**MODULE 2**

**Class Title**: Dangerous Road Blocks – Part 2

**Aim of the lesson**: learning how to overcome certain mental blocks that halt personal development

**Category**: Personal Development

**Lesson Format**: Power point presentation with discussion

(Note to teacher: some slides in the power point presentation are hidden, as they were not used for this session. They have not been deleted as you may want to use them for your class.

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)

Slide 1:

Okay, do any of you remember what we were doing last week? It’s right on the slide over there. Do you remember what exactly we were talking about? Who’s going to tell me? Quickly!

Student: Road blocks?

Teacher: Yes, we were talking about road blocks. We were talking about the three most significant and destructive road blocks, especially for preteens and teenagers. What were these road blocks that we talked about last week. The first one?

Student: Negative labels.

Teacher: Yes, negative labels. What do negative labels mean? How do they become a road block? Can anyone explain how they make you behave, negative labeling? What does it mean and how does it become a road block? Yes, you?

Student: When someone says something negative about you and you start believing it.

Teacher: Ok, if someone says something negative about you and you start believing it then that becomes a road block. How does it become a road block? What does this mean?

Student: It means it affects how we think about ourselves.

Teacher: It affects the way you think about yourself, and what approach you have in life. Okay. Good. What is the second road block that we talked about?

Student: The “It’s all over syndrome’.

Teacher: The “It’s all over syndrome”. What does it mean? How does it become a road block? Yes, what does it mean?

Student: You just give up.

Teacher: So you go into a destructive mode wherein you just undo all the efforts that you’ve already made; you just give up. You give up as you feel there’s no use going on. You feel like you can no longer continue. Okay you get into this destructive mode, and that stops you from making any more effort in a challenging situation. What’s the third road block that we talked about last week? Yes?

Student: “Climbing the wrong wall.”

Teacher: Yes, “Climbing the wrong wall”. What does it mean? Who’s going to explain? What does it mean, “Climbing the wrong wall”?

Student: Your intentions are good, but you don’t know what you’re doing. You’re following the wrong path, your making an effort which is misdirected.

Teacher: You’re making an effort which is misdirected. You want to achieve something but the direction that you take, or the kind of effort you’re making, is not taking you towards the direction that you want to go towards. You are climbing a wall, but it’s not the right wall. So you are not climbing the right wall. The effort is there, you are climbing and climbing and putting in all your effort, but it doesn’t take you where you want to go. Can somebody give me an example on climbing the wrong wall? Yes?

Student: Like not doing my homework when my mom tells me to, and instead baking a cake.

Teacher: So instead of doing what she has asked you to do, you do make an effort at something worthwhile, only your effort is towards what? Baking a cake? So rather than putting your effort in doing what she wanted you to do and pleasing her, you are making an effort to please your mother but that effort is useless at that moment, as that effort isn’t taking you to the desired result: pleasing mum. Your mum will not be happy because of that cake, if you haven’t done your homework first. Now, going back to negative labeling, who’ll give me a good example of it? Yes?

Student: How about “teacher’s pet”?

Teacher: Is that a negative label, to be called a teacher’s pet? What does teacher’s pet mean, anyway?

Student: To be the teacher’s favorite.

Teacher: So what’s wrong in being the teacher’s favorite? You, at the back?

Student: It’s a way of teasing someone, of annoying her.

Teacher: So what you’re saying is that if someone puts a label on you as the “teacher’s pet”, then you’re not really a fun loving person, but a “nerd” instead? Personally, I feel if you’re the teacher’s favorite then that’s a compliment. It would be a compliment for me, but what you’re implying is that calling somebody a teacher’s pet means that she’s no fun, or she doesn’t have a life, or she’s a very dull person. Now, if the person being labeled this begins believing in what the other person is saying, then she’ll actually become the teacher’s pet, with all the qualities of one? Am I right? How about giving me an example of the “It’s all over syndrome?

Student: How about when you’re doing something, and somebody tells you it’s all wrong, that you’ve made a mistake.

