

Dealing with Conflict

Suggested Duration: 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

- ▶ To reinforce the idea that conflicts should be resolved peacefully
- ▶ To learn about the meanings of the word 'jihad'
- ▶ To learn that Islam and the Geneva Convention lay down very strict rules about the conduct of war
- ▶ To reinforce the command that suicide is haram

Key Words

- ▶ Haram, jihad, struggle, good, evil

Islamic Values

Islam encourages the peaceful resolution of all conflicts, but permits armed struggle in limited circumstances with very clear rules. In Islam the greatest struggle (jihad) is the individual's own battle against evil within.

Citizenship Values

Citizens are expected to abide by the law. Britain should only go to war with the consent of parliament. Britain, like most countries in the world, has signed up to the Geneva Convention, which lays down rules about the nature of warfare.



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M (B)



Activities

Recap the previous lesson on conflict and resolving conflict.

Ask: What did we decide were the main reasons for causing conflict? What is the Islamic method of conflict resolution?

Share the lesson objectives.

A Starter Activity

Explain that, as good Muslims, we should abide by the law of the land and behave peacefully.

Ask pupils if there are any occasions when we can decide to take the law into our own hands in order to achieve what we want. Ask the whole class if they can think of any recent events where people have acted outside the law. Was this the correct thing to do? What would happen if we all decided to ignore the law of the land?

This is a whole-class discussion and might lead to examples such as the Danish cartoon incidents, burning of books or, even more likely, the terror attacks and suicide bombings. Emphasise that the law of the land does permit you to demonstrate, to go on the streets peacefully to try to change something you do not agree with.

B Development

Activity 1: Discussion

Read the following passage to the class and then lead a whole-class discussion:

'It was recently reported that a very concerned father had sought advice because his 10 year old son had come home very annoyed that a group of boys who were not Muslims had been bullying him on the way home from school. He was right to be annoyed but what shocked his father was that the boy then said: "I will blow them all up!"'

Ask: Have there ever been occasions when you have been so annoyed that you have used language like this? If so, what caused you to be so angry? What action did you actually take? Is it ever right for people to threaten to blow up other people, or actually to blow them up? Why do some people take actions like this?

This will no doubt lead to some real discussion about the nature of bombing, suicide bombers and what is permitted in Islam and what is not. The discussion might move from relatively low-level anger about events in school to much more serious debate about why some Muslims feel angry enough to do this. Issues like Palestine, Kashmir, Iraq and Afghanistan – that is, about the sections of the ummah where there is conflict – might well feature. The term 'jihad' or 'jihadis' or something similar might also arise. These are very topical areas, but debate about them and understanding them is not simple, so do not try to explain every example. You are looking for the common reasons for this anger and, even more importantly, what action might be justified.

Activity 2: Jihad

Ask the whole class: What does the term 'jihad' mean to you?

It is likely that some pupils will have a limited view of the term 'jihad' and may well think that it is something like a 'holy' war, a war conducted by Muslims against non-Muslims. They may think it means a struggle. They may think it is about getting to Jannah. They may also refer back to the earlier debate.

Explain that the word 'jihad' actually means 'to struggle'. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ spoke of the greater jihad, which is your struggle to do good and to overcome the selfish desires that tempt all human beings.

Ask the class to think of a time when they were about to do something wrong but decided against it. What made them make that decision? Ask several pupils to give their own examples. You may want to provide an example of your own.

If the struggle against your own evil is the greater jihad, ask the class what they think is the lesser jihad.

Now explain that the lesser jihad is armed struggle, but stress that in Islam and in modern warfare there are very strict rules that govern how war is conducted. In modern times all countries have signed an agreement called the Geneva Convention, which tells countries what they can and cannot do, the types of weapons they should not use, and how to treat prisoners and civilians. It forbids, for example, the use of torture.

Islam has even stricter rules. For example, it also says that you must not kill the elderly, women, children and innocent people. You must not attack places of worship, destroy crops and trees.

Resources

Activity 3: Islamic Guidance

Ask a pupil to recite the following verses. Explain the meaning.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

'...And do not kill yourselves, indeed God is merciful to you.'
(Surat al-Nisa' 4:29)

Question: Ask pupils what 'do not kill yourselves' mean?

Suggested answer: Islam teaches us not to commit suicide whatever the circumstances.

وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

'And do not throw yourselves by your own hands to destruction, but do good, indeed God loves those who do good.'
(Surat al-Baqarah 2:195)

Questions: What do we learn from this Ayah? What is God's message to us? Is it clear? Briefly discuss the meanings of these verses. Explain that the community of scholars has totally condemned suicide bombing because it is both suicide and because it breaks Islamic rules about the lesser jihad.

Explain that it is God's right to judge people and take their life – and that no one individual or group of individuals has the right to take life outside the law. As the Qur'an says:

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ
أَوْ يُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

'You (Muhammad) have no say in the matter whether He (God) forgives them or He punishes them because they are indeed wrong doers.'
(Surat Alee Imran 3:128)

'He who killed himself with a thing would be punished on the Day of Resurrection by that very thing.'
(Muslim)

'He who has no control over his anger has no control over his mind.'
(Al-Kafi)

Pupils' Activity Sheet 3.1002:
Islamic Guidance

Resources

Pupils' Activity Sheet 3.1003:
Feedback

Pupils' Activity Sheet 3.1004:
Follow-up Worksheet

'Whoever strangles himself will be strangling himself in the fire and whoever stabs himself will be stabbing himself in the fire.' (Bukhari)

'There is no strength like being able to control one's anger.' (Tuhaf al-'Uqul)

The Prophet ﷺ has taught us that all human life is sacred and has taught Muslims to love for humanity what we love for ourselves.

Ask pupils to explain the word 'humanity'. Stress that it does not simply mean Muslims.

C Plenary

To recap, ask the following questions:

- ▶ Is it halal or haram to commit suicide?
- ▶ How do we know that committing suicide is halal or haram?
- ▶ Is it acceptable to blow up innocent people for the sake of any cause?
- ▶ What is the greater jihad?
- ▶ In what way is the Geneva Convention similar to Islamic rules about warfare?

Ask pupils to complete Pupils' Activity Sheet 3.1003

Suggested Follow-up Work

Give instructions for follow-up work:

Talk to your parents and teachers about at least two recent international conflicts in the Middle East and other countries.

Get their views on how Muslims in the UK should respond to these conflicts.

Use Pupils' Activity Sheet 3.1004 to record your discussions.

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- ▶ To reinforce the command that suicide is haram



Islamic Guidance

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Feedback

Lesson Title: Dealing with Conflict

Name:

Madrasah/Organisation:

Today I have learnt about:

As a result of this lesson I have learnt that a good Muslim should:

I am going to follow up this topic in my home/school/community by:

Follow-up Worksheet

Lesson Title: Dealing with Conflict

Name:

Madrasah/Organisation:.....

Tasks:

Talk to your parents and teachers about at least two recent international conflicts in the Middle East and other countries. Get their views on how Muslims in the UK should respond to these conflicts.

International conflict 1:

International conflict 2: