



Relatives & Red Flags?

YOUR GO-TO GUIDE TO NAVIGATING
TOXIC RELATIVES



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If you've stumbled upon this e-guide, chances are you're either plotting your escape from a never-ending rishta talk, dodging a phuppo's side-eye, or trying to recover from your nani's latest guilt trip. Welcome to the ultimate survival guide for dealing with toxic relatives in the desi world.

CONGRATULATIONS

Pakistani families are a beautiful paradox. On one hand, they're your biggest supporters during weddings and exam meltdowns. On the other hand, they owe you for all the mental health crises you've been through. Let's not sugarcoat it—some relatives really are as nourishing as a burnt roti. From the aunt who can't stop comparing you to her beta with a "high-flying" career to the uncle who thinks your goals are a "waste of time," we've got your back.

So grab your chai, take a deep breath, and let's tackle this together.

You're at a family dinner. One of the aunties corners you and says, "Beta, weight kam kar rahe ho na?" You're still chewing your gulab jamun. Ouch.

And there you are, mentally calculating the number of hours you'd need to work to afford therapy after this conversation.

Let's be honest, what makes some relatives so unbearable?

Common Traits of **TOXIC RELATIVES**

Shaming:

"Teaching? Humare zamane mein toh ladkiyan doctor banti thi, ab log compromise kar lete hain." They never miss an opportunity to make you feel inadequate.

Controlling:

"Yay degree theek hai, magar MBA karlo. Aaj kal yeh hi chal raha hai." They think your choices (from career to marriage) belong in their hands.

Gossiping:

"Arey, suna tumhari mami ke ghar chai phir se jal gayi?" They know what your neighbor's bahu cooked for dinner—and why it flopped.

Comparing:

"Ahmed ki naukri ka pta chala?" For them, your life is apparently an OTT series, and every cousin's episode is getting better ratings.

Boundary-Breaking:

"*Shaadi kab kar rahe ho?*"
or worse, "*Bachay kab honge?*" Privacy? What's that? Your WhatsApp chats and medical history are their peak discussions.

Criticizing Choices:

"*Yeh kya khana hai? Healthy khaana seekho meri tarah.*" Whether it's your food, friends, or phone wallpaper, they're here to tell you you've got it all wrong.

Invalidating Feelings:

"*Tum toh bas overreact karte ho.*" Cry if you want, but they've already dismissed your feelings and decided it's your fault.

Unsolicited Advice:

"*Aise mat karo, humare zamaane mein toh...*" Their motto: "If it ain't broke, give advice until it is."

Envy-Fueled Undermining:

"*Acha, yeh job mili hai? Promotion toh mushkil hai wahaan.*" They make sure to compliment you but always with a side of poison.

Self-Victimizing:

"*Maine tumhare liye itna kiya, aur tum...?*" Somehow, every situation turns into how you made them suffer.

Living in Denial:

"*Tumhe galat laga, maine aisa kuch bola hi nahi.*"
They refuse to acknowledge their mistakes, and make you think you're at fault.

Apparently the “*Hmmm, Accha, Theek hai*” tactic works most of the time but not always. In Pakistani culture, “boundaries” are as foreign as pineapple on biryani. But they’re necessary for your sanity.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Without Starting World War III

The Silent Boundary: Stop oversharing. Keep your plans vague. They: *"How's your new house coming along?"*
You: *"Alhamdulillah good, still in process"*

The Physical Boundary: Strategic seat placement is key. Also, you can try the busy bee tactic: always look like you're helping or doing something important. People rarely bother those who seem “busy.”

The Verbal Boundary: Use phrases like: *"I appreciate your concern, but I've got this."* Or, *"That's a personal decision, but I appreciate your concern."*

Pick Your Allies: Every family has a cool cousin. Stick to them. They'll save you from awkward rishta interrogations and sneak extra gulab jamun onto your plate.

The Strategic Bathroom Break: Spot a loaded question coming your way? Suddenly remember you need to refill your glass or go to the bathroom.

Compliment-Redirect Combo: Change the subject before they dig too deep. They: "What are your plans for marriage?" You: "Oh, I don't really think much! By the way, your bangles are gorgeous, where did you get them?"

The Group Switch: If cornered, join another group mid-conversation. Preferably one laughing about something harmless, like a viral meme.

The Controlled Smile: Keep smiling and nodding while mentally making grocery lists until they lose interest.

The Honest-but-Short Response: They: "Why didn't you come to the last dawwat?" You: "I was caught up, Alhamdulillah all is good now."

DEALING WITH TOXIC RELATIVES

The Islamic Way

Toxic relatives aren't a modern phenomenon. Islam recognises the complexity of family dynamics and provides a timeless framework to navigate them with balance, grace, and integrity.

IMPORTANT: Sometimes, we are too quick to label relatives as "toxic" over minor misunderstandings or trivial issues. Even worse, we use them as scapegoats for our own shortcomings. One should be really careful before making such judgments. Remember, Islam encourages us to look beyond petty grievances and emphasises the significance of silah-rehmi (maintaining ties of kinship).

“So would you perhaps, if you turned away, cause corruption on earth and sever your [ties of] kinship?”

[Quran 47:22]

“...Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, and the needy; and speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakah...”

[Quran 2:83]

“The best of you are those who are best to their families, and I am the best among you to my family.”

[Ibn Majah]

“Whoever is pleased to have his provision expanded and his life span extended, let him keep good relations with his family.”

[Bukhari]

“The one who maintains ties of kinship is not the one who reciprocates. The one who maintains ties of kinship is the one who, when his relatives cut him off, maintains ties of kinship.”

[Bukhari]

These verses and ahadith highlight the sacredness of family ties. Breaking them without valid reason is a grave matter in Islam.

Practical tip: If a toxic relative spreads gossip about you, counter it with kindness. Send them a plate of food or make dua for their guidance. It’s not about them—it’s about protecting your heart from bitterness.

In addition, we learn

“Mercy does not descend on a people when there is someone among them who severs ties of kinship.”

[Sahih Bukhari]

This doesn't mean you allow toxicity in your life; rather, it encourages you to rise above pettiness.

“Consult them in the matter and, once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah.”

[Quran 3:159]

Sometimes, speaking to a wise, trustworthy person can provide clarity on how to handle a difficult situation.

“Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account.”

[Quran 39:10].

Patience doesn't mean tolerating abuse—it means responding with dignity and self-restraint.

“I guarantee a house in Paradise for one who gives up arguing, even if he is right.”

[Abi Dawood]

Try your best to avoid heated arguments. Sometimes, walking away is the best way to let both sides reflect and gain perspective.

What's more?

1

Your mind and body are an amanah (trust) from Allah. Letting toxic behavior affect your emotional health defies the purpose. If things get too overwhelming, excuse yourself politely: “***I need a moment, InshaAllah we’ll talk later.***”

3

Islam encourages balance in all things. You can **set boundaries** without being harsh. For example, If a relative keeps prying into your personal life, politely redirect the conversation: “Alhamdulillah, things are going well. Let’s talk about your garden—it’s so beautiful!”

2

Forgiveness in Islam is deeply rewarding, but it doesn’t mean allowing someone to harm you repeatedly. For example, if a relative publicly shames you, forgive them in your heart but keep your distance to avoid it happening again.

4

When tempers flare during family gatherings, silently recite: **SubhanAllah, Alhamdulillah and Allahu Akbar.** This not only calms your nerves but also aligns your focus.

SELF-CARE

for the Soul

Dealing with toxic relatives can drain your energy faster than a load-shedding session in July. Here's how to recharge:



Take a Breather: Step outside, get some fresh air, or go for a walk. A change of scenery can clear your head and lift your mood.



Listen to Something Uplifting: A calming Quran recitation, a soothing nasheed or even a “it’s okay, sometimes, things happen” kinda vibey podcast can feel grounding.



Vent Safely: Talk to a trusted friend, cousin, or sibling who “gets it.” Sometimes just saying it out loud helps lighten the emotional load. P.S. *just make sure you don’t go down the gossip route.*



Write it Out: Grab a notebook or open the Notes app on your phone and pour out all your feelings—the experience, how it made you feel, and what you’d do differently in a similar situation. This helps process emotions, release negativity, and gain clarity.



Treat Yourself: Make a cup of chai, watch a favorite show, or have your favourite dessert. Little comforts work wonders.



Set Tiny Goals: After an exhausting interaction, focus on one simple, rewarding task—like organizing a drawer or watering plants. It gives you a sense of comfort.

IMPORTANT: Staying calm and handling things with patience, even if you were wronged, earns you a reward from Allah. Keeping this in mind can lighten the emotional load and help you move forward.

REMEMBER,

*“Family is a blessing from Allah.
A righteous family is the foundation of a
strong ummah. Strengthen your bonds,
cultivate love and respect and never take
your family for granted.”*

Dealing with toxic relatives isn't about winning arguments or proving points. It's about preserving your mental well-being. At the end of the day, you love your family, right?

So take a deep breath, recite Bismillah, and handle your relatives like the calm, collected boss you are. Stay graceful, keep your cool, and let them wonder where all your poise comes from. You've got this, InshaAllah!

And the next time someone asks why you haven't achieved world domination yet,

just smile, sip your chai, and remember:
you're the main character in your story, not theirs.