**MODULE**

**Class Title**: Conflict resolution – part 1 (1st part of a 3-part series)

**Aim of the lesson**: To understand the causes of conflict between parents and children and focus on the ways to overcome such conflict and build a stronger relationship.

**Category**: Interpersonal skills

**Lesson Format**: Power point presentation, handouts, activities and discussion

**Handouts:** In folder

Greeting to students*) AssalamalaikumwaRahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

*(Taooz) Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanirRajeem*

*(Tasmiyah) BismillahirRahmanirRaheem*

*(Du’a) Rabbishrahlisadriwayassirliamriwahluluqdatummillisaniyafqahuqawli* (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

This is a workshop conducted at Perceptions with both mothers and daughters together.

However, the material may be used to conduct a class just with daughters/sons or mothers/fathers individually too.

INTRODUCTION

**Slide 1:**

Conflict resolution is the process of resolving a conflict or dispute by identifying and satisfying some or all of each side’s needs as well as addressing their interests.

In today’s workshop we will discuss various types of conflicts that arise in a mother/daughter relationship which may make the relationship strained or difficult. In order to avoid that tension, we will also try to come up with some tips and tricks to resolve these common conflicts.

**Slide 2:**

I think it’s fair to say that the mother-daughter relationship is like being on a roller coaster; the big, scary kind that you’re able to see from the next town over and whose passengers can be heard shrieking from miles away.

Parts of that ride can certainly be thrilling and fun and exciting – much like the way you may feel when you and your daughter are really getting along. There may be other stretches of that same ride that leave you feeling anxious, fearful, or nauseated — much like the way you may feel when you and your daughter are in the midst of an argument.

There’s one big difference, though, between a rollercoaster and a mother-daughter relationship. Unlike the experience at the amusement park, the ride a mother is on with her daughter will never come to a halt, automatically release its safety bar, and allow you to exit. No matter how scary or intolerable the ride may get with your daughter, there’s not even a chance of getting off. This ride is forever. And there is no safety bar.

The truth is, most moms actually don’t even want to get off this ride. They’d just prefer a slower, smoother, more predictable journey, a ride with fewer upside-down loops or steep, heart-stopping drops — one that doesn’t include, for example, your fifteen-year-old getting pregnant or your thirty-year-old becoming addicted to drugs. Nobody wants that ride. But it’s a given that every mother-daughter pair faces challenges, and it’s inevitable that at some point, there will be a challenge that will test the strength of this relationship and the feelings you have about the ride you and your daughter are on.

This workshop is aimed at understanding the mother-daughter relationship better and preparing for the inevitable conflicts that will arise between you both. It has been designed with *both* mothers *and* daughters in mind since it is no secret that each of you will have your own perspectives about the relationship you have with the other. This difference in perspective is not surprising, but it can sometimes be confusing and frustrating if you don’t understand what the other person’s perspective is. With that in mind, this workshop is going to try to help you both understand the other person a little bit better in order to reduce your frustration and therefore reduce conflict. But when there is a conflict – as there no doubt will be at times – this workshop will equip you with some tools to resolve it and work past it. After all, at the end of the day, mothers and daughters share a really special bond (even though you might sometimes question it!) and, with a little bit of work, that bond can be preserved and made stronger. I hope that all of us will be able to participate in today’s workshop with an open mind and heart and take away lessons that might help you in building your own personal, special mother-daughter relationship.

