

DEPARTMENT OF TARBIYAT  
LAJNA IMA'ILLAH CANADA



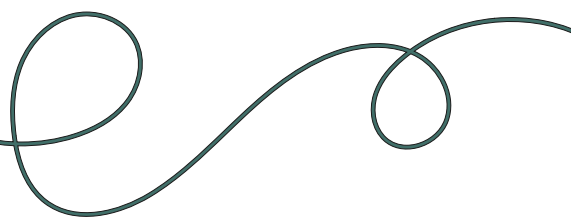
THE INFLUENCE OF  
**Biological &  
Mental Health**  
**ON MARRIAGE**



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# Introduction

The Holy Quran describes the purpose of marriage using a beautiful analogy of clothing:

**“They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them.”**

*(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:188)*

In his commentary of this verse, Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud (ra) has explained that like the clothes we wear, a marriage is meant to provide comfort, protection, and embellishment for both husband and wife. Therefore, the husband and wife should be a source of mercy and support for each other.

This booklet is specifically designed to address the biological and mental health factors which can influence one's marriage. It is very important for a woman to educate herself about these changes and learn how to communicate with her husband effectively in a respectful and kind manner. Lajna members should read this together with their husbands to help them better understand these factors.

Marriage is a partnership that thrives on mutual understanding, trust, and harmony. While emotional connection and shared values play a central role, the impact of biological and mental health factors on marital relationships is often underestimated. Issues like hormonal changes, mental health challenges, and stress can significantly influence how couples interact, communicate, and navigate their shared lives. Understanding these factors is essential, not only to strengthen the marital bond but also to provide support and empathy to one another during challenging times. This discussion will explore how physical and mental well-being can shape the dynamics of marriage and why addressing these aspects is critical for a fulfilling partnership.

We will discuss the phases of hormonal changes in a woman's life, their impact on marriage, effective communication strategies with husbands, and how as wives, we can understand our husbands' frustrations as well as their physical and mental challenges.

**When a girl gets married, she should have a clear understanding of her menstrual cyclical changes and know how to communicate with her husband, as effective communication is key to a successful marriage.**

Communication needs to be polite, gentle, and supportive. Practice compassion, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized gentleness in speech, saying:

**‘When Allah wills good for a household, He instills gentleness in them.’**

*(Musnad Ahmad)*

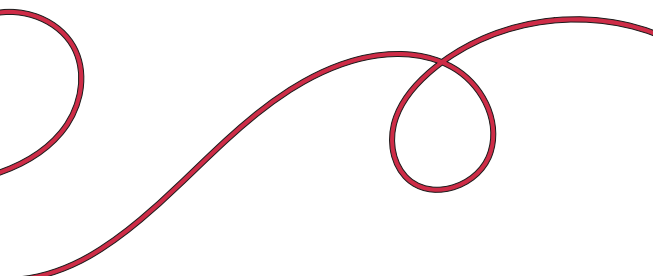
Cyclical changes have a huge impact on a woman’s mood and affect our interactions with the people around us. Something that might not normally upset us one day, might on another day. This is why it’s important that while communicating with our partner we avoid placing blame or making our partner feel at fault. Instead of saying “You don’t understand my struggles,” try framing it as, “I sometimes feel misunderstood when I’m going through this.”

Example:

- “I feel overwhelmed when my mood changes suddenly, and I need some extra patience from you during those times.”

Let’s go through the cyclical phases of a woman’s life, what to expect, and how to communicate with a partner about these changes





# 1. Menstrual Cycle & PMS

## What Happens:

- During the menstrual cycle, hormone levels (primarily estrogen and progesterone) fluctuate, particularly before menstruation. In some women this hormonal fluctuation can lead to **Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)**. Symptoms may include:
  - Mood swings (episodes of sudden low mood without any reason)
  - Irritability
  - Fatigue
  - Anxiety or depression
  - Difficulty concentrating (i.e brain fog)
  - Physical symptoms like bloating, cramps, and headaches

It's important to know that the intensity of PMS varies among women, with some experiencing Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD), which is more severe and mostly involves a very low and cranky mood. Women feel like crying without any reason.

