

# Hadir

**Hadir ElSayed, 52, School Nurse/Nurse, Egyptian**

“I was born and raised in Kuwait. My family wasn't very religious, I don't remember seeing my dad or mom pray all the time. My mom's not a hijabi up until this minute, and a lot of my family, my aunts and cousins, are not hijabis. Somehow, in high school, I got really connected to the religion. And then when I went to college in Upper Egypt, I spent some time in the dorms with other girls who are hijabis, and I became more involved. I became more convinced of how important it is.

I wanted to wear the hijab at that time, but when I went back to Cairo for a visit, my family gave me a very hard time, and they started teasing me about it. So I took it off. It was a matter of time when I would have the control over myself to put it on, not the decisiveness if I should wear it or not. It was just about when I could actually be strong enough to put it on and not take it off again, and that's when I came to [the conclusion] that it's not about the place [or anything else], it's just about me.

Since I grew up in a non-religious household, I made sure that my kids understood my mission from day one. I put a lot of effort into that. So I took them to the Islamic center at an early age to start Sunday School, and I also gave them private lessons, all the way up until they were in high school. I was very proud of [my daughter,] Donna, to take that step [to wear the hijab at 14]. I wasn't worried. My husband was very worried, and he tried to convince her not to for a while, but then at the end he gave up because she said, ‘Allah will protect me.’ I was very happy and proud of her. But I also worked hard for both of them [Donna and her brother, Omar] to understand the religion really well. I didn't want them to be confused. I wanted them to love Allah. I wanted them to love the prophets. I wanted them to make the decision that will take them to the right path.

The main thing [about wearing the hijab] is that I am one step closer to doing what Allah wants me to do. Even if it's not perfect, it's a step towards being better. Plus, I'm a very proud Muslim, so I like having the hijab on with the work I do. People might get to know Islam in a better way. When I interact with people in the clinic, or when I interact with people at the school, and they know how I am, how my personality is, if I am always smiling and always trying my best, I think that will give them a better idea than what they see in the media.

When I was working in South Pasadena, I was the first one the kids had ever seen with the hijab on. The district nurse, who was my boss, told me that the kids in this school were very lucky because they were introduced to me. They got to know me, what the hijab is all about and why I am wearing it. I feel like I introduced the religion to a lot of people. People get to know Islam through me.”