
LIGHT *&*
MERCY

MENTAL HEALTH AND
TESTS & DIFFICULTIES

Extracts *from*
the Bahá'í Writings

COMPILATION

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MENTAL HEALTH AND
TESTS & DIFFICULTIES

A Compilation of Extracts from the Writings
of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Letters
of Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice

Light & Mercy

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Mental Health

Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

1 O BEFRIENDED STRANGER!

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.

The Hidden Words, Persian, no. 32

- 2 Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind. That a sick person showeth signs of weakness is due to the hindrances that interpose themselves between his soul and his body, for the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments. Consider the light of the lamp. Though an external object may interfere with

its radiance, the light itself continueth to shine with undiminished power. In like manner, every malady afflicting the body of man is an impediment that preventeth the soul from manifesting its inherent might and power. When it leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence as no force on earth can equal. Every pure, every refined and sanctified soul will be endowed with tremendous power, and shall rejoice with exceeding gladness.

Consider the lamp which is hidden under a bushel. Though its light be shining, yet its radiance is concealed from men. Likewise, consider the sun which hath been obscured by the clouds. Observe how its splendor appeareth to have diminished, when in reality the source of that light hath remained unchanged. The soul of man should be likened unto this sun, and all things on earth should be regarded as his body. So long as no external impediment interveneth between them, the body will, in its entirety, continue to reflect the light of the soul, and to be sustained by its power. As soon as, however, a veil interposeth itself between them, the brightness of that light seemeth to lessen.

Consider again the sun when it is completely hidden behind the clouds. Though the earth is still illumined with its light, yet the measure of light which it receiveth is considerably reduced. Not until the clouds have dispersed, can the sun shine again in the plenitude of its glory. Neither the presence of the cloud nor its absence can, in any way, affect the inherent splendor of the sun. The soul of man is the sun by which his body

is illumined, and from which it draweth its sustenance, and should be so regarded.

Consider, moreover, how the fruit, ere it is formed, lieth potentially within the tree. Were the tree to be cut into pieces, no sign nor any part of the fruit, however small, could be detected. When it appeareth, however, it manifesteth itself, as thou hast observed, in its wondrous beauty and glorious perfection. Certain fruits, indeed, attain their fullest development only after being severed from the tree.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. LXXX

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 3 There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the treatment of physicians; the second consisteth in prayers offered by the spiritual ones to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practiced.

Illnesses which occur by reason of physical causes should be treated by doctors with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be healed more effectively by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of treatment should be followed; they are not contradictory. Therefore thou shouldst also accept physical remedies inasmuch as these too have come from the mercy and favor of

God, Who hath revealed and made manifest medical science so that His servants may profit from this kind of treatment also. Thou shouldst give equal attention to spiritual treatments, for they produce marvelous effects.

Now, if thou wishest to know the true remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Focus thine attention upon them.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, sec. 133

- 4 O thou who art turning thy face towards God! Close thine eyes to all things else, and open them to the realm of the All-Glorious. Ask whatsoever thou wishest of Him alone; seek whatsoever thou seekest from Him alone. With a look He granteth a hundred thousand hopes, with a glance He healeth a hundred thousand incurable ills, with a nod He layeth balm on every wound, with a glimpse He freeth the hearts from the shackles of grief. He doeth as He doeth, and what recourse have we? He carrieth out His Will, He ordaineth what He pleaseth. Then better for thee to bow down thy head in submission, and put thy trust in the All-Merciful Lord.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, sec. 22

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- 5 It is very hard to be subject to any illness, particularly a mental one. However we must always remember these illnesses have nothing to do with our spirit or our inner relation to God. It is a great pity that as yet so little is really known of the mind, its workings and the illnesses that afflict it; no doubt, as the world becomes more spiritually minded and scientists understand the true nature of man, more humane and permanent cures for mental diseases will be found.