Teacher: What were you doing? What mistake?

Student: You commit one mistake, and you feel your life is all over.

Teacher: What mistake?! Like what?

Student: Like you get bad grades, and your parents get mad at you and they don’t let you do anything you want to do anymore. You then feel it’s the end of the world.

Teacher: So you get bad grades, as a result of which your parents get mad at you and they don’t allow you do anything fun anymore. You then feel this is the end of the world. And then what do you do? How does it become destructive for you, how does it become a road block for you? How does their reaction become a road block for you?

Student: My sister got bad grades, and she decided she’s not going to go to school anymore.

Teacher: Yes, that’s a very good example. She’s saying her sister got bad grades and as a result decided she’s not going to school anymore. Why? Because it’s all over; her efforts weren’t giving results. She probably thought, “I tried and tried, but nothing seems to be working, so it’s better if I just stay home!” That’s a serious serious road block that can happen to anyone of us! Okay, good; we’ve identified all three, very serious road blocks, *alhumdulillah*.

 Our next question is how can we remove these road blocks and get going. That’s the question we‘ll tackle today, inshaAllah. Whenever we find a task to be difficult because of any road block in our life, what should we do? Hmm, what do you need to do? Well, there are certain steps that we need to take. I’m going to talk about a few, very important steps that will help us to overcome these road blocks that we may encounter in our life. It’s not necessary that we might face all three road blocks that we’ve talked about. We may just encounter one of them.

Now, I’m going to give you all ten seconds to identify any road blocks you may be facing yourselves. I’m not going to ask you what your road blocks are. I don’t just want you to identify one or more road blocks from the three we’ve talked about, but anything at all that’s problematic in your life, anything that’s stopping you from doing what you should be doing at your age, anything that’s stopping you from growing in the right direction. Think about that particular road block; think about that problematic area in your life. Ten seconds. I’m not going to ask you what they are. Based on the solutions I’ll give you, you just keep assessing yourself and try to determine what you need to do, in your particular case. Again, nobody’s going to ask you; this is for your own self-assessment. Ten seconds. Think about the road block, or blocks, that you have in your life.

(Teacher counts to 10.) Are we done? Are we all done? Does anyone need more time? You do. You need more time? Can you keep thinking about it? I guess you are the only one. What about the rest of you? You need more time, too? Okay, I’ll give you ten seconds more. (Teacher counts to ten.) Okay, you’re all done? Good!

Slide 2:

Next, how do we tackle the road blocks that we have in our life?

Whenever you find a task difficult because of any road block in your life what do you do?

There are few steps which will help you to do what u want to do in your life.

Slide 3:

The first thing that all of us need to do is think about the costs; we need to count the costs and the benefits of doing something. Whatever problem we may have that prevents us from doing what we really want to do but just can’t, then that problem is a road block. Think about all the costs that you’ll have to undertake if you do that thing, all the effort that you’ll have to make, all the unpleasant things that you have to do while doing that particular thing. Then, think about all the advantages and the benefits that you are going to get if you actually succeed in doing that thing. The costs and benefits must be weighed against each other.

Slide 4:

Ok, moving on. Do you all know what the biggest road block preventing us from doing what we really want to do is? Anyone? Simply, it’s that we just don’t do it! This is the biggest road block for almost everyone. We really want to do something but the biggest obstacle that stops us from doing it is that we don’t do it; we procrastinate, or don’t bother at all. Now let’s just take an example, in order to give you solutions. So rather than asking you all your road blocks, as that’s very personal, I’ll give you a basic example.

Let’s say you want to get really good grades this year, but you feel you just can’t do it. This feeling may be because of negative labeling, it may be because of “It’s all over” syndrome, or because you’re climbing the wrong wall. Or maybe, and more than likely, you’re just not making an effort. Clearly, this is a road block and it’s stopping you from achieving your goal. The first thing to do is to think about what is the cost that I am going to pay for good grades? Then, what is the effort that I need to make in order to achieve those good grades? We all know nothing in this life comes for free, or effortlessly. What will getting good grades require from me? Can you give me examples? Yes?

