

An Analysis of The Causes Of Mental Illness

Part 2

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An interesting look at overcoming mental health issues, stress, anxiety and more through verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Ahl Al-Bayt ('a). It tackles issues of where the cause of these problems come from in terms of dunya, and how to overcome them through establishing a relationship with God, contributing towards mental sanity and clarity.

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An Analysis of The Causes Of Mental Illness

Part 2

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Abstract: Mental illness, anxiety, depression, and worries are among the predicaments of human society in the present century. In recent decades, the factors contributing to, preventing, and curing these illnesses have been addressed from different angles. The resulting achievements are various cognitive, behavioural, psychological, psychodynamic, and biological theories that, of course, led to valuable outcomes.

The previous paper addressed general symptoms and the stages of mental illness according to the Qur'an. This paper offers the consequences of religious teachings on the treatment of mental illness; faith in God, living the "goodly life", God-wariness (*taqwa*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*) are some qualities that stave off mental illness and bring about peace and tranquillity.

1. Islam

According to the Muslim scholars, Islam brings peace of mind and security, hence a means of mental health. When disbelief is regarded as a mental illness, Islam would then be considered mental health. Imam Ali said:

"Praise be to Allah, who has opened the way of Islam, facilitated learning and practising its injunctions for those who are willing to, strengthened its pillars against those who fight with it, and made it a safe refuge for those who hold fast to it, a means of health for those who enter it, proof and arguments for those who follow its logic..."

Elsewhere he said,

"God has chosen Islam specifically for you and has chosen you for it because the word 'Islam' is derived from the root 'Salam' (meaning 'health'), and Islam is the source of honour..."

2. Faith And Belief In God

Faith in God is man's best asset which, if realized, is the source of many blessings; if someone is not faithful, he is permanently in loss:

وَالْعَصْرِ

I swear by the time. (103: 1).

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

Most surely man is in loss. (103:2).

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience. (103:3).

Faith and the knowledge accompanied by faith bring peace and assurance, both integral parts of faith. Faith in God has positive results divided into cognitive and behavioural categories; some results are manifested in one's beliefs, and some in his personal behaviours, altogether forming a strong, good-natured man void of apprehensions and anxiety.

1. The Consequences Of Belief In God

According to the Qur'an, belief or faith in God has many cognitive benefits, some of which are as follows:

A. The believers always see themselves under the auspices of God because they do not know any Wali (Master) and supporter except Him,

وَاَعْتَصِمُوا بِاللّٰهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۖ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ

and hold fast to Allah. He is your master—an excellent master and an excellent helper. (22:78)

B. The believers view themselves as needing God under any circumstances and see Him All-powerful and All-embracing:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. (35: 15)

C. The believers only fear God and do not fear anybody else:

وَيَخْشَوْنَہٗ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيبًا

and fear Him, and fear no one except Allah, and Allah suffices as reckoner. (33:39)

D. Due to the light in their hearts, the believers can distinguish between the truth and falsehood—the right and the wrong way. There is a difference between them and those in darkness. They are never anxious and apprehensive because of their correct understanding and their knowledge of the correct way:

أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا

Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people, like one who dwells in a manifold darkness which he cannot leave?... (6: 122)

E. Believers neither regret losing something nor are delighted at worldly gains; and they do not worry about the future. These three states lead to others' permanent anxiety, apprehension, and fear:

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

So that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your way; and Allah does not like any swaggering braggart. (57:23)

F. Due to the peace and composure descended on their hearts, their belief in God is constantly increasing; doubt and fear are removed from their hearts, resulting in steadfastness during hardships:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ

It is He who sent down composure into the hearts of the faithful that they might enhance their faith. (48:4)

This peace of mind may have ideological aspects and dispels the instability of beliefs, or it can be practical so that one can have steadfastness, resistance, and patience. In short, the believer never wavers and grieves in the face of hardships; he sees himself constantly superior to the enemy and adheres to the verse:

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Do not weaken or grieve, you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful. (3: 139)

However, the anxiety of disbelievers is evident in their words and actions, especially during hardships.

