

TAWAKKUL



BY DR SARA KADIR

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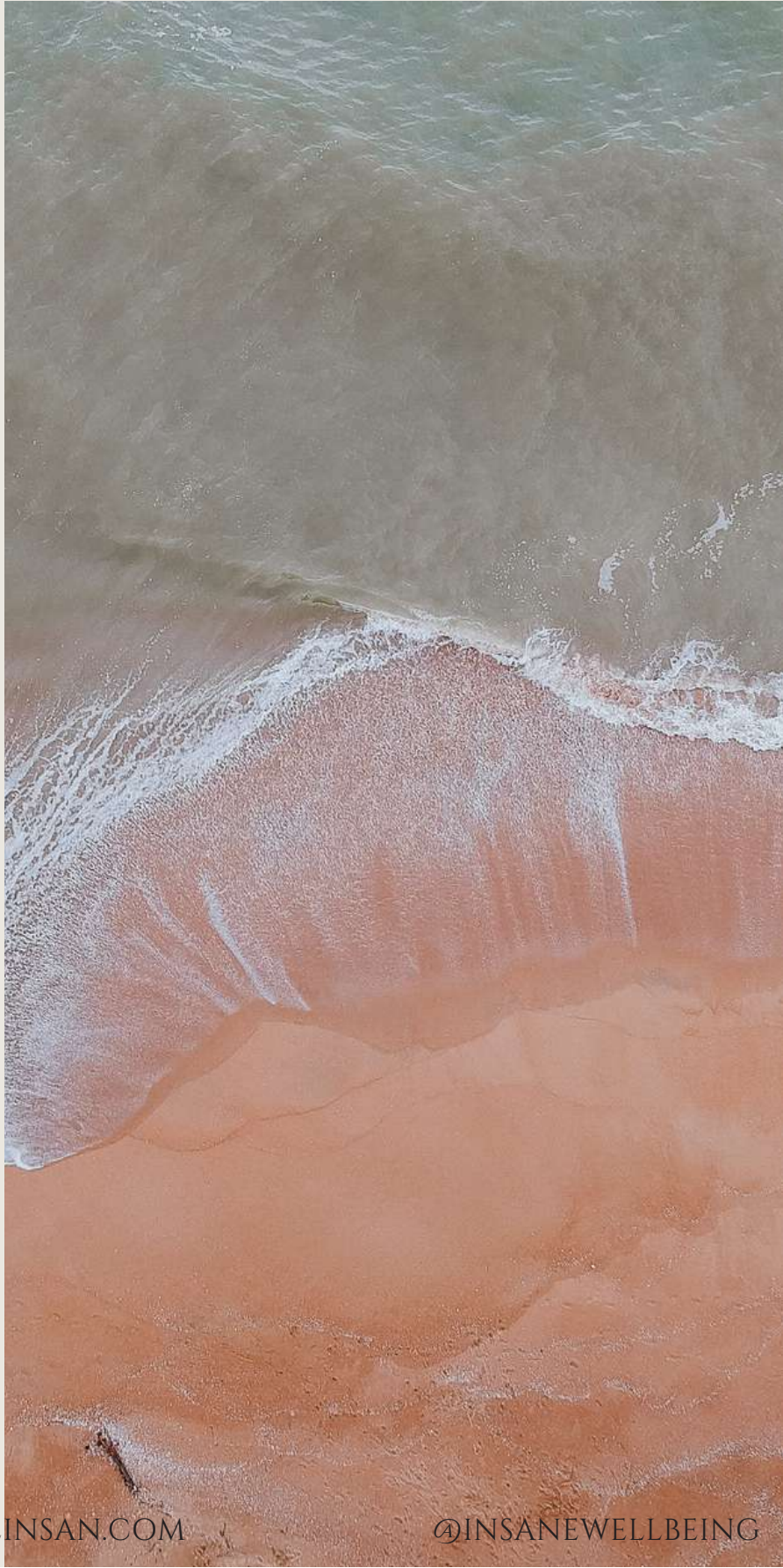
ISLAMIC WELLNESS

THE ROLE OF TAWAKKUL IN
WELLBEING, ACCORDING TO
IMAM AL-GHAZALI

INTRO

The definition of "Tawakkul"

'Tawakkul' is translated to 'reliance on God' or 'Trust in God', and is one of the core spiritual concepts of Islamic teaching. Within the Islamic tradition, 'The Trustworthy', 'The Dependable' and 'The Healer' are among God's ninety-nine names and so, the ability to rely or trust in God is seen as a sign of the extent of conviction a believer has in God.



فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَا الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَبُ
مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ
رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ
أَضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ
فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ

AND WHEN THE TWO HOSTS SAW
ONE ANOTHER, THE
COMPANIONS OF MOSES SAID,
'WE ARE OVERTAKEN!' HE SAID,
'NAY! TRULY MY LORD IS WITH
ME; HE WILL GUIDE ME.'
THEN WE REVEALED UNTO
MOSES, 'STRIKE THE SEA WITH THE
STAFF!' AND IT PARTED AND
EACH PART WAS A WAS A GREAT
MOUNTAIN.

(QUR'AN 26:61-63)

IN THE QUR'AN TAWAKKUL



Much of the verses of the Qur'an concerning the importance of reliance on God were demonstrated using the lives of the Prophets (peace be upon them), in which the concept of reliance is reinforced, time and time again, through storytelling, recounting the unwavering trust and reliance the Prophets had on God, despite the odds stacked against them, for which they were rewarded victory and protection.

Al-Ghazali writes, reliance is to rely on none but God which requires conviction, that starts in the heart.

Al-Ghazali argues that reliance is founded upon knowledge and the extent to which a person is able to rely on God is proportionate to one's knowledge of God. As, only through knowledge of God can a person be aware that all power belongs to God alone and that God is the source of everything and the only protector.

You thwart not on earth, nor in
Heaven; and apart from God you
have no protector or helper.

(Qur'an 29:22)



RELEVANCE OF TAWAKKUL TO WELLBEING

In the context of mindfulness and wellbeing, reliance is being mindful of God and His power and forsaking all others. Al-Ghazali explains, in the state of reliance a person is certain that God will dispense of one's affairs in a way that will benefit the person, in both worlds, and the realisation of this certainty leads to feelings of peace in the heart and calm in the mind.

Interestingly, Al-Ghazali argues, these positive feelings attributed to reliance are not solely dependent upon certainty of faith, he states: a person can become overwhelmed by negative thoughts despite the presence of certainty. Al-Ghazali asserts, a person can only feel tranquil if they possess a 'strong heart' i.e., not become overwhelmed by negative thoughts.



**“WHOEVER WHEN BROKEN,
STRENGTHENS THEIR HEART,
AND DOES NOT WEAKEN OUT
OF COWARDLINESS AND
REINFORCES HIS FAITH IN
GOD’S DECREE, SHALL ALWAYS
BE IN A STATE OF
TRANQUILLITY”**

AL-
GHAZALI



تَوَكَّلْ



To support this view, Al-Ghazali recalls the story of Prophet Abraham (pbuh) in the Qur'an, in which Abraham (pbuh) asks God to show him how He raises the dead. God is reported, in the Qur'an, to have responded; 'Have you not believed?', to which Prophet Abraham (pbuh) answers; 'Yea, indeed, but so that my heart may be at peace.' (Qur'an 2:260).



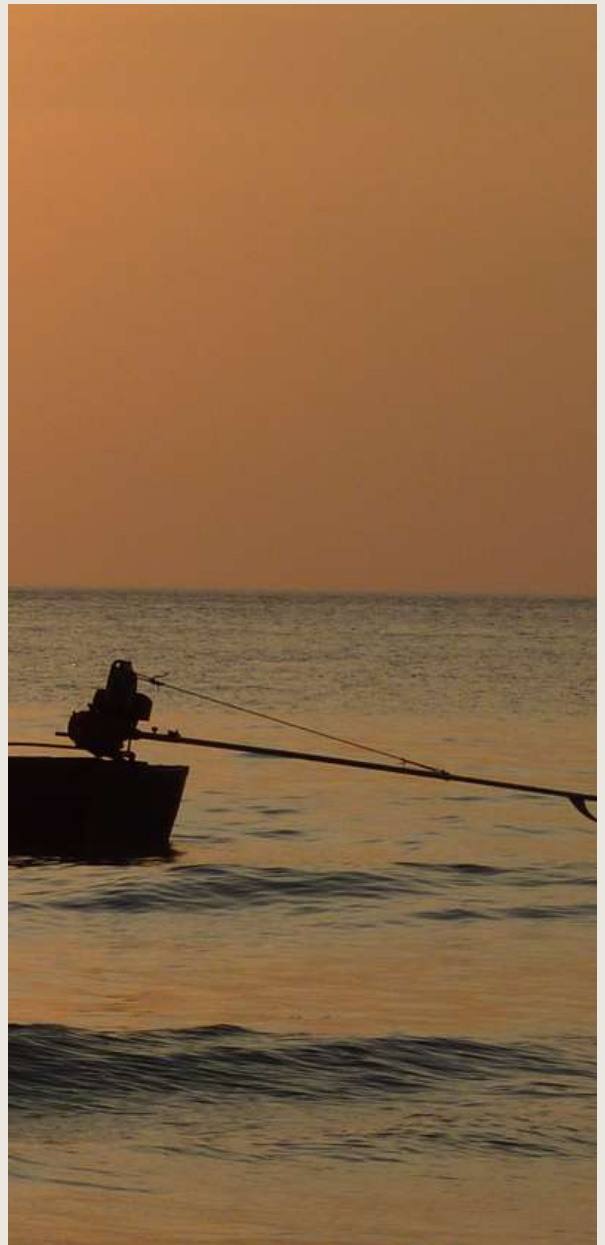
'Yes, indeed, but so that my heart may be at peace.'

(Qur'an 2:260)

Here, there is acknowledgement that certainty in God alone does not result in feelings of peace, rather certainty needs to be combined with mental or cognitive strength in order for feelings of tranquillity to manifest.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali states, the cultivation of reliance requires effort and practice, stressing that the virtues of patience and taqwā are important components in achieving this, as they lead to feelings of contentment in God's decree, no matter the outcome.

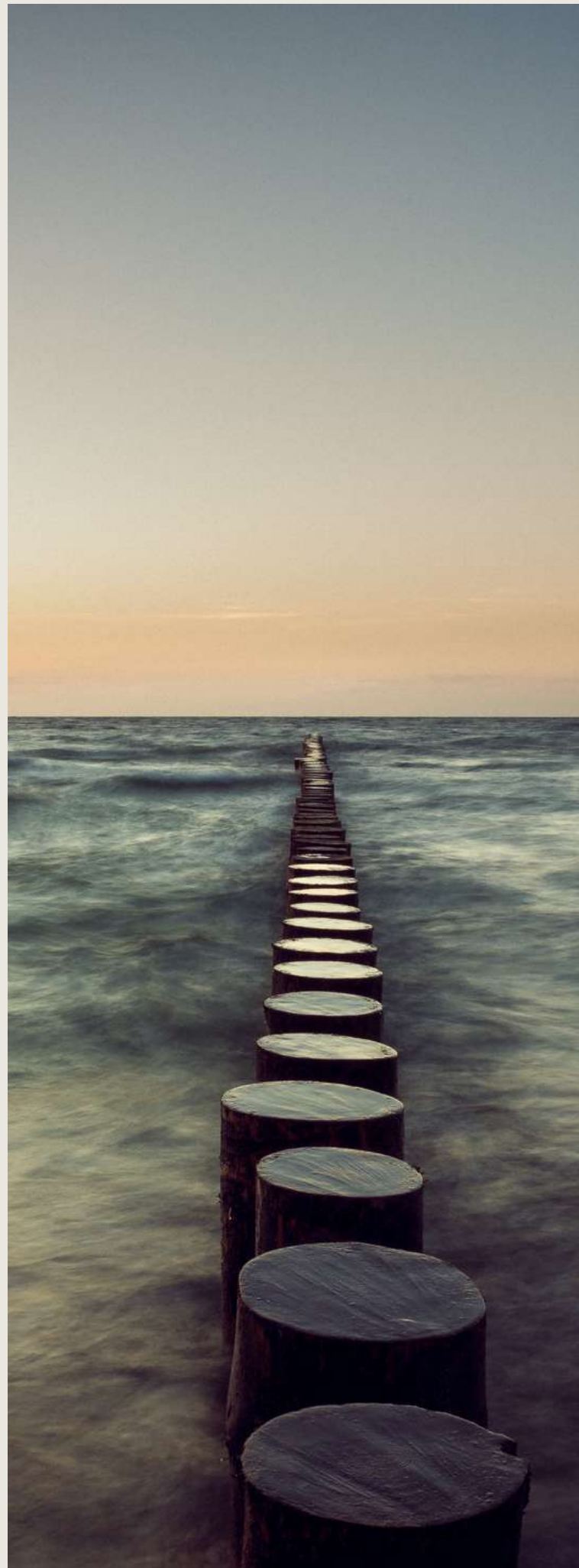
(please refer to the guide on 'Taqwa and wellbeing', for more on the relevance of Taqwa to wellbeing).