Slide 5:

Student: How about stopping one’s socializing?

Teacher: Yes, you have to stop socializing as much as you can; keeping it to a minimum. You also have to stop watching TV, surfing the Net, reading novels; these could be the costs. It may require us to study harder and sleep earlier; this could be that little extra effort we need to make. There’s one very important thing that you’ve all missed; best of all, it’s not even a cost. That is, you just have to be more attentive in your classes; it’s just an extra effort.

Student: How about *du’a* as a cost of getting what we want?

Teacher: Well, I wouldn’t call *du’a* a cost, at all. However, making sure to make *du’a* is something that you’ll have to keep reminding yourself to do. You’ll have to make an extra effort by constantly praying to Allah (SWT) that “O Allah I’m putting in the right effort, so please help me out”. So these are all the things that you really need to do if you want to achieve what you want. Next, and more importantly, you need to count the benefits. This is extremely important.

Slide 6:

 What are the things that you will gain if you actually get good grades? Make a list of them. I can assure you, it will be a long list.

Student: Self confidence.

Teacher: Self confidence, yes. In fact, improved self confidence is a great benefit to one’s sense of self worth, too; especially if people have placed negative labels on you. Good grades can give you that confidence to ignore all those negative labels. Yes, what else. Yes.

Student: Parent’s approval and happiness.

Teacher: For sure, pleasing parents. Yes, what else?

Student: Getting admission into good colleges.

Teacher: There’s no other way.

Student: Preparing for a better future?

Teacher: Yes, of course. There’s little chance of a good, successful future without sound knowledge, anymore. What else? Think about what else.

Student: Gaining respect.

Teacher: Yes, you’ll get respect from your parents, school mates, siblings, and friends. They’ll all look up to you if you get good grades.

Student: Making a good impression on others, and thus having a good reputation.

Teacher: Okay, a good impression and reputation with others, what else? How about a relaxed environment at home? Your mum will not be on pins and needles about your homework, or that you’re not studying; she will trust you to know when to study. Even when she catches you watching a TV program, she won’t be overly concerned as she’ll trust in you to know when to study and do your work, and when to relax. In fact, you probably won’t watch until you’ve already taken care to it. So these are some of the benefits of getting good grades.

Slides 7-8:

After you compare all the costs and benefits of a particular goal you really want to achieve, ask yourself, “Am I willing to sacrifice all this for the end I want? Am I willing and ready to make the effort? If the answer is no, if you feel there’s too much of a cost that you need to pay, then you won’t want to make an effort to do it. “I can’t stop socializing! I can’t sleep early! I have juicy books I want to read! I have to watch TV!” If all the former are more important, and it doesn’t matter if you get low grades, then don’t make that extra effort. You have to feel in you heart of heart if you want to or don’t. It’s something that you have to decide for yourself. Your mom or dad can’t decide for you, your friends can’t decide for you. You have to do it yourself. If you feel the cost is just too much, then please don’t do it! Don’t do it! Forget about it.

You don’t have to think about getting good grades because you’re not willing to pay the cost of achieving them. It’s definitely not a good idea to make a commitment to yourself when know you’re going to break it. However, if you feel that the cost that you’ll pay is really worth it, because the benefits that you’re going to get out of it are so amazing, then go ahead and do it. Then there should be nothing that should stop you. This is how counting your costs and benefits will help you to decide if what you desire is something achievable for you. If it’s something that you really really want to go after, then you’ll make an effort for it. No road blocks will be able to stop you from achieving your goal.

Slides 9-11:

Now, let’s look at another example. The example that we’re going to look at now is something which is very, very important to all of us. There’s one goal that all of us would like to achieve, and what’s that? What’s the one common goal that all of us, as Muslims, would like to achieve?

Student: Getting into *Jannah*.

