

WE ARE FAMILY

Life is designed in such a manner in which we can never live alone – human are always in need of each other in one way or another. Even the most introverted personalities need other people to survive – to get food, knowledge and many other necessities of life, even if it is through the least interactive ways.

Everyone has their individual needs to be fulfilled; the need to love and be loved, to learn, to contribute, to socialise and not forgetting basic needs such as eating, having shelter – all these cannot be achieved alone. Living with others is a natural chain of life that beautifully falls into place where we complement and complete one another.

We help each other fulfill individual needs and in the bigger picture fulfill the needs and balance of society. A student learns from a teacher, a leader serves the people, a mother brings up her children, a man loves a woman – these are some examples of the many relationships we have with one another, in no way can we exempt ourselves from the chain.

As much as it is the most fundamental and natural need of life, human relationship is among the most difficult thing to manage. The difficulty is due to the different values, emotions, beliefs and characters involved in a relationship, which can be a challenging combination to balance.

We could get into disagreements even with those closest to us – our spouse, siblings or best friends, what more acquaintances or strangers.

At the same time, as much as it is difficult, it is our strongest strength as a society. The stronger the ties we have with one another, the stronger the society is. This is the main reason behind the success of great teams, be it the army, a corporation or a sports team – they succeed mainly due to the strong bond they have with each other, which makes them understand and work well with one another.

There will always be superstars amongst us, but they can never make it on their own. No superstar can be good at everything, no matter how much they claim they can. A great team does not need superstars, especially not its mindset i.e., putting their own interest above others. Rather, a great team requires a mixture of great individuals who are willing to work with each other towards a shared goal or purpose – these are people who embrace the concept of brotherhood or what I call family.

The Concept of Family

Generally, the most important people in any normal human being's life would be their family. These are the people who we spend most of our time with, people who we take care and takes care of us, the people who matters and we love the most. Because of the strong connection and emotions we have for our family, we are willing to sacrifice, go the extra mile and give our best for them. It drives us beyond our own personal interests as we strive for a bigger and nobler reason. If ever we are to be stranded on an island, who else would we be most willing to give our last piece of bread to, if not our own parents, spouse or children?

Also, due to the love we have for one another, we care enough to sincerely highlight any mistakes or weaknesses of our family members even if we end up in disagreements and arguments. We don't give up on our family members despite the lengthy process it might take to convince them. It is a common sight for mothers to continuously nag their children to complete their homework. Regardless how their children react, even up to the point of sometimes being disrespectful, mothers would still be by their children's side and continuously care for them; all of it with the sole intention of wanting their children to be successful and make it in life.

A family system is driven by values and etiquettes, which forms the way we interact with one another. Values and etiquettes play a key role in maintaining a strong, good and healthy family system or institution. Broken families happen mainly due to weak values and etiquettes being practised in the family such as the lack of interest and respect for each other.

However, this beautiful and proven concept or system in its natural form is practised in a limited scope that only impacts a limited number of people. Imagine how big a difference we could make if we were to practise it beyond our own family members – don't you think the world would become a better place?

The Concept of Brotherhood in Islam

Born from different mothers, skin of all colours, come together as brothers – that's the beauty of Islam.

I found this beautiful phrase on Facebook that accurately describes the meaning of brotherhood in Islam and how it forms an integral part of the

religion. Islam strongly emphasises human relationships. It is so important that wrongdoings among humans are not forgiven by Allah until the person wronged forgives the other. For this reason, Islam teaches us manners to deal with others and for the same reason the concept of brotherhood is established in Islam.

The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy.

Al-Hujurat 49: 10

Allah firmly reminded us the importance of standing united in the cause and name of Islam as it is the key to success.

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you – when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.

Ali Imran 3: 103

Unity builds a strong and durable support system that helps us go through the difficulties and challenges that lies ahead of us. A hadith of Prophet (ﷺ) beautifully explains this, which to my personal opinion, also accurately describes the characteristic of a great team.

Abu Musa narrated: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A faithful believer to a faithful believer is like the bricks of a wall, enforcing each other." While (saying that) the Prophet (ﷺ) clasped his hands, by interlacing his fingers.

Bukhari

Disunity is fatal and only brings negative impact to us, which is proven time and again by Islamic history – how many Islamic empires had fallen due to

disunity among Muslims. Being divided and having disputes with each other would only result in failure or loss.

And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.

An-Anfal 8: 46

The concept of brotherhood in Islam is holistic and complete. It is meant to unite people based on a single belief, putting aside any differences, be it race, status, gender, lineage or wealth. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) made this concept clear in his last sermon (also known as the farewell sermon) delivered on Mount Arafat during the Hajj of year 632 (10 Hijrah).