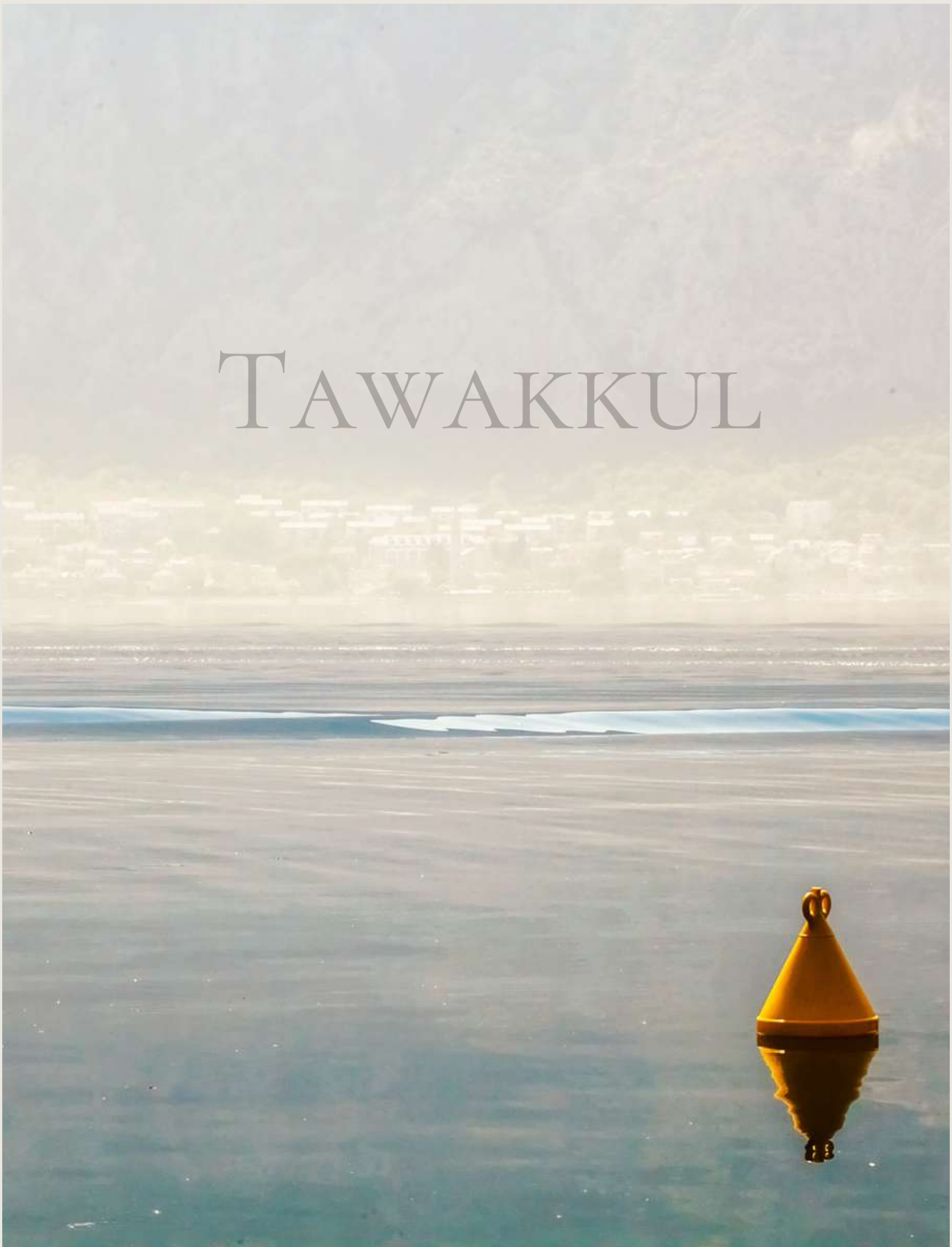
HOPE

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali explains the importance of being hopeful when relying on God, where hope in God's mercy and having a positive opinion of God at all times is advised. This is the same advice given in the discussion on taqwā, where hope is encouraged, to prevent excessive negative feelings and sickness associated with the fear of God. Hope, in the context of reliance, is conveyed through the belief