

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Young “not allowed out to play”

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If you think seriously about this report

(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6720231.stm>) you'll realise how sadly true it is.

I know that I'll never let *my* children out to play by themselves or with 'their friends' until their mid-teens (I guess) or some equally pointless age when it's really far too late to start and try to develop ones intrinsic responsibility and to learn the lessons of life that can only be done out in the big bad world.

Of course, this is a reflection of Western society today. When I took my eldest son with me for a few months to Pakistan (when he was just 4), it was very difficult for me to get used to his going out in the morning and then only returning back home when he was hungry. And 'going out' didn't mean into the garden but rather out into a large mountain-side village with rivers, valleys, rocks, horses, donkeys, snakes, scorpions etc but never any fear of anything like what we are so scared to death about here in the UK and the West in general. After a day or two, it was the most natural thing in the world and I wouldn't have been able to have *paid* for such an experience for him.

The disaster surrounding the McCann tragedy only serves to intensify our fears, coming at a time when we are feeling more insecure than ever from predators and criminals.

We have robbed them of their childhood and we are guilty of it but what can we do? It feels even worse when you think how much fun we used to have when *we were young* children of 5-6-7 years, when it used to be by right that we'd come home from school, have a quick bite to eat and then off we'd go to ride, climb, run, play all over town to return three or four hours later ready for dinner with our parents together and then off to bed. I can remember the good old days when we started to practise fasting *Ramadhan* when *Maghrib* was after 9pm and we'd come home from school and play football in the park until our throats felt like they'd been rubbed down with sandpaper, then we'd leg it home as the sun would set and tuck into juice and *samosas*. How times have changed.

Add to this that my generation is the same one that grew up with “*Charlie says...*” when it used to be a government campaign, and then “*Charlie says...*” when used by ‘the Prodigy’ in an infinitely more attractive way and it is then no surprise that we are the freaked-out parents we are. Don’t forget our additional concern for the spiritual states of our children and the preservation of their Deen and all of this means we end up with children who are in serious danger of growing up without the moral fibre and toughness that we’d expect from our sons and daughters in their adult lives.

As with everything these days, who knows what the answers are? And again as with everything everyday, we place our hope and trust in Allāh to help us and to protect and preserve all our children all over the world, *ameen*.