**PART ONE:**

**Slide 3:**

Let’s start with a little self-evaluation. I am handing out a short quiz to the daughters in this class as a way for you to see where you stand at the start of this workshop. The questions are easy but hopefully they will provide you with a sense of what your personal relationship with your mother is like. (“Parent’s checkup” handout for teens **T 2** attached)

**Slide 4:**

Now with that score in mind, let’s talk about *how* important a good relationship with our parents is. In fact, it’s not just important, but really important. So important in fact that the Prophet (pbuh) put disobedience to parents in the same category as killing someone! When he was asked about the major sins, he said:

"They are:

(1) To join others with Allah (SWT) in worship,

(2) To be undutiful to one's parents,

(3) To kill without cause,

(4) To bear false witness." (Bukhari)

Can you imagine that? In this *hadith*, shirk, killing someone and bearing false witness are all put in the same category as being disobedient to parents. Now while, it is probably true that no one in this class would ever think about killing someone, the truth is, we don’t even think twice when it comes to being rude to our parents. Rolling our eyes is an immediate response when our mother says something we don’t like. We slam the door, raise our voice and answer back so much that it has become our automatic reaction in a conflict. Unfortunately, the harsh reality is, when we behave in this way, we are behaving in a way that is extremely displeasing to Allah (SWT). So displeasing in fact, that it has been categorized as an extreme sin like murder. For all of us, the first and most basic lesson to take away is the seriousness of the matter of being good to our parents. This *hadith* needs to be the foundation of our relationship with them.

**Slide 5:**

In the Arabic language *walid* (father) and *walida* (mother) are two words for parents who are our biological parents – the ones who gave birth to us. A more respectful term is *umm* (mum) and *abb* (dad) which means someone who didn’t just give birth to you but who takes care of you in all circumstances, by all means.

وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

“And with the parents do utmost good”

Here, Allah swt has said to be excellent to *walidain* (parents). He has not used the terms *umm* and *abb* and neither has He put a limitation on that instruction by saying that you must be good to your parents if they are good to you. Not at all. In fact, this verse implies that whether they were good too you or not, the mere fact that they gave birth to you is enough to demand excellent behavior from you. Allah (SWT) has a high expectation of the way you and I are going to behave towards our parents.

**Slide 6:**

With that in mind, we should remember that the best words, actions and characteristics (after those that we give to Allah swt) should be reserved for our parents. *Hassan*, *ihsaan* (excellence) raises the bar between for us regarding our parents. There is no tit for tat relationship with parents and no reciprocal mentality should be there. In fact, Allah SWT says,

فَلاَ تَقُل لَّهُمَآ أُفٍّ

Do not say “uff” to them

(“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word” (Surah al Isra: Verse 17))

Imagine! Even something as small as expressing annoyance through saying “uff” verbally or through rude body language is disallowed. So before we continue with the workshop, we now know (1) that rudeness to our parents is a serious sin, (2) that Allah SWT has not made our good behaviour to our parents’ conditional on the way that they have treated us and (3) that we have to treat them in the *best* possible way, and cannot even express our annoyance through saying “uff”. Now that’s really some food for thought.

**Slides 7:**

Now we will get started with the workshop itself, but before we begin, let us set some ground rules and decide what our attitude should be during this workshop.

(Teacher/trainer sets ground rules, explains what the attitude of participants during the session should be and the limitations of participants. All this is done with the participants, written on newsprint and tacked in the room.)

**Ground Rules:**

* One person speaks at a time
* We will be totally respectful at all times
* We will make a sincere commitment to listen to one another, to try to understand the other person's point of view before responding
* We agree to try our hardest and trust that others are doing the same within the group
* We will not carry any grudges against anyone when we leave this place
* We agree to attack the issues only and not the people with whom we disagree

**Slides 8:**

**Attitude during this workshop:**

* What are my boundaries in this situation?
* How can **I** solve the problem facing us? Focus on yourself.
* Am I willing to explore possible solutions?

**Slide 9:**

**Our Limitations:**

* We cannot negotiate solutions to all of our problems in one session
* We can’t change others or ourselves overnight
* No one else can change us; any change has to come from within

**Slides 10 & 11:**

**Exercise:** Parents and teens list areas of conflict they think need to be addressed, in order of priority. Each party explains the situation from their point of view.

So now, let’s make a list of the most annoying things about our parents.

