

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Pre-Marital Counseling Handbook

**National Rishtanata Department
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA**

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SESSION WITH BRIDE, BRIDEGROOM and PARENTS

Important note:

The idea of counseling is not necessarily to teach religious beliefs, or to do tarbiyyat of the couple, or to improve spiritual status. The main idea is to make the couple aware of the common pitfalls that befall a marriage and lead to difficulties, and how best to avoid them. Increase in religious knowledge, and improving the level of tarbiyyat and spirituality will be an outcome which it is hoped will come about (to a lesser or greater degree, depending on the individuals).

Introduction:

Due to the increasing number of problems that are being encountered by married couples, it has been found necessary to make couples aware of the problems (that befall other couples). This meeting is for your information, and to **forewarn** and **forearm** you.

Before Marriage: (it's surprising how many problems cause a marriage to break down before it starts)

Beware of problems that begin before marriage, simmer and then present after marriage as huge issues that can disrupt or destroy a marriage.

Marriage is a union between two people and two families. It may be easier to resolve issues between two individuals rather than between two families. Why? It is so because a family is made up of more than two individuals who have traditions, habits and practices that have been ingrained for years. Therefore, the couple will be well advised not to confront either family head on. Whereas, now, you will be making your own family, and your traditions. But before you do that, it is best to accept or tolerate the traditions, habits and practices of both families – unless they are clearly non-Islamic.

A marriage cannot be successful without prayers. Pray before, during, and after each step of your relationship process. Every conflict and issue should be addressed with prayers.

1. Marriage Consent and Explain Nikah Form:

- a. Explain Nikah form and logic behind different questions, especially the portion of BRIDE's consent and witnesses scope in this regard
- b. Are both parties happy with the marriage?
- c. Has any party been forced to agree to this marriage against their will?
 - Is any party wishing to marry someone else or in love with someone else?

2. Haq Meher:

- The Haq Meher is set so that it has to be paid to the wife by the husband.
- This is the wife's right from day 1 of marriage – cannot be denied except under special circumstances by the Qaza Board.
- May only be waived by the wife if done so completely voluntarily (without any instigation from the husband), and or if she has received it and then returns it.
- Has it been set to the satisfaction of both parties?
- Is the figure agreed upon by both sides (and no alteration was made at the time of signing of the Nikah form by either side after a figure was agreed). If alteration was made, are both sides still happy?
- Haq-Meher that has been inflated for the purposes of prestige (with an assurance from the bride's side that it will actually never be claimed) is not permissible. A Nikah must NEVER be announced on this basis.

According to Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra), the dowry should equal the groom's current income of six months to one year. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) has further directed that the minimum dowry should be \$10,000 US dollars when the bridegroom is a resident of the United States.

2. **Marital Home:** In general, it is the girl who is 'given away' in society, and it is the girl who therefore goes to live with her husband (and not the other way round). Exceptions do occur but that is by mutual agreement and understanding.

- Is it understood that the bride will live with the parents in the parental home – which will be the marital home? **There must not be any ambiguity about this.**
- Is there any agreement or understanding that the period of living with parents will be for a specified time? If not, then it should be made clear at the outset whether

the arrangement is long term or for a finite period. **Both parties must not only be clear about this but accept the position.**

- Is there an agreement or understanding that the marital home will be separate from the parents? If so, what are the expectations about furnishing (or 'setting it up')? It is generally expected for the bride's side to provide for the kitchen's set up like utensils, cutlery, cooking paraphernalia etc. The bride's side is also responsible for bedroom furnishings (as per the Sunnah). The groom's side is responsible for the rest (i.e. sofa sets, chairs, other white goods. Any deviation from this must be completely voluntary from both sides, and no pressure should be applied on one side or the other against this. Does any side feel they have had any undue pressure exerted upon them? Are they comfortable about this now and accept it, or would they like this resolved before the wedding proceeds?
- It should be understood that if conflicts are arising for the couple due to living in a home with extended family, then Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) has advised that the parents should be supportive of the couple separating and living on their own.

3. **Dowry:** this is what the bride brings with her to the new home, according to Sunnah. When the Holy Prophet (saw) gave his daughter Fatima (ra) away in marriage, the dowry given was kitchen utensils and bed furnishings. This establishes the broad parameters into which the dowry should fit.

- Has any side been pressurized subtly or openly about providing anything with which they are unhappy or uneasy? Whatever is being offered in the dowry must be completely voluntary.
- Is the dowry being offered in order to impress rather than to fulfill a requirement? Remember, blessing from Allah is best attracted when things are done with righteousness in mind.
- Is the dowry extra large or extravagant because the bride's parents feel that they cannot trust their son-in-law to provide adequately for their daughter? Are both sides happy and comfortable with the size of the dowry? Some marriages break down later, when the son-in-law feels that he was treated like a pauper, incapable of providing for his family.
- If the bride's side is unable to provide a dowry (as per Sunnah) perhaps because of financial difficulties, or because of coming from abroad, or other reasons, is

this point understood and accepted by the groom's side? It will be unwise to proceed with the marriage if this will be a point of rancor later on.

4. Expectation of duties from each other:

- If a discussion between the two parties has already taken place about this, then it is good to hear about it. What is expected of the wife/daughter-in-law – household chores, cooking, keeping the house clean, etc. What is expected of the husband/son-in-law – going to work, helping with household chores etc. Are both sides happy and comfortable with their expected roles? Are there any areas of potential conflict? E.g. expecting the wife to do all the cooking, washing and cleaning the entire house, while there are able bodied brothers- or sisters-in-law in the house. Expectation from the husband that he should take the wife on international holidays twice a year, etc.
- Does the wife know she will be expected to look after a sick parent – as a nurse perhaps? Does the husband know that he will be expected to provide support for his wife's family if they are in distress or unexpected tragedy befalls upon them?
- Can the bride cook yet? It should be made clear to the groom and his parents if she cannot cook yet. If she cannot, then she cannot be expected to begin preparing full meals on her own immediately after marriage, and may need guidance from her mother-in-law. It should be decided how much skill she currently has, how much she will learn before the wedding (she should be prepared with basic skills to provide for husband), and how much she will need help with this post-marriage through support from her in-laws.

5. Clarity about personal issues:

Are both sides aware of each other's personal issues regarding:

- Marriage - Marriage can mean paradise on earth and can be the ultimate blessing, but only if both parties are ready to make a commitment and work very hard on it. Are both parties clear on what marriage entails and do they agree to this? Do both parties know that they must remain committed and focused on one another as their main priority above anyone else? Are both parties aware that this is a **permanent** and lifelong arrangement, and not a temporary experiment? Do they know that must be devoted to maintaining their home and will be spending most of their time from now on with this person (rather than on their own or with family and friends)? Do they know that there are many sacrifices involved in marriage, such as: time, money, extracurricular hobbies, etc? Are

they ready to share their finances, time, families, and home together? Are they ready to make every decision for two people rather than for one? Are they ready to be adults and deal with matters maturely and make compromises?

- Level of *purdah* and attire: Does the bride observe *purdah* - how much or how little? Are the groom and his family alright with this in the long-term? Does the groom observe *purdah* to the level required of Muslim men?
- Level of spirituality of both bride and groom: All parties should be aware of both the bride and groom's level of spirituality and level of involvement in Jama'at programs and activities. Assumptions about the bride or groom should not be made based on his/her parents' or family's level of spirituality or Jama'at involvement. What are the expectations of one another of involvement in Jama'at activities and programs?
- Regularity in Salat and Qur'an: Do both the bride and groom offer their five daily prayers (be honest to avoid future problems)? Do they recite Qur'an daily? Is this the general direction they wish to take their future household in? Is this alright with all of the parties in the long-term?
- Life goal: What is the life goal of the bride and of the groom? Do they share a common purpose and similar aims, or are their visions for their own lives incompatible? (i.e. bride's goal is to maintain a busy career and earn a lot of money vs. groom wants to have a large family with stay-at-home mother; or bride's goal is to attain nearness to Allah vs. groom's is to have little connection to Jama'at)
- Health – Have both sides made each other aware of any long term health problems they have had, or still have – such as a history of fits/epilepsy even though it may be fully controlled now, any chronic diseases such as diabetes, thyroid problems, depression, mental illnesses etc. Any surgical operations in the past, any hidden scars, etc. Are there any family health issues that the other party should be aware of (i.e. history of infertility or diabetes or heart disease in family members, etc)? Do remember, marriages can break down with great acrimony if such disclosures are not made candidly.
- Any previous marriages, children from past marriages, engagements, etc.
- Personal habits – such as smoking or taking intoxicants. Any history of alcohol or illicit drug use in the past. If one has had a history but is now clear of such vices, but a number of people have known this past history, then it's always advisable

to be clear about this with your future partner before marriage. It will only end painfully if found later, as it will be a sure sign of lack of honesty. On the other hand, there is no need to disclose each and everything that Allah has covered through His mercy and is unlikely to surface.