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.”

The concept has been practised since the early years of Islam, giving birth to the strongest group of people who eventually spread the word of Islam throughout the Arabian Peninsula and subsequently the world. The earlier Muslims managed to survive difficult times because of this strong brotherhood bond. During the initial years of Islam, Muslims were tortured, insulted, humiliated and attacked for no reason other than being Muslims, some even by their own family members. But the brotherhood bond gave them the strength

to persevere and became a force that was reckoned with, built on a single common belief; faith in Allah – a bond stronger than any relationship even bloodline.

There were no longer any racial barriers, torn down by the teachings of Islam and the brotherhood concept it introduced. Since the start of Islam, the brotherhood spanned many races, tribes and languages – Bilal ibn Rabah was an African from Ethiopia, Salman Al-Farisi was a Persian and Abdullah ibn Salam was a Jew. These were among the closest companions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Similarly, there were no differences when it comes to genders, both men and women were part of the larger Muslim family as mentioned in the Quran.

The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those – Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

At-Tawbah 9: 71

The fundamental concept of brotherhood is relatively simple; we are to treat each other like how we would like to be treated, wanting the best for fellow Muslims as how we would like to have it for ourselves – this is truly the base of the concept – sincere love.

It was narrated from Anas b. Malik that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.

Bukhari and Muslim

The feeling of love and brotherhood between the Muslims brings us joy as it gives us the wonderful feeling of sweetness of faith, which is a feeling of true pleasure and satisfaction. The closeness and intimacy of brothers in Islam

is described by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as being similar to the human body, when any part of the limb aches, the whole body will ache – if any one of us is in difficulty, the others would feel it as well.

Nu'man b. Bashir reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection and empathy is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.

Muslim

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) also described Muslims as mirrors to each other. The strong bond we have naturally makes us protective of each other.

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A believer is the mirror of his brother. A believer is the brother of another believer. He protects him against loss and defends him behind his back."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad. Graded Hasan by Al-Albani

There are various guidelines provided to us on treating each other as brothers (or sisters) as elaborated in numerous hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). It emphasises on the rights of others and on mutual respect. It also highlights certain responsibilities that we have to fulfill towards each other.

Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: Don't envy one another, don't nurse aversion against one another and don't pry one another and don't outbid one another (with a view to raising the price) and be fellow-brothers and servants of Allah.

Muslim

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "The Muslim is the brother to the Muslim; he does not cheat him, lie to him, nor deceive

him. All of the Muslim is unlawful to another Muslim: his Honor, his wealth, and his blood. At-taqwa is here.

It is enough evil for a man that he belittle his brother Muslim."

Graded Hasan by At-Tirmidhi

Abu Ad-Darda narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Whoever protects his brother's honor, Allah protects his face from the Fire on the Day of Resurrection."

Graded Hasan by At-Tirmidhi

Brotherhood goes beyond just feelings; it needs to be manifested in our actions as well. In doing so, we are encouraged to always do good deeds for fellow Muslims and for such noble actions, great rewards are promised for us.

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: If anyone relieves a Muslim believer from one of the hardships of this worldly life, Allah will relieve him of one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. If anyone makes it easy for the one who is indebted to him (while finding it difficult to repay), Allah will make it easy for him in this worldly life and in the Hereafter, and if anyone conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah helps His slave as long as he helps his brother."

Muslim

There isn't a small good deed that is not taken into consideration. Among the action that is most encouraged and yet the simplest, is to supplicate or provide a prayer for another and asking the best for them. Such a simple action has a high standing in Islam as elaborated in both the Quran and hadith of Prophet (ﷺ).

And [there is a share for] those who came after them, saying, "Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts

[any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful."

Al-Hashr 59: 10

Abu Dharr reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: There is no believing servant who supplicates for his brother behind his back (in his absence) that the Angels do not say: The same be for you too.

Muslim

Islam is a religion of action and walking the talk. For anything that it preaches, it would be deeply built into the actions required of a Muslim, be it in worship, social interaction or economy.

In inculcating the spirit of brotherhood, Islam encourages Muslims to live in society and congregation (*jama'ah*). In building this behaviour, the brotherhood spirit is built into the acts of worship so that it becomes easy for us to continuously inculcate and internalise the spirit. Additional incentives are even given for such actions to further encourage us to be steadfast at it.

For instance, Muslims are encouraged to perform congregation prayers where the reward for it is 27 times greater than a prayer performed individually. Muslim men are also required to perform the compulsory congregational Friday prayers at the mosque each week.

