



## Cut out the devaluing messages

Our self-esteem, as mentioned previously develops mainly from both positive and negative messages we have received from the time we were young.

You may have had relatives telling you, “You’re so terrible at mathematics,” “You’re more intelligent than your brother,” “You’re kindhearted,” or “You should be more like your neighbours.”

It is necessary to understand that most people don't intend to send devaluing messages. However, this does not mean that their words don't harm. They can still damage your self-esteem. Many times people may be merely speaking from anger, pain or emotions. Be that as it may, being a young child, you weren't able to understand this and as a result, you just soaked in everything you heard. You received the messages, absorbed them, carried them and lived with them.

One important strategy that can help you overcome this is to stop believing the devaluing messages and start building a healthy self-esteem. It includes believing that nothing will reach you except if Allah ﷻ has destined for it to reach you. You cannot get wealthier, healthier, more intelligent or more beautiful if Allah ﷻ in his infinite mercy has already made you a certain way.

## Strategy

**#1 :** Recognise and challenge the devaluing messages you have received by not allowing them back in. It will take time, but you will get there

**#2:** Write all the devaluing messages you have received on small pieces of paper and then destroy them one by one. You could shred them, tear them, white them out or crumple them. As you destroy, each one remind yourself of one of the favours of Allah ﷻ upon you and say, “I am releasing this disparaging message and thanking Allah ﷻ for ...”



## Case Study

Dayyanah's parents were struggling financially, because of which her mother suffered from depression. She, however, did not get the help she needed and did not focus on her spiritual needs. Thus, she had low tolerance of stress and often blamed Dayyanah for all their problems. She often told her that it was her fault the family struggled so much in life. Of course, this was not true, but Dayyanah grew up thinking, "I am the cause behind my family's problems," "My parents are poor because of me," and "I'm not good enough." Eventually, one day during Tafseer lesson she came across the Ayah:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا

Surely your Lord gives abundant or limited provisions to whoever He wills. He is certainly All-Aware, All-Seeing of His servants.

[17:30]

Dayyanah finally took in that the amount of wealth they had was nothing in her control. She understood that everything is in fact, under the control of Allah ﷻ. He does whatever He likes and grants what He wishes to whomsoever He wants. She then became aware that her family was having financial difficulties long before she was born; she was not the cause, but yes, believing those devaluing message was crushing her self-esteem. As she worked to untie these message, be grateful to Allah ﷻ for His bounties and change her thinking habits, she started to feel better about herself and her situation.