## Impact on Marriage:

- **Emotional Impact:** Mood swings or irritability can lead to misunderstandings or arguments if the partner does not understand or empathize with these changes.
- **Communication Struggles:** Partners may misinterpret emotions or reactions as personal criticism or withdrawal.
- **Sexual Intimacy:** Some women may experience lower libido (reduced interest in sexual activity) during this phase, which can cause tension if not communicated effectively.

## How to Communicate with our Husband

Educate your husbands about these hormonal changes in a polite way so that they understand the biological basis of PMS to foster empathy:

*"During certain times of the month, I might seem more tired or emotional. It's not intentional, and I don't mean to take it out on you. Here's how you can help me during those times....."*



## 2. Polycystic Ovarian Disease

**Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)** is a hormonal disorder affecting women of reproductive age. It causes irregular menstrual cycles, excessive androgen (male hormone) levels, and ovarian cysts. Symptoms include weight gain, acne, excessive hair growth, thinning hair, and infertility.

### What a Woman Feels with PCOS

- **Physical Symptoms:** Irregular periods, fatigue, bloating, hormonal acne, and unwanted hair growth.
- **Emotional Impact:** Mood swings, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and body image issues (due to excessive weight gain secondary to hormonal changes)
- **Infertility Stress:** Difficulty conceiving can lead to frustration, sadness, and feelings of inadequacy.

### Impact of PCOS on Marriage

- **Emotional Strain:** Mood swings and depression can cause misunderstandings.
- **Intimacy Issues:** Hormonal imbalances may lead to low libido or discomfort.
- **Fertility Challenges:** Difficulty conceiving can cause stress, disappointment, and pressure from family/society.

### How to Communicate with our Husband:

Educate your husbands about PCOS in a polite way so that they understand the biological basis of it to foster empathy:

“PCOS affects my body in ways that I’d like you to understand so we can handle it together.”  
[(Discuss above symptoms you are experiencing)]

“Sometimes my mood swings or fatigue are due to PCOS, not because I’m upset with you.”

“It helps me when you support my efforts to eat healthy or exercise because my weight gain is because of my hormones and not necessarily in my control.”



## 3. Infertility

Some women go through a phase of **infertility**. Infertility can be one of the most challenging and emotional experiences a couple can go through. The journey of infertility and the treatments involved can have profound impacts on the marriage, both physically and emotionally. Infertility can be particularly challenging for women, as they often face both physical and emotional struggles that are unique to their experience.

### **Challenges Women Face During Infertility:**

- Many women internalize the struggle with infertility and may feel inadequate, believing that their inability to conceive makes them less of a woman. This can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, or low self-esteem.
- The emotional toll of infertility can trigger thoughts of personal failure, especially when they are unable to fulfill the societal or familial expectations of becoming mothers.
- Seeing others easily conceive can lead to feelings of isolation, jealousy, or resentment, which can be hard to deal with when they don't feel able to share their pain openly.
- There can be a societal stigma surrounding infertility. Some may see it as a sign of weakness or fault, which can add further pressure and shame to the woman's experience.
- Women often face questions from well-meaning family members, friends, or even strangers about when they plan to have children, adding to their emotional burden. Some might unintentionally make insensitive comments that can increase feelings of inadequacy or embarrassment.
- Women undergoing infertility treatments such as ovulation induction, in vitro fertilization (IVF), or intrauterine insemination (IUI) often experience hormonal therapy. The side effects can include weight gain, mood swings, headaches, and bloating.
- The constant medical monitoring, blood tests, and injections can be physically exhausting and may make the woman feel overwhelmed or physically drained.
- Certain procedures such as egg retrieval or intrauterine procedures can cause physical discomfort or pain.
- Women may also experience cramping, bloating, and other side effects that interfere with their daily activities and emotional well-being.
- The disappointment of unsuccessful treatment cycles can be emotionally and physically taxing. Each failed attempt can bring a sense of physical and mental exhaustion, especially when the woman has invested hope and effort into the process.

## Impact of Infertility on Marriage

Infertility can either strengthen or strain a marriage, depending on how the couple navigates the journey. Women should recognize that their husbands also experience the emotional toll of infertility. When approached with mutual love, patience, and understanding, the relationship can emerge even stronger. Facing struggles together can deepen emotional intimacy and reinforce the bond, as both partners support each other as a team.

