

Teacher: **MODULE 2**

Class Title: Gender Relations – Part 2 (2nd part of a 3 lesson series)

Aim of Lesson: To learn interaction etiquettes with classmates & teachers

Category: Interpersonal Relations

Class Format: Power point presentation with narration & activity.

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

(Ta'awwuz) A'oodhubillahi 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)

Slide 1:

Teacher: Do you all remember what we were talking about last week?

Student: Yes, we were talking about gender relations.

Teacher: Yes, that's right.

Student: *Mehrams* and non-*mehrams*.

Teacher: Yes, we were also talking about *mehrams* and non-*mehrams*. Who remembers what else we were talking about?

Student: How to deal with the category of significant others.

Teacher: How to deal with the category of significant others, exactly. *InshaAllah*, let's just continue from where we had left off.

We need to have some sort of rules and regulations, or some sort of limit set for interactions with those of the opposite sex—those who don't fall into the category of our *mehram*.

We need to define how we are going to be with these people who we call our class mates and friends. For those of you who actually go to an all girls' school right now, you'll need to understand this too because as soon as you get to your A-levels and/or beyond, you'll be having male class mates.

Slide 2 &3

Let's do a little exercise. I'm going to present you with a hypothetical situation. I want you to give me either thumbs up, or thumbs down, or in-between for any situation. Look at my hand please: thumbs up, thumbs down or in-between. I want to see everyone's thumbs, ok? Let's get started.

Firstly, let's examine platonic friendships with class mates. Thumbs up or thumbs down? I want to see everyone's thumbs, please.

Student: What does platonic mean?

Teacher: A platonic relationship is supposedly a friendship between a girl and a guy in which there's no physical attraction whatsoever; it's just that he's my buddy and I'm his. It's just like a relationship you would have with a girlfriend. I want to see everyone's thumbs, please. Up? Down? In-between? Keep your hands up. Everybody who has in-between raise your hands up, and the rest of you keep them down. Now, I want you all to explain why you think you can have a platonic relationship with a guy? I need to know the answer.

Student: Maybe they understand us better.

Teacher: Better than whom?

Student: Better than our girlfriends.

Teacher: Do you really think so? Ok. How about you, why did you say in between?

Student: Because I'm just friends with this guy.

Teacher: Just like you're with your girlfriends?

Student: Yes. He knows I'm just a friend and I know he's just a friend.

Teacher: So if the guy knows he's just your friend and you know he's just your friend, then it's absolutely normal and ok. It's a truly platonic relationship that you have. That's what you're saying. Why do you think having a platonic relationship with class mates is in between somewhere though? Why didn't you just give it thumbs up, if you think it's perfectly ok?

Student: It's ok to be nice to guys.

Teacher: No, I'm not talking about being nice. Polite and casual, without being rude—these are acceptable. No, I'm talking about being close friends, like with your girlfriends. You know, one in which you share everything, giggle, laugh and even cry together; do things together all the time so that you seem inseparable.

Student: I guess, maybe it's possible with a guy.

Teacher: You think so? Can we have a true friendship which is very close with a guy? I'm not talking about merely being nice, friendly or polite, as I've just made clear. Are there any close friends sitting together here?

Student: Us two.

Teacher: “Us two.” You two are really close, a pair, right? Similarly, if a guy and girl can say “us two” in a much the same way, without any physical attraction not even the consciousness that he or she is of the opposite sex, then that’s a platonic friendship. Knowing this, I want you all to honestly answer if a guy and girl can be so close without feeling anything physical in between, even though they’re physically and emotionally close to one another all the time? Possible? Not possible is it? Come on, be honest with yourselves. Therefore, a platonic relationship between classmates is absolutely thumbs down, guys! I’m glad we talked about this. Remember, they’re not even our relatives, besides not being our *mehram*. And remember Ron and Hermione from Harry Potter!

Slide 4:

Next, How about doing projects together? I want to see all of your thumbs—up, down, or in-between.

Student: I’m not sure.

Teacher: Who’s got thumbs down? Keep your thumbs down. Why? Why shouldn’t you be doing projects with a boy?

Student: What if you don’t have a choice?

Teacher: Hmm, good question. What if you don’t have a choice? Your teacher assigns you as part of a group with boys. Then what? Some of you gave me an in-between. Who were the maybes? Raise your hands.