2. The Conduct Of Believers

The believers are also fundamentally different from others in their conduct, some of which are as follows:

A. They have no fear, sorrow, and grief:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Look! The friends of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve. (10:62)

The one who has no fault and sees God as the just one, who never punishes the sinless, and the one

who is always supported by him should not be afraid or grievous.

B. They fulfil their commitments.

C. They are reliable in their personal lives and social interactions.

D. They are chaste and avoid unusual sexual behaviours.

E. They comply with religious obligations.

F. They will achieve salvation and enter Heaven because of their good deeds:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Certainly, the faithful have attained salvation—those. (23:1)

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

Who are humble in their prayers. (23:2)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

Who avoid vain talk. (23:3)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ

Who carry out their [duty of] Zakat. (23:4)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ

Who guard their private parts. (23:5)

إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ

Except from their spouses or their slave women, for then they are not blameworthy. (23:6)

فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

But whoever seeks [anything] beyond that-it is they who are transgressors. (23:7)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

And those who keep their trusts and covenants. (23:8)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ

And who are watchful of their prayers. (23:9)

وَلِئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ

It is they who will be the inheritors. (23: 10)

الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Who shall inherit paradise, and will remain in it [forever}. (23: 11)

G. They do not surrender to hardships as they overcome their problems by relying on divine power.

H. They do not feel humiliated and inferior to others: ¹

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Do not weaken or grieve: you shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful. (3: 139).

3. Doing Good Deeds

Wherever faith or belief is referred to, it is immediately followed by reference to virtuous deeds. Belief and good deeds are interdependent. According to the Qur'an, the result of good deeds (i.e., any good behaviour stemming from justice and fairness) is the "good life" (*al-hayat al-tayyibah*) in this world. In other words, the good doers have lives cleansed of any oppression and worry, and replete with serenity and well-being:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْشَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever acts righteously, [whether} male or female, should he be faithful, -We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do. (16:97).

In contrast, those who are cut off from God and turn away from his remembrance will have a hard life, full of anxiety.

4. Piety

Piety, or God-wariness, is essential for anyone who wants to lead a relaxed and comfortable life under the control of the intellect. As seen in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions, the effects of piety are abundant:

A. Clear-sightedness: Due to piety, the heart's eyes open and see the truth as it is. He or she will have an inner awareness of religious obligations (which might on occasions be the believers' most difficult problem), and is free of confusion (i.e., a mental problem) because these obligations are clear due to comprehension of divine teachings and having a bright soul:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

O, you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion for you... (8:29).

Elsewhere, God says in the Qur'an,

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ

Be wary of Allah and Allah shall teach you... (2:282).

Prophet Muhammad also said, "Beware of the believer's insight because he sees by means of God's light."

B. Protection against harms: The pious people are protected against the harms of evil-doers and the enemies' deceit:

وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا

Yet if you are patient and God-wary, their guile will not harm you in any way... (3: 120)

C. Being saved from hardships and receiving untold provisions:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

And whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him. (65:2).

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

And provide for him from whence he does not reckon. (65:3).

D. Forgiven sins: If the pious commit a sin, God will forgive him due to their piety:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

O, you who have faith! Be wary of Allah... (33:70).

يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

He shall rectify your conduct for you and He shall forgive you your sins. (33:71)

E. Entering heaven: From numerous Qur'anic verses, it can be inferred that the pious are the dwellers of heaven, encompassed by divine mercy:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

Indeed, the God-wary will be amid gardens and springs. (15:45).

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ

Enter it in peace and safety! (15:46).

Considering the above verses, that which renders people apprehensive or sad, either about this world or the hereafter, and may lead to mental illness, can be prevented through piety, as it leads to a relaxed life. The pious, including the poor, live a life void of tension, anxiety, and stress; while those who are not pious, including the rich, are always in a state of unease.