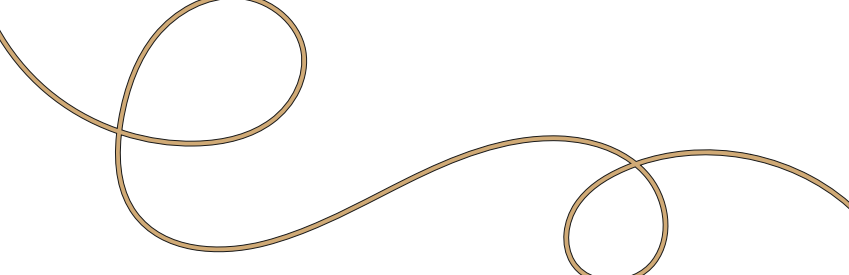
## How to Communicate with our Husband

- It's vital for women to have open and honest conversations with their spouses. Sharing feelings of frustration, sadness, and hope can strengthen the bond and provide emotional support.
- A woman should acknowledge the frustration of their husbands.
  - "I sometimes feel sad and overwhelmed about our struggle with infertility, but I know you're going through this too."
- It's equally important for men to express their emotions and support their wives in this shared journey, maintaining mutual understanding.
- Trusting in Allah's plan and incorporating prayers can help alleviate feelings of frustration.

رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنْتَ  
خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ

"My Lord, leave me not  
childless, and Thou art the  
Best of inheritors."

(Surah Al-Anbiya 21:90)



## 4. Miscarriage

Experiencing a **miscarriage** is one of the most emotionally and physically challenging events a woman can face. It brings with it a range of emotional, physical, and psychological changes, and can deeply affect her sense of self, her relationships, and her future hopes. Here's a breakdown of the changes a woman may go through after a miscarriage, the role a partner can play in providing support, and how both partners can cope together.

### **Emotional, Psychological and Physical Changes After a Miscarriage**

- The emotional pain following a miscarriage can be profound. It's not just the loss of the pregnancy, but also the loss of hopes, dreams, and expectations for the future.
- Women may question themselves and wonder if they could have done something to prevent the miscarriage. They might blame themselves, even though miscarriage is often beyond anyone's control.
- After a miscarriage, women may experience anxiety about future pregnancies or concerns about their fertility. The fear of another loss can create a sense of uncertainty and doubt about their ability to carry a pregnancy full-term.
- For some women, the emotional toll of a miscarriage can lead to depression. They may lose interest in everyday activities, experience feelings of hopelessness, or have trouble connecting with others.
- Miscarriage can trigger deeper emotional wounds, especially if the woman has a history of previous losses or mental health struggles.
- A woman's body needs time to physically recover from the miscarriage. There may be bleeding, cramping, or other physical symptoms as the body expels the pregnancy.

Hormonal shifts following a miscarriage can lead to fatigue, mood swings, or changes in appetite.

### **Impact of Miscarriage on Marriage**

A miscarriage can deeply affect a marriage, as both partners experience grief, emotional distress, and uncertainty in different ways.

The role of a husband during this time is critical. Emotional and physical support from a husband can greatly help a woman cope and heal after a miscarriage. It's important for women to

understand here that men also go through emotional trauma after a miscarriage. So both partners need to play a role in emotional recovery from miscarriage.

### **How to Communicate with our Husband**

Women should talk to their husbands and help them understand that healing takes time. Emotional recovery from a miscarriage can be gradual, and it's essential for family and husband to give her the space she needs while also providing continuous emotional support.

Women can talk to her husbands about practical help. Helping with day-to-day tasks (like cooking, cleaning, or managing other children) can alleviate some stress. As the woman physically recovers, she might be too exhausted or emotionally drained to manage everything on her own.

Men and women often grieve differently. Be patient if your husband doesn't express his emotions in the same way you do. But women should try to help them recover through polite and caring ways.

## 5. Pregnancy & Postpartum

During these phases a woman goes through lots of hormonal and physical changes.

- During pregnancy, hormonal changes (increases in estrogen, progesterone, and other hormones like hCG and relaxin) prepare the body for childbirth and nurturing the baby.
- Fatigue and mood swings due to hormonal shifts
- Increased sensitivity or emotional reactions
- Physical discomfort, which may lead to irritability

## **Postpartum:**

After childbirth, a woman's body undergoes significant hormonal and physical changes. The sudden drop in **estrogen** and **progesterone** levels, along with the physical demands of childbirth and caring for a newborn, can lead to a range of emotional and physical challenges:

- **Postpartum Blues:**

- A temporary phase affecting **70-80%** of new mothers.
- Symptoms include mood swings, crying spells, and mild anxiety.
- Typically resolves within **1-2 weeks** after delivery.