After all, we are all human and that means we are not perfect (yes, even our parents!). And so we all can’t always get along. So yes, it’s natural that we will sometimes do or say things that will annoy or upset the other person. But for our parents, we may sometimes feel that Allah (swt) has given them special talents to embarrass us! So this is a space where we will try to understand what those annoying things are and why our parents may say those things. But remember our ground rules: we are going to be completely respectful under all circumstances, so we are going to phrase our sentences like this: “I know some parents who…”

Let’s now talk about some common habits of parents that might annoy you as always as look at the other side of the picture to understand maybe why they might behave in this way.

**Slides 12:**

1. **They compare you to others:** sometimes with a sibling or a cousin and sometimes with someone completely random! This kind of comparison will probably make you feel that no matter how hard you try you will always fall short of their expectations because someone else will always be better. It might be with your grades or your manners or your confidence or your extracurricular activities. The list of comparisons is endless.

The truth is, your parents don’t do this to make you feel bad. Instead they feel that this will make you improve or work harder. Unfortunately, however, in reality we end up retaliating most of the time and even stop doing the things we are good at. We need to remind ourselves that we are different from the people we are being compared to and we don’t need to try to be like them. But what we do need to do is always try to improve ourselves and be the best version of ourselves that we can be.

**Slides 13:**

1. **They are never satisfied no matter how hard you try**: I will share with you a personal story here. When I bagged third position in Karachi in F.A amongst thousands of students, my parents were jubilant and so was I. My picture was in many newspapers and so was the picture of one of my friend’s had placed first position in Karachi. When after a few days, I received my mark sheet, my father went over my marks and expressed his disapproval at my marks in Math (which had always been my weak subject) and declared that had I studied harder I could have won first position instead of third!

I realize that now when I am a parent myself that my dad meant well when he said this, just like your parents mean well when they say something similar. Sometimes their love may come across in a way may sound hurtful but the truth is, they want to see us at the top always and they want the very very best for us. Just believe in their love and accept their weakness (which is YOU) and you will be fine in shaaa Allah.

One suggestion to solve this problem however, is to highlight the good things that you are doing or working on (in order to try this tip however, keep in mind that you actually need to be doing or working on something good otherwise this will backfire!) For example:

“Mom do you really like it when I clean up the room?”

“Have I started doing it frequently enough?”

“I really tried to finish my school work on time like you asked me to”

Any of these, or similar statements would be better than saying “I hope you noticed that I did that…” or “didn’t you notice I did that?”.

The secret is that moms are softies at heart so this will work most of the time in shaa Allah or will at least soften them up.

**Slide 14:**

1. **They embarrass you at the wrong moments:** sometimes parents can unknowingly embarrass their kids in front of their friends. I realized this when I went to watch a school football match and my son scored a goal. At the end of the game, I instinctively hugged him in front of his friends and only later realised that I had embarrassed him. This is obviously only one example of a way in which your mother might do something or say something that might embarrass you.

But the truth is, your mothers really *really* love you…and sometimes that love ends up showing itself at the wrong times! And yes, that may be embarrassing but you need to put your faith in your mother’s love and just believe that her intentions aren’t bad. It’s just “parenting in progress”!

The thing is, your parents might be out of touch of “cool” things these days like the “in fashions” or the right expressions to say. But they are your main resource for understanding the real world. And of course, it’s always possible to help them to learn what’s cool (if they are interested in knowing!) by showing them. You could also help them pick things out from the store with them.

**Slide 15:**

1. **They are too controlling:** your parents might seem too controlling and have way too many rules. You probably feel that they are very judgmental about your friends and don’t respect your privacy to the extent that they even want to check your messages on your phone and want to be added on your friends list on Facebook.

Again, as a reminder, the bottom line is that (1) they really do love you and want the best for you and (2) as difficult as it may be to accept, they really do know what they are talking about and are more experienced than you.

With that in mind, let’s think about why your parents might be this controlling. Either they don’t trust you or they love you too much and want to protect you. If they don’t trust you, then try to figure out what it is that you did to betray their trust and then fix the situation accordingly. Relationships are fragile and often need to be mended. This is a precious relationship and that means that you will need to take the time and effort it takes to mend it.