5. Remembrance Of God

Remembrance of God (*dhikr*) brings peace of mind; hearts attracted to the other than God, be it a powerful ruler or one's clan, tribe, family members, properties, and positions, etc... never finds peace because nothing can satisfy him. No matter what he gains, he wants more.

The only thing brings peace of mind and satisfaction is the remembrance of God. The one who remembers God and is fond of Him does not yearn for anything else and won't become anxious and disturbed about it. Experience shows that even if man has all his life amenities as many times as necessary for his lifetime, his divine nature that seeks God never rests in peace. God said in the Qur'an,

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance! (13:28).

It should be noted that remembrance of God does not merely refer to articulating specific *dhikr* such as "There is no god but Allah", "Immaculate is Allah," and "Praise be to Allah" Rather, it means whatever reminds man of God, whether it be reciting some *dhikr* or avoiding sins, being patient in hardships, resorting to divine prophets, heeding to the verses of the Qur'an, prayers, and other religious injunctions, each of which reminds man of God because any deed should be done for His sake.

In short, a factor in mental health and prevention of mental illnesses is the remembrance of God.

6. Trust In God

Through trust in a power superior to all other powers, people feel deeply calm. In Islamic teachings, whenever one is urged to do something without being fearful and stressed out, the issue of trust in God is raised, and he or she is told not to fear problems and trust in God and in His eternal power when beginning a difficult task. In return, God will help because trust in him prevents frustration and hopelessness. The one who trusts in God is never defeated and frustrated, and can easily tolerate problems, as said in the Qur'an:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ ۖ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا

And whoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him. Indeed, Allah carries through His command Certainly Allah has set a measure for everything. (65:3).

And

لَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Those¹ said, 'All the people² have gathered against you; so, fear them.' That only increased them in faith, and they said, Allah is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent trustee. (3: 173).

Those who trust in God—albeit few and defeated (in the Battle of Uhud) and lacked modern weapons—

stood strong against the so-called triumphant enemy, and they never feared or worried; rather, their faith was strengthened. One factor in prevention of mental illnesses resulting from stress and worry is trust in the All-powerful and All-merciful God.

7. Not Being Attached To This World

According to Qur'anic verses and Islamic traditions, the love for and fondness of this world and its manifestations are the roots of all evils. God revealed to Prophet Moses, "Know that love for and attachment to this world are the origin of all evils."

Imam al-Sadiq also said, "Love of this world is the peak of all errors."

Likewise, Imam Ali said, "Love of this world is the apex of all seditions and the root of all sadness."

In the Qur'an, this world is introduced as 'a means of deception':

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

The life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion. (3: 185).

In the same line, Imam Ali said, "Trust in and attachment to the world are the greatest deceit."

Accordingly, Imam al-Sadiq said, "Now that the world is ephemeral and mortal, attachment to it is meaningless."

In his will to Imam Hasan, Imam Ali said, "Do not make this world your greatest purpose."

Finally, one cannot love this world and the hereafter (i.e., God) at the same time. Thus, fondness of this world ruins our lives and distresses our hearts. Likewise, inattention to this world and its manifestations save us from sorrows and stress. In short, disregard of this world is a factor in mental health. Of course, it does not mean not using the blessings in this world.

8. Paying Zakat

Paying zakat, a way to spend money in the way of God, for the needy while receiving their prayers in return bless one's property and brings peace of mind:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Take charity [as zakat] from their possessions to cleanse them and purify them thereby, and bless them [when receiving Zakat]. Indeed, your blessing is a comfort to them, and Allah is all-

hearing, all knowing. (9: 103).

In this verse the two aspects of moral, mental, and social philosophies of zakat are referred to. It means: O Prophet, when you take charity from their wealth, you cleanse them of their sins and help them grow spiritually. You cleanse them of their moral vices, avarice, parsimony and cultivate philanthropy, generosity, and respect for the others' rights.

