



# Being sociable

Social Rules

LEVEL 5

## Being Sociable

### Objectives >>>

#### Students should:

- Be reminded that Allah (SWT) has created us to be social creatures
- Know that many actions in Islam need to be carried out socially and that individualism is not recommended in Islam
- Know that Islam encourages meeting and greeting friends regularly and being part of a community.
- Understand that socialisation should remain moderate
- Know that there are certain rules to being sociable
- Review the etiquettes of conversations in Islam

We have learnt in previous lessons that Allah (SWT) has created us as gregarious beings i.e. we naturally tend to socialise with other people. Islam encourages us to follow this innate nature by being actively involved in our communities and by being around good company. Living an isolated life away from society is strongly discouraged since it eventually could lead to very serious mental, physical and spiritual problems. Whilst being a lonely person is abominable (very bad), having friends in our lives is considered a basic necessity just like food and water. Imam al-Şādiq (as) says:

“One who does not have a friend lacks a base necessity”<sup>i</sup>

Islam also encourages us also to work collectively as a community since this has a lot of individual and social benefits. Social benefits include uniting the community whilst individual benefits include breaking the selfish nature by developing concern for other people’s problems.

In practice, we also notice that Islam places a lot of emphasis on reciting daily prayers in congregation in mosques rather than alone at home. Also, the ritual of Ḥajj requires Muslims around the world to gather at one place all at once and to perform the acts of worship together. These acts of worship are in synchrony with our innate nature of being gregarious or social animals.

Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur’an:

“And hold (onto) the rope of Allah all together, and do not be divided”<sup>ii</sup>

### WHO SHOULD WE SOCIALISE WITH?

Whilst being social is highly encouraged, Islam does not advise us to socialise with just anybody. It advises us to carefully select who we should befriend. We should only socialise with those people who will help us to get closer to Allah (SWT) and we must avoid the company of those who are ill-mannered and careless about their duties toward Allah (SWT).

Imam Ali (AS) said, ‘Beware of befriending corrupt people, immoral people, and those who openly commit acts of disobedience to Allah.’<sup>iii</sup>

## HOW MUCH SHOULD WE SOCIALISE?

Depending on whom we usually hang around with, the time we spend with people should vary. If the people around us always make us feel very spiritual and close to Allah (SWT), and we feel that we learn a lot from them, then the time spent around such people should be increased. However, if our company is usually non-Muslims who of course don’t care about Islam, then we need to limit our socialisation with them. This is because their behaviour and thinking can eventually have a negative effect on our behaviour without us realising.

## ONLINE SOCIALISING

Another form of socialisation is on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Again, the rules of socialisation on the internet are not different to those outside the internet. We must ensure that the people we befriend on these sites are people who are God-fearing i.e. good Muslims. If we find that a ‘friend’ on Facebook continuously uses vulgar language (swear words) or posts links to indecent video clips, we must immediately cut this e-relationship.

## RULES OF SOCIALISING

Whether in person or on the internet, there are certain rules for socialising that Islam has laid down:

### ALWAYS HAVE A SMILE

Even when we are in a lot of worry or trouble, keeping a cheerful face is very beneficial in maintaining a healthy social life. People like happy people and not those who are always angry and frowning.

### RESPONSIBILITIES FIRST!

If our socialisation causes us to forgo or neglect important duties such as praying on time or obeying parents, or even for instance studying for a school test, then this kind of socialisation is negative. We must put our Islamic priorities first and then set aside the time for our friends and community.

## ḤIJĀB

We must ensure that when we are talking to the opposite gender we must observe all forms of ḥijāb. For girls this includes covering their bodies with loose clothing, not talking with a soft voice and not perfuming themselves in a way that causes lust. For boys it is to lower their gaze and restrict the communication to what is necessary only.

## NO ALCOHOL OR MUSIC

Any event that includes alcohol or ḥarām music must be avoided. On the internet, we also must avoid any conversation that supports the use of alcohol and the selling/ listening of ḥarām music.

## NO RACISM

We should always treat people fairly irrespective of where they come from. Our socialisations should not encourage racism or nationalism of any sort.

## ISLAMIC CONVERSATIONS

Another important aspect of socialising is of course conversation. Let us review some of the etiquettes of Islamic conversation that we have learnt in the past.

Just as with greetings, Allah (SWT) has placed some boundaries as to what is appropriate conversation. It should be remembered though that being a good Muslim does not mean that a person is boring and humourless. Indeed Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

“Humour people and you will enjoy their brotherhood. Meet them with smiles and joy and you will kill their spites.”<sup>iv</sup>

Some rules to observe and remember when conversing with others:

- 1- We should never be offensive, make offensive jokes or use sarcasm to destroy the confidence of another. It is ḥarām to tease and laugh at anyone due to their physical nature or circumstance. This

type of bullying behaviour is highly frowned upon by Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

“O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they; and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nick names.” (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 11)

- 2- We should never lie or gossip – Even if it is in joke or a prank. Lying in jest is another kind of falsehood. For instance, telling a person that “such a person has invited you for dinner tonight,” when actually there is no truth in it can be harmful if that person believes the lie. This type of falsehood is also *ḥarām* as proved conclusively from the traditions.<sup>v</sup>
- 3- Thinking carefully when we make a statement or state a fact to ensure it is not exaggerated, is true and is not offensive.
- 4- Maintaining the principles of *ḥijab* when conversing with members of the opposite gender.
- 5- We should avoid constantly telling jokes and clowning around as we will never be taken seriously. Imam al-Sajjad referring to a clown once said:

“Tell him that there is a day for God in which those who indulge in vain and futile acts will not gain anything but loss.”

- 6- We should never violate the sanctity of sad occasions and places like funerals and graveyards with laughing and giggling.
- 7- Have a sense of humour and do not take everything personally!

The Holy Prophet summarised the conversations of a true believer as thus:

“(The true believer is one who possesses) noble interactions (with others); his (spiritual) bosom is the most expansive from all other people; his soul is the most humbled (of others); his laughing is done (only) with smiling (not out loud); and his gathering (with others) is (only) in order to learn something...”<sup>vi</sup>

Being humorous is also very encouraged in Islam if the rules above are followed. The Holy Prophet used to be very humorous and used to encourage his companions to have a sense of humour too!

One of the Holy Prophets companions was Zahir, who used to trade in metal objects. Once the Prophet was passing by the bazaar, he saw Zahir and playfully grabbed him from behind and said, “*Will anyone buy this slave?*” Zahir laughed and said, “*O Messenger of Allah, whoever buys this slave will be in loss.*” The Prophet smiled and said, “*In Allah’s eyes, your value is high.*”

## Review Questions

### 1) ‘Human beings are social beings’. What does this mean?

- a. Allah (SWT) has created us in a way that we need to be around people
- b. Human beings must socialise for a healthy lifestyle
- c. Both a and b

### 2) Why does Islam encourage socialisation?

- a. Because it is part of man’s inner nature to do so
- b. Because it breaks the selfish nature and develops concern for others
- c. None of the above
- d. Both of the above

<sup>i</sup> Ibid No. 8760

<sup>ii</sup> Holy Qur’an (3:103)

<sup>iii</sup> [Ibid. no. 2601]

<sup>iv</sup> Mizan al-Hikma, vol.3 p.240.

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.al-islam.org/greater\\_sins\\_complete/22.htm](http://www.al-islam.org/greater_sins_complete/22.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 64, Section of the Signs of a True Believer, pg. 310, tradition 45