- **Postpartum Depression (PPD):**

- A more severe condition affecting **10-15%** of new mothers.
- Symptoms include:
  - Persistent sadness or hopelessness.
  - Difficulty bonding with the baby.
  - Anxiety, irritability, or anger.
  - Feelings of guilt or inadequacy.
- Can last for months if left untreated.

- **Postpartum Anxiety:**

- Characterized by excessive worry, restlessness, and intrusive thoughts about the baby's well-being.
- May include physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat or dizziness.

- **Physical Recovery:**

- Fatigue from sleepless nights.
- Pain or discomfort from childbirth (e.g., stitches, soreness).
- Changes in body image and self-esteem.

## **Impact on Marriage:**

The postpartum period can significantly affect a couple's relationship. Here's how:

- **Emotional Disconnect:**

- Mood swings or depression can make it difficult for the mother to connect emotionally with her husband.
- Husbands may feel helpless or unsure how to provide support.

- **Intimacy Challenges:**

- Physical recovery, hormonal changes, and exhaustion can lower libido.
- The focus on the baby may leave little time or energy for intimacy.

- **Increased Responsibilities:**

- The demands of caring for a newborn can create stress, especially if one partner feels unsupported.
- Disagreements about parenting styles or division of labor may arise.

- **Communication Struggles:**

- Husbands may misinterpret emotions or reactions as personal criticism.
- Lack of sleep and stress can lead to misunderstandings or arguments.

### **How to Communicate with our Husband:**

Women go through significant hormonal changes, much like a roller coaster, which dramatically affects their mood. However, since men do not experience these changes, they may struggle to understand how to cope. Therefore, a woman should educate her husband about each stage of pregnancy and postpartum, helping him understand the challenges. This should be done with patience and in a polite manner.

**A kind word and forgiveness are better than  
charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-  
Sufficient, Forbearing.**

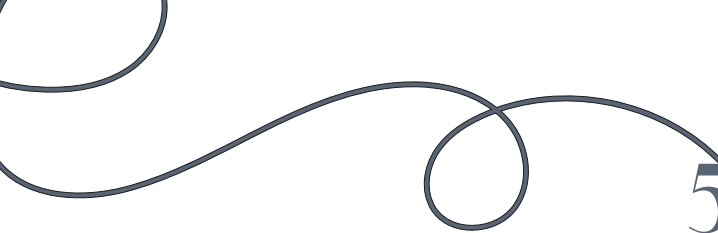
(2:264)

This verse illustrates that speaking kindly and forgiving others is better than acts of charity if the charity is followed by hurtful words or actions.

#### **Example:**

- *"Pregnancy comes with a lot of changes in my body (discuss the symptoms of pregnancy) and emotions. It's overwhelming sometimes, but having you involved makes me feel more secure."*
- *"The postpartum period can be difficult with recovery and taking care of the baby (discuss and explain the postpartum symptoms). I might need more breaks, and I'd love your help in sharing some of the responsibilities."*

A woman should have open conversations about fears, challenges, and emotions to strengthen the partnership. Involve yourself in activities that support mental and physical health. If postpartum depression or anxiety occurs, it's important to seek therapy or medical support.



## 5. Perimenopause

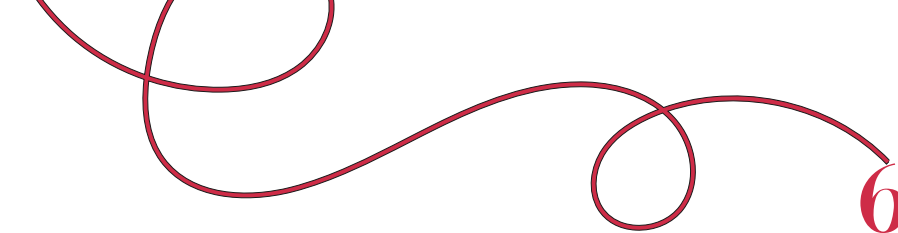
**Perimenopause** is the transitional phase leading up to menopause, marking the time when a woman's body begins to undergo natural hormonal changes as it prepares to end reproductive years. It usually begins in a woman's 40s, but it can start earlier or later, lasting anywhere from a few months to several years. Perimenopause and menopause can be very challenging stages for some women, depending on the symptoms they experience, as not everyone has the same symptoms. **These stages can sometimes significantly impact a marriage and may even lead to serious consequences** if the partner is not properly educated about why the woman is acting differently.