Furthermore, you eliminate the corruption created in society due to poverty, social class differences, and deprivation through acting upon this religious injunction and cleanse the society of such contamination.

In the next sentence, God says: When taking zakat from them, pray for them, and say hello to them (i.e., bless them) because this prayer brings them peace of mind. With this prayer, they are showered with the divine mercy such that they feel it clearly.

In addition, the gratitude of the Prophet or his rightful successors to the people for their paying zakat gives them peace of mind. In other words, if they have apparently lost something, they have gained something better in return. Interestingly, nowhere in the world is it heard that tax collectors are required to thank people, though this ruling in Islam is a recommended injunction. Hence, giving zakat is a factor in our mental peace.

9. Marriage

In the Qur'an, marriage is introduced as a divine sign; a spouse is introduced as relief and peace of mind:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً

And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. (30:21).

In another verse, God referred to Eve as a means of peace to Adam:

وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

...And made from it its mate, that he might find comfort with her. (7: 189).

This peace lies in the fact that spouses complement each other and cause one another to flourish, delighting each other in such a way that one is incomplete without the other. Naturally, there is attraction between those who complement each other which the Qur'an referred to as "affection and mercy".

This peace may be physical or mental, individual, or social. When a person enters a marriage, he

develops a new personality and feels more responsible; this is the meaning of tranquillity through marriage.

10. Open Heartedness

In the Qur'an, open-heartedness is introduced as opposed to hard heartedness, a kind of mental illness. The hard-hearted person refuses to follow the divine teachings and injunctions and turns away from remembrance of God. Open-hearted people, on the other hand, who have enlightened, and pure hearts have no problem accepting Islam and its divine injunctions. Thus, they are guided; they tread the right path and will be saved on the day of Resurrection.

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

Is someone whose breast Allah has opened to Islam so that he follows a light from His Lord? So woe to those whose hearts have been hardened to the remembrance of Allah... (39:22).

11. Not Oppressing Others

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

Those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing—for such there shall be safety, and they are the [rightly] guided. (6:82).

Considering the above verse, one can see that tranquillity is achieved only when there are two principles governing the society: faith and social justice. Because when a person's faith is weakened, he or she does not feel responsible towards God; social justice is replaced with injustice, which leads to less security in society.

That is why despite all the efforts of world thinkers to eradicate various forms of insecurity from the world, people are moving further away from real peace and security. The reason can be found in disregarding the two above principles, that is, people's faith is weakened, so there is injustice. No doubt faith generates serenity and inner security, and unbelief generates a guilty conscience and unrest.

12. Studying History

Sometimes when faced with misbehaviours, obstinacy, rebellion, and ingratitude, one may feel hopeless, anxious, distressed, and fearful of his failure, and may either give up or continue his efforts anxiously. However, when he studies history, he sees all godly reformers and prophets faced these problems, but they overcame them through their patience and resistance, and they have become well-known throughout the history.

However, there remains no trace of rebellious oppressors and enemies of the righteous in history. This way, one's willpower becomes strong, one's heart rests, and one continues his efforts confidently, strongly, and diligently.

To reassure Prophet Muhammad, God narrated the history of the previous prophets to him, strengthening him and allaying his anxiety.

وَكَلَّا نَقْصُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُنَبِّتُ بِهِ قُورَادَكَ

Whatever We relate to you of the accounts of the apostles are those by which We strengthen your heart. (11:120).

13. The Dark Night

وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا

...and He has made the night for rest... (6:69).

14. Sleep

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا

It is He who made for you the night as a covering and sleep for rest. (25:47).

15. A Home

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا

It is Allah who has made for you your homes as a place of rest... (16:80).

¹. the Prophet's companions in the battle of Hamra al-Asad] to whom the people [Abd-ulQays caravan going from Mecca to Medina.

². Abu-Sufyan's army.

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