Teacher: *Jannah,* *Jannah,* yes. Without a doubt, this is one goal that’s common between all of us, isn’t it? All of us really want to get to Jannah, and all of us know that there is a significant cost that we have to pay to get there. All of us know that. And the cost sometimes seems so big that it stops us from doing the things that we should be doing to end up there. We all know that Jannah is not cheap; its expensive. We really have to work for it.

Now, let’s just count our costs for achieving *Jannah*. Let’s just quickly do it. Let’s identify ten costs, at least. It could be any random cost that comes to your mind. Let’s just identify them; those that you really think are a cost.

Student: How about having to reduce my time for socializing with friends, so that I can pray?

Teacher: Yes, you might have to reduce your time for socializing with friends, in order to offer your *salah* to Allah.

Teacher: Another specific cost?

Student: Being left out, being lonely because I’m not doing what my friends and peers are doing.

Teacher: Good. Yes, you might have to take a lot of peer pressure for being the odd one out, or your friends may leave you out of their activities, as you won’t do this or that. You might feel lonely on the path of Allah. This is quiet common; it does happen, we all know this. Yes?

Student: Sacrificing your sleep to wake up for *Fajr*.

Teacher: Yes we have to sacrifice some of our sleep, to wake up for *Fajr*. Yes?

Student: Having people make fun of you because you’re a *hijabi*.

Teacher: Sadly, people do make fun of girls and women who wear *hijab* and cover themselves properly.

Student: Can’t listen to music.

Teacher: You definitely can’t listen to music. For teenagers, it seems, it’s a huge cost to pay.

Student: Respecting elders.

Teacher: Respecting elders? Is that a cost?!

Student: There can be no backbiting.

Teacher: Absolutely no backbiting. No juicy gossip; that’s a cost. We really have to stop ourselves from back biting, as back biting is something that will not let us enter *Jannah*.

Student: We’d have to give up some fun activities that are a waste of time, so that we can do things which will help us get *thawab* (reward).

Teacher: For sure, you’ll have to give up all your time wasting activities, especially if you feel that they’re stopping you from giving time to the Quran and other extra good deeds. So these are some of the costs. There are many, many other costs; I can make a long list of all the costs. What are some of the benefits of getting to Jannah? Can you name me any ten benefits, that come to your mind?

Student: *Jannah* is eternal.

Teacher: Eternal bliss, yes. What else?

Student: Being able to see Allah’s face in *Jannah*.

Student: Just being in Jannah!

Teacher: Yes, *Jannah* in itself is a benefit because it’s so beautiful.

Student: We can get whatever we want.

Teacher: We will have all kinds of pleasures.

Student: We can do whatever we want there.

Teacher: Yes, we’ll be able to do whatever we want to. Those things which Allah is stopping us from doing in this world, which are big costs for us in the *Duniya,* we’ll be able to do them there.

Student: Being close to Allah (swt).

Teacher: We’ll have the honor of being loved by Allah (swt) and being close to Him! What a benefit this is, isn’t it?

Student: There’ll be no pain and heartache.

Teacher: No pain, no illnesses, not tensions, no disappointments, and no heartaches! Could we want anything more?!

So, these are some of the benefits that have come to our mind. Knowing our costs and benefits, what do we need to do next? What happens once we make a list comparing both? It could be a separate, individual list for you, and her and her, and me. Each of ours could be a totally unique list of what each one of us thinks are their costs or benefits. But once we’ve don’t that, then what should we do? Well, we need to sit alone, sit in a quiet place in our room, and make sure nobody disturbs us. Then ask ourselves, “Am I willing to pay the cost for what I want, for Jannah?” Remember, unless and until you are willing to pay the costs for what you really want, no one can push you to become a good Muslim. Your parents cannot push you to become a good Muslim so that you can get to Jannah. This is something that has to come from within, you are the one who has to decide if you really want to get there, if you aren’t willing to pay the cost for it—whatever it may be, then please don’t bother about it, please keep enjoying this life, at least keep enjoying the benefits of this life.