that any outcome is in one's best interest, especially if its contrary to one's wish.

To illustrate this point, Al-Ghazali gives an example of a patient, who places trust in and is content with a doctor's decision to deny her a favourite food or activity in the interest of her long-term wellbeing.



TAWAKKUL





Excellent indeed is the reward of the workers (of righteousness), those who are patient and trust in their Lord

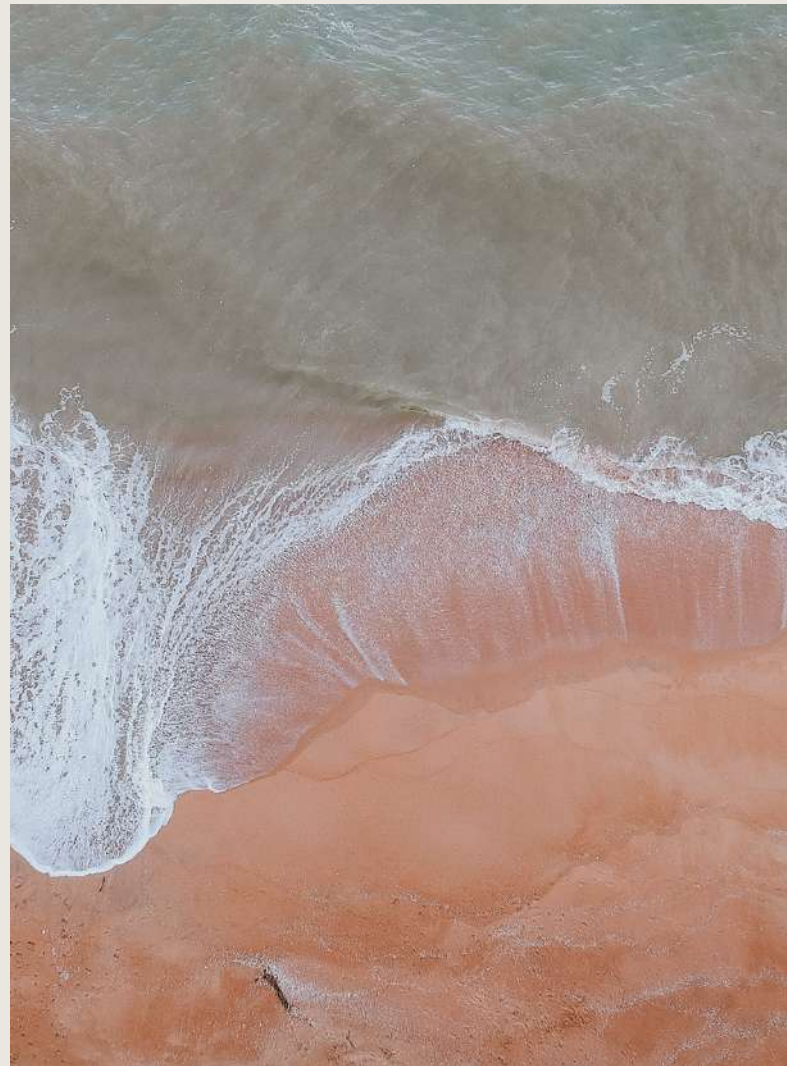
(Qur'an 29:58-59)

