

# ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS

(A short guide)



# WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

The concept of Mindfulness is grounded upon present moment awareness. Practiced when a person is fully engrossed in the 'here and now', paying purposeful attention to their surrounding including colours, textures, sounds, sensations, smells and tastes. In this moment no thought is given to the past or the future, all attention is solely on the moment at hand.

## MINDFULNESS AND WELLBEING

In contemporary Western societies mindfulness is promoted as a secular therapeutic technique that decreases feelings of anxiety and depression and enhances overall psychological wellness. Mindfulness also offers relief from physical ailments such as chronic pain. Many scientific studies support the claims made for the effectiveness of mindfulness on mental health.

# THE NEED FOR ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS

As Muslims we often find that our values and belief systems are absent from a lot of the theories and practices found in popular contemporary perspectives, the field of wellness, unfortunately, is no exception. The absence of God from wellbeing systems often leaves Muslims feeling excluded from the discourse, and more critically, unable to engage with their own mental health and wellness in holistic way, prolonging the suffering of ill mental health in our Muslim communities.

The constant marginalisation, and at times, portrayal of Islamic values and beliefs as being 'backwards' can also add to the anxieties and feelings of isolation felt by the Muslim. This guide (and the general aims of **insane**) is to validate islamic values and teachings and help the Muslim integrate them into wellness

systems in a way that brings feelings of peace and harmony in this life and the next (insha'Allah).

The Islamic Mindfulness presented in this guide is rooted in the Qur'an. Islamic Mindfulness aligns with the teachings of 'dhkir' or 'remembrance' found within the Islamic tradition, essentially emphasising mindfulness through this concept.

The core concept of Islamic Mindfulness is the remembrance of God, in which the mindful Muslim seeks to purposefully bring the awareness of God into the present moment. I define Islamic mindfulness as:

*'Paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, with awareness of God's presence'.*

## DEFINITION

**'Paying attention  
to the present  
moment, on  
purpose, with  
awareness of  
God's presence'**

DR SARA KADIR

**ISLAMIC  
MINDFULNESS**

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# WHAT'S GOD GOT TO DO WITH WELLBEING?

in one word: everything.

As Muslims we believe that the whole purpose of existence is to worship God, there is no other reason for being here on earth. A Muslim's wellbeing in both this world and the next is dependent upon their ability to fulfil this role of worship and whether or not a Muslim is successful at doing so is dependent upon how mindful a Muslim is of this task, and in turn how much mindfulness a Muslim practices whilst being present on earth.

Islamic mindfulness does not give the promise of a pain free world, but reminds the Muslim that this world is a test and ease comes when the Muslim prepares themselves for trials and tribulations, through faith and proximity to God. For the mindful Muslim, suffering bears a bittersweet essence—a reminder of the soul's humility in the face of divine decree. It is in this surrender to the Majesty of God that peace is found, while the heedless wander in the shadows of defiance, lost in the maze of despair and resentment, seeking solace in fleeting illusions that lead them astray from the path of worship and salvation.

Indeed one can argue that the correct practice of Islam is the constant and conscious practice of Islamic Mindfulness, wherein the Muslim seeks to be in a state of constant awareness of God and His presence. This, in turn, leads to positive health and wellbeing for the Muslim in both this world and the next, as the moment by moment awareness of the presence of God guides the Muslim towards good action, prevents them from doing wrong, provides comfort and ease in times of difficulty, and allows for the cultivation of positive character traits such as patience, discipline and courage.

There exists an understanding in the Islamic tradition that premises existence on the understanding that the human is in the perpetual state of forgetting the covenant they made with God and that life is about 'remembering' to fulfil this covenant. Shiekh AbdulQadir al Jalani in his book 'The secret of secrets' explains:

'A time came when these souls started binding themselves to the flesh and forgot their source and their covenant. They forgot that when Allah created them in the realm of souls He had asked them Am I not your Lord? and they had answered, Indeed They forgot their promise, they forgot their source, their way to return home; but Allah is merciful....so He sent divine books and messengers to them to remind them of their origin.' P7

Accordingly, the whole purpose of revelations is an act of reminding the human being of God and purpose for existence, a call to awaken to the presence of the Divine and the purpose of existence. The more the Muslim is mindful of God, the more successful they will have, this success includes enhanced wellbeing, as surely the religion of 'salaam' must first and foremost bring salaam (peace) to its adheres?!

Moreover, the Mindful Muslim, steeped in the consciousness of God, embraces a sacred duty towards kin, community, and humanity at large. Sacrificing personal desires upon the altar of communal welfare, they nurture a sanctum where all souls find solace, a haven where each individual may bloom in harmony.

Therefore, the practice of Islamic mindfulness does not only benefit the person who practices mindfulness but all those who come in contact with the mindful Muslim, just as God intended.

# FORMS

## ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS TAKES TWO FORMS:

**1<sup>st</sup>**

An act of worship carried out with purposeful intent to bring the awareness of God into the present moment.





Meditation



Salah



Reading Qur'an



Dhkir



Prayer (dua)

# FORM 1 EXAMPLES



FORMS

ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS  
TAKES TWO FORMS:

**2<sup>nd</sup>**

Purposefully bringing the awareness of  
God into mundane activities- turning  
them into acts that serve divine purpose  
and therefore enhance wellbeing.





Eating



Exercise



Washing the dishes



Walks



Driving



Cooking

# FORM 2 EXAMPLES

[WWW.INSANEINSAN.COM](http://WWW.INSANEINSAN.COM)

## ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS





# HOW DO I PRACTICE ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS?

## FORM 1

To illustrate the first form of mindfulness , which is practiced during an act of worship, i will use the words of Imam Al-Ghazali on reading the Qur'an:

One should contemplate upon the verses of the Qur'an with presence of heart ignoring all other thoughts. A person ought to be emotionally engaged with the text, so, where there are verses pertaining to punishment one should feel distress and anxiety and should actually cry, and similarly, when the reader comes upon verses of love, forgiveness and kindness, one should feel soft at heart, relieved and happy.

## FORM 2

whilst eating:

- A) Take a moment to acknowledge how readily food is available to you, how copious and various the food is. Thank Allah in acknowledgment of this blessing.
- B) When you place the food into your mouth, take in the flavours. Thank Allah for your body that is able to digest and taste the food you are eating.
- C) Feel gratitude and blessed.
- D) Good action: Feed the poor in acknowledgment of God's blessing.

# HOW DO I PRACTICE ISLAMIC MINDFULNESS?

## FORM 2

whilst walking:

A) Take a moment to acknowledge your body- how it moves, your surroundings, God's creation-humans and nature. Contemplate your ability to see them and hear them.

B) Glorify God for His creation. Say 'SubhanAllah', how excellent is God in His creation?

C) Feel humility and humbleness in the face of His Majesty. Feel safe and assured you are in 'good hands'.

D) Good action: Trust in people, knowing no one is able to take from you or give you anything without God's permission.

An example of mindfulness that starts in the moment, and leads to general awareness of God:

whilst washing the dishes:

A) Take a moment to acknowledge the free flowing water and that you can feel it on your skin.

B) Thank Allah in acknowledgment of this blessing. Ponder on what other blessings you have taken for granted ?

C) Feel gratitude and ashamed of your oversight. Say 'estagfurulla'

D) Good action: Be resolved to teach yourself to be more mindful and grateful for what you have. Force yourself to list the things you take for granted every night and thank God for them.



OUTCOME

**'Practicing Islamic  
Mindfulness leads  
to enhanced  
wellbeing and good  
action.'**

DR SARA KADIR

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Salaam! I'm Sara and I have a PhD in "Mindfulness and psychological wellbeing from a Qur'anic perspective'. Much of my research relied upon the works of Imam Al-Ghazali in his book "The Revival".

I launched 'INsane' after noticing people were genuinely interested in my research. The INsane logo has a double meaning, it can also be read as the Arabic word for human 'insan'. You can find more about the project and me on my pocast, the link for which is on the website.

I am passionate about informing Muslims on wellbeing from an Islamic perspective. I see this as a duty and a privilege.

This guide will be the first of many (insha'Allah). You can download it free from the INsane website.

I pray that the knowledge i share brings you clarity and courage. Because finding peace takes courage.



Feel free to contact me for collaborations, feedback or thoughts on: the insane website or on twitter @imsarakay

*Sara K*