- Lifestyle - What does an average day look like for the bride and for the groom? What are their hobbies and interests? Does either the bride or groom engage in activities which are undesirable to the other party (such as preferring to stay out late to spend time with friends rather than spend evening at home, or an extravagant hobby such as buying collector items)
- Employment – be truthful where you work and what your position is. (i.e. do not overstate your position; be honest)
- Wife's desire to work: This matter should be made clear in front of all parties. Does the wife desire to work outside the home after marriage, or does she prefer to be a homemaker? Is this preference alright with her husband and in-laws? Do the in-laws have a preference of wanting her to stay home or work outside the home? Does the husband? (Wife should be aware her primary responsibility of maintaining the household and caring for the home/children must not be sacrificed for sake of career, but if she can balance both then she is permitted to work)
- Children: Preference of having children earlier or later? At the birth of the child, will wife spend some time at her mother's home, or remain with her husband or in-laws?
- Dislike or otherwise of in-laws visiting regularly
- Chanda payments and Jama'at contributions.
- Education Loans taken by the bride before marriage
 - Will it be paid off by the parents of the bride
 - Will it be paid off by the bride herself and if yes, then what will be arrangements
 - Will it be paid off by the bridegroom and/or his family
 - Loans taken out by husband also need to be disclosed since payments will affect the household income and wife should be aware of this.
 - Any excessive credit card debt?

6. **Marriage ceremony:**

- According to Sunnah, weddings and all related events should be simple and the focus should be on prayers rather than ostentation. During the life of the Holy Prophet (saw), weddings were celebrated in the following manner: a Nikah ceremony would be held, followed by a Walimah celebration.
- Some marriage rites and rituals are common to some families and frowned upon by others – such as giving of gifts to the entire household by one side or the other. These customs are purely cultural, not religion-based and not obligatory.
- Marriage functions such as the Rukhsati and Walimah. Who gets invited and who not.
- Barat (wedding procession from the groom's side)
- How many functions will be held, what will the nature of each one be, and how large will they be?

7. **Jewelry given at time of marriage:** Jewelry at the time of marriage is normally considered part of the marriage contract, unless specifically stated otherwise. This should be understood clearly, for in the unfortunate case where a marriage breaks down, these items have to be returned. Once a marriage gets established, such jewelry becomes the asset of the wife to do what she may please with it.

8. **Gifts of marriage:** Gifts given at the time of marriage are gifts, and form part of the property and assets of the one who receives them. These can be disposed off in any way by the recipient (i.e. given away or kept). It is highly advisable however, that gifts provided by the in-laws should be kept and used to demonstrate their value. If a dress or item of clothing provided by the mother-in-law is not to your taste, you should still show your gratitude for the gesture by being seen wearing it at least once. Also important and sensible is to wear garments provided as part of dowry or barri/warri to either partner to display to those who provided them. Remember, it is not always possible for the other side to have anticipated your tastes and preferences. They have tried their best and have given you gifts out of love, and not to appreciate that will show ungratefulness and disregard, and may start your marriage off with a bad impression. Toughen your heart, clench your teeth, and show your appreciation by being seen using their gifts.

9. **Honeymoon arrangements:**

- Has it been determined or is it a surprise? Not going away on honeymoon should not be the surprise. If cannot afford to go away, it should be so made clear at the outset, and there is no shame in that. Lack of clarity on such issues only helps to

fuel disputes in future. A 'delayed' honeymoon when finances permit is also an option that can be agreed upon.

- If going abroad, are the passports and vaccinations etc current? Groom shouldn't expect the bride to have anticipated that if she didn't know the honeymoon was going to be abroad.

10. What if the bride or bridegroom is arriving from a different country?

If the bride arrives from another country, more care should be taken to have her adjust to the new environment by learning the language and with mutual agreement to complete the basic secondary school education if not educated enough.

If the bridegroom arrives from another country, he should be guided on possible career options, degree equivalencies, etc and helped to adjust in the new environment but at the same time adjust to his role as the breadwinner. Also try to make this new family independent by having separate accommodation as soon as possible and let them make their decisions and establish themselves as a family.

11. What if the bride is still studying?

This should be discussed and agreed upon, between both sides. If the bride is studying, then both sides need to understand how that will affect the responsibilities of the home and a compromise should be established. In such case, the husband should be willing to share responsibilities of the home when the wife is away. Having said this, the wife should also understand that pursuing education doesn't shift her primary responsibility of the home.

