

Mjamaleh 101: A Beginner's Guide

By Nahla Tabbaa



This manual is dedicated to everyone in my community who has mastered the art of manipulation and Mjamaleh, whether it was towards myself or others, you have been such an inspiration.

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered how so many people around you have a power with words? That they are able to get what they want and say what they want, without burning bridges, flinching or feeling stressed? That they manipulate and bend the truth whilst maintaining a plastered smile on their face?

This manual has been designed to help you, dear reader, to take control of how you communicate, maintain healthy relationships and keep your emotions in check. *Mjamaleh 101: A Beginner's Guide* introduces simple but effective methods that will have life-changing effects on how you navigate your life.

Mjamaleh (n.) stems from the concept of being a specific kind of insincere, combined with courteousness and a sprinkle of passive aggressiveness, mastered by those who understand the essential concepts of graceful manipulation. The roots of this particular kind come from the Middle East.

In its latest iteration, *Mjamaleh 101: A Beginner's Guide* has been updated to also include useful and essential catchphrases in Arabic which research has shown to be more relevant, effective and appropriate than in English.

The illustrations will also help guide you on how to be mindful of posture, the movement of your mouth and the emphasis you put on certain syllables.

I look forward to taking you on this journey!

How to Keep Female Enemies Close

This is probably the trickiest to navigate. Female friendships are among the most complex relationships. Beneath their façades are elements of uncertainty, jealousy, envy, love, infatuation and toxicity, and at times all of these emotions can exist simultaneously. This is especially tricky when you cross paths with a female that you either already hate, envy or fell out with.

First impressions are everything! So the way you greet this encounter is particularly important, because it will determine what she will then say about you to others. And really, for none other than your own sake and well being, you don't want to give her a reason to embellish the truth and spread nasty rumors, which has been proven to happen, 90% of the time.

With self-preservation in mind, gather all your courage, we have come up with just the solution to keep you protected:

1. Catch her off-guard.

This needs to come from you first. The shock, the greeting, the warm embrace. She needs to be pleasantly surprised enough to then report that to other people.

2. Reach in for the hug.

Yes, as much as it makes you cringe this will need to happen. An added bonus would be a gentle stroke of her hair.

3. Shower her with one compliment.

Kteeeeeeeeeer Halyaneeeeeeh has yielded the best results so far especially when you emphasize the 'e's' the way we have illustrated. See *Figure 1*

4. Ask her to hang out.

Khaleena Nshooooofek! End it with an empty yet zealous suggestion that the two of you really need to hang out. Do not worry, this will never happen, she's probably just as repulsed by the thought as you are, but your good intentions can now never be denied.



BODY LANGUAGE!!!

The hug. Give a warm, long embrace, the way you would a lover. Stroke her hair. When you compliment her, motion your hands to your face as if you are in shock and need to slap yourself. A happy dance is a bonus.

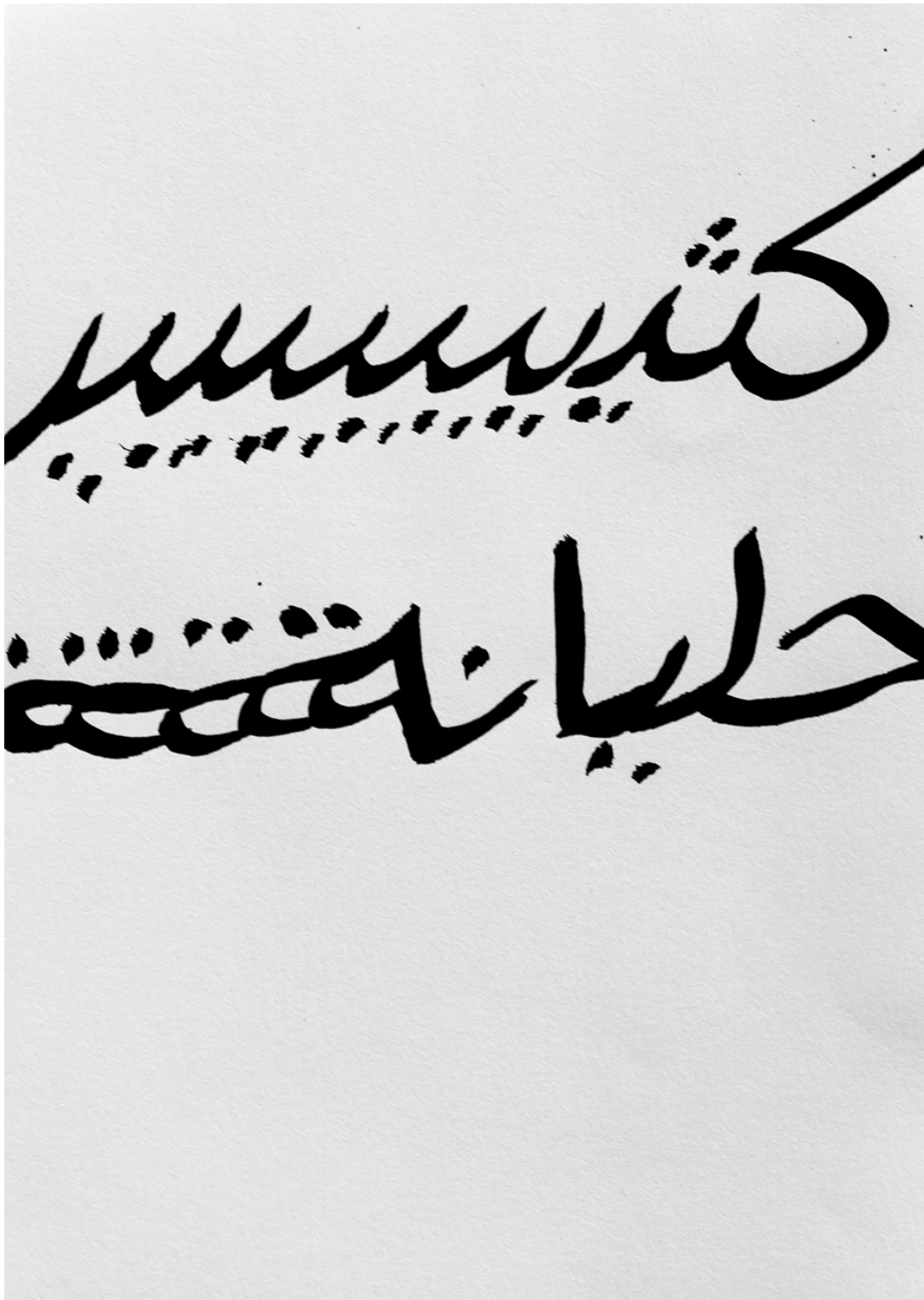


figure 1

How to Let Someone Know They Have Offended You and Avoid Confronting Them at the Same Time

People are a huge inconvenience. They are late, inconsiderate, sloppy, unempathetic, self-absorbed, dirty, they drop things. They are also noisy, ultimately very selfish and they double dip!!! Ultimately, they walk away from all this with very low levels of self-awareness—surely you can imagine what it would be like to confront people about their behaviors, the start of a Cold War.

This can all be avoided with the following step:

- 1. Before you're about to let someone know how they did you wrong, say the following phrase: *ALLah Yisamhek/Yisamhak*.**

The key here is that by bringing God into the picture, you are deterring from the fact that you are offended by them, but that actually it is the Almighty that is offended. Another important thing to remember is ensuring that your tone of voice is soft, as is your gaze, and there needs to be a forced somber smile on your face – so it is a combination of looking constipated and pleased at the same time. See *figure 2*



BODY LANGUAGE!!!

You will need to stand up for this kind of confrontation, or at least be sitting upright. Bring both your hands to your face and very gently make a slapping motion. The expression is key because you need to look constipated.



figure 2

How to Avoid Promoting Employees You Feel Threatened by

Is it that time of the year again? Your employees are nagging you for a promotion? Asking to be credited for all their hard work, but you simply don't value their intelligence and would rather plug a few gaps in the budget instead? Or maybe, just maybe, being a self-preserving human like us all, you are a little threatened by their performance and their shoe collection?

Follow these easy steps to put them back in their place:

1. Remind them of the times they have not done a good job.

Were they late sending you that email? How was their attendance? Even if they were so little as minutes late to work, remind them that these figures do in fact add up to a lot of wasted time. How have they been cooperating with their team members? Did you hear of any arguments or conflicts? Make sure you do your research and look them up. You can also add a few lines or two on how hard you work, what time you come home, and how little you see your family and friends.

2. Be direct and ask them what value they feel they have added to the overarching work of the company - who are they in the big picture?

By doing this, they will nervously start to list their attributes, which will give you the opportunity to politely nod and say 'yes, but I am surrounded by a team who are equally talented,' 'can you remind me again why you deserve this promotion?' Remind them that what they have done is simply abide by their job description – this will in turn make them realize that whilst their contribution has been significant, it has not been life changing.

3. Sweep in with a supportive and helpful enquiry about their personal lives, completely unrelated to work.

Try to dish out any personal information about them. Are they stressed out? Trouble at home? Ill family member? Because you've already made them vulnerable and questioned their abilities at work, offering a supportive shoulder to cry on will make you look like the understanding, sympathetic and kind boss that you're not.

4. Make them cry

If you see their eyes start to water, BINGO! This is your perfect opportunity to sweep in with more positive affirmations, such as 'don't worry, I'm certain that next year will be a better year,' 'stay positive,' 'please consider what I said, this is for your own good.' See figure 3



BODY LANGUAGE!!!

Remember that body language is key at all times. To make yourself out to be the empathetic boss that you're not, remember to remain sitting down, act like you're fiddling with your computer or somehow so busy, keep your palms open and arms unfolded, and if needed, offer them a tissue and give them a warm hug. Open up about your own personal journey as well so that they are able to draw comparisons (it doesn't have to be true) but everybody loves a sob story with a happy ending.



figure 3

How to Reassure Someone That You'll Get Something Done When You Won't

Those pests. You know the ones. The ones who keep nagging you but they call it 'following up.' The ones with ants in their pants who take work way too seriously. The ones who start breaking into a sweat every time they ask you if you did the work. Chances are, you will be very late handing that work in, or you're holding out until they finally give up. If this sounds familiar, here are three steps to help you wiggle your way out of this annoying situation:

- 1. Give them an unrealistic timeline, such as 'InshaLLah in 5 minutes' or 'InshaLLah you'll have it by tomorrow at the latest'.**

This will pacify them for a moment and indicate to them that you are en-route to submission, plus by saying **Inshallah**, you are reminding them that actually, the concept of time is divine and completely out of their hands, and who knows what the universe and God have in store for us. What if God has other plans? **Inshallah** will double your time, ie. **Inshallah** 5 minutes will give you an extra 5 minutes.

- 2. Fabricate a sample and send it to them, or even better, create a social media story about how hard you're working on that deadline.**

Prove that you are working with screenshots of you immersed in it. Add some props, such as a cup of coffee, or the hashtag #teamnosleep.

- 3. If none of this works, swoop in with the phrase 'Aaaaaaaaah Akeeeeeeed, WaLaw.' See figure 4**

Similarly to 'Allah Yisamhik', the phrase 'WaLaw' will let them know that not only is it inevitable that you deliver, but that you are surprised that they would even doubt your capabilities. This will get them to feel slightly embarrassed. They will doubt their own logic and investigate whether they have control issues or perhaps anger management problems.



BODY LANGUAGE!!!

You need to look very flustered and tired. Your hair needs to be out of place, and don't wear any make up. In fact, the more frazzled and un-groomed you look, the better. You also need to look like you're in a massive rush to get somewhere, so please make sure you pick up your walking pace as you are conversing, if caught on the move.



figure 4

About The Author

Nahla (b. 1986) Amman, Jordan is a creative professional who is not very good at **Mjamaleh** but has closely observed how artful some people can be at work, school, social occasions and personal relationships.