Ok. Yes, it could be an in-between situation. In such a case, it’s not completely ok to be chummy and at ease, as you would be with girls. In fact, there are certain rules that should be followed. As we know, thumbs up means ‘it’s perfectly acceptable’; thumbs down means ‘no way’. But when you have this kind of unavoidable situation, it means you have certain rules you should be following. That’s what it means.

Slide 5:

For instance, work only in the group; don’t work alone. Avoid going to a guy’s house; avoid asking him to come to your house. Stick to the topic you’re dealing with. If you’re doing a physics project, then stick to discussing the project alone; no irrelevant topics need to be talked about. Remember, you just need to be polite and casual, not overly friendly. If you communicate through email, then again, only exchange mail which is relevant to the project, and so on.

In fact, before you’re assigned to groups, speak to your teacher and request to have a girls’ only group. I know that’s possible because my daughters go to a coed school where they’ve requested to be part of an all girls’ group. In fact, there hasn’t been any time that that they haven’t had an all girls’ group. Teachers are usually cooperative, *Alhamdulillah*.

Alhamdulillah, there's no problem with such interactions as long as we know where we stand, and how we should behave, and what kind of attitude we should have while dealing with them.

So with regards to doing projects together, there may be times when you could request your teacher to be put you in an all girls' group. By the way, that's a very doable thing, as long as you're not all squeamish and giggly about making this request, thinking it's not the done thing, or whatever. Actually, you should confidently approach your teacher and say "Ma'am..." or "Sir, I would be more comfortable in an all girls' group. Often times, we're reluctant to say something as we're afraid of what other people might think about us. You may be afraid other people might think that "Oh God, she probably goes to Perceptions; that's why she's making such a silly request!" This may be why you're reluctant to make such a request. But, practically speaking, if you do that, it will save you from a lot of tricky situations, *inshaAllah*.

Let's assume, however, that's not possible (for whatever reason) and you have to work in a coed group. At that point, you have to be very clear about the limitations or parameters that you need to work within: work in school only; there's no need to go to each others' houses; distribute your work in school; communicate as much as is required to complete the project, and strictly about the project; and finally, if you need to communicate outside of school, then do so by email only. Being able to communicate electronically is a real plus, these days. We can misuse it, as we're all aware of, but if used for the right purpose, it allows us to be in touch with people without actually physically meeting them. Isn't it? In this way, school work and projects can be done together with non-*mehram* boys, without any awkward or inappropriate interactions.

However, it's very important to stick to the topic. You absolutely have to stick to the topic! If it's a Physics project, just stick to Physics. Don't talk about, "Oh have you heard, Cinnabon has opened now?" You know, keep it to the topic. There's no need to become chatty and cross that boundary of talking about the project, so that you end up talking about everything else other than the project! You don't want to end up talking about the project for half the time—or even less, and something else the rest of the time. Remember, one thing leads to another; I'm sure you're all bright enough to understand what I mean.

Slide 6:

Moving on to the next category, let's discuss 'helping out'. I need to see everybody's thumbs, either thumbs up, thumbs down, or in-between. Come on, quickly. Okay, those of you who have your thumbs up, keep your hands up, the other ones put your hands down. Hmm... one, two, three, four, five, six, seven; only seven thumbs up! What is the matter with the rest of you? Why do you think it's thumbs down? Or is it somewhere in-between? Tell me why you think the way you do. Yes, you?

Student: It's thumbs up because it's ok to help a guy out. We just have to be careful how we do it.

Teacher: Yes, good, it's most certainly thumbs up. Helping out is definitely important and rewarding – no matter who we are helping.

For example, a boy in your class asks you to lend him your notes for a lesson he missed, “Can I share your notes?” It’s ok to give him the notes to copy and then give back to you, when he’s done. But if he says, “Bring your copy here and sit with me while I copy, please.” Or, “lets meet for coffee where I can copy the notes” Well, there’s a difference in scenarios here.

Helping out, whoever that may be, is always thumbs up, period. I understand where those who gave thumbs down are coming from. If you have the wrong attitude towards the guy, then it’s definitely thumbs down. “Oh, so you need my notes? That’s exactly what I was waiting for!” So helping out isn’t good in that kind of situation, for sure, where you’re just looking for an opportunity to get chummier with a classmate, if you know what I mean.

Helping out others-- whether it’s a boy or a girl, in your school or in your class, if they need help with their work or need notes, or whatever, is a commendable act to do. So when some guy approaches you for some help, then go ahead and help out, **within limits** however.