So this is something that you all as pre-teens have to make a decision about; it is something extremely important and very serious. And I would suggest that you go home today, make a list of costs and benefits or think about the cost and benefits of Jannah, and seriously think about if you are willing to pay the price? Are you? Because clearly, Jannah is not free; it’s obviously not for free. Then, if you’re willing to pay the cost, then just begin making an effort towards your goal. Once you’ve made up your mind, what’s going to stop you? No road blocks can stop you once you’ve decided that you’re willing to pay the cost for it. In fact, you’ll have to overcome all the road blocks and just get going; just do it! Okay?

Slide 12:

Moving on, tell me something. Do any of you know the difference between “I will try” and “I will”? Does anyone know the difference between the two? Yes?

Student: “I will try” means that I will try and do it, but if it doesn’t happen, it just doesn’t happen. I won’t try anymore.

Teacher: She’s saying “I will try” means that you’ll try and do it but if it doesn’t happen, so be it. You won’t try any more. Yes, you at the back?

Student: “I will” is that we’ll actually, really try.

Teacher: So, “I will try” is that we’ll make an effort, but not persevere. If we were to encounter road blocks, and there will always be some, we’ll just give up. Right? “I will” is that we will put our heart into it, persevere and persevere, overcome all road blocks with determined effort, until we reach our goal.

Student: So it seems that in “I will try” we aren’t sure whether it’ll happen or not, we just give it a shot. Whereas in “I will”, we’re determined to make it happen, set on overcoming all costs.

Teacher: Yes, absolutely. When we say “I will try”, we’re not too sure about actually getting it done. However, when we say “I will”, we’re absolutely sure about it. With the first commitment, basically, we know, at the back of our mind, that if some excuse pops up in the form of a road block, then will just give up. We’re not making a true commitment, nor ready to take on the responsibility, nor make a real and sincere effort. We’re saying, “I’ll see, and if I feel that I won’t be able to do it, then I can excuse myself of the task.” Right? This is what we mean, whether we’re making a commitment to ourselves or others. This is what our true intention is.

Slide 13:

For example, would you lend money to someone who says, “Oh, I’ll try to return it”? Would you trust him? Probably not, but you’d definitely be willing to lend money to someone who says, “I’m going to return it”.

Or, for example, would you like to marry a guy who says “I’ll try not to cheat on you”. Surely not! Do you get the point? When you say I’m trying to do something so what kind of an impression are you giving? Thus, when you say “**I’ll** **try”** to change my life to please Allah (swt), what kind of commitment are we really giving to Him? He must be laughing at us, just like the way you’re laughing at the examples I’m giving you. He must be laughing at us, after all, what are we really saying by intending to **try** and be a good Muslim? We actually don’t have any intention to be one, at all! With a commitment like this one, we’ll probably just look for the right excuses to get out of it. Are you with me on this?

So, should we be saying “I will try” or “I will”? If we really want to achieve something in our life, then we have to sincerely say, “I will” and just demolish all the road blocks as they pop up, there and then, and just do it! By the way, what’s the one thing we should always say along with our intentions and commitments?

Students: *InshaAllah*

Teacher: *InshaAllah,* we shouldn’t ever forget to say that. We might feel very strongly about achieving something, of being able to do it, and we might be very confident about actually being able to get it done, but if we don’t have that *tawwakkul* on Allah (swt ) if we don’t rely on Allah’s help, that only He can help us achieve our goal, then we might not be able to do anything at all. Always, always, say “*inshaAllah*” along with whatever intentions you have for your future.

Slide 14:

There’s a very interesting story about a master and his servant, regarding “I will” and “I will try”. One day, a master told his servant to please go and deliver a letter to his friend. Now the servant was a very dedicated servant so he said, “I’ll do my best, master”. The master replied, “No, no, I don’t want you to do your best, I just want you to go and deliver the letter to my friend”. The servant answered, “I’ll do it or I’ll die, master”. The master, in turn, said, “Oh no, I don’t want you to die, I just want you to go and deliver this letter”. So finally, the servant got what his master was saying, and said, “**I’ll do it**, master”.