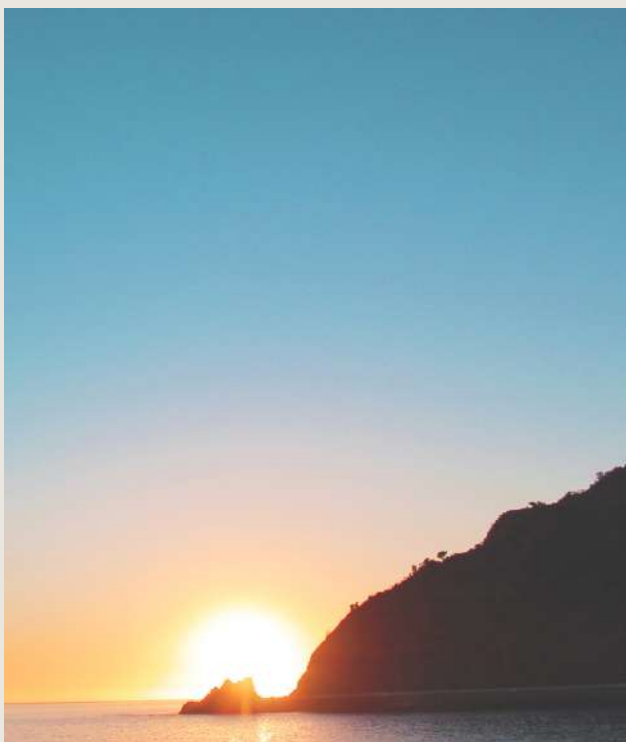
And whosoever reverences God, He will appoint a way out for him and will provide for him whence he reckons not. And whosoever trusts in God, He suffices him. Truly God fulfils His Command. God has indeed set a measure for all things

(Qur'an 65:2-3)

And surely thy Lord shall give unto thee, and thou shalt be content

(Qur'an 93:5)





Furthermore, the Qur'an warns against a belief system that is conditional upon God's grace, equating such 'belief' to disbelief, an example of which is:

And among mankind some worship God upon a brink: if good befalls him, he is content thereby, but if a trial befalls him, he is turned over upon his face, losing this world and the Hereafter. That is the manifest loss.

(Qur'an 22:11)

Moreover, whilst there exists a principle of 'acceptance' in the act of reliance, Al-Ghazali warns, reliance on God does not excuse a person from excursion and action, and that a person must try their absolute best and do all that is necessary in life to attain success or protect oneself or property from harm, by lawful means. This is to ensure that reliance on God is not used as a concealment for cowardliness, fear, shame etc, but is purely based on the knowledge of God. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali argues, taking all necessary action also safeguards a person from the negative thoughts and feelings of hopelessness that can arise due to inaction.



IN SUMMARY

Reliance is understood to mean; acceptance of, without loss of rigour, life's circumstances, whilst believing that whatever God decrees is good, and in doing so, detaching from any egoistic or self-originating narratives and desires. This, according to the Islamic teachings, ultimately leads to feelings of peace.

This Islamic perspective of 'reliance' and 'submission to God's will' resonate with the notion of 'acceptance' found in contemporary mindfulness discourse. The idea that one should 'let go' and 'accept what is happening around them' is a common outlook found within contemporary and traditional understandings of mindfulness, where again, within the philosophies the understanding of 'no judgement' does not mean that one surrenders to negative character traits or circumstances, but rather one accepts that they are present and can be changed.



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 podcast, 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