`Abdullah bin `Umar narrated: The reward of the congregational prayer is twenty seven times greater (than that of the prayer offered by a person alone).

Muslim

In terms of social interaction, besides the things mentioned in the earlier hadiths, Muslims are also asked to visit the sick, attend funerals of fellow Muslims and many other actions that would strengthen the relationship between each other.

Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "A Muslim owes another Muslim six duties." He was asked, "And what are they, Messenger of Allah?" He said, "To greet him when he meets him, to accept when he gives him an invitation, to give him good counsel when he asks for advice, to wish mercy on him when he sneezes and says, 'Praise be to Allah,' to visit him when he is ill, and to join the funeral procession when he dies."

Narrated by al-Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad. Graded Sahih by Al-Albani

These are some of the basic principles of brotherhood in Islam. It emphasises togetherness, values and familial relationship that glue everyone together as a great united team. However, most of us fail to practise it these days. The gaps are getting larger where the majority of us are returning back to the *jahiliyah* ways. We are now divided according to ranks, statuses, skin colours and ideologies, making us weak as a society in the eyes of the world.

If only Muslims could fully embrace the brotherhood or family concept just like how the Companions did before, Muslims would be able to rise again and become a stronger and more civilized society in no time.

There is a destiny that makes us brothers, No one goes his way alone; All that we send into the lives of others, comes back into our own.

Edwin Markham, American poet

The Strength of a Family Culture

When I was much younger, I was fascinated with the Godfather film trilogy series – feature-length crime movies that depict the life of a fictional Italian Mafia family. The movie series gave me an insight on how the most organised crime organisation live and operate.

The movie series fascinated me so much that I actually bought a book on the history of Mafia families in the United States – how it started, how it is run and how it evolved from a being street gang to a structured crime organisation.

Yes, we are talking about among the most notorious and ruthless group of people. How does this fit in our current discussion that focuses on values and positivity?

Despite it being involved in almost all evil deeds that we can list down, we cannot deny their success as an organisation. What strikes me the most is how they leverage and optimise the family concept to strengthen their organisation and to aggressively grow their operations.

***Mafia is a process, not a thing.
Mafia is a form of clan-cooperation to which
its individual members pledge lifelong loyalty;
friendship, connections, family ties, trust, loyalty, obedience
– this was the glue that held us together.***
Joseph Bonanno, Sicilian-born American Mafioso,
boss of the Bonanno crime family

They adopted a close-knitted family culture that focuses on respect, loyalty and treating each other well. They had strict rules that emphasises strong family values, even specifying punishments for being unfaithful to their spouses – an awkward rule considering the vices they do. But because of such a strong family oriented culture that focuses on taking care of each other, their operations grew so large that it was almost impossible to stop them.

As I analysed further the downfall of some of these Mafia families, I found a common reason and trend. It was when they started to forget their responsibilities and loyalty to the family that things started to crumble. Members started to lose respect for their leaders and eventually betraying

them, which finally led to either the leaders being assassinated or the failure of their entire operations. It is more or less the same story for all of the failed Mafia organisations.

Similar trends are observed when I analyzed the lives of the famous Japanese gangsters known as the Yakuza. They practised an even stricter and disciplined family culture. But the same applies to them; failures of Yakuza families are due to the same reason – when a member or a leader fails to live the family values they hold so strongly, things go haywire.

What is the main point that we are trying to prove here? What is it that is so important that we are taking a negative example to elaborate a positive trait? The two examples above illustrate the positive effects of family culture that even notorious organisations benefited from it.

Imagine how strong we could be if we were to embrace the culture religiously (as called and taught by Islam) be it in smaller teams or the larger society and how much we can achieve as a great team. Even criminals can reap the benefits, so why can't we?

***The opportunity for brotherhood presents itself
every time you meet a human being.***

Jane Wyman, singer, dancer, and film/television actress

Embracing the Family Culture

Success is driven by strong teams – a formula widely known to everyone. The question is therefore how do we actually build a strong team? There are various theories and answers to this commonly asked question, some of it we have discussed in the other chapters of this compilation.

Among the solution for building a strong team that I have personally observed is the adoption of a family concept as their working culture. We have discussed how much the family concept is called upon by Islam and how it has benefited the society at large. We have also discussed how effective it is in a smaller setting, even for criminal activities.

The family culture is something that I had personally practised since I was young. My childhood friends and I had always claimed that we are a family and bonded strongly with each other. Because of this, we evolved into becoming a strong team who worked well with each other – as a team, we were good in most of the things we do together and more importantly, we got things done.