### What happens:

- **Irregular Menstrual Cycles:** Periods may become shorter, longer, heavier, lighter, or less predictable.
- **Hormonal Fluctuations:** Estrogen and progesterone levels fluctuate, leading to symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats.
- **Mood Changes:** Increased risk of anxiety, irritability, or depression due to hormonal shifts.
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Insomnia or difficulty staying asleep, often linked to night sweats.
- **Decreased Fertility:** Ovulation becomes irregular, reducing the chances of conceiving naturally.
- **Vaginal and Bladder Changes:** Vaginal dryness, thinning of the vaginal walls, and increased risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs).
- **Bone Density Loss:** Estrogen plays a role in maintaining bone strength, and its decline can lead to decreased bone density.
- **Weight and Metabolism Changes:** Slower metabolism may result in weight gain or difficulty losing weight.
- **Changes in Hair and Skin:** Thinning hair, brittle nails, and changes in skin elasticity.

**Peri-Menopausal Musculoskeletal Syndrome** refers to muscle and joint pain, frozen shoulder, stiffness, muscle aches, weakness, back pain and discomfort that many women experience during perimenopause due to hormonal changes, particularly declining estrogen levels.

**The next phase of hormonal change is Menopause which is the continuation of perimenopause:**



## 6. Menopause

### What Happens:

- **Menopause** is the stage when a woman's ovaries stop producing eggs, and menstruation ceases, typically occurring between ages 45-55. Hormonal changes involve:
  - Decreased estrogen and progesterone levels
  - Fluctuations in testosterone

### Common Symptoms:

- Worsening of hot flashes, night sweats, fatigue, vaginal dryness, and changes in weight or body composition.
- Mood swings, irritability, anxiety, or depression.
- Difficulty concentrating or memory lapses.
- Reduced libido and discomfort during intercourse due to vaginal dryness.

### Impact of Perimenopause and Menopause on Marriage:

- **Emotional Disconnect:** Mood swings and irritability may create misunderstandings or conflict.
- **Changes in Intimacy:** Vaginal dryness and reduced libido can lead to discomfort and avoidance of sexual intimacy.
- **Physical Distance:** Sleep disturbances (e.g., night sweats) may affect sleeping arrangements, reducing closeness.

### How a Woman can Communicate About Perimenopause and Menopause with Her Husband:

- **Educate Yourself First:** Understand the physical and emotional changes of perimenopause so you can explain them clearly. This helps in answering any questions your partner might have and reduces misunderstandings.
- **Be Honest and Open:** Explain the symptoms you are experiencing, such as mood swings, fatigue, or hot flashes. Use "I" statements to express your feelings (e.g., "I've been feeling more irritable lately, and it's because of hormonal changes").
- **Communicate Clearly:** Describe your experiences in a relatable way. For example, "Sometimes I feel really overwhelmed or tired because my hormones are changing."

- **Focus on Facts:** Talk about how the changes might impact intimacy, mood, or energy levels, and emphasize that it's not about your husband but a natural phase of life.
- **Express What You Need:** Be specific about how your partner can support you, whether it's offering patience, helping with household tasks, or simply listening when you need to vent.
- **Normalize the Experience:** Remind your husband that perimenopause is a natural phase of life and not a permanent state. Emphasize that with time and support, you'll navigate it together.

Example:

*"As I'm going through these changes, I might have days where I feel off. It would help if you were patient and understanding, even when it's hard for me to explain."*

## ANOTHER IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ASK OURSELVES: Do Men Experience Hormonal Changes?

Yes, men do experience hormonal changes, although they are not as widely discussed or as obvious as those in women. However, these changes can still impact their physical and mental health.

### Testosterone Levels

- **Decline with Age:** Testosterone, the primary male sex hormone, naturally declines as men age, typically starting around the age of 30. This decline can affect mood, energy levels, libido, and muscle mass.
- **Symptoms of Low Testosterone:** Men with low testosterone may experience fatigue, depression, irritability, decreased libido, and even difficulty concentrating.

