

Healing the Mind and Soul an Islamic Approach to Mental Health and Resilience

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Abstract

The growing global awareness of mental health has highlighted the need for holistic approaches that consider not only psychological but also spiritual well-being. In Islamic tradition, the human being is viewed as a composite of body, mind, and soul, and true healing requires nurturing all three. This article explores the concept of mental health and spiritual resilience through an Islamic lens, emphasizing the role of faith, worship, and divine connection in fostering emotional stability and inner peace. The Qur'an and Sunnah acknowledge emotional challenges such as grief, fear, and anxiety, offering spiritual tools like *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in Allah), *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and *du'a* (supplication) as means to cope. The life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ serves as a model of resilience amidst adversity, illustrating how spiritual strength can guide individuals through psychological distress. Historically, Muslim scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina addressed mental and emotional disorders, proposing treatments rooted in both spiritual and rational practices. In modern contexts, integrating Islamic principles with evidence-based therapeutic methods can enhance mental health outcomes, especially for practicing Muslims. Spiritually integrated psychotherapy, Islamic mindfulness, and community-based support within the Ummah are crucial in this regard. This article also highlights the importance of removing the stigma around mental illness in Muslim communities and the proactive role mosques and scholars can play in this domain. Ultimately, Islam not only validates emotional struggles but offers a deeply rooted spiritual path to healing and resilience, promoting holistic well-being for the mind and soul.

Keywords: Islamic Mental Health, Spiritual Resilience, Faith-Based Coping, Qur'anic Psychology, Prophetic Healing

Introduction

In the contemporary world, mental health challenges are increasingly becoming a matter of global concern. Stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and psychological trauma are affecting millions of people across all ages, professions, and faiths. Despite the advancement of modern psychology and psychiatry, many still struggle to find lasting relief and inner peace. In such a context, spiritual healing and faith-based resilience are gaining renewed interest. For Muslims, Islam offers a holistic and comprehensive framework that not only acknowledges mental health issues but also provides spiritually grounded tools for coping and healing. Islam recognizes the human being as a tri-dimensional creation: body, mind, and soul.

Therefore, a complete approach to well-being must address all three dimensions. Islamic teachings from the Qur'an, Sunnah (Prophetic traditions), and classical scholarship provide profound insights into understanding emotional struggles and nurturing spiritual resilience.¹ This article explores how Islamic principles support mental health, emphasizing the role of patience (sabr), trust in Allah (tawakkul), remembrance (dhikr), prayer (salah), supplication (du'a), and the support of the Muslim community (ummah) in healing psychological distress. It also discusses the integration of Islamic values with modern therapeutic practices and highlights the role of religious scholars and institutions in addressing mental illness within Muslim societies.

Understanding Mental Health in the Islamic Perspective

Islam does not consider mental health to be separate from religious or spiritual well-being. In fact, emotional struggles are seen as part of the human experience and are acknowledged in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). For instance, in Surah Yusuf, Prophet Yaqub (Jacob) expresses immense grief at the loss of his son, showing that sadness and sorrow are natural emotions. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself experienced deep personal loss, social rejection, and the pain of persecution, yet remained resilient through his faith.

In the Islamic worldview, mental health is affected by the state of the heart (qalb) and the self (nafs).²

The nafs can be inclined towards good or evil, and the heart can be spiritually healthy or diseased. A sound heart (qalbun salim) is essential for overall well-being. The Qur'an refers to diseases of the heart (marad al-qalb) such as envy, pride, and hypocrisy as sources of inner turmoil.

Therefore, Islam advocates for regular purification of the heart through remembrance of Allah, moral behavior, repentance, and spiritual awareness. This inner purification (tazkiyah) is seen as essential to emotional and psychological healing.

Qur'anic Principles for Emotional Stability

The Qur'an offers profound guidance for dealing with stress, fear, anxiety, and grief. Some of the most essential principles include:

Sabr (Patience):

Patience is one of the most emphasized virtues in the Qur'an. In over 90 verses, Allah commands believers to be patient in times of hardship and adversity. Sabr helps individuals endure trials without falling into despair. Allah says:

"Indeed, Allah is with those who are patient."³

Tawakkul (Trust in Allah):

Believers are taught to rely on Allah for all affairs, especially when outcomes are uncertain.⁴ Tawakkul does not mean inaction but rather a reliance on divine wisdom after making an effort. It helps reduce anxiety by shifting the burden to Allah:

"And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for him."⁵

Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah):

Dhikr soothes the heart and brings peace of mind. Regular remembrance through tasbeeh (glorification), tahmid (praise), takbir (magnification), and tahlil (declaration of faith) helps calm inner distress:

“Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.”⁶

Du’a (Supplication):

Supplication is a direct conversation with Allah. The Prophet (SAW) taught many du’as for anxiety, sadness, and hardship. Turning to Allah in prayer helps develop hope and emotional strength.⁷

The Prophetic Model of Resilience

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) provides a comprehensive model of emotional and spiritual resilience. From his early life as an orphan to facing immense hostility in Makkah and the sorrow of personal losses, including the deaths of his children and wife Khadijah (RA), the Prophet faced adversity with calm, wisdom, and unwavering faith.