Slide 7:

Hanging out? I need to see everybody’s hands. Okay. All of you who haven’t given thumbs down keep your hands up. All the thumbs down, put your hands down. And you, you’re the only one who’s in between.

Tell me why you think hanging out with guys is something which is not thumbs down but it’s somewhere in between? What kind of guidelines do you think we need to have for that?

Student: You know, if you’re all covered up and talking to them, as you’re friends with them.

Teacher: Ahh...the deception of the *hijab*! So if you’re all covered up, then it’s okay to be friends with boys? How many of you think that? Raise your hands.

No, I’m serious. Please don’t feel bad about your position; if that’s what you feel, then that’s what you feel. This is why we’re here-- to discuss these things. Nobody is sitting in judgment of anybody here. Is that what you very seriously feel, that it all depends on how we look, how we dress, right? So if I’m all covered, then it is perfectly all right if I sort of go to Gloria Jeans and have a coffee with whomever, right?

Students: No, not like that.

Teacher: Not like that? Then hanging out how?

Student: By staying within your limits. You talk about certain things, but not everything. Meanwhile, you’re all covered up and...

Teacher: Let’s be on the same page. What does ‘hanging out’ exactly mean to you?

Student: That you talk about general things.

Teacher: When you hang out with friends, what does that mean?

Student: Spending time with them?

Teacher: Exactly! When you're hanging out with somebody, it's your casual, let-your-hair-down time. Isn't it? We're not "hanging out" here by the way, right now. What we're doing right now is not hanging out, are we? You're here for a specific purpose; you're here, *InshaAllah*, to learn something, to exchange ideas and talk about your reservations. This is why you're here. Ok? So the thing is, when you hang out—whether you hang out with your friends or with your family or whomever, that basically means that you're really chill. You don't have any reservations in your speech, actions or attitudes; you sort of, you know, talk about everything other than work. You could of course have meaningful discussions, as well; I'm not saying that it's all frivolous. Generally though, it's a very relaxed and casual interaction. What did you want to say sweetie?

Student: I feel that in a world where both genders are always intermingling, you know, interacting a lot, it's very hard to develop a shell around yourself which only allows girls to talk to boys for some specific purpose.

Teacher: Absolutely. She's got it. Can you say that one more time, please?

Student: So in a world where the two genders are very close and all, it's very hard to form a shell around yourself which doesn't allow boys to interact with you.

Teacher: Yes, practically speaking, it's very difficult to just say, "*Assalamualaikum*, how are you?" And that's about it. I'll give you a very simple example. I'm old enough to be your mother, for sure, as my own daughter is older than you guys. So once, I was invited to take Islamic classes in a co-educational school, which I readily accepted as there's actually nothing wrong when a woman is taking a mixed class. Now, these were A-Level students; so they were older. Thus, the guys were all *baaligh*. As a result, I was always completely covered throughout the classes. Was I old enough to be their mother? Yes, absolutely. But were they my *mehram*?

Students: No.

Teacher: No, they were not. I didn't know any of them. The boys were eighteen or nineteen years old. Was there any chance of us having some kind of a sinister relationship, *nauzubillah*? No! I'm old enough to be their mom; and they knew that, too. Despite the age difference, I still don't fall into the *mehram* category, even if I'm completely covered. As a result, I took the classes all covered up, even my face. In fact, I even made sure I didn't wear my rings when I went to take their class - although I feel absolutely naked without my jewelry. And I never wore an *abaya* with butterflies on it, only a plain, simple *abaya*. I was careful to cover up all my *zeenat*. But my own attitude is such (and we all know what our own attitudes are like) that when I speak, I don't even realize that I'm calling someone "*jaani*" or "sweetheart" or being way too casual. I remember when I first started covering, I went to a clothes shop and the poor seller almost fainted! Here was a woman in a black *burqa* (outer covering) saying "*Chanda, zara wo kapra tou dikhana.*" (Sweetie, please show me that cloth). Do you understand what I'm saying?

After taking some classes at this school, I myself declined. Why? Because I was very seriously compromising my *deen*!

When I come and sit and talk to you guys, this is how I speak. This is how I talk, and it's perfectly fine with you, because you're all girls. Can you imagine if boys were sitting here as well, it would be a serious *fitnah* for me! Forget about everybody else! You understand where I'm coming from? It's not just the covering that's the issue; it's very easy to cover up. People ask me about that all the time. I'm sure people ask you guys as well, if you wear the *hijab*. Actually, putting on a piece of cloth is the easiest thing. Donning a *hijab* over our attitude, that's the real challenge! That's the real challenge, particularly, because we're so integrated these days, you know, we're interacting with *non-mehram* guys at most times of the day.

In fact, cultural norms have changed so much in the last few decades that men and women, girls and boys, are interacting much more and much more freely; at a very personal level. Interacting at an impersonal level has become the more difficult thing to do! As a result, it's become difficult to keep within the permissible boundaries.

Are you following? In other words, "hanging out" is absolutely thumbs down as it's very difficult to know just when and where to draw the line. You don't know where to draw the line; it's extremely difficult. I've just given you my own example; for me, a completely grown woman, it's very difficult to draw a line; very, very hard, indeed. So clearly then, hanging out is an absolute no-no!

Slide 8:

Next scenario: sitting with boys in class. Quickly, quickly, I need to see everybody's hands please—thumbs up or thumbs down. Those who haven't given thumbs up keep your hands up; everybody else put them down. Who has not given thumbs up? Why not?

Student: Well, if you have to sit right next to boys, or in between boys.

Teacher: We're talking about sitting in the same class with boys in a co-ed school. You go to a co-educational school, don't you? So then, in a co-educational school, how can it be anything but okay to sit in a class with boys? Where else are you supposed to sit? Will you go and sit outside?

Student: No, I'm saying if you have to sit amongst the boys...

Teacher: The reason I had put it as thumbs up, basically, is because as one is attending a co-ed institution, you have to sit in a class with boys; that's just how the set up is. You were saying, sweetie?

Student: There are certain teachers who assign places for you to sit and you can't change your place, either. What if she makes you sit next to boys?

Teacher: Well, in such a case, you can request a teacher a seat change and explain why. Most should understand. However, if one refuses, then it's ok; our *deen* is not unrealistic, is it? Our *deen* is for people who live in the real world. It's not for people living in a utopia. Please let's understand that very clearly. Even in the time of *Rasoolullah (SAW)*, Medina was not a utopia. It was full of real people. We're also real people. As such, all the teachings of our *deen* apply to us, in whatever situation, wherever we may live.

As I said earlier, in an ideal situation it would be best for boys to go to boys' school and for girls to go to a girls' school. However, we live in the real world where not everyone can do this. So what should you do in a compromising situation? As we discussed with group project work, you have to have certain parameters which will limit your interaction with the boys in your classes.

How should you behave?

Student: Mind our own business.

Teacher: Yes, besides not being cute and flirtatious, but rather talking to the point and about school and whatever concerns it, strictly. You shouldn't pass notes with guys either, nor even amongst girls, in fact. While sitting in class, you should not be talking to each other anyway, but rather listening to the teacher, participating in group discussions, or doing your work.

So yeah, even if your teacher has asked you to sit right next to a boy, or in between boys, then your attitude should be as is required in a class: focused on the class and not distracted nor wandering. Your concentration and focus should be on what is going on in class, rather than what is going on around you.

Student: Sometimes, if you may end up sitting close enough so that to a boy your elbows keep on touching. It gets annoying.

Teacher: Oh, then in such a situation, you really need to talk to the teacher, to request your own space, "I don't want anybody violating the space around me". *InshaAllah* in the next session, that's exactly what I want to talk about. Next week, we're going to talk about our personal space. It's extremely important. Sometimes we don't guard our personal space well enough. We should, in fact, never be in a situation where our personal space is violated, whether by a man or a woman. Your personal space is your personal space. We'll come to that next week, though, *Insha Allah*.

Slide 9:

Our next scenario: socializing outside of school, for whatever reason. Is this on? If so, then why?

Student: Socializing outside of school is sometimes necessary, such as if you have some work to do...

Teacher: Socializing does not include meeting for work related reasons. That's why we've talked about doing projects together with boys. As for meeting outside of school, what possible

work is there in socializing? Socializing is basically hanging out. Do you understand? So now tell me why it's thumbs up to socialize outside of school?

Student: Well, you know that most people who hang out they do it in a huge group—with boys and girls. Besides, if you're going out with two girlfriends and they bring a guy along, you can't tell him to get lost, that you can't hang out with them, can you?

