

MY “HUMBLE YOUR HEART” STORY

My name is Anuszka Khadija. I am 10 years old and I go to Charlton Primary School in Wantage, Oxfordshire, England. I attended the “Humble Your Heart” course in spring 2014 and it changed my life! It was my first Islamic class ever and I was very sceptical to begin with but my mum encouraged me to give it a try because she always says “Prejudices come from the unwillingness to learn. But Allah gave you the ability to learn, so don’t waste this gift!” This is a story of how the “Humble Your Heart” course changed my life and that of the people around me. It is a story about how I became less selfish and more considerate. It is a story about my journey towards Islam.

Thank You for Your Good Deeds - Dealing with Bullies

Since the day I started school I was bullied. First I didn’t know what bullying meant, because in nursery and Kindergarten I had many friends. All those bullies must have skipped the happy days of my early childhood. I never actually thought that I was different from all the other children in Northern Ireland, because all of my parents’ friends came from different countries all around the world. At home we found many reasons and made many excuses. But whichever reason it could have been, the bullying never stopped. One day, I came home being very unhappy with the way I looked. I was angry with my mum for having black hair and dark skin instead of blond hair and fair skin like ALL the other children. I asked her why I looked like my dad and not like her.

My mum was surprised and also very sad. What had happened at school? A girl called me ugly because of my dark hair and skin, the class laughed at me for wearing trousers and not a skirt, they called me a boy and they said I couldn't speak English properly because I was a foreigner. I didn't even know what the word foreigner meant and besides I was Irish, I was born there. That day, I began to change my character. I so much wanted to be like everyone else. I started making up rules about myself.

I told myself that my skin was dark pink and my hair was brownish. I was rude to others whenever I felt annoyed by them, even if they were actually friendly. I didn't want to learn anything about my German or Arabic heritage and certainly nothing about Islam, because it would make me so different to everyone else. I thought that life was unfair and I could not understand why it had to be me who was being punished. It made my mum very sad.

Since then we have moved to England and been to Jordan a lot, and lived in many different places and, although, I have never experienced racism again (I later learned what this type of behaviour was called), bullying remained a part of my school life because I was so accustomed to it. It felt to me as if I were a magnet to attract bullies. My mum said to me that there will always be people who don't like us or who we don't like. It is the great challenge of life to deal with it and we cannot move town or school every time I had an argument with someone because running away is never the solution to any problem.

So, it was time for me to face my problems. Where to begin? My mum said, "You begin by loving Allah"! I already loved Allah. But according to my mum, in order to really love Him I needed to know what He wanted me to do with my life, and not so much what I wanted. She said, "Love Allah and everything else will fall into place."

And this is where my journey begins.

The Qur'an teaches us many things about bullying and resolving arguments. As part of the "Humble Your Heart" course I learned that I can actually collect the good deeds of those who bully me and don't apologize. I know, it's still about me, but it made me realize that perhaps bullying isn't so bad after all and that I really don't need to feel bad about it at all. And after a while I felt pretty good collecting quite a number of good deeds. In fact, I was happy and I began to see myself as truly blessed with all those fab deeds in my pocket. But my mum said that it doesn't stop here and with me. In the Qur'an it says:

"The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you. (49:10)"

My mum tends to do that. Whenever I think I am finished with a task, she starts with this big "but" and I understand I have a lot more work to do to reach my goal. So what does this quotation mean? Some of the kids in my class began to think that I was weird constantly thanking them for their good deeds but many of my classmates thought that my reaction to bullies was cool and started doing exactly the same. But, and here comes the big "but, that is not where it stops. The Qur'an teaches us to make peace! My teacher Ariba asked us in an exercise to apologize to someone for our mistake. At this point I was willing to try anything since her advice on dealing with bullies had worked so well. MY friend Emily and I had a bad argument. We both thought we were right and the other person was wrong. The argument continued for some days and it was not much fun, because we missed out on playing together.

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MY friend Emily and I had a bad argument. We both thought we were right and the other person was wrong. The argument continued for some days and it was not much fun, because we missed out on playing together. I apologized to Emily for having started the argument and told her that she was right, even though I was convinced that I was right. I felt not so good doing it, in the end I felt really great, because we stopped arguing and went back to being friends. We have to swallow our pride and do what the Qur'an teaches us. I made peace with Emily and I also made peace with myself.

From this moment on I became a lot more considerate. I started helping other kids in my school to resolve their problems in the same way. Today, only a few weeks later, I am acting as peer mediator for the Year groups 5 and 6. I was elected by the pupils of my school, because they thought I was mature and responsible to handle and resolve arguments. Not only am I feeling happier and more content at school but my grades have also improved and I am in the top group for all subjects. I have many friends and I learned to stand up for myself and others in a peaceful and polite manner. Loving Allah by following his word has made me both a happy and useful person.

Being Myself

I have also learned that I love everything about my life! I like the way I look and I love learning about my heritage and especially my religion! I believe that I wasn't bullied because I was different but because I was afraid to be different.

I couldn't even defend being different because I didn't know anything about what made me different. Since I started learning with Ariba, I have also found an interest in my cultural heritage. I have started reading the Qur'an, learning German and Arabic more actively. As part of my "Humble Your Heart" class project I have created a power point presentation about Islam. I will give a presentation in my class about the values of Islam and what it means to live as a Muslim. I have had prayer clothes since I was 6 years old, but I have only recently started using them. I have been to the Mosque twice and I am learning how to pray properly at the moment.

Thank you Allah for giving me the gift of wealth so I can share it with others! Thank you Ariba for opening my eyes! Thank you Mum for encouraging me to use the gift of learning!

Anuszka, Wantage/UK, 14th April 2014