there is sifting, whisking, using several bowls, yada yada yada

Which recipe is simpler? Which one is simpler?

Student: The first one.

Teacher: Bingo! Have you ever made a cake out of those Betty Crocker things? It really doesn't

taste that much different from the bakery cakes. It tastes absolutely yummy and what does it take? Add eggs, oil and water. Whisk it up and stick it in the oven.

So the person who has come up with this recipe must have experimented various different steps, gone through a lot of pain and sweat to eventually make a simple recipe for everyone to follow. I bake a chocolate cake and I literally dump in everything, whisk it and put it in the oven. No creaming the sugar and egg separately and then sifting the *falana dhimkana* (this and that) separately. Whoever has come up with that recipe must have taken hours and hours with lots of variations and techniques to come up with something simple. That's what I am saying. I'm not saying that something that has lots of step is necessarily wrong. It's just really time consuming and not necessary.

Look at these laptops. Are computers easier to use now? Are the designs and applications simple to use? There was a time when computers were initially invented, one computer with a memory less than this laptop would be a whole room full of machines. So it got simplified and easier to use but there is someone who is doing the behind the scene job? They are KISSing it constantly.

(Slides 19 – 20)

Everything should be made as simple as possible but not one bit simpler, Albert Einstein said that.

Ok let's just have an experiment over here. Please read this paragraph.

Student reads. 'Two individuals proceeded towards the apex of a natural geologic protuberance, the purpose of their expedition being the procurement of a sample of fluid hydride of oxygen in a large vessel, the exact size of which was unspecified.

'One member of the team precipitously descended, sustaining severe damage to the upper cranial portion of his anatomical structure; subsequently, the second member of the team performed self-rotational translation, orientated in the same direction taken by the first team member.'

Did anybody understand a word of what she just said?

(Slide 21)

Now let's KISS this mouthful of complication, what's happened?

This simply means: Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water, Jack fell down and bumped his crown and Jill came tumbling after. That's what it means.

(Slide 22)

Teacher: Figure out this sign you see on the screen

Student: no left turn, no right turn, don't go forward, huh? I'm confused.

(Slide 23)

If we KISS this traffic sign what it simply means is: stop!

Do you understand the principle now? If you can make the solution to a situation simple, make it simple. Don't make it unnecessarily complicated.

Who do you have an argument with the most?

Student: My brother.

Teacher: Ok so let me guess here. Most of the time what happens is that when we argue with brothers or sisters who perhaps took your pen and you are hunting for it and are unable to do your homework. In such a situation, you can find your brother and argue; 'Omar you always do this! Last week you did *falana* (so and so) and the week before you did *dhimkana* (such and such) and tomorrow you are going to do that ' – and your voice is getting louder and you are totally losing it.

So what are you doing? You are totally making a simple situation complicated. All you could have said was, "Omar you took my pen, don't do it again, give it back'. In every situation it is up to us how unnecessarily complicated we make it. Does this kind of thing happen when we have an argument? Yeah, it happens all the time.

Even our parents tend to do that. I am a parent so believe me I know. For e.g. A child gets bad marks in a subject and the mother is going to go like, 'you never study, you only watch TV, and you're on Facebook all the time ...' There's no need of all that, just say, 'you got bad marks in Math, just make sure you study', whatever grounding that has to be done, do it and that is the end of it. I'm just giving you a few simple examples.

(Slides 24 – 25)

The reason we are talking about KISSing today is because *tawheed* is one of the most simplest and basic principles of Islam. Do you all know what *tawheed* means? What does it mean? Belief in One Allah. It is a simple but not easy concept. Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Baqarah 2: Verse 185,

'Allah desires ease for you; He doesn't desire hardship for you'.

(Slide 26 – 27)

If we are involved in worshipping too many deities then we are juggling too much together. However, *tawheed* tells us to worship one Allah (swt) only and that we are accountable to Him

alone so if we are on *tawheed* we are like chill, totally! No juggling. No going beserk with tension – have to please so & so and have to listen to so & so too.

The Companions of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) mentioned the life of the world before him. He (pbuh) said, "Do you not hear? Do you not hear? Simplicity (in life) is part of Faith, simplicity is part of Faith." [Abu Dawud]

(Slides 28 – 30)

What does that mean? In a lot of other faiths, just their worship requires a lot of paraphernalia; get this ready, do this and do that and whatever, the Roman Catholics, the Hindus and various faiths require a lot of shabang, ornaments, objects - just to worship.

Do Muslims who worship one Allah alone have to do all that? What do we have to do? It is so simple for e.g. take *salah*, you have minimum preparation to do. Do *wudu* and if you can't find water, do *tayamum*. End of story. Take another e.g. of: *du'a*. You can make *du'a* anytime, anywhere and in any language. Just establish a connection with your Lord and that's that. It is as simple as that!

(Slide 31)

'Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists but aim to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded and gain strength by worshipping in the morning and the night.' [Bukhari]

(Slide 32)

If we are involved in going to different places, praying to somebody else, doing all this *mazaar* (shrine) business, is that simple? If someone comes to a scholar or a teacher who is teaching Qur'an and they ask I'm in trouble or such and such is happening in my life, what should I do and if that teacher says that at midnight you should go and stand under a *peepal* tree on one leg and recite the names of Allah a million times, they say yeah that sounds good but if the teacher simply advices: do *astaghfaar* (ask Allah for forgiveness), they're going to be like, what?! As simple as that?! Can't possibly work!!

Yes, it **is** that simple. Most of the time, we try to find solutions that are unnecessarily complicated. There is no need for it because this has never been prescribed by Allah (swt).

(Slides 33 – 34)

The Prophet (pbuh) said religion is easy then keep it that way. If you make it more difficult for yourselves then it will get difficult.

‘Make things easy, and don’t make them difficult, give the good news and don’t scare them away.’ Bukhari.

Life is simple but it’s just not easy. I gave you an example of religion and *alhamdulillah* there are so many principles today that are being propagated all over the world for the ease of people that are totally *shariah* compliant. That is totally something prescribed by our *deen* already. That’s the reason we need to look at it to see how we can apply it in our lives to make things uncomplicated, and untangled up for ourselves.

(Slides 35 – 36)

How do you simplify your life? The first step is you set your priorities.

Teacher: One of you just quickly recap your average school day.

Student: You go to school, come back sleep, have food and then go to school again.

Do any of you go for tuitions? Do you feel stressed that there is too little time and too much to do? How many of you feel that there is too little time and too much to do in a day? Please explain why?

Student: Uh-huh, right. And then you have quite a bit of homework and you don’t get time to relax.

If you feel you are fine with going to sleep, going to school, eating and going to sleep again, that’s a completely different story, we will address that in our next class but if there are goals that you want to achieve then you need to set your priorities so you have a productive life.

Cutting down on certain unnecessary things will help you to achieve that. At times you are stressed out because of homework and there are times when you need to go for help at tuitions. Some of you go for Qur’an class maybe or take the time out to recite it at home but first things first, set your priorities straight, like some of you said I get up and eat my food. No if you want to be servant of Allah (swt) you get up and do your *salah*. You put the *salah* box in first and then you prioritize what you want to do whether it’s spending time with your family or doing your homework etc. Without setting your priorities straight you will never be able to know what to cut on.

(Slides 37- 39)

Key to simple living is de-cluttering and cutting down on unnecessary commitments.

Simplify your space. That’s extremely important. If your room looks like this even if it’s near to this:

(Slide 39 shown)

(Slide 40 – 42)

Then, you need to do something about it. If you have cleaned out your cupboards, you get rid of all unnecessary things in your life. I mean do you **need** 50 pairs of shoes? The more you stuff your life with stuff, the more complicated your life will become. De-cluttering is a very important part of leading a simple life. If there is an outfit you haven't worn for six months, give it away. There is no need to hold things. We have this tendency of doing that. If your locker in school looks like this then you need to make it look like this. It'll make your life simpler. (slide 42 shown)

(Slide 43)

Abu Umamah (ra) reported: Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "O son of Adam, if you spend the surplus, it will be better for you; and if you retain it, it will be evil for you. You will not be reprimanded for storing what is enough for your need. First of all spend upon those who are your dependents." [Tirmidhi]

Some people are very meticulous and organized but those who are not, de-cluttering is the key. Do it on a regular basis but don't just give away everything. Keep those golden sandals which you wear once a year on a wedding that's fine but if you have like another 30 pairs of shoes then maybe you need to reconsider what to do with that.

(Slide 44)

Cutting down on commitments is extremely important. What happens is that as you go to higher grades, you commit to too many things. You're going for five tuitions and you're going rowing to a boat club and doing your tennis lesson also. That's a possibility and that happens a lot but then you need to prioritize and see that what are the unnecessary commitments that you need to cut down upon.

(Slide 45 – 46)

Maybe you love going out with friends and you're not giving any time to your family. So you need to see what kind of a commitment you are making. Are those commitments keeping you from doing something which is necessary? If yes, then you gotta cut them down otherwise it will cause stress. You need to cut down on your unnecessary commitments and you need to **KISS** it so you are more organized and stress free. Sometimes there are such commitments that you don't want to do but it is something that you should be doing. For e.g. if you look at it from a *deeni* point of view, *salah* is something that is *fardh* on us all whether you like it or not. Sort yourself out like that, make sure you've got the five slots for your *salah* during your day and night. Simple as that and then work around it.

(Slide 47)

Simple living is not about living in poverty or self-inflicted deprivation; it is about living an examined life. One where you have to determine what is important for you or what is enough for you and that will be different for everyone.

And *Alhamdulillah* if we look at the life of the Prophet (pbuh) it is a perfect example of simple living. There's no emotional clutter, he wasn't hyper in any way, his belongings were very few and he had time to do something worthwhile.

(Slide 48)

Simplicity is making the journey of life with just enough baggage rather than hoarding things for yourself. When I say baggage I don't mean physically things only, it could be a lot of emotional baggage that we may carry.

Insha'Allah think about this principle: 'Keep It Simple Stupid' in whatever situation you are dealing with whether it is an argument or school assignment, for e.g. do you need to have 5000 friends on Facebook? I mean de-clutter yourself in every department. Do you need to post a picture every day or update your status every five minutes?

Think about it. That is also included in de-cluttering. If you think that you are sorted out for stuff, and then look in other areas of your life, where else can you de-clutter.

Insha'Allah when we start de-cluttering our lives in all different areas then we will have time to do something worthwhile. Simple living means worthwhile living.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillah Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*