However, if it isn’t a trust issue then it is obviously that they love you too much and want to protect you. So even if the 101 messages you receive from your mother while you’re out might be annoying, keep in mind it’s because we live in Karachi and despite you taking your best precautions to be safe, she is concerned about you.

Sometimes we might wish that we didn’t have parents who cared so much. It’s possible we might hear of some other people’s parents who never text them when they’re out or ask them where they’re going or who don’t even know the names of their friends and definitely never tell them what to wear or what not to wear! And it’s possible that when we hear of such parents we might think to ourselves that we wish our parents were like that. But what we don’t realise is that having such parents means that our parents won’t wake us up for school or care if our school fees is paid – and we will have to struggle and work ourselves to pay the fees. It would mean not having food in the fridge after school because your parents only prepared enough for themselves. It would mean not being able to talk to your parents when you’re feeling low; not being able to take money from them when you’re going out for dinner with your friends; and not being able to rely on the fact that you have a place to sleep at night. The truth is, even though we may not realise it right now, the only reason we live the life we live now is because of the fact that our parents care about us. And that is something we should never take for granted.

**Slides 16:**

Now that we’ve talked about some things that parents might do to annoy you, let’s think about what you should do in response. Perhaps the first and most important thing to remember is that if some of this kind of behavior is a weakness of your parents that is not something you can control. You cannot change their behaviour. What you can control is your own reaction to what their behaviour..

**Slide 17:**

Unfortunately, parents don’t get a manual on “how to be an awesome parent” when they become parents. They are learning from their mistakes and you are learning from yours. Just as you would like your parents to be patient with you, you need to be patient with them.How can we exercise that patience?

**Slide 18:**

It might help to remember that your parents are not ill-intentioned. They are not trying to make you feel bad. Instead, for some strange reason, they do things and say some things because they feel it will help you improve

**Slide 19:**

Let’s think about our own attitude in response to an annoying situation. What is most important is that we must be willing and open to solving the problem and exploring possible solutions – and yes, this goes for both daughters and mothers. How do we react when our parent does something annoying? Do we walk out in a huff or do we smile and walk away quietly? Do we start a heated debate or do we say “ok mom” and wait for a better time to share our views on the matter? The truth is there is no one right way to deal with a situation. As long as you are being respectful and not rude, you know your parents best and you should deal with the situation in any way that is creative and respectful. We can call that being creatively respectful! Know that you are unique and your mothers are unique because that’s how Allah swt has created everyone. If He had created all of us as clones of each other, the world would be dull and boring!

**Slide 20 & 21:**

Do you feel that you and your parents are speaking a different language? Like they just can’t understand what you’re saying and you can’t understand what they’re saying? Why can’t they understand that football or rowing practice are more important that your homework? Why do they keep calling your room a “war zone”? Why can’t they understand that that outfit you need to buy is a necessity? Why do they have a problem with your cell phone? After all you’re just messaging your friends!

**Slide 22:**

This difference in communication is most commonly known as a ‘communication gap’. It’s not that you both are speaking different languages but just that your perspectives of the world are completely different.

**Slide 23 & 24:**

The things you care about, the things you worry about, the things that make you happy and the things that upset you are usually completely different. You might have had a really stressful day at school but they might have had a really stressful day at the office or at home managing the house. You might be worried about fitting in with your friends while they are worrying about budgeting in a way that ensures there is a savings account for you to go to college. While you get excited about the new movie that just got released, they get excited when the new washing machine is bought! Again, it’s not that they don’t get it. It’s just that their perspective is different.

**Slide 25:**

With that understanding, how can you solve this critical problem? As a reminder, you can’t control what they say, but you can control how you react and how you view their statements to you.

**Slide 26:**

When you say “I don’t want to talk about it right now”… they hear “She has time for her friends and her gadgets but not for me.”

When you say “You have no idea how to do this or that”… they hear “She thinks she knows more than me.”

