



A SERIOUS CONVERSATION ABOUT AGING

When we are young, we can't imagine the difficulties we will face when we're old.

As we age our health, mental capacity and quality of life diminishes. We may feel we are burdening family, adding to feelings of depression.

Just as having youth and good health is a test, so is aging. It is another phase of life with new tests, that, if we have the right mindset and follow Islamic guidance, we can make the most of our twilight years and earn a lot of rewards before we return to our Creator, insha Allah.

"It is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness, then gave strength after weakness, then, after strength, gave weakness and grey hair: He creates as He wills, and it is He Who has all knowledge and power." (30:54)

There is a widely accepted expectation that our elders must be care for by their family only, no matter what. But this expectation must be looked at realistically, both by the families and elders themselves.

The reality may be that a family is unable to adequately care for their elder, or an elder may not have anyone.

Families often feel guilt when they have to look for help. Caring for an elder can become psychologically and emotionally like caring for an unwell child, and it can be extremely distressing to "let go" and let someone else take care of them. But sometimes it is in the best interests of the elder that they are cared for by people with special training and in a setting where they will get the best help.

It is very important that the dignity of our elders be maintained. Elders have the right to make decisions about their own lives. Informing them of their options and involving them



in the decision-making process maintains their sense of dignity and is best for their mental and emotional well-being.

Islam honors and respects the elderly.

"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both attain old age, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood." (17: 23,24)

Most people don't plan for their old age. When things come to a crisis point is the most difficult time to start searching for help and making decisions. We can't plan everything ahead but having knowledge of available services and having an Advance Care Plan is helpful, insha Allah.

The National Zakat Foundation's "Respecting Elders" program is building partnerships with Muslim Community services to raise awareness and working to meet the needs of our elders.

For information about Navigating the Aged Care System, making an Advance Care Plan, and where to get help see NZF's website <https://www.nzf.org.au/>