Teacher: No, but why get into such a situation in the first place. Let's cut the long story short, this is definitely thumbs down! Any kind of social interaction, which is other than work-related, other than necessity related, is totally thumbs down, when it comes to non-*mehrams*, and classmates are just that, right? The cousin situation is a bit different. For instance, if your whole family is going out, if all the cousins—boys and girls are going out for ice cream, for example, then that's a different story altogether. That sort of socializing would be permissible, but definitely with certain rules and regulations intact. However definitely not with your classmates, as you have no God given ties which bind you together, which require you to interact.

Student: Cousins are non-*mehrams*, too, though.

Teacher: Absolutely. But cousins are also family.

Student: You can't ignore family.

Teacher: Exactly! This is exactly the conclusion we drew earlier: cousins are in a different category from other *non-mehram*. Why is that, now? What did *Rasoolullah (SAW)* say? He emphasized that we should never cut off family ties, right? Even still, we need to be very careful how we deal with cousins; that we don't cross any line or limits, agreed? We need to be very careful about that.

Slide 10:

Next, joking around. Come on...quickly, quickly. I want to spell out all possible scenarios for you guys so that nothing is left unturned, *Insha Allah*. All thumbs down. Yes, good, absolutely thumbs down.

Slide 11:

How about being polite? Yes, absolutely thumbs up! If a guy in your school comes up to you and say, "Hi", how will you respond?

Students: Say, "Hi" back.

Teacher: No, "*Assalamualaikum*" that's what you're going to say! "Peace be upon you." That's the *du'a* you're going to give him. Isn't that a better reply? So yes, being polite is absolutely fine, just so long as we don't go beyond that. There's no issue, here.

Slide 12:

Playing sports and games together? Thumbs down! Thumbs down! How many events of sports are there with boys and girls playing together, anyway?

Student: We have sports' days and PE classes together in co-ed schools.

Teacher: Even if you have sports' days and PE classes together, you still participate separately. Even in co-ed schools, the boys' events are separate from the girls' events, always. There is no sport, anywhere in the world, in which men and women compete against one another; they have separate competitions, always.

Just that fact tells us that when people say that there's no difference at all between boys and girls, they're grossly mistaken. If it were true, then why are they playing sports separately? Why aren't they in competitions together? Except in tennis, except for mixed doubles, all other sporting events are either just for women or just for men. Even in mixed doubles in tennis, there is a couple against another couple, and not two women against two men, as that would be lopsided. Isn't that true? Isn't it?

Student: But in a co-ed school, if you're playing a game in a mixed team, let's say of net ball, so you're playing together but you're not actually physically touching each other...

Teacher: You see, then that is a similar situation to being assigned to do projects with boys. If your teacher has instructed you to do so, then go and talk to him or her and explain why you'd rather be in an all girls' team or, maybe, not play at all.

Student: We sometimes have to play together but we don't touch physically at all while playing with them.

Teacher: Even if you don't touch them physically, it's still **not** okay. You just have to opt out of playing; as simple as that. You may not like it, but that's that.

I think you guys know exactly what we're talking about here. If you have to do something, because of school, you should voice your beliefs and opinions—something that we're scared of doing most of the times. You just have to go up to your teacher and explain why you can't participate. Most times, people are very reasonable you know; if you don't want to do certain things, they're not going to force you to do them. No one can force you to do anything. But in case you feel a bit of friction, or that it's too big a problem for you to handle on your own, that you're not ready to face the music at that point on your own, then perhaps you need to get your parents involved. They could write a note to explain the situation, or go to school and speak to someone about it.

Slide 13:

Moving on, how about dating? Nobody has got a boyfriend in this class, has she?

Students: No.

Teacher: Okay. Let me rephrase it. Do any of you have a boyfriend?

Students: No.

Student: We have friends that are boys, but not boyfriends in the romantic way.

Teacher: Well, I'm talking about boyfriends in a romantic way. I have a boyfriend!

Student: That's your husband.

Teacher: Yes, my husband is my boyfriend. That's true. So... does anybody have a boyfriend?

Students: No.

Teacher: No? Does anyone have intentions of having one?

Students: No

Teacher: Why not?

Students: It's *haram*.

Teacher: Why not? This is a very serious question. Why not?

Student: Because boys are smelly.

Student: Because boys are obnoxious.