In conclusion, whenever we intend on doing something, all we need to say is “I’ll do it, I’ll do it Allah”. No “ifs” nor “buts”; no maybes. Rather, we’ll intend, “I will do it, Allah; I want to do it because I want to please You, and because I really want *Jannah*. I’ll make sure to climb the right wall; no negative label is going to stop me from trying to please You! I’m only going to do what I’m supposed to do”. Thereafter, if we make a mistake, what will we say? “I’m not going to give up. I’m a human being with weaknesses. If I make a mistake or displease you, I know you will forgive me, if I ask for your forgiveness. You will help me, if I ask You”. Just because of some road blocks, we’re not going to fall into the trap of the “It’s all over” syndrome. Are we?!

So we’ve just completed discussing how to overcome road blocks by counting our costs and benefits.

Slide 15:

Now, the second method: this is to use momentous moments.

What do I mean by that? Well, there are certain moments in our life which are extremely powerful. In these moments, we make very important and difficult decisions, there and then, on the spot. Furthermore, these moments force us do what in normal circumstances we couldn’t, wouldn’t, or weren’t willing to do. These decisions, then, can make a huge impact on our lives and can even change them around, all of a sudden. Can anyone give me an example of such a moment?

Student: An extremely sad moment?

Teacher: A sad moment? Sure. Sometimes we experience an extremely sad moment in our life; it happens. It could be because of the death of a loved one. Do you agree that when a loved one dies, that it’s a momentous moment? Those people who lose their near ones have to very seriously think about their situation there and then, their priorities, and their future. This is the time people make very important decisions, with regards to their lives.

Starting at a new school can be a momentous moment. At that moment, someone is making a fresh start and so can decide, for example, not to make the mistakes she made in her previous school, or with her previous friends. As it’s a fresh start, this person can decide to make sure she always has good credibility with her teachers, by always doing her work and doing it well, to the best of her ability. She can also try to have good credibility with her friends, so that they always trust her and can rely on her. I’m sure you all know that could be a momentous moment. The month of *Ramadan* can be a momentous moment. Many people feel closer to Allah (swt) then. This feeling can be nurtured in that month and can linger over after *Ramadhan,* as a result. What else? Can anyone give me another example?

Student: How about a young girl who sees her mother die of cancer? So she grows up to be a cancer doctor.

Teacher: Yes, this is not uncommon. A child who sees her parent die of cancer may decide, there and then, that she will become an oncologist in the future. So any new day that dawns, could contain a momentous moment. There are certain people who get up in the morning so thankful to Allah for giving them one extra day to live and make a difference, that they make significant decisions, there and then, about how to please Him.

Slides 16:

The key is to identify those momentous moments in our lives and to harness those moments to help us achieve our goals. We need to harness such moments, to hang on to them, to make the best of them. These special moments don’t come every day. Rather, they come now and then, maybe once a year, maybe once in three years, and so on. For some, it may only be once in a life time. The trick is to harness them. We need to recognize them, and make sure we don’t let them slip past as they are very precious. Usually, these moments give us a lot of energy and enable us to make that extra effort, and do things differently, unlike other, normal moments. That’s why it’s crucial for us to just do it at that moment, before it passes by unnoticed. This momentous moment won’t stay in our lives for very long. It may be for only half an hour, or an hour, or a day and then it will finish. If we don’t harness it there and then, it’s going to disappear from our lives.

After recognizing and harnessing the moment and making our decisions, then the most important thing is for us to persevere with them, even if we don’t feel like doing so later. This is the real test. Sometimes we make decisions in momentous moments, such as when we make resolutions in Ramadan to do this and not do that. At that moment we may be feeling very close to Allah (swt), feeling spiritually elated; our level of *eman* may be at a peak. However, what usually happens after the month is over? We forget all about our resolutions. The real test is that we stick to them, to whatever decisions that we’ve made.

Moving on, then, after comparing our costs with benefits, and harnessing momentous moments to our benefit, there’s still a third method of achieving our desired goals.

Slides 17-18:

This method is called “roping up”. Has anyone here done some sort of climbing, like mountain climbing or rock climbing? How can we dare to do this? What helps us to do this? Yes?

Student: A rope.

Teacher: Yes, there’s always a rope. It’s tied around the climber, usually with a harness which is around the waist of the climber, so that she’s secure when she’s climbing, and even if she misses a step she’ll be saved, won’t fall nor break any bones. The safety rope will not let her fall to the ground. As importantly, it’s the rope that’ll help her to even climb up. This is the meaning of “roping up”. A climber can actually climb any height, as long as she’s roped up. Clearly then, roping up is crucial to success. Climbers can also rope up together, to aid each other in climbing. They can rope themselves together, and in this way, can accomplish the impossible by borrowing strength from each other.

Using this impossible, I want you to understand that if we are all roped up together, if we’re hanging on to the same rope, we can also achieve whatever we want in our lives. Our task becomes easier.

Slides 19-20:

How can we rope up with others with a common cause? The best way is to find a friend with the same goal. If we find a person with the same goal as ourselves, and work towards it together, helping each other, then we’re roping up with together. The friend won’t let you fall and you wouldn’t let her fall, either. It’s just like roping up while climbing a mountain. Furthermore, we can become each other’s cheerleaders, encouraging and cheering one another on, passing on each other’s energy. You all can even get your parents involved, so that you and your parents can rope up in a mission together.

 Or you and your siblings can rope up in a mission. Actually we can rope up with anyone with a like mission and goal: friends, siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. We can rope up with just about anyone, really. So then, to rope up means to find the right people around us, those who have the same desires as we do. Our initial example, of achieving good grades, is a perfect one. How could you rope up to get good grades? With whom would you rope up? Yes?

Student: Friends and classmates can help us.

Teacher: For sure. A friend can help you in your studies, and you can help her. You can keep a check on each other, whether you’re wasting time or not. You can ask her to keep a check on you to make sure you study properly, and not waste time socializing too much, or being distracted by the Net, etc. Your friend can check you when she feels you are wasting time. Also, your friend can help you in your studies, and you them. She can help you with whatever she’s good in, and you can in whatever you’re good in. So, let’s say your grades are slipping in Math, your friend, whose good at it, can help you with it. You can do the same. This is roping up. Perhaps many of you can rope up together. It doesn’t have to be with one person alone; it can be with a group of people.

How about all of you sitting here, in this class? You can all rope up together in your religious challenges, can’t you? You can rope up together to discuss them. When you’re having snack time, you can discuss about the challenges that you’re facing, or talk about the costs that you have to pay for *Jannah*, or the your road blocks. What are we all coming here to Perceptions for? What? We all gather here to learn how to become good, practicing Muslims, of course. Now since we all have the same goals, we can all naturally rope up together. Right? Why would we?

Slides 21:

What’s better, this or this? Would you like to be here or here? Obviously we’d like to be with other people so that we can share our strengths and energies with each other. We need to rope up then. That is, we need to find the right company, one that will help us achieve what we want out of life.

Slides 22-23:

Before coming to the fourth method of overcoming road blocks as a way of achieving our goals, let’s quickly cap the first three, again: counting the costs and benefits; harnessing momentous moments; and roping up.

The fourth method is to turn our weaknesses into our strengths. How does this work? Now, let’s say that some of you feel (and I’m not going to ask who feels that way) that you’re not as good looking as you want to be, or that you’re not as well off as you want to be, or as well off as some other person. Or, you may feel that you’re not as smart as you want to be. These are the three most important things in most people’s lives: looks, money and intelligence. Personally, if any of you felt that way, I would want to congratulate you! I’m sure you’re all thinking, “There’s something wrong with Sarah! I don’t know what she’s talking about! Here, I’m saying that I’m not pretty enough, or not smart enough, or not well off, and she wants to congratulate me?!” And why would I want to congratulate you? Why do you suppose? Yes, you at the back?

