



Baby @ 6 months...the bitter taste of hand cream still lingers from this morning when I liberally squirted it on my toothbrush. My beloved kitchen has not seen more excitement than squash puree in weeks. I cannot remember the last time I finished a (now much needed) hot cup of tea.

And day-by-day, something's bubbling inside of me. Curiously, though, it is not the task in hand. It is something that has been niggling at me ever since I first picked up a copy of one of the many baby manuals on the market. Even back then, before our little bundle had joined us, there was a small voice at the back of my mind wondering if there was some sort of catch. But in my antenatal state I ignored my better judgement and looked forward to the golden promise of sleeping through at 6 weeks. Happy days. So confident was I at my own capacity to project manage, I thought it would be a great time to finally apply for that MSc – seeing as I would have all that spare time on my hands.

The reality, quite literally, is a far cry from such blissful promises. Like any good advertising campaign, one hint at an elusive prize (sleep) and your book becomes an instant bestseller. The growth of baby books both sides of the continent has catapulted former nannies, childminders and midwives to almost celebrity status.

And as keen a reader I am, I believe in some ways all these differing opinions may have done us more harm than good. In the past it seems like young parents were better able to cope because they had the wealth of experience from actually partaking in raising their younger siblings/cousins due to larger family sizes and the obvious benefits of community-centred living.

No amount of 'Googling' or extra sessions with the health visitor could ever replace the experience of actual parents who have been through the easy and difficult times and have, *alhamdulillah*, got through the other side to tell the tale (and laugh about it!).

While attending last year's AICP camp I happened to come across a couple of sisters who, in the space of a few short minutes, completely changed my mentality on how to approach the challenges associated with being a first time parent, may Allah bless them for that. Instead of charting nap times on a clipboard (no, really) and carrying my 'textbooks' around with me, I realised that these sisters had a better, more natural approach: taking cues from your baby, trying your best and making *du^a* that you succeed.

As with all things we find difficult in life, persevering and realising the blessings we have been given by Allah *ta^ala* allows us to overcome our own weaknesses and grow as individuals. Doing so aids us in learning about how to be patient, avoid anger and rely on Allah without fear for worldly matters. It also makes us realise that the knowledge we should put all our efforts into learning is the knowledge of the religion and that, by the Grace of Allah, acquiring and implementing it allows us to reach our fullest potential, whatever the challenges we face.