When I started working, my mentor believed in the same culture and was implementing it for the teams he was leading. It created a positive energy where people cared for each other, which was also translated into work. We were cautious of the work we were doing and giving it our best so that it fits well into the overall chain and not affect another person's work. Helping one another was natural and everyone was not calculative in doing additional work because we believed we were doing it for our family.

Communication was much more pleasant and warm. We referred to each other as “brothers” and “sisters”. Even our emails started with greetings followed by these beautiful words. It inculcated a close-knitted relationship where people are willing to go the extra mile and take care of each other's back.

***We all want to help one another.
Human beings are like that.
We want to live by each other's happiness,
not by each other's misery.***
Charlie Chaplin, comic actor, filmmaker, and composer

We were able to accomplish a lot of milestones at various organisations using this family concept. I had the chance to witness a division that was suffering an underwriting loss of about 10 million, turned itself around to record over 40 million underwriting profit within a year.

I was also part of a project team that managed to launch a Takaful operation within 3 months. These are two real life success stories that I had personally experienced, achieved by teams who embraced and practised a family based working culture.

Building a Great Team and Family

The benefits of adopting a family culture to build a strong team are quite obvious. However, the actual implementation of it can be a little bit tricky. If it is not managed well, there will be people who would take advantage of the culture for their own benefit, which would affect the effectiveness, morale and reputation of the team.

1. Setting the family values.

It is important for us to define and set the parameters of the family culture that we want to inculcate so that everyone practises the same version of the culture. A suitable method to do this is to define the shared values for the team. It should highlight the core traits fundamental to a family – respect, loyalty, sincerity, responsibility, teamwork, love, care and many other noble values that are applicable to a strong family culture.

Family is where character is formed, values are learned, ethics are created and society is preserved.

Unknown

2. It starts from the top.

Another important factor in inculcating an effective family culture is that it has to start from the top and practised by the leaders of the team. This is similar to an actual family where a healthy family environment is introduced by the parents, particularly the father as the head of the family. If the father himself displays bad attitudes and values, it would surely be copied by the other family members, especially the children, which would eventually lead to a broken family structure.

3. Family does not mean having fun all the time.

One of the most common misinterpretations of a family culture is that many think that it is about having fun all the time. It is true that a family culture encourages members to enjoy each other's company and have fun; we want to create a positive and happy environment. However, it's not just about that.

Like an actual family, there are times we have fun – going for outings and playing around. But a larger portion of our time is spent doing more beneficial activities such as earning a living to sustain the family, studying to create a better future, cooking to fill up empty stomachs – we have responsibilities to fulfill. In simple words, it can be summarised as “work hard, play hard.”

4. We sincerely care for each other, even if it means scolding each other.

Another common misinterpretation is that family culture needs to be harmonious all the time, up to the extent that we rather let wrongdoings happen in front of us rather than addressing it appropriately. This is with the belief that a family culture is all about politeness and turning a blind eye out of “love”, which is not entirely untrue.

A true believer of love would never allow their loved ones to become bad people. This is why parents would scold their child for any wrongdoings they do. It is not that they don't love their child – on the contrary, the child is scolded because of sincere and unconditional love – all good parents want their child to grow up and become a good and successful person, and it is their responsibility to mold the child to become one.

In short, if something is required to be reprimanded for the right reasons, it needs to be reprimanded – period.

5. All for one, one for all.

Family culture is about everyone, not particular sections or individuals. Everyone plays a role and chips in. Anyone who does not practise or believe in the culture would fall out from the family.

I believe in brotherhood for all men. But I don't believe in wasting brotherhood on anyone who doesn't want to practice it with me.

Brotherhood is a two way street.

Malcom X, human rights activist

It is to be tied to a single purpose that everyone would strive for. In an actual family, this purpose could simply be the wellbeing of the family members. For Islam, all Muslims are tied to the faith in Allah. For teams, we can establish any purpose that represents the existence of the team. What is more important is that everyone plays a part in it – all for one, one for all.

We Are Family – A Balance Culture for Survival and Success

The family culture has been around for a long period of time and practised by various groups of people. As simple and basic as it is, it provides a solution to

many of the world's problems – from the larger perspective of the society to the smaller team dynamics.

Executed correctly, it would produce remarkable results. But it is much deeper than that, in essence the concept is there for our survival in this world and for this same reason, it was introduced in Islam.

Brotherhood is the very price and condition of man's survival.

Carlos P. Romula, Filipino diplomat, statesman, soldier, journalist and author

It creates a positive environment for us to live in and at the same time emphasises the need for us to give our best in everything we do. It puts aside extreme selfishness as we strive towards goals that are beyond ourselves, creating a balance in our lives both internally and externally. It pulls us together to live a happy, balanced and meaningful life – we are family.