From a letter dated 12 April 1948 to an individual believer

- 6 There are a great many as you know mental diseases and troubles at present, and the one thing Bahá'ís must not do is take a defeatist attitude toward them. The power in the Faith is such that it can sustain us on a much higher level in spite of whatever our ailments might be than other people who are denied it. This however does not mean that we should ignore medical opinion and treatment. On the contrary, we should do our best to procure the opinion of specialists and competent doctors.

From a letter dated 12 January 1957 to an individual believer

From letters written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice

- 7 The Universal House of Justice suggests that through daily prayer, and specially by observing the daily obligatory prayers, through study of the Writings, through active participation in teaching efforts and in the activities of the community, and through constant effort to sacrifice for the Faith you love so well, you will provide a spiritual counterpart to the professional help you will receive from the experts. You should also endeavour to engage in some useful occupation, or train yourself to have such an occupation, as work is itself another means at our disposal, in accordance with our Teachings, to draw nearer to God, and to better grasp His purpose for us in this world.

From a letter dated 6 April 1976 to an individual believer

- 8 ... mental illness is not spiritual, although its effects may indeed hinder and be a burden in one's striving toward spiritual progress. In a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to a believer there is this further passage:

Such hindrances [i.e. illness and outer difficulties], no matter how severe and insuperable they may at first seem, can and should be effectively overcome through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined and continued effort.

That effort can include the counsel of wise and experienced physicians, including psychiatrists. Working for the Faith, serving others who may need you, and giving of yourself can aid you in your struggle to overcome your sufferings. One helpful activity is, of course, striving to teach the Cause in spite of personal feelings of shortcomings, thus allowing the healing words of the Cause to flood your mind with their grace and positive power.

From a letter dated 15 June 1982 to an individual believer

- 9 Your inquiries into matters of mental health are timely, for of all medical science studies, remedies for disorders of the brain and mind are possibly the most important for mankind. In a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian, which refers to Freudian methods, it is stated that “psychiatric treatment ... is still a growing rather than a perfected science,” hence requires contemporary disciplined study. In another letter he provides guidance by suggesting that, despite the many mental diseases and troubles of the present day, the power in the Faith is such that it can sustain Bahá’ís, whatever their ailments may be, on a much higher level than is given to others who are denied its healing grace.

From a letter dated 8 July 1986 to an individual believer

- 10 It is certainly very difficult to bear an illness like the one you describe, but you can be sure that, as with all the difficulties of life, this one, too, will present an opportunity for much spiritual growth and for the

garnering of many blessings both for you and for your near ones. The important thing is to bear in mind that there is really nothing to fear since, according to the Teachings, the soul is exalted above the ills of the body, however unpleasant they may be. These emotional or mental illnesses, as they are often called, seem in part to stem from a certain imbalance in the elements of the body, an imbalance which medical science is only just beginning to understand. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that the soul is like the sun and the ills of the body like clouds. The latter can keep the rays of the sun from being visible to us, but they can never have an influence on the refulgence of the sun itself.

From a letter dated 30 June 1993 to an individual believer

Tests and Difficulties

Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

1 O SON OF MAN!

For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.

The Hidden Words, Arabic, no. 48

2 O SON OF MAN!

If adversity befall thee not in My path, how canst thou walk in the ways of them that are content with My pleasure? If trials afflict thee not in thy longing to meet Me, how wilt thou attain the light in thy love for My beauty?

The Hidden Words, Arabic, no. 50

3 O SON OF MAN!

My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

The Hidden Words, Arabic, no. 51

- 4 Whatever hath befallen you hath been for the sake of God. This is the truth, and in this there is no doubt. Ye should, therefore, leave all your affairs in His Hands, place your trust in Him, and rely upon Him. He will assuredly not forsake you. In this, likewise, there is no doubt. No father will surrender his sons to devouring beasts; no shepherd will leave his flock to ravening wolves. He will most certainly do his utmost to protect his own.

If, however, for a few days, in compliance with God's all-encompassing wisdom, outward affairs should run their course contrary to one's cherished desire, this is of no consequence and should not matter. Our intent is that all the friends should fix their gaze on the Supreme Horizon and cling to that which hath been revealed in the Tablets