**Slide 27:**

Similarly when they say “When I was your age..”…you hear “ I was so much better than you.”

When they say, “Because I say so”…you hear, “I have no good reason but am just exercising my authority over you.”

So the truth is, when you hear something your mother says to you or when you say something to your mother, you need to be very aware that the things being said and the things being heard are completely different. There are underlying messages that the other person hears that can create this communication gap.

**Slide 28 & 29:**

Your parents have more years of living in this world than you do. So, whether you like it or not, the reality is that they have many more years of experience than you do. That is what makes you both look at the same situation differently.

**Slide 30:**

At the end of the day, both of you are right when it comes to your perspective. The key is being able to sit down and talk about your viewpoints so that each of you knows what the other person is thinking. This is best done when you both have had time to cool down rather than in the heat of the moment. And yes, it may be a difficult conversation to have – especially if your usual reaction is simply to close your bedroom door and avoid the situation. But it is extremely important. There is usually a middle ground that works for both of you.

**Slide 31:**

But keep in mind that that middle ground means compromise. You will have to understand that you will not always get what you want by talking. Sometimes you can convince your parents about something and sometimes they will convince you. And sometimes, both of you will have to agree to give up something to reach a solution. But all of this can only happen through talking. Keep in mind though, that this isn’t a magical solution. There may be times when you won’t be able to reach a compromise and that’s okay too. You and your parents are both human and you may feel strongly about some things. Sometimes you may just need to give yourself and your parents time. Maybe over time you will understand more about their position and they will understand more about yours. But you first must at least try.

**Slide 32:**

Another thing you can do is try to get to know them better. Do you know what they like or what really bugs them? What please them instantly and is a magical diffuser? If not, then you should probably pay more attention. Chances are, once you figure these things out, you can make more of an effort to do the things they like and to stay away from the things they don’t like. It’s possible that this alone will be a way to reduce the conflicts you both have!

In order to take the first step in understanding each other better, we’re going to do an activity. We will hand out forms to the mothers and the daughters in this class which you should fill out to see how well you know each other. **(Handout to both mothers and daughters)**

A lesson you should remember about the communication gap is that you need to look at things from your parents’ perspective before you think they are crazy or they don’t understand. There is a funny saying which goes like this:

“Before you criticize someone,

You should walk a mile in their shoes.

Then, if you do, you’re a mile away…and

You’ve got their shoes.”

The big question is: how do we look at things from their perspective?

**Slide 33:**

This needs to be an active effort on your part. Take the first step and listen carefully. I can’t emphasise this enough. Unfortunately, as a society, we have lost the ability to stay quiet and listen. Our attention spans are limited to 10 second snapchat videos or at most, 1 minute facebook videos. We are so used to commenting instantly on social media that we are usually preparing our next comment in our head while someone is talking to us. So it has become difficult for us to listen attentively for long periods of time without thinking of our answer or, even worse, interrupting!

**Slide 34 & 35:**

That won’t qualify as effective listening. In order to have an open and honest conversation, the person who you are listening to needs to feel like you understand them or *at least* are trying to understand them. They have to feel like you are at least ready to have an open and honest conversation. Think of an argument or conflict like an onion: the real issue is under layers and layers of other things. In order to get to the real issue you will have to peel away those layers – and like peeling an onion, that process may cause tears. But you have to be patient and know that that’s part of the process. Getting angry, turning or walking away, scowling or texting while someone is talking to you will not achieve that purpose.

**Slide 36:**

The general rule for listening is to be like a mirror. Don’t respond. Don’t argue. Just reflect and understand. Try to see what it is that has upset your mother. Maybe it was something you thought was okay but turns out it was not for some reason. Whatever it is, you will be better able to understand it if you listen patiently, even if you don’t like what’s being said, and think about what it as well.

(end class with the nasheed “Who should I give my love to” by Rashid Bhikha)

Or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqHqEuOgYRQ>

(Nauman ali khan’s animated version of a story regarding how patiently parents raise their kids can be played to conclude the class)