Have you discussed and finalized the OSAP loans payment for Bride?

12. Going to live with his parents:

- First few days:
 - The new bride is a guest of the house and should be very well looked after.
 - She should not be expected to be involved in any household chores.
 - Everyone should be on their best behavior welcoming her to the household.

- She has just left the cozy sanctity of her own house, and will probably be homesick. She might have feelings of sadness, and may pine for her parents, friends, etc. This should be fully understood and sympathized with. Lack of understanding at this stage could mark out the in-laws as being harsh, hard and without sympathy. Avoid this at all costs.
- Household duties to be carried out should be told by the husband (and not anyone else, specifically the mother-in-law or the sisters-in-law). This should be done in the form of a discussion and a polite request during a light-hearted conversation, rather than an authoritative instruction at a tense time. Do remember that this is going to be a process of gradual assimilation in the family, not a forced induction.
- Household duties should be allocated fairly so that all able household members participate in the upkeep of the house. The wife is not meant to come in as a servant.
- New practices and habits: both families are used to their own way of living and dealing with things. Be mindful of this and be respectful to each family's way of doing things if they are different from yours. Do not impose your ideas upon the other and do not joke about the practices and habits of the others. Show understanding and respect.
- New family dynamics: each family operates differently, mother-in-law may make all the decisions in one household, or the eldest son would, or the father-in-law does, etc. In addition, there may be differences in that certain types of decisions are taken by certain members of the family. Both sides are advised to learn about this in the early days, and then try to respect the family dynamics. Do not try to impose your own values – there will be enough time for that when you get established. This applies to both the husband and wife.
- Family expectations:
 - For the bride to behave like a bride and the groom like a groom for the first few days. The bride should dress nicely and come down dressed in the mornings. The groom should also take care of his appearance, behave as a son-in-law, showing respect to the in-laws.
 - Respect of the gifts that have been given to either side. It is good manners to be seen to appreciate the gifts provided from the other side.

Wearing the clothes or jewelry from the in-laws not only is good manners, but earns a lot of kudos.

- Daughter-in-law is expected to show respect and deference to the mother-in-law and the father-in-law. Son is expected to treat his mother and father-in-law with respect and as parents. Both are expected to show tolerance and respect to the siblings of their spouse.
- While the in-laws must show empathy towards the new family member, she, in turn, should be mindful of her behavior around them and try her best to 'mingle'. Try hard, for example, to not have your phone out (even under the table!) and be texting (your family & friends) as soon as, or every time, you are in your in-laws' company. Try to wait until you are in your room / another room / alone. This is equally important for the husband when visiting his wife's family.

Family stresses:

- Both sets of parents-in-laws will feel a sense of loss at some stage, for having to share their child with an outsider. This is understandable, and should be understood. Do not feel angry and disappointed when you see signs of this. Tolerate it. Best way to eventually make it go is to become part of the family – merge with the family. Important for both sides.
- Tensions often mount with the sisters of the husband, as it is difficult to share a brother. Best way to deal with this is to ignore it as much as possible, and try to befriend them. Find things that are common between them and yourself and use them to befriend them. Think of your husband's sisters as your own sisters, and treat them as such.

Responsibilities and Conduct of the Parents

It is the responsibility of the parents to provide love and comfort to the bride, who has left her home to join a new family and new environment. Do not try to impose authority by trying to control everything. Instead try to gain their confidence, trust and respect, and once this is achieved, common grounds can then be achieved, effortlessly in a very relaxed environment

Wives are entitled to their Rights

Approximately 30 to 40 percent of problems are caused by the in-laws of both sides. In these cases, the wife's parents are [usually] less responsible. It is the husband's parents who try to establish control and say inappropriate things which upset the wife, ultimately making her return to her parent's home. This is also wrong. Yes, husbands are to be dutiful to their parents but wives are also entitled to their rights. When these rights are fulfilled, wives usually take very good care of their husband's parents. By the Grace of Allāh, there are also many examples in the Jama'at of in-laws having more trust in their daughter-in-laws than even their own children. (Friday Sermon, November 10, 2006)

The Relationship with In-Laws

Both husband and wife should remember that their spouse's family should now be like their own. They should not see their in-laws as strangers, outsiders, or as people to be opposed to. They should welcome their in-laws into their lives and treat them as they would treat their own family: with love and respect. They should endeavor to become friends with their spouse's siblings and develop a parent-child relationship with their spouse's parents. They should maintain a level of purdah where required in their in-laws' home (e.g. a daughter-in-law in front of her husband's father or brothers, or a husband to his wife's sisters). They should treat their in-laws as they would want their spouse to treat their own parents. Only then can a respectful and peaceful situation be established with one's in-laws. A harmonious marriage can only be established when each person feels that his/her spouse respects and loves his/her in-laws as much as his/her own parents.

