

HOW TO DEAL WITH SADNESS AND WORRY (PART 1 OF 2): PATIENCE, GRATITUDE AND TRUST

Rating:

Description: Patience, gratitude and trust are three ways that Islam suggests we deal with sadness and worry.

Category: [Lessons](#) › [Social Interaction](#) › [Coping with change](#)

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Objective:

- To utilise guidance from the Quran and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad to deal with the stresses of the 21st century.

Arabic terms:

- Hajj* – A pilgrimage to Mecca where the pilgrim performs a set of rituals. The *Hajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam, which every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their life if they can afford it and are physically able.
- Ramadan* - The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the month in which the obligatory fasting has been prescribed.
- Sabr* - patience and it comes from a root word meaning to stop, detain, or refrain.
- Shukr* - thankfulness and gratitude, and to acknowledge the beneficence of Allah.
- Sunnah* - The word Sunnah has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- Tawakkul* - to have complete faith or confidence in something. In this case to trust Allah completely, demonstrated by the ability to accept our circumstances no matter what.

The typical person in the developed world battles sadness and worry on a daily basis. At the same time you will often hear similar people comment about how happy and content those who live in underdeveloped Muslim countries appear to be. Even facing extreme poverty, hunger and loss, they repeatedly accept their circumstances without complaint. Why do they not suffer from stress and anxiety? We could accept at face value, that because they face death on a daily basis, everything else pales in comparison or we could look a little deeper and wonder about their relationship with Allah.



In the 21st century religious beliefs do not give the same comfort we would have expected one hundred, fifty or even twenty years ago. We have everything available at our finger tips or at the touch of a button but technology does not hold our hand in the quiet of the night or soothe our fears when our heart beats erratically, and our souls are filled with unreasonable fears and anxiety. The religion of Islam is all about making and keeping a connection with God. Islam instructs us to deal with sadness and worry by turning to Allah with patience, gratitude and trust.

Great Islamic scholar of the 14th century CE, Ibnul Qayyim said that our happiness in this life and our salvation in the Hereafter depend on patience. He explained that having patience meant having the ability to refrain from complaining, or despairing, and also having the ability to control ourselves in times of sadness and worry.

Patience means accepting what is beyond our control. In times of sadness or worry, being able to surrender to the will of God is a relief beyond measure. This does not mean that we sit back and let life pass by without participating. It means striving to please God in all aspects of our lives and at all times bearing in mind that if things don't go the way we planned, or the way we wanted, we accept what Allah has decreed and continue to strive to please Him. Being patient is hard work; it does not always come naturally or easily, however Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever tries to be patient then Allah will help him to be patient".

Patience and gratitude go hand in hand. *Sabr* and *Shukr*, are the Arabic words for patience and gratitude. Exercising patience becomes easier if we count our blessings and be grateful for them. We often forget that blessings from Allah include the air we breathe, the rain that falls from the sky, the sunshine on our faces or the shelter from rain and cold.

There are many ways to express gratitude but the easiest and most useful way is to obey Allah by fulfilling all our Islamic obligations. Simply by following the five pillars of Islam we express our gratefulness to Allah. When we bear witness that, there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His final Messenger we are being grateful for being blessed with Islam. When a believer prostrates before God in quiet,

joyful prayer, we are expressing gratitude. During the fast of Ramadan, we become thankful for food and water by realizing that God provides our sustenance. If a believer is able to make the pilgrimage to the House of God in Mecca, it is indeed a cause for thankfulness. The *Hajj* journey can be long, difficult, and expensive.^[1]

Practising Islam in the way Allah directed is an expression of patience and gratitude. If we accept and acknowledge as blessings the trials, triumphs, and tribulations of this life we open the way for the annihilation of all our worries and grief. All our experiences, from the highest highs to the lowest lows, are blessings from Allah. When we are overcome by sadness or worry we must turn to Allah, strive to be patient and grateful and put our trust in Allah because Allah is the most trustworthy.

“The believers are only those who, when God is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts and when His Verses (this Quran) are recited unto them, they (i.e. the Verses) increase their Faith; and they put their trust in their Lord Alone.” (Quran 8:2)

This complete trust in Allah is called *tawakkul*. It means that we face life's trials, and triumphs knowing that whatever our circumstances Allah knows what is best for us. Our trust in Allah must be constant, in all situations, good, bad, easy, or difficult. Whatever happens in this world is with His permission. Allah provides sustenance and He is able to withdraw it. Allah is the master of life and death; He is also the One who determines whether we are rich or poor, healthy or ill. If we are mindful that Allah has control over all things and that He ultimately wants us to live forever in Paradise, we can begin to leave our sadness and worry behind. If we face our fears and anxieties with complete trust in Allah, and if we show patience and gratitude with all our circumstances sadness and worry will disappear.

Prophet Muhammad said, “How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affair is all good, and this applies to no one except the believer. If something good happens to him, he gives thanks and that is good for him, and if something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience, and that is good for him.”^[2]

In the next lesson we will outline ways in which to become closer to Allah and thus begin to banish worry and sadness from our lives.

Footnotes:

[1] From <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/3535/>

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*

The web address of this article:

<https://www.newmuslims.com/index.php/articles/160/how-to-deal-with-sadness-and-worry-part-1>

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