Teacher: Hang on, hang on one second. Listen guys, when we're talking about not having relationships with the opposite sex, having boundaries and keeping a distance, that doesn't mean that there is something wrong with them, *nauzubillah*. It's not because they're a stinky, smelly, obnoxious kind of species! That is simply blind prejudice. Truly, it is.

I think boys and men are wonderful people; they truly are wonderful. You know, they are a very important part of our lives—our fathers, brothers, sons, husbands and so on. They're amazing people and it's great fun to hang out with them. In order to protect ourselves and society at large, what our *deen* does is put checks and balances on our behavior, on how we interact with the opposite sex. I want to know from you all why you shouldn't have boyfriends.

Student: Aside from an Islamic view, it's plain senseless to have one. It doesn't lead you anywhere. It's not like if you date someone when you're fourteen you're going to get married to them when you're twenty-two. There's no guarantee.

Teacher: Exactly! If you date somebody when you're fourteen, that doesn't mean that something is going to come out of that relationship.

Student: Also, after you've gone through a relationship with one person you eventually get over him and move on to another person...

Teacher: So a girl's devouring all these boys up! She goes through one, and then goes through another and then go through yet another!!

Student: I'm just saying that sometimes this happens...it happens that some girls do this.

Teacher: So how do you know this?! I want to know how. How old are you, by the way?

Student: I'm twelve.

Teacher: You're twelve? So then, how do you know this?

Student: I watch TV shows.

Teacher: You watch "Friends".

Student: No, I don't watch that show.

Teacher: You don't watch "Friends"? What happens on that show? Everybody is going out with everybody, and everybody is sleeping with everybody, everybody is doing whatever with everybody. That's what happens, right? Why? Why? No, this is something extremely serious! Why? I want you all to understand this well.

Student: Because it's a TV show?

Teacher: No, not just because it's a TV show. It's because it's a myth to even think that friendships between guys and girls are something simply platonic. Friendship between boys and girls can never ever be platonic; we're just not made to have them! There's no such thing as he's my friend, he's just my pal so it's not like having a boyfriend. There just isn't! That's the reason why it's important for us to take nothing else from these terrible, terrible shows (which we should not be watching in the first place) except this obvious truth.

The plots in this show try to convey that everybody has this lovely-'dovey' friendship; "he's just my friend" or "she's just my friend"...and then what happens?! They all start getting involved with each other! Friendships are no longer simple friendships! Now, this is exactly the kind of thing that happens in real life, by the way. This is what ends up happening in real life, also. As a result, we have to realize that *Allah (SWT)* has made girls and boys to interact with each other in a very particular manner, within different parameters for different relationships. He's made specific relationships with specific norms of behaviour. The relationships between boys and girls are not just 'free-for-all' situations.

So that's the situation with having boyfriends. Yes, we all know it's forbidden to have them in the romantic way. Even in the platonic way - definitely thumbs down. Firstly, it's very difficult to have such a friendship within boundaries. Secondly, the concept that we've been given with regards to relationships with the opposite sex, through the media because that's what we watch all the time, has really warped our expectations of such relationships in an ugly kind of a way. As a result, we think that it is all fun and 'hunky-dory' and whatever; we don't even stop to consider what the consequences of having such relationships actually can be. It's almost considered normal to have boyfriends, and abnormal if one doesn't!

Student: There's no commitment in just dating, so it's really a waste of time.

Teacher: There could be commitment too. You could be assuring him or he could be assuring you that we'll go to college together, and then we'll get married. But will you really do that, particularly when the relationship is formed at a very young age, at a very immature age? Will your feelings remain the same after both you and he have changed over the years and matured? It's highly unlikely that it's going to happen.

The thing is – commitment or no commitment, Allah (swt) has prohibited romantic involvement with the opposite sex outside of marriage – and that's it.

Student: The best advice I got from a cousin was that in all cultures the girl is the one who gets in trouble, for whatever actions she takes; the guy, he gets in trouble initially, but he gets away with it really quick.

Teacher: In worldly terms, yes, you're right. Generally speaking, that is what happens. I'm sure you girls are smart enough, and have been around long enough, to know what usually ends up happening. I'm sure you all know of people, or at least have heard of them, who have been through relationships and have suffered very badly because of them. Haven't you? Sometimes it happens that a girl may be having a ball of a time and might not suffer at all, at least not in worldly terms. That in itself is a greater test from Allah (SWT). That is actually a test for her from Allah (SWT), though she may not even realize it. So, we should always remember to have self-respect and dignity; we should know our true worth.

As it is, guys don't truly appreciate a girl who's very easily available. She may seem popular and liked by the guys up front, but in reality, they don't have much regard for such girls, at all. I don't know if you're aware of that, but that is the plain truth. An easy sort of girl, one who would go out with anybody and is available whenever for whatever, is really not appreciated. She's really not appreciated; in fact, quite sadly, she's used by the boys.

You girls are smart and clever enough not to fall for a guy who would be just dying to go out with you. You know, you have to look for greater, deeper and more meaningful values in a person; for a better person than that. Right? Even amongst girlfriends, if somebody's meeting you because of some material motive, for example because your parents have a lot of money, and so you would be taking them out to all these fancy places to eat all the time, or other such meaningless X, Y or Z reasons, then maybe you should reconsider who you're hanging out with.

Slide 14:

Let's look at the next issue: sending emails or SMS, being friends on Facebook or tweeting—all things electronic (because you're not actually physically there with the guy) are these okay? I want to see everybody's hands please.

Student: If we have some rules.

Teacher: Yes, we need to have some rules; for sure. How many of you are on Facebook for *da'wah* purpose? None...got you! Well I'm on Facebook for *da'wah* purpose. I've got lots of people on my friends' lists that aren't girls. However, the reason they're on my friends' list is because the predominant reason why I Facebook is for *da'wah*. That's it.

Student: You deserve applause.

Teacher: No I don't. There are many people that I know who are like that. I know many people who use Facebook just for that purpose; many people, in fact.

Student: No fun then? No games?

Teacher: No. No, they're a waste of time. We'll talk about Facebook some other day. But all I'm saying is that if you have guys are on Facebook for *da'wah* or some professional/academic reason, then that's fine (which is highly unlikely, at this time). If there's any other reason, for instance just for socializing, then you shouldn't be having that. If you have to communicate with your classmates for projects, for example, or for some other work, then that's a different story altogether. Those sorts of communications don't require elaborate emails or sending personal pictures, right? There's no need for such exchanges, is there? Is there any need for that? Posting pictures of your every minute of the day, of what's happening in your life, is plain senseless and a waste of time. Updating your status every...

Student: Two minutes.

Teacher: Two minutes, yes, or even every two hours, is a complete waste of time! Why does everyone all over the world need to know what you're up to, all of the time?! How many of you have a Facebook account, by the way? You don't have a Facebook account? *Alhumdulillah*. Why is it that you don't have a Facebook account?

Student: My parents don't allow it.

Teacher: Oh, I love your parents already. Why don't you have one?

Student: I use my mom's but I don't really have time for it.

Teacher: Right. Why don't you have it?

Student: I don't really like Facebook...

Teacher: You're too young to have a Facebook account, anyway. Do you all know what the legal limit of having a Facebook account is?

Students: Thirteen.

Teacher: Thirteen? Are you sure?

Students: It's thirteen, yes.

Teacher: So you're sure it's thirteen, then?

Students: Well you can use Facebook when you're thirteen, but the legal age is actually 18.

Teacher: I'm not one hundred percent sure; I'll find out today, *InshaAllah*, and then tell you. I thought it was more than thirteen, actually. So whoever aren't at least 13, should not be on Facebook anyway as that's illegal. Did you all know that? You need to have very particular checks and balances on yourself when you're on Facebook, as well. This is extremely important. You see, electronic communication can be deceptive. We feel that since we're not face to face with anybody, we have an open playing field to write whatever. How many of you post pictures on Facebook? Raise your hands, please. You don't post pictures on Facebook? How many of you have an account and don't post pictures?

Student: I stopped using it.

Teacher: You stopped using it?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Why?

Student: I got annoyed one day, suddenly.

Teacher: How many of you use Facebook every day? Once a week? How often do you use Facebook, then—those of you who didn't raise their hands?

Student: Two or three days a week. Not every day.

Teacher: For what do you use it, two or three days a week? What do you do on Facebook?

Student: Um, update my status.

Teacher: So what status do you write?

Student: I check my messages, do chatting.

Teacher: Do you guys chat on Facebook?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: How many of you Skype? Who do you Skype with?

Student: My sister, cousins, friends, family.

Teacher: Who Skypes with friends? Are these friends who are here in Karachi or abroad?

Students: Both.