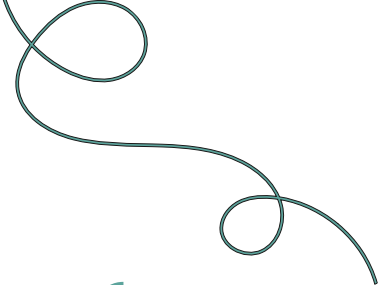
### How can a Wife Help Her Husband?

Hormonal changes can affect a man's mood, energy, and behaviour. Recognize that irritability or fatigue may be symptoms rather than intentional actions. Approach his mood swings or changes with patience.

Men may feel vulnerable or frustrated about hormonal changes, especially as they age. Offer emotional reassurance and let him know that you're in this together and that his health and well-being are important.

Avoid blaming him for mood swings or changes in behavior that may be related to hormonal shifts. Rather than pointing out his shortcomings, offer constructive support and reassurance.

Hazrat Amman Jan (ra) advised ladies to never argue with one's husband while he is in an angry mood. Even if one's opinions or actions are justified, a dignified wife will speak with her husband after his anger has subsided. This leads to a more harmonious household and wins the Pleasure of Allah Almighty.



# Mental Health Factors which can Impact Marriage

Prayers are the key when dealing with any physical or psychological illness, as outlined in the Holy Quran:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Aye! it is in the remembrance of  
Allah that hearts can find comfort”  
(13:29)

Sometimes, after marriage, a woman may realize that her partner has psychological issues, or she herself may be facing psychological challenges. The first thing a couple needs to understand is that because mental health is often stigmatized, people tend to hide any psychological issues they may be facing. If there are any mental health concerns, both partners should not hesitate to talk about them and seek help. Both husband and wife should act as counselors for each other, but everything should be approached with patience and understanding. Both partners should educate themselves about mental health factors as they can adversely impact the marriage.

A woman should understand the mental health factors and be able to communicate effectively with her husband. The following is a list of some mental health issues which, if not addressed, could impact the relationship and marriage.

1

## STRESS & ANXIETY

Work-related stress, financial worries, or family pressures can lead to communication breakdowns and conflict if not managed.

## DEPRESSION

Untreated depression in one or both partners can reduce emotional availability, lead to isolation, or increase misunderstandings.

2

3

## TRAUMA AND PTSD (POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER):

Past traumas, whether from childhood or previous relationships, can impact trust, intimacy, and emotional stability.

## PERSONALITY DISORDERS:

Conditions like borderline personality disorder, narcissistic tendencies, or obsessive-compulsive behavior can influence how partners interact and resolve conflicts.

4

5

## COMMUNICATION PATTERNS:

Poor emotional regulation or untreated mental health issues can lead to unhealthy communication, including defensiveness, criticism, or stonewalling.

## ATTACHMENT STYLES:

Secure vs insecure attachment styles, often stemming from childhood, influence how partners express love, handle conflict, and feel secure in the relationship.

# 6

### How to Communicate with our Husband:

- Remind your husband (and yourself) that mental health challenges are common, and there's no shame in seeking help or sharing struggles
- Mental health is complex, and it's important to approach the topic without blaming your husband or yourself.
- Instead of saying "You don't understand me," say "I feel misunderstood or unsupported when...". This reduces defensiveness and encourages empathy.
- Express your feelings honestly, but frame them in a way that focuses on your need for support, not as a criticism.
- If you notice any of the mental health issues in your husband, always be very polite and understanding when discussing these sensitive issues.

## Conclusion

Throughout this booklet, we have explored how both biological and mental health factors profoundly impact marriage. From hormonal changes and physical health challenges to emotional struggles and mental health concerns, it is clear that a successful marriage requires more than just love—it demands understanding, patience, and effective communication.

The key to navigating these challenges lies in **Prayers** and **mutual support**. Understand that these factors are a natural part of life, so it is important to create an environment of trust and empathy in our marital relationship.

Be the garment for each other and provide comfort, protection, understanding and support. Foster an environment of kindness, empathy, and unwavering friendship in your marriage. May Allah Almighty bless your marriage abundantly, so that you and your spouse truly are a garment for each other. Ameen!