

THE ARIF TIMES

Achieving Resilient and Inspiring Families

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PREPARING FOR A FAMILY

As couples begin the journey toward marriage and parenthood, one question often lingers in the background: Are we ever fully prepared? The truth is - readiness is rarely a fixed point. It is something we grow into, through knowledge, reflection, support and shared experience.

In this edition of the ARIF Bulletin, we explore what it means to build a strong foundation before marriage, to prepare the mind and body for pregnancy and to maintain a healthy and nurturing pregnancy journey. These transitions are not just medical milestones - they are emotional, relational and spiritual ones.

A key conversation we bring into the spotlight is the role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how they shape the way we love, cope, communicate and eventually, parent. Our past does not define our destiny but understanding it empowers us. No one begins perfectly prepared - but with compassion, knowledge, and the right support, every couple can move forward with confidence and hope.

May this edition inspire growth, reflection and connection as we continue nurturing stronger families and a healthier community.

Preparing for Marriage

by Ustaz Muhd Zaki Mahmud

As a Kadi for ROMM, I have had the privilege of solemnising many unions. Each ceremony is filled with hope and joy, but it also reminds me of an important reality, a wedding (walimah) is only the beginning. What truly matters is how prepared a couple is for the life that follows after the nikah.



The importance of Intentional Planning

One key observation is the importance of intentional planning. As mentioned by our Prophet Muhammad PBUH "Actions are by intentions". Many couples focus heavily on the wedding day yet give less attention to their life after marriage. It is crucial for couples to have honest conversations about their shared goals. What do they hope to achieve in the first two to five years? Whether it involves career progression, financial stability, starting a family, or personal development, aligning expectations early helps prevent misunderstandings later.



This planning must be supported by strong communication and mutual understanding. Couples should openly discuss key aspects of life such as health, work commitments, living arrangements, and views on children.

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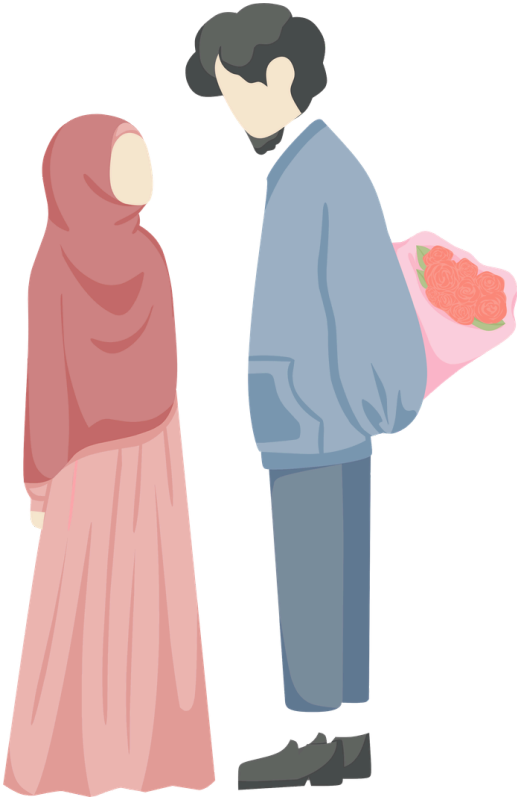
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any comments or feedback.*

*Log on to <https://www.projectarif.sg>
for other Project ARIF Resources.*

These are not always easy conversations, but they are necessary to build a stable foundation based Sakinah, Mawaddah & Rahmah.

Marriage is not just about love, it is also about clarity, compromise and shared responsibility.



Beyond practical matters, couples must equip themselves holistically. Religious knowledge is essential to understand rights and responsibilities within marriage. At the same time, emotional maturity, mental resilience and financial management skills are equally important. Marriage brings many challenges, and being prepared in these areas helps couples navigate them with wisdom and patience.

It is also helpful to adopt a mindset of planning and execution. Before nikah, couples should take time to plan carefully. After marriage, the focus should shift towards implementing those plans, tracking progress, and making adjustments when needed. Growth in marriage is a continuous process.

Despite all preparations, challenges are inevitable. This is where faith plays a significant role. Couples should cultivate husnuzzon, having good expectations of Allah. We plan, but Allah also plans, and He is the Best of Planners. In moments of difficulty, turning to Him through prayers and ibadah provides strength and guidance.

Finally, marriage thrives on mutual support. Be there for one another, seek advice when needed, and never hesitate to turn back to Allah for direction. A successful marriage is not one without challenges, but one where both partners strive together for the sake of Allah. May every marriage become not just a union in this world, but a pathway for you and your family towards Jannah. Ameen Ya Rabbal 'Alamin



Preparing for Pregnancy and Maintaining a Healthy Pregnancy

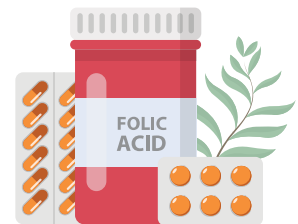
by Dr Dhillshad Qadir

Planning for pregnancy is an important step for both women and men. Good preparation not only increases the chances of conception but also lays the foundation for a healthy pregnancy and baby. Physical health, mental wellbeing, nutrition, and lifestyle choices all play vital roles throughout this journey.



Preparing for Pregnancy: HER Health

Women planning to conceive should focus on optimising their nutrition and overall health. Folic acid is essential and should be taken at a dose of 5 mg daily at least three months before conception and continued until 12 weeks of pregnancy. This vitamin helps with red blood cell formation, development of the baby's nervous system, and prevention of neural tube defects such as spina bifida.



A well-balanced diet supports fertility and pregnancy outcomes. Dark green vegetables such as spinach and asparagus provide folate, while iron-rich foods like red meat, chicken, fish, egg yolk, and leafy greens help prevent anaemia. Oily fish such as salmon and sardines support the baby's brain and visual development, while dairy products and soy provide calcium for bone health, especially when taken with vitamin D.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is equally important. Regular exercise and achieving a normal Body Mass Index (BMI) before pregnancy reduce fertility difficulties and pregnancy complications. Women should ensure vaccinations against Rubella, Varicella, and Hepatitis B are up to date before conceiving. Smoking, alcohol, and drug use should be avoided, as these can cause low birth weight, breathing problems, and irreversible intellectual damage to the baby.



Mental wellbeing is often overlooked but is crucial. High stress levels can disrupt menstrual cycles and delay conception. Open communication with one's spouse, emotional readiness, and mutual support help create a stable and nurturing environment for future children.

Preparing for Pregnancy: HIS Health

Pregnancy preparation is a shared responsibility. Men should eat a balanced diet rich in vitamins and minerals, maintain a healthy weight, and exercise regularly. Obesity and smoking are linked to male infertility and can affect pregnancy outcomes through passive smoke exposure. Alcohol, drugs, very hot baths, and tight underwear should be avoided, as they can impair sperm quality. Men taking long-term medication should consult a doctor regarding fertility effects.



Maintaining a Healthy Pregnancy

Most women discover pregnancy around five weeks following a missed period. Early antenatal care is important, with a dating scan between weeks 6 and 12 to confirm gestational age. The first trimester can be marked by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and breast tenderness. While common, severe symptoms warrant medical review.



As pregnancy progresses, women will undergo routine blood and urine tests and optional screening for conditions such as Down syndrome and other chromosomal anomalies, preeclampsia and cytomegalovirus infections. Antenatal vaccination will be discussed with you. In the second trimester, fetal movements become noticeable, and a detailed scan at around 20 weeks screens for structural abnormalities. Screening for gestational diabetes is performed between weeks 24 and 28.



Healthy eating continues throughout pregnancy. Contrary to popular belief, women do not need to “eat for two”, but require only modest calorie increases later in pregnancy. Certain foods, including unpasteurised dairy, raw or undercooked meat, and high-mercury fish, should be avoided to reduce infection and developmental risks.

In the third trimester, physical discomforts may increase as the body prepares for labour. Regular medical monitoring ensures both mother and baby remain well. With informed preparation, healthy nutrition, and emotional support, pregnancy can be a positive and empowering experience for both parents.

Are We Ever Fully Prepared?

The Influence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on Our Capacity to Parent

by Siti Nurzakiah binte Zar'an



As couples prepare to welcome a child, many spend time thinking about practical preparations - appointments, finances, baby essentials, and routines. But parenthood also brings something less visible: the resurfacing of our own experiences of being parented. Oftentimes, those experiences led us to make that quiet promise to ourselves:

"I want to parent differently from how I was parented."

Many of us carry early life experiences that continue to shape how we respond to stress, relationships, conflict, and emotional closeness. These are sometimes referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs may include growing up around frequent conflict, emotional neglect, instability, harsh criticism, loss, or inconsistent caregiving.

Pregnancy and early parenthood can sometimes awaken these memories quietly.

A partner forgetting something small may trigger a reaction bigger than expected.

Exhaustion may make patience feel harder to access.

Some may struggle to express emotions openly, while others become fearful of "getting parenting wrong."

These responses are not signs of failure - they are often signs that our past experiences still live within us.

But having difficult childhood experiences does not mean we are destined to repeat them.

In fact, awareness itself is powerful. Many parents who grew up with hardship become deeply intentional about creating safer, more emotionally secure homes for their children.

Healing often begins not with perfection, but with reflection.

As a couple, it may help to gently ask:

What kind of environment made you feel safe growing up?

What are some patterns you hope to continue?

What are some experiences you hope your child will never have to carry?



These conversations are not meant to assign blame to our parents or families. Rather, they help us better understand ourselves and each other. When couples become more aware of the stories they carry, they are often able to respond to one another with greater compassion instead of judgement.

Parenthood is not simply about raising a child. It is also about learning how to nurture ourselves, our relationship, and the kind of home we hope to build together.

Perhaps no one is ever fully prepared to become a parent. But we can become more aware, more supported, and more intentional.

If you are ready for this journey and would like support in becoming more aware, more supported, and more intentional as parents, feel free to reach out to your ARIF Social Worker. Together, we can begin meaningful conversations about your families-of-origin, explore how past experiences may shape present relationships, and gently build new parenting narratives for the family you hope to create.

While we may inherit stories from the past, we also hold the capacity to write new ones for the future.