Teacher: How many of you have got a BlackBerry? No one? How many of you are online all the time or most of the times of the day? Or have access to being online most times of the day? You know, you can do whatever you want online without anybody finding out about it, ever. Do you all know that? Now, all I'm trying to say is that being involved in any kind of activity that you don't want other people to find out about, it's not that hard to do in cyber space. You guys probably know this better than I do. It's not that hard to do, really, truly.

But what's important for us to understand is whether it's really worth it? Is it really worth hiding things from others, let's say one's parents, and doing things secretly on cyber space? We all know that the One who is watching us all the time, we can't ever dupe Him, at any time of the day or night, never ever. So that is one thing you need to think about. So when you're online, you need to be careful just who you're interacting with, and how you're interacting with them. What you're posting and what you're writing says a lot about you, right? It clearly says a lot about you, so you don't need to go for temporary cheap thrills online, right? That's exactly what it is: temporary cheap thrills. That's all there's to it. By the way, what we post online will stay online for years. Think about it, we certainly don't want our cheap thrills to come back to haunt us later on, do we?

Student: Can we chat with guys on it?

Slide 15&16

Teacher: Kill me please, somebody! I've been talking for the past 15 minutes about the pitfalls of chatting online and you're asking me, "So, can we chat with guys?!" No you cannot chat with guys if it's for socializing! No you can't! Just as you can't meet them personally, then you can't chat with them online either, as it would be just like meeting without physically being present together.

Student: Can we chat with guys that we know? We can chat with our classmates and all, can't we?

Teacher: Just as you're not supposed to have social interactions in person with your classmates, a social interaction online is also a no-no. Is that clear enough?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: Is that clear now? Or is there somebody who doesn't understand this still?

Student: No.

Teacher: Any social interaction—hanging out in person or in cyberspace, it amounts to the same thing. Is that clear now?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah*. Again, chatting is absolutely not on. How about phone calls? Again, if you need to call for some specific non-social reason, if you need to call a classmate for a specific work related reason, then you can do that; but that's it. Then hang up.

Slide 17,18, 19:

Moving on, how about class photographs? Yes, you will need to do take part in those. In this class photograph people are sitting on top of each other, whereas in this official class photograph we can see the distance between this girl and the guys. So class photographs in which one isn't sitting on top of anybody are, of course, ok.

Slide 20, 21 & 22:

Now I want us to define our attitude with certain people. Let's begin with your male classmates. How should your attitude towards them be?

Student: Serious?

Teacher: Yes. It should be purely formal—distant, polite, and without any nonsense whatsoever. All your interactions should be based on necessity, so that if it isn't necessary to interact then don't bother doing so, at all. The rule's simple: if it isn't necessary to interact, then don't. This clearly means you shouldn't just dig for excuses to interact. Are we agreed? How about our attitude with teachers? You must have male teachers as well. Again, this is a very formal relationship, so you maintain your distance, while still being polite and cordial. You should have utmost respect for the men, and be humbly obedient. Your interactions should be limited to the subject at hand, or matters relating to school strictly.

By the way, this attitude includes that towards a *maulvi sahib*, as well. If you happen to have a *maulvi sahib* who teaches you the Qur'an, behave with him with utmost respect and obedience. A lot of times, we don't even consider somebody who comes to teach us the Qur'an to be in a category of a serious teacher. We treat them that badly. So we need to be careful about being kind, polite, obedient and respectful.

Student: How should we react to a male teacher who reacts badly to us?

Student: Yeah. If he shouts and scolds, how should we react?

Teacher: You should go and complain to the concerned authorities. If it still doesn't get better, then tell your parents. Get your parents involved. Perhaps you feel that it's difficult for you to talk to the teacher or the principal. In such a case, just tell your parents to go and talk to them instead. It's as simple as that. This is the best way of going about it.

If you have a complaint against anybody, just talking about it amongst yourselves, or complaining about it to your friends or someone else, is not going to help you any. The best action to take, and particularly if that complaint is related to an adult, or even if it's related to somebody who's your own age, is to talk to someone who's in authority, someone who can actually do something about it. At that point, it's best that you get your parents involved.

We will *InshaAllah* continue next week as we're completely out of time. I don't know how we're going to finish off! but *InshaAllah* we'll try to. If you have any questions which you're concerned about, please have them ready so that we can address them, and then we'll move on quickly *InshaAllah*.

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

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