



A GUIDE FOR WIVES

For the Second Wife and After

Building a home, guarding the heart — your rights, living without secrets, conduct towards the first wife and her children, jealousy, emotional health and what people say

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوِيكُمْ^ج وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

To You

Much has been written for women who are **considering** becoming a second wife. Very little has been written for women who are already second, third, or even fourth wives—who are now building their own home, learning to know their madu (co-wife) and their children, and trying to guard their hearts amidst the gaze of others.

This book is for you. It is not intended to praise or defend polygamy, nor is it to judge your choices. It aims to help you live with peace, justice, and dignity in the situation you are going through.

You will read about your full rights, the importance of a legal and registered marriage, proper conduct towards the first wife and her children, how to manage jealousy, maintaining emotional health, dealing with people's words, and what can be done when your rights are neglected.

Evidence is drawn from verses and hadith that have been reviewed on the MYPolygyny website. Legal matters are not set out in detail because they vary by state and change from time to time; if you need certainty, your Syariah Court or state Islamic religious office is the right place to ask.

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This book is for women who are **already** a second, third or fourth wife. Each chapter opens with a verse of the Qur'an and ends with a **Summary & reflection** page. Further reference at mypolygyny.com.

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CHAPTER 1

You Are Not a Second-Class Wife

Your rights are full, just like every other wife's.

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً^ج فَإِنْ طِبَّنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ... ﴿٤﴾

"And give the women their mahr as a free gift."

An-Nisa' 4:4

Equal and Full Rights

A second wife is not a "second-class" wife. Every wife has the same full rights as if she were the only wife. These rights do not depend on who was married first, who is younger, or who is most loved.

These rights include the dowry (mahar), sufficient maintenance (nafkah) according to the husband's means, a separate place of residence, good treatment, and fair turns (giliran) for nights. At the beginning of the marriage, a new virgin wife is entitled to 7 nights, a widow to 3 nights, after which the turns (giliran) begin equally (Sahih al-Bukhari 5213; Sahih Muslim, Kitab ar-Radha'). The finer details of turns can differ slightly according to scholarly views and mutual agreement.

If a second or subsequent marriage takes place lawfully, the new wife has the same rights, and the sunnah of walimah applies to her as it does to a first marriage. At the same time, your presence does not diminish the rights of the existing wife. Justice is the husband's responsibility to every wife. Nafkah amounts and how to claim your rights depend on each family's circumstances and state law; if you need certainty, the Syariah Court or the state Islamic religious office can guide you.

Your Rights as a Wife

- ✓ The dowry (mahar) paid, or clearly documented if deferred.
- ✓ Maintenance (nafkah): food, clothing, and basic necessities according to the husband's means.
- ✓ A safe, separate place of residence — not forced to share a home with a co-wife (madu).
- ✓ Fair turns (giliran) for nights and a clear schedule.
- ✓ Good treatment, respect, and freedom from violence.
- ✓ A lawful and registered marriage, with documents kept safely.

Summary & Reflection

Every wife has equal and full rights: dowry, maintenance, residence, good treatment, and fair turns (giliran). Your presence does not diminish the rights of the existing wife, nor does your status lessen your rights.

Reflection Questions

- Do I know my rights clearly, or am I still too shy to mention them?
- Which rights have been fulfilled, and which ones do I need to discuss with my husband?
- How can I claim my rights calmly without infringing upon the rights of others?

02

CHAPTER 2

Living Without Secrets

A valid and registered marriage is your protection.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ﴾

﴿١٣٥﴾ ...

"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves..."

Surah an-Nisa' 4:135 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

The Burden of Secrets

Some second marriages begin in secret—without informing the first wife, without court permission, or without being registered. Often, the one who carries the burden of the secret is the hidden wife and her children.

Registration is not merely a formality. Without it a wife will struggle to claim maintenance, deferred mahr, jointly acquired matrimonial property (harta sepencarian) and inheritance, and children are hard to register under their father's name. A valid and registered marriage is the primary protection for you and your children.

If there are conditions agreed upon during the marriage contract (akad), they are a trust. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The condition that is most rightful for you to fulfil is the condition by which you make lawful the private parts" (Sahih al-Bukhari 2721; Sahih Muslim, Kitab an-Nikah). If your marriage has not been registered, or if it took place abroad or without permission, do not despair: procedures for confirmation and registration exist. Every case is different, so it is wise to ask the Syariah Court, the state Islamic religious office or a syarie lawyer about the right steps in your state.

If Your Marriage Was Kept Secret or Not Registered

1

Keep Documents

The marriage certificate or nikah certificate, details of the guardian (wali) and witnesses, photos of the contract, and any agreements. Keep copies in a safe place.

2

Discuss with Your Husband

At a calm time, state that registration protects you, the children, and also him.

3

Get Official Advice

The Syariah Court, the state Islamic religious office, or a syariah lawyer can explain the procedures in your state.

4

Written Agreement

Ask for a clear schedule of turns (giliran) and maintenance (nafkah), preferably in writing, so there are no misunderstandings.

5

Safety First

If there are threats or violence, call 999 or Talian Kasih 15999 before any other matter.

Summary & Reflection

A secret or unregistered marriage is most detrimental to the wife and children. Registration protects your rights; if it has not been done, the Syariah Court, JAIN or a syarie lawyer can help you understand the steps to have it confirmed.

Reflection Questions

- Are all my marriage documents complete and stored safely?
- What am I afraid of if this marriage becomes public knowledge, and is that fear justified?
- Whom can I ask about the registration procedures in my state?

03

CHAPTER 3

Conduct towards the first wife

The co-wife (madu) is not an enemy; she is a fellow believer.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ^ج وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

﴿١٠﴾

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy."

Surah al-Hujurat 49:10 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

A sister, not a rival

The first wife is your fellow believer who is bound to the same husband. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Do not envy one another, ... do not hate one another, ... be servants of Allah, as brothers" (Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Birr wa as-Silah wa al-Adab). Maintaining good relations with a co-wife is an act of excellence (ihsan), not an obligation to be close friends. What is obligatory is not to commit injustice (menzalimi).

One prohibition to remember is: "It is not lawful for a woman to ask for her sister (co-wife) to be divorced in order to empty her plate, for she will have what has been decreed for her" (Sahih al-Bukhari 5152). You cannot force a husband to divorce the first wife—similarly, she cannot force a husband to divorce you."

The best example comes from the Prophet's ﷺ own household. In the incident of the slander (al-ifk), Aisyah r.a. testified that Zainab binti Jahsh r.a., the co-wife who most rivalled her position, was protected by Allah with piety (wara') because she only spoke what was good (Sahih al-Bukhari 4750). There may be emotional rivalry, but the tongue must always be guarded.

Conduct towards a co-wife

Do

- ✓ Handle scheduling and children through one agreed channel
- ✓ Greet and behave politely at family gatherings
- ✓ Respect her home and her nights
- ✓ Mention her good qualities, or remain silent
- ✓ Bring disputes to the husband or a mediator

Avoid

- ✗ Sarcasm and 'showing off' pictures on social media
- ✗ Displaying gifts from the husband to hurt feelings
- ✗ Calling the husband on her night except in emergencies
- ✗ Telling her weaknesses to others
- ✗ Pressuring the husband to divorce her

Summary & Reflection

A co-wife (madu) is a fellow believer; what is obligatory is not to oppress, and doing good is 'ihsan' (excellence in conduct). Do not pressure your husband to divorce, and guard your tongue as Zainab r.a. only spoke what was good.

Reflection Questions

- What is an action of mine that might hurt the first wife without me realizing it?
- How do I want to be treated by my co-wife, and am I treating her that way?
- What boundaries do we need to agree upon through the husband?

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CHAPTER 4

Children in Two Households

Stepchildren, your own children, and the bond of siblings.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا



"O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;— reverence Allah..."

Surah an-Nisa' 4:1 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

One Family, Several Households

Your first wife's children are your stepchildren. A father's wife (stepmother) is a permanent mahram to her husband's sons (Surah an-Nisa' 4:22). You do not replace their mother; you are another adult in their lives whom they can choose to treat kindly. Unless for safety, do not discipline stepchildren without their mother's consent.

Your children and your co-wife's children are paternal half-siblings. They are mahram to one another and the bond of kinship (silaturahmi) must be maintained. A mother must not plant hatred towards paternal half-siblings. Doing so severs the kinship that Allah has commanded to be maintained (Surah Muhammad 47:22–23).

Justice among the children is the husband's responsibility. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Be conscious of Allah and act justly among your children" (Sahih al-Bukhari 2587; Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Hibat). Your role is to support that justice—not to demand more for your own child by diminishing the rights of another child.

Four Common Scenarios



Stepchild Visits

Welcome them warmly, but do not force affection. Allow them time.



Your Own Child

Speak highly of their older and younger siblings so that they grow up with a sense of brotherhood/sisterhood.



Family Gatherings

Plan holidays, feasts, and school events early with your husband, so that every child feels valued.



When Children Ask

Answer honestly according to their age, without badmouthing anyone. Do not make your child a messenger between households.

Summary & Reflection

You are a mahram to your husband's sons, and your children and your co-wife's children are half-siblings whose kinship must be maintained. Justice among the children is the husband's responsibility; your role is to support it.

Reflection Questions

- How will my child remember their relationship with their siblings in the future?
- Have I ever, without realising it, spoken ill of the madu (co-wife) in front of the children?
- What is one way I can help my husband be just to all his children?

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CHAPTER 5

Jealousy and Your Heart

Feelings are natural; what is judged is the action.

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ
وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

"...and let them forgive and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

An-Nur 24:22

Acknowledging Jealousy

Jealousy is not a sign of weak faith. The Prophet's ﷺ wives were also jealous. He put right the damage gently, saying, "Your mother is jealous" (Sahih al-Bukhari 5225). Islam does not deny the feeling; what is judged is the action that stems from it. Jealousy is forgiven. Oppression, slander, and conspiracy are not.

When jealousy turns into anger, there is a phrase taught. Two people argued in front of the Prophet ﷺ, and he said there was a phrase that, if uttered, would make their anger disappear—"I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed" (Sahih al-Bukhari 6115; also see 3282).

Clear boundaries reduce jealousy: avoid calling your husband on your co-wife's night except in emergencies, do not ask for details of her household's expenses, and do not monitor her social media accounts. Heavy feelings can be conveyed to your husband with wisdom, at a calm time.

When Jealousy Peaks

1

Name the feeling

Tell yourself: "I am feeling jealous." A named feeling is easier to manage.

2

Isti'azah and Wudu

Say "I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed," perform ablution (wudu), and calm your body.

3

Do not act immediately

Do not send messages or post anything when your heart is hot.

4

Express with wisdom

Choose a calm time. Use "I feel...", not "You always..."

5

Seek help

If jealousy persists and disrupts your life, talking to a counsellor can help a great deal.

Summary & Reflection

Jealousy is a natural feeling experienced even by the Prophet's ﷺ wives. What is judged is the action: seeking refuge in Allah when angry, setting clear boundaries, and expressing feelings with wisdom.

Reflection Questions

- What most often triggers my jealousy?
- What boundaries can I set to reduce those triggers?
- How can I express my feelings to my husband without blaming my co-wife (madu)?

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CHAPTER 6

Caring for Emotional Health

You also deserve peace.

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

﴿٢٨﴾

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Know that it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts find rest."

Surah ar-Ra'd 13:28

The Heart That Needs Care

Nights that are not your turn, feelings of guilt, the judgment of others, and uncertainty can weaken the soul. Feeling heavy does not mean you are far from Allah. Make prayer (solat) and remembrance (zikir) your place of refuge. "Remember that in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Surah ar-Ra'd 13:28).

Allah also reminds us: "Allah does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear" (Surah al-Baqarah 2:286), and "truly, with hardship comes ease", repeated twice (Surah asy-Syarh (al-Insyirah) 94:5-6). One form of that ease may be the people and services who can help you.

Seeking treatment is encouraged in Islam. Prolonged depression and anxiety are treatable health conditions. Seeing a doctor, counsellor, or psychologist is not a sign of weak faith. For emotional support, Talian HEAL 15555 and Befrienders KL 03-7627 2929 can be contacted.

Caring for Yourself on Difficult Days

- ✓ Maintain a consistent evening routine: prayer (solat), simple remembrance (zikir), and sleeping at the same time.
- ✓ One activity for yourself every week — a class, sport, or hobby.
- ✓ A trusted friend who listens without judgement.
- ✓ Reduce scrolling on social media on nights that are not your turn.
- ✓ Move and walk every day, even if only for a short time.
- ✓ If sadness persists for more than two weeks, it is wise to see a doctor or counsellor.

Summary & Reflection

Feeling heavy is not a sign of being far from Allah. Take refuge in remembrance (zikir) and prayer (solat), and at the same time, seek treatment and support; seeking treatment is encouraged in Islam.

Reflection Questions

- When was the last time I rested for myself without feeling guilty?
- Whom can I contact on the hardest night?
- Are there any signs of depression that I have ignored?

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CHAPTER 7

What People Say

Facing suspicion and people's words with dignity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا
تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ... ﴿١٢﴾

"O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs..."

Surah al-Hujurat 49:12 · tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

When People Talk

A second wife is often labelled with hurtful words, sometimes even by one's own family. Islam is clear on this: "O you who have believed, let not a group of people ridicule other people... and do not ridicule one another." (Surah al-Hujurat 49:11). This prohibition applies to those who mock you—and also to you when speaking about a co-wife (madu).

Rumours spread quickly within families and on social media. Verify first. "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a wicked person with news, then verify it..." (Surah al-Hujurat 49:6). Do not respond to unconfirmed news.

You do not need to explain your life to everyone. A simple and polite answer is sufficient. A calm demeanor is stronger than a long argument, and time will reveal who you truly are.

Avoid This → Try This

Avoid

- ✗ Retorting to sarcasm with sarcasm on social media
- ✗ Over-explaining to every person who asks
- ✗ Responding to unverified rumours
- ✗ Talking about co-wives (madu) to gain sympathy
- ✗ Completely isolating oneself from the family

Try

- ✓ Silence, or a brief, polite answer
- ✓ "Thank you for your concern. We are fine."
- ✓ Ask yourself: where did this news come from?
- ✓ Mention something positive, or not mention it at all
- ✓ Attending family gatherings with a calm demeanour

Summary & Reflection

Islam forbids mocking, suspicion, and backbiting—a prohibition that protects you and also your **madu** (co-wife). When faced with rumours, respond briefly and politely, and let your character be the answer.

Reflection Questions

- Whose words hurt me the most, and why?
- Have I ever retaliated in a way I regret?
- What is one simple phrase I can use when asked personal questions?

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CHAPTER 8

When Your Rights Are Neglected

Silence is not the only option.

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ...﴾



"Indeed Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge, to judge with justice."

An-Nisa' 4:58

Rights That Can Be Claimed

If maintenance (nafkah) is not provided, turns (giliran) are not kept, or you are treated poorly, you do not have to bear it alone. Start by discussing it. "...and reconciliation is better" (Surah an-Nisa' 4:128); for serious disputes, appoint a mediator (hakam) from both families (4:35). The JAIN family counselling unit and the Syariah Court Sulh officer provide this service free of charge.

Some wives choose to relinquish some of their rights for the sake of betterment. To surrender a turn (giliran) — a wife can willingly give her turn to her co-wife (madu), as Saudah r.a. did to Aisyah r.a. (Sahih al-Bukhari 5212). The surrender must be without coercion and can be revoked for the future. It is your choice, not something that can be demanded from you.

If discussions do not succeed, the Syariah Court is the channel for claiming your rights. Procedures and rules vary by state, and every case has its own circumstances; the court, JAIN or a syarie lawyer can explain the options open to you. If violence or threats occur, safety comes first: call 999 or Talian Kasih 15999.

Claiming Rights Calmly

1

Document

Date, amount of maintenance (nafkah), and the turn (giliran) night that was not kept. Calm records are stronger than angry memories.

2

Discuss

Clearly convey to your husband what has happened and what you need.

3

Mediator

A respected family member from both sides, or the JAIN family counselling unit.

4

Sulh officer

At the Syariah Court, mediation before trial. Free of charge.

5

Syariah Court

If rights continue to be neglected. The court can explain the procedure that applies in your state.

Summary & Reflection

Neglected rights can be claimed step-by-step: discussion, mediator or JAIN counsellor, Sulh officer, then the Syariah Court. Relinquishing a turn (giliran) is a voluntary choice that can be revoked, and safety always comes first.

Reflection Questions

- Which right is most important for me to claim right now?
- Have I ever given up a right due to pressure, rather than willingly?
- Who is the mediator trusted by both me and my husband?

Checklist: My Home, My Rights

Tick what is already in place. For what is missing, discuss it with your husband—or with a JAIN counsellor if necessary.

Item	In Place?	Chapter
Marriage registered and nikah certificate kept	☐ Yes	2
Mahr paid or recorded as a debt	☐ Yes	1
Safe separate residence	☐ Yes	1
Clear and adhered-to turn schedule	☐ Yes	1
Agreed and paid monthly maintenance (nafkah)	☐ Yes	1
Official channel with the first wife for child and schedule matters	☐ Yes	3
Agreed social media boundaries	☐ Yes	3
A friend or counsellor to confide in	☐ Yes	6
Talian Kasih 15999 and state JAIN number saved	☐ Yes	8

Getting help



In danger right now?

Call the Police on 999. Your safety and your children's comes first; everything else can follow.



Talian Kasih 15999 (24 hours)

For urgent cases involving the safety or welfare of a family. Talian HEAL 15555 and Befrienders KL 03-7627 2929 for emotional support.



Family Counselling Unit, state JAIN

Every state Islamic Religious Department has a family counselling unit, and it is free. There is no need to wait until a problem grows — coming early is welcome.



Sulh Officer, Syariah Court

Mediation before a full hearing, also free. Rights, procedures and rules can differ from state to state; the Syariah Court or the state Islamic religious office can explain what applies in your situation.

CLOSING

The Home You Build

Your home should not be compared to anyone else's. It is your home—a place where you worship, love, raise children, and seek the pleasure of Allah.

May Allah purify your heart and the heart of your madu (co-wife) from envy, protect the rights of every wife and child, and make every home in your family a place of sakinah (tranquillity).

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا
بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ



"And those who came after them say: 'Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed. Our Lord! Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful.'"

Surah al-Hashr 59:10

mypolygyny.com · A general reference, not a fatwa and not legal advice. Rights, procedures and rules can differ between states; for your own situation, the Syariah Court, the state Islamic religious office (JAIN) or a syarie lawyer can give more precise advice. If there is danger, call 999 or Talian Kasih 15999.