The Relationship of a Mother and Daughter in-law

A mother-in-law should treat her daughter-in-law as she would want her own daughter to be treated. A daughter-in-law should treat her mother-in-law as she would want her own mother to be treated.

Another pertinent issue these days brought to our attention by some new brides relates to family life. They state that they have had to endure cruelty and injustice from their in-laws and husbands. At times, [prospective wives] are not informed of their [prospective husband's] behavioral issues, or are told in a hidden manner

in such a way that the wife and her parents are led to believe that the issues are not a big deal. However, at times, a very frightening situation appears. In such situations it is observed that many times, the husband wants to live in peace and harmony with his wife but the mother-in-law or sister-in-law are being harsh or are inciting him to be cruel to his wife. In such cases, the poor wife is left with only two choices: either to opt for separation, or to live in such cruelty for the rest of her life. Furthermore, it is also seen in certain cases that when such wrongs are committed against the wife, she in turn wrongs the mother-in-law when she is given authority as a daughter in-law. And thus begins a satanic cycle that goes on and on in families lacking righteousness. This all occurs despite of both parties having received the teaching of righteousness and truthfulness in the verses of Nikāh. These verses promote the establishment of a paradise on earth and an atmosphere to which even strangers are attracted. Such harsh cases are few in number – yet they are very distressing and painful ...May Allāh enable every Ahmadī home, every husband and wife, mother and daughter in-law, sister-in-law and brother to tread along the path of righteousness and establish a beautiful society. (Friday Sermon, May 30, 2003, Khutbāt Masroor, Vol. 1, pg. 78)

13. Beware of:

- Your partner or his/her family is acting in a way that endangers you or your health, or is a gross violation of Islamic teachings, seek help maturely as appropriate (i.e. speak to your local Sadr or Tarbiyyat Secretary or parents)
- Of other relatives who seek to know about how things are going but are actually more interested in getting juicy gossip rather than offering genuine help.
- Of friends who offer a shoulder to lean on should you need one but may not keep your confidence – supposedly in your interest.
- People who enquire about your new family from you, hoping to find areas of criticism.
- Any third party who seeks to gain influence in matters of the marriage which should remain only between husband and wife (e.g. wife's best friend always telling her to argue with her husband for various reasons, or husband's mother always telling him to be more stern with his wife)

SESSION WITH BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM

As mentioned earlier, marriage can make your life paradise on earth. It can be the ultimate blessing and bring you immense happiness, peace, and rewards. However, this is only with a lot of hard work and dedication. You will get out of it as much as you put in.

Remember - the key to success here is prayer. Begin and end each blessed day of your marriage with prayer. Wake up for Tahajjud prayers and Fajr prayers together. Make it a habit to offer two nafl each day together to pray for your marriage - this is the most powerful tool and will go a long way in protecting and helping you. A marriage cannot be successful without prayer.

A second crucial tool is to regularly write to Huzoor (aba) to ask for prayers for your marriage. Take out some time each week so sit down and write to Huzoor (aba) together. You will see a positive difference in your relationship when you develop this connection to Huzoor (aba) and have his prayers as a layer of protection over you both.

14. EXPECTATIONS from Each other and HOW to RESOLVE ISSUES -

- Expectations from each other:
 - Honesty - always be honest with one another. There are no secrets between husband and wife, and no lies. Be open and truthful with one another so that there are no misunderstandings or suspicions.
 - Trust – you have a new life partner. Be able to keep whatever secrets and personal details of each other CONFIDENTIAL. That means that your parents and siblings have been replaced in the hierarchy, and your partner is now the first and foremost point of confidence for you. Remember that and do not breach this confidence and trust.