One of the most difficult years in his life was the "Year of Sorrow" (Aam al-Huzn), in which he lost both Khadijah (RA) and his uncle Abu Talib. Despite such profound grief, the Prophet never gave up on his mission. Instead, he turned to Allah in solitude, prayer, and deep reflection. His night journey (Isra and Mi’raj) was both a spiritual elevation and a source of healing and divine support.⁸

The Prophet also encouraged emotional expression. He cried when his son Ibrahim died, and when asked about it, he replied, “

The eyes shed tears and the heart is grieved, but we do not say except what pleases our Lord.”⁹

Such examples show that emotional expression is not a sign of weakness but of humanity. The key is in processing those emotions through faith and maintaining trust in Allah.

The Role of Worship in Mental Well-being

Worship in Islam is not just ritualistic but therapeutic. It nurtures discipline, mindfulness, humility, and connection with the Creator.

Salah (Prayer):

Five daily prayers act as structured breaks in the day, reducing stress and helping the mind reset.¹⁰

The physical movements also contribute to bodily relaxation, and the recitation of verses brings spiritual calm.

Fasting (Sawm):

Beyond physical cleansing, fasting helps develop self-control and empathy for others. It redirects focus from material desires to spiritual growth.¹¹

Qur’an Recitation:

The rhythmic, melodious recitation of the Qur’an has been shown in research to lower stress

and improve mental clarity. The words of Allah are a form of shifa (healing).¹²

Hajj and Umrah:

Pilgrimage offers spiritual rebirth, unity with fellow believers, and a break from worldly distractions, providing immense mental rejuvenation.¹³

Community Support and Social Well-being (Ummah)

Islam emphasizes the importance of community and social bonds. Isolation can worsen mental health issues, whereas a supportive community promotes healing. The Prophet (SAW) said:

“The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body.”¹⁴ Mosques, family units, and faith-based organizations must play a role in supporting mental health through:

Listening and empathizing without judgment.

Encouraging counseling and therapy when needed.

Organizing mental health awareness programs.

Classical and Contemporary Islamic Scholars on Mental Health

Classical Islamic scholars addressed psychological and emotional well-being with profound insight. For example:

Imam Al-Ghazali: In his "Ihya Ulum al-Din," he discussed the purification of the heart and classified emotional diseases like anger, envy, and arrogance.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah:

Explored the effects of sins on the heart and emphasized dhikr as a remedy.¹⁵

Ibn Sina (Avicenna):

Proposed early theories on mental illness and developed techniques similar to psychotherapy.¹⁶

In the modern era, Muslim psychologists such as Dr. Malik Badri and Dr. Aisha Utz have advocated for integrating Islamic spirituality with modern psychological methods, giving birth to spiritually integrated therapy.

Integration of Islamic Teachings with Modern Therapy

Today, many Muslims seek culturally and religiously sensitive mental health support. Islamic psychology (Ilm al-Nafs) is now being developed as a formal discipline. Faith-based counseling blends Islamic values with cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), trauma-informed care, and mindfulness techniques.

Examples include:

- Using verses from the Qur'an to challenge negative thoughts
- Practicing gratitude as a form of positive psychology
- Mindfulness adapted to muraqabah (awareness of Allah)
- Journaling linked with self-accountability (muhasabah)

Muslim counselors and therapists are increasingly recognizing the importance of aligning

their methods with the client's religious values, which improves trust, effectiveness, and outcomes.

Overcoming Stigma and Promoting Awareness

Mental illness is still taboo in many Muslim communities. People may be afraid to seek help due to shame, fear of gossip, or misbelief that mental illness signifies weak faith. This stigma must be addressed urgently.

Steps toward change:

- Friday khutbahs (sermons) discussing emotional well-being
- Workshops in Islamic centers
- Training for imams on mental health basics
- Publishing literature on Islamic psychology

Seeking mental help is not a weakness but a courageous step toward healing. The Prophet (SAW) said, “

There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment.”¹⁷

Summary of Key Points

- Islam acknowledges and validates emotional struggles.
- The Qur'an and Hadith offer guidance for coping with distress through sabr, tawakkul, and dhikr.
- The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) modeled emotional strength and vulnerability.
- Worship practices promote spiritual and emotional balance.
- Support from the ummah is crucial to healing.
- Classical scholars provided a foundation for Islamic mental health.
- Modern therapy can be enriched through Islamic values.
- Stigma must be replaced with awareness and compassion.

Conclusion

This article provides an in-depth exploration of how Islamic teachings contribute to mental health and spiritual resilience. Recognizing the increasing prevalence of emotional distress in modern societies, it emphasizes the Islamic perspective that true well-being encompasses the mind, body, and soul. Islam acknowledges human emotional struggles—such as grief, anxiety, and sadness—as natural experiences and offers divine tools for coping and healing. The article begins by explaining the Islamic concept of mental health, centered on the purification of the heart (qalb) and self (nafs). It highlights Qur'anic principles like sabr (patience), tawakkul (trust in Allah), dhikr (remembrance), and du'a (supplication) as essential for emotional stability. The Prophetic model is presented as the ultimate example of resilience, with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrating emotional openness alongside deep spiritual strength.

Worship practices such as salah, fasting, Qur'an recitation, and Hajj are shown to nurture emotional regulation and mindfulness. The article also underlines the importance of the Muslim community (ummah) in offering support and social connection. It reviews the contributions of classical scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina, and discusses how their insights align with modern psychological methods.

Crucially, the article advocates integrating Islamic teachings with evidence-based therapies to create culturally sensitive mental health support. It stresses the need to combat stigma within Muslim societies and calls on religious leaders and mental health professionals to promote awareness, compassion, and help-seeking behavior. Islam provides a spiritually rich, psychologically sound, and community-driven approach to healing the mind and soul.

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