Student: I think you’d do that because on the Day of Judgment we’re accountable for everything we have. We’ll have to answer to Allah (swt) about all we had. So the lesser we have, the lesser we have to answer for.

Teacher: Yes, but these are *n’aymat* not in our control; they’re from Allah (swt). That’s different from what I’m getting to. You should be congratulated because uphill battles always produce quality and strength. The high quality and strength produced, when fighting an uphill battle, only comes from making an effort to acquire what we don’t already have. We can’t develop it if we already have it. For instance, if somebody isn’t intelligent enough, the kind of effort that person is going to put into getting good grades, will make that person more committed, persevering, disciplined, and industrious -- in fact a stronger student, as compared to somebody who is already smart and doesn’t work as hard. Since the first student doesn’t have what the second one does, her desire for it will be greater; she’ll put all her effort into acquiring it. That extra effort will make her a lot sharper than somebody to whom mathematics comes very naturally.

Slide 24:

A good example from nature of this process is the timber tree. These are very tall and strong trees, which don’t grow easily. They, in fact, gain their height and strength depending on how hard their growth process is. The stronger the wind that they have to grow in, the stronger the tree is. The strong winds actually make them strong. *SubhanAllah.*

Slide 25:

So this is how weakness can become strength. So if we feel that we have certain weaknesses which can stop us from achieving our goals, especially if it has something to do with looks, intelligence, and personality-- anything that isn’t in our control, then we just have to make an extra effort to overcome whatever shortcomings se may have. That extra effort is what’s going to make us as strong and able as those who have an edge over us. It may, in fact, give us an edge over them!

So let’s take looks, for instance. We can’t change our looks, of course, but we can optimize them. How? We can put in extra effort with regards to our grooming, dressing, and maintaining a healthy weight. Even more importantly, an effort in the right direction would mean to overcome this shortcoming by actively developing an agreeable temperament, an admirable personality and a good character. We have to make sure that whatever is achievable through good looks, will be achievable through other possible means. Why do people want to be good looking anyway? Good looks help one in becoming what? Popular? Admired? Liked? Why do people want to look beautiful, so that people might like them, and want to be with them? Right? However, there are many other ways of achieving popularity, ways that are so powerful that once we put our heart into acquiring them, we’ll be able to do a lot more than somebody who’s just good looking. Besides, if a person is good looking, but not a nice, affable person, will she be popular?

In concluding, let’s do a quick recap of the four methods we’ve discussed today: number one, counting and comparing our cost and benefits; number two, harnessing the momentous moments (not merely recognizing them, but hanging on to them, clinging on to them, to make sure we don’t let them slip away); number three, roping up, finding good people, like minded people, around us to help us; number four, to turn our weaknesses into strength. With so many constructive methods of overcoming road blocks, let’s make sure that none stop us from doing what we really want, from achieving our goals.

Slides 26:

This is extremely important as each and every one of us in this room will stop breathing one day. It’s a scary thought, but its reality. All of us will stop breathing, die, and turn cold. No matter who we are today, we’ll all become fertilizer for daffodils. We all know this.

Slide 27:

Time is ticking by, even now as we sit here, and we can’t slow it down. So let’s not be late in making the best of what we are capable of doing.

We’re very fortunate that Allah (swt) has given us a chance to determine our own destiny, our place in the Hereafter. Allah (swt) has given us the opportunity to make whatever we want out of our lives, today. Thus, we should thank Him that we’re still breathing and have that time to do whatever we want to do.

Slide 28:

There’s a very interesting saying: “for every closed door there’s always another which is open, but only for those who have the eyes to see it, and the courage to march through it”.

So the whole idea is that no road block in our life should stop us from doing that we want to do. If one road seems closed take a detour! A closed road should never stop us from going where we really want to go, where we want to end up, at the very end of our lives.

Slide 29:

The important question is, do we all know where we’re heading?

It’s time to think……

(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*

Bibliography:

“The 7 habits of highly effective teens”, by Sean Covey