

MIND & FAITH

Islamic Guidance
For Mental Wellness

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GUIDELINE

COUNSEL · COMPASSION · COHERENCE

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Every breath, heartbeat, emotion, thought and feeling within the diverse creation is a manifestation of mercy and mastery of the Master of the Universe. Undoubtedly, our Creator, Allah Ta'ala, has meticulously crafted even the minutest intricacies of life.

If such care and attention has been bestowed upon the creation of the physical world around us, we can well imagine the love and care that goes into the development of the heart and the intricacies of the human mind and intellect.

Mental health, a buzz term in recent times, is no new concept. It encompasses wellness on individual, social and structural levels, and has deep-rooted significance in Islam. For a Muslim to forge ahead through life's highs and lows, understanding mental wellbeing is paramount.

WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS?

The concept of mental health encompasses key aspects that are integral to our overall health, including our physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and social wellbeing. Mental wellbeing directly impacts each and every one of us, through our subjective thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The essence of it all is: if we want to maintain our 'health goals' and do justice to the facets entrusted to us, then our mental health surely does matter.

It is, however, important to understand that mental health is multifaceted and exists on a continuum. Our unique experiences can result in many different presenting outcomes, which can show up in our personal lives, social environments and sometimes, in clinical settings. Keeping this in mind, we acknowledge that the concept of mental health does not always result in mental health conditions or illnesses; even though it is undeniably embedded in the way we are accustomed to understanding it. Mental health and mental conditions can, and should be viewed separately for the purpose of our own insights.

CAUSES & CONDITIONS

So, what are some of the causes of mental health conditions? Mental health conditions occur as a result of a considerable disruption to our social environment, cognition, emotional regulation and even our own behaviour. These factors can potentially lead to the disablement of our daily functionality, cause us significant distress, increase the probability of self-infliction and ultimately lower the level of our mental wellbeing. Some mental health conditions that you might be familiar with are: Clinical Depression, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Dementia, Schizophrenia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

HOW DOES FAITH FEATURE?

In every part of the world, adherents to faith in the Creator and Sustainer, Allah Ta'ala can be found. True faith is the compass to navigate turbulent waters and survive stormy seas.

If Allah Ta'ala, who is Al-Musawwir (The Fashioner), beautifully fashioned your thoughts and feelings, **won't nurturing your spirituality be key to preserving mental wellness?**

Nabi ﷺ is our role model for wellbeing and a reminder that when Allah Ta'ala tests us with challenges, sound mental health is still achievable. Does this mean that Nabi ﷺ never experienced negative thoughts and feelings? He ﷺ felt the weight of sadness, grief, anxiety and heartbreak, but his unwavering trust in Allah Ta'ala always triumphed.

Hazrat Anas bin Malik ؓ narrated the following upon the demise of Ibrahim, the son of Rasulallah ﷺ:

“The eyes of Allah's Messenger ﷺ started shedding tears. `Abdur Rahman bin `Auf said, "O Allah's Apostle, even you are weeping!" He said, "O Ibn `Auf, this is mercy." Then he wept more and said, "The eyes are shedding tears and the heart is grieved, and we will not say except what pleases our Lord, O Ibrahim! Indeed, we are grieved by your separation." (Bukhari)

This simple illustration highlights his ﷺ emotional steadiness in the face of adversity, and it is from Qur'anic and Prophetic wisdom that Islamic approaches to counselling and mental health evolved. Historically, Muslims have been at the forefront of research in psychology, cognitive treatments and emotional insight in light of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Undeniably, mental health difficulties and conditions are more prevalent now than ever before. Undergoing relevant guidance and possible clinical treatment from

reputable scholars and mental health professionals is necessary and encouraged within Islamic faith.

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?

The unfortunate reality is that many people have misconceptions of what mental health is and isn't. As previously established, mental health and illness are usually understood to be the same, resulting in societal ideas that portray a negative light on the reality of the matter. Have you ever heard or used the phrases similar to 'I am feeling so depressed today' or 'she's definitely bipolar'? Mental health conditions are incorrectly used in our general day-to-day conversations that we forget that these are real illnesses affecting real people.

Thus, mental health matters are subjected to stigma, including stereotypes and discrimination. When you experience this, it's easy for you to internalise these negative beliefs. You may feel misunderstood, isolated and find it difficult to speak up or seek help, because of a fear of judgement and being treated differently.

So what can we do to change this and normalise the concept of mental health within our family units, friendship circles and community?

- ◆ **TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:** Create a safe environment for you and your loved ones who are experiencing mental health concerns and direct each other to seek necessary assistance.
- ◆ **EDUCATE YOURSELF:** Don't be afraid to politely respond to misconceptions or negative comments by sharing facts.

- ◆ **BE LANGUAGE-CONSCIOUS:** Remind yourself and others that words matter - refrain from labelling people and using discriminatory words like 'crazy' or 'psycho'.
- ◆ **EMPOWERMENT:** By having open conversations about what mental health is and isn't, you can begin to empower yourself and others to make informed decisions relating to mental health.
- ◆ **ALWAYS REMEMBER:** There is no validation greater than your connection with Allah Ta'ala.

HOW DO I SEEK HELP?

Seeking assistance can pose challenges, particularly when confronting stigma or feeling unsure of where to begin.

- ◆ **RESEARCH OPTIONS:** Research reputable organisations and mental health professionals, particularly those with sound Islamic orientation. Engage with Ulama, your local Masjid or Islamic centre for guidance, and be discerning about the professionalism, modalities and ethical standards of the service provider you choose. Ensure the service is tailored to your needs, and consider virtual appointments if available and more easily accessible to you.
- ◆ **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:** You can't put a price on health, including mental health! Understandably, some mental health care providers offer pro-bono services, reduced rates or payment plans if needed. Don't be afraid to explore your options and prioritise accordingly.

- ◆ **OUR ULTIMATE REFUGE:** Contentment and sound mental health cannot be achieved without consistently seeking Allah Ta'ala's Divine assistance. Take comfort in His Wisdom and Decree.

“Whoever turns away from My Reminder will certainly have a miserable life.” (Qur'an 20:124)

“Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort.” (Qur'an 13:28)

Guideline Islamic Counselling offers free and confidential counselling and support for those undergoing various psychosocial challenges. Counselling is undertaken by qualified mental health professionals and Ulama, and is underpinned by Islamic teachings.





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