- Respect – of what you do, like, dislike, enjoy, have an interest in, or prefer. Your tastes may be different from the partner; so be understanding. You are two different individuals coming together. There will be time in future to merge your tastes and preferences together.
- Understanding – understanding of the difficulties both parties are experiencing, or will experience, in trying to adjust to the new set of circumstances presented by the joining together of two different individuals. Understanding means that you give each other leeway and time to adjust and change.
- Tolerance – of the mistakes or difficulties each side experiences whilst trying to adjust to each other. Some issues may just be very difficult to overcome. It may be difficult or impossible for one not to snore, or not to perspire excessively, or to stop laughing in a certain way, etc. Be tolerant and show understanding. There may be difficulties in adjusting to dietary changes, not liking something cooked in certain ways, etc. Tolerance and understanding is needed here, rather than feeling slighted and blaming the partner for not respecting the culinary skills of the in-laws.
- Privacy: The husband and wife relationship should remain private, and issues of this nature are best if discussed between the couple themselves. Involving outsiders is best avoided for the first few weeks. The couple should try to work things out between themselves and give each other due consideration for their inexperience.
- Time together: in the early days of marriage, it is expected that the couple will and should spend most of their time together. Going about their normal business as if nothing has happened is building a poor foundation for the future. However, whilst being together most of the time, obligations to the rest of the family must not be forgotten.
 1. It is important for one partner to give the other enough time to still fulfill their obligations to their parents or siblings – such as meeting and greeting them in the mornings and / or having a meal with them if that is the norm.
 2. Remembering to meet and inquire after other members of the family, so that they do not feel ignored.

3. Calling back home and inquiring about one's parents and letting them know how things are proceeding, etc.
 4. Being allowed to contact friends and update them. Be mindful that the relationship priorities are now changed, and the partner is now the priority. So time allocation to friends will necessarily have to be reduced, even though complete cut-off is not recommended either.
- After the first few days: when the euphoria of marriage settles, you begin to see the partner and their families differently. Things which you may have ignored before may become significant now. Remember: this is your new life, and this is what you have to compromise with. You give up something and the other side gives up something and together, you reach a middle road. The difficulties if any, have to be tackled with:
 - Taqwa foremost in mind – that is, will Allah be happy or unhappy if this issue is brought to the fore?
 - Issues with partner: these are best discussed mutually with understanding, tolerance and forbearance.
 - Issues with family: also best discussed mutually with your partner with understanding, tolerance and forbearance. **It is best not to involve your families as they will provide solutions best suited to their point of view, whereas you are a new family and will develop your own values and views as a result of your combined attitudes and preferences. Interference from families is a frequent cause of marriage breakdowns.**
 - Arguments: these will develop for sure, sometimes frequently. The most important thing is to:
 1. Avoid talking when the other is angry, or answering back
 2. Avoid using bad language at all costs
 3. Never bring the other's family into the argument (i.e. your parents or other family members are like this also, etc, etc).
 4. Never become violent (i.e. throw things, or punch or slap). **The surest way of losing respect is to display violence of any kind.**

5. Always end an argument as soon as you can. This can be done by either apologizing (even if you are wrong and the other is too proud to accept it – you can correct them later when they are in a better mood), or by not responding to the arguments (you can only clap with both hands).
 6. Never ever go to bed with the argument unresolved.
 7. Never raise your voice. Any issue, whether big or small, should be discussed calmly, maturely, and in quiet voices.
- If arguments get persistent: sometimes this will happen in some cases. Sensible senior family members can help, if they don't take sides. Sometimes junior family members close to your partner provide help and resolution. If it does not seem to be working, then it is better to involve outsiders confidentially. It will be important to contact the Islahi Committee or the counsellor/advisor of the area. **Do not ever forget the power of prayers. ("rabbana hub lana min azwajina..."). Requesting Huzoor ayyadahullahota'ala and other righteous people regularly (and in confidence) for prayers is essential and very rewarding.**
 - Privacy of In-Laws: both partners are entrusted with whatever happens in their new families. Don't breach that trust. Don't tell outsiders about what happens in the families. Especially if you see a weakness or fault in their home - everyone has them, even your own family. The culture will be new to you, but you owe it to your in-laws to be respectful and open-minded. The husband and wife should keep matters that they witness in the homes of their in-laws private and not divulge all the details to their own parents. Parents will naturally be very sensitive to their children's well-being, and may overreact to small details, even if the couple may be happy together. Use wise judgment and tact when speaking about your in-laws to anyone, and they will do the same for you.

15. Going to live alone with your partner: Be prepared for life which will be markedly different from what you are used to.

- For the wife who is not working outside the home, make sure you construct a normal household routine which should be followed:

- Ensure you get up together and have breakfast together. Do not let him prepare and have his breakfast alone whilst you lie in bed asleep.
 - If you have both agreed to this, then ensure his clothes are ready BEFORE it is time to go for work.
 - If packed lunch needs to be prepared, ensure its ready the night before, or well before departure time from home.
 - Ensure that the evening meal (or lunch if he comes home for it) is ready on time. Try to make things that he likes.
 - Go through the routine of the day, vacuuming, cleaning where necessary, cooking and laundry etc while husband is at work during the day rather than waiting until he comes home and spending your time alone doing chores, hence not being in each other's company
 - Make sure that you are ready and properly dressed when he comes home. To many men, nothing is more off-putting than to come home to the lady of the house who is still in her night gown.
 - Avoid being on the telephone with family or friends when you know he is due home; make personal phone calls during the day. He in turn should be mindful of letting his wife know if there are any changes in his schedule, even unforeseen changes such as traffic congestion can be communicated easily through phone calls / text messages
- When husband has gone away to work, it will suddenly be very lonely, and depression can sometimes set in. You must avoid:
 - Brooding on your own
 - Spending too much time on the internet, watching TV, or on the phone.
 - Sleeping excessively and neglecting yourself and your house.
 - The husband should make every effort to give his wife attention when he comes home- sitting at the computer all evening, or in front of the TV is not conducive to bonding, neither is taking the work day's stress out on your wife. Try to keep your wife informed about what your job entails, what you do at work on a day-to-day basis etc

- During loneliness, you need to occupy your time:
 - Make a schedule of work around the house, which should start and finish on time.
 - Make yourself busy doing things which are or will be useful in future (like taking up a course of study).
 - Make friends with people you know your husband will approve – never with those you are sure he will disapprove. This applies both ways and you owe it to each other. (i.e. of your own gender)
 - Call both sides of the family from time to time to inform them of your and his well-being and seeking their best wishes.
 - Busy yourself in improving your religious knowledge, by reading the books of the Promised Messiah (as). Encourage your husband to read as well and discuss with one another what you are reading whenever possible. This is in anticipation of you setting a good example to your children in the future.
- Be in frequent contact with both sets of parents. Encourage each other to do so. It reassures everyone.

16. Finances: during breakdowns in marriage, financial issues figure fairly prominently. It is wise to ensure that this aspect is handled and dealt with fairly and sensitively and equitably.

- **Disposal of household income.** Are both sides clear that money is disposed off to their satisfaction? Sometimes the man may have committed to supporting relatives financially, and this should be clearly understood. It is not the wife's calling to support her side of the family from her husband's income (over which he will have greater say and control). If there is a substantial portion of the husband's income that is going outside the use of the married couple and the household budget, then it is important to disclose this at the outset.
- Agree how the household should be run. Who is responsible for the purchases for the day-to-day running of the household? Normally this falls in the realm of the wife, but there is no hard and fast rule about this. Whatever is agreed upon, both sides should be happy and comfortable with this.
- If the wife is going to manage the household finances, it is important for both of you to agree beforehand on what is a fair sum of money to be provided every

week or month to ensure this task is carried out. There should always be provision for this to be reviewed at intervals to ensure the figure is reasonable.

- Agree what exactly will be the responsibility of each partner for the running of the house. Who will pay the utility bills, the mobile phone bills, the internet bills, fuel for the car, insurance, etc?
- The wife must be provided with a reasonable amount of pocket money for personal use over and above household expenses. This may not be necessary if she has her own job as well. Division of duties of the household will then be by mutual agreement.

17. Inviting people: Neither party should invite people to the house without letting the other know in advance (exceptions accepted). Neither party should invite people the other is uncomfortable with unless it is those for whom Allah has enshrined a right in Islam (parents and blood relations).

18. Visiting relatives: It is good practice to visit both sets of parents regularly. Both have rights and it is important for the confidence of each other that these rights are maintained and upheld.

19. Holidays: Marriage is expensive, and it is perhaps unfair to expect a holiday in the first year. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. Look at the finances of the house before demanding or expecting a holiday. Also look at what is affordable and reasonable. A good holiday brings the couple together and rejuvenates them. A holiday taken under pressure does nobody any good.

20. Children: The decision about when to have children must be mutual. There should be no pressure exerted by either set of parents-in-law, though it is acceptable to express a desire. If there is disagreement about when to have children, this should not be made into an issue in the first year or two of marriage. There may be difficulty in having children. This could be due to medical problems from both sides. Medically speaking, causes of infertility are equally distributed between the sexes, so it is not fair to blame one partner or the other. Be understanding and supportive if there is a medical issue - you are in this for life. A medical issue that arises is not cause for separation. Support your spouse as you would want to be supported. Medical help should be sought if there has been no pregnancy after ONE year of trying and both partners should seek advice together.

21. Money and assets: It must not be forgotten that in Islam, what a man earns is common to husband and wife, but what a wife earns belongs to her for use as she chooses. Wives' income should not be eyed upon by the husband in anticipation for a share. Nor should they be coerced and or cajoled into giving you their income. Husbands who try to hold back household expenses in the belief that the wife should contribute, do wrong. Any contributions from the wife must be given completely voluntarily and happily.

22. How to handle the household responsibilities and balance all duties:

Although the prime household responsibility lies with the wife, if she is working outside the home, then the workload can be shared among husband and wife with mutual respect and understanding and not with enforcement. Tasks should be decided upon mutually and a conscious plan should be made ahead of time to clarify both the husband and wife's duties and responsibilities for a certain day/week/etc. Try preparing a weekly schedule each weekend for the upcoming week and indicate on there who is cooking, doing groceries, errands, household chores, etc. This schedule will also help to maintain balance, as it will be clear to see if you two are spending enough time alone, with each of the in-laws, and if there is too much time being spent at work or with friends without the spouse, etc. It will also help to ensure that both parties are carrying out their respective roles, and help to avoid the conflict of both husband and wife coming home from work to no dinner, etc.

23. Relationship Boundaries with respect to Islam:

Ensure that both husband and wife are clearly aware of the instructions of marriage and the roles of husbands and wives as outlined in the Holy Qur'an, Ahadith, the Ten Conditions of Bai'at, and by the Khulafa. Both parties are responsible for helping to maintain the sanctity of the marriage by covering one another's faults, keeping private issues private, and honoring his/her spouse in the way that he/she should. Both parties should respect and be aware of the things that hurt the other person and avoid them if they are reasonable request (i.e. a wife asking her husband not to interact freely with other females). A marriage is a sacred gift from God, and should be treated as a precious treasure. It is a lifelong commitment and a delicate matter; not a temporary arrangement that can be dealt with immaturely or foolishly.

CLOSING COMMENTS IN PRESENCE OF ALL

- **CONTACT US or ANYONE** you feel comfortable within Jama'at, if God Forbid any conflicts arises after MARRIAGE
- Remember that a healthy setup of this new life will lead to proper and healthy upbringing of our future generation with sound personalities, spiritually and physically
- Remember to pray that this union may be a source of blessings and peace for both the bride, groom and their families, *insha'Allah!*

Nikah Sermon

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ
وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

(Al- Nisa'4:2)

O ye people! fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from the two spread many men and women: and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, fear Him particularly respecting ties of relationship. Verily, Allah watches over you.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا لَا
يُضْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

(Al-Ahzab 33:71-72)

O ye who believe! fear Allah, and say the right word. He will bless your works for you and forgive your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger shall surely attain a mighty success.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ
لِعَدْوِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

(Al-Hashr 59:19)

O ye who believe! fear Allah; and let every soul look to what it sends forth for the morrow. And fear Allah; verily Allah is well aware of what you do.

68. Prayer for a Righteous Wife, for Children and Setting a Good Example for them

Whilst mentioning the characteristics of the servants of God, the Holy Prophet^{sa} told us that they used to say the following prayers:

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ
وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ۝

(Al-Furqan 25:75)

And those who say, ' Our Lord, grant us of our spouses and children the delight of our eyes and make each of us a leader of the righteous.'

Prayer for the Newly Weds

Amr bin Shuaib relates the Holy Prophet^{sa} instructed us that when you marry or employ a slave, recite this prayer.

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَسْأَلُكَ خَيْرَهَا وَخَيْرَ مَا حَصَلَتْهَا عَلَيْهِ وَاَعُوْذُ
بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَشَرِّ مَا حَصَلَتْهَا عَلَيْهِ -

(Abu Dawud, Kitabul Nikah)

Note; if women recite this, the personal pronoun should be changed from "Ha" to "Ho" which denotes the masculine gender.

O Allah! I seek its goodness and gain and goodness which You have endowed in his/her nature. I seek refuge in You from its evil and every evil which is hidden in his/her nature.

Prayer at the time of Copulation

Hadhrat Abdullah bin 'Abbas relates the Holy Prophet^{sa} instructed us that whosoever recites this prayer at the time of copulating with his wife God grants him progeny which is safe from the mischief of Satan.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ اَللّٰهُمَّ جَنِّبْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ وَجَنِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ مَا
رَزَقْتَنَا

(Bukhari, Kitabud Da'awat)

In the name of Allah, O Allah, save us from Satan and save the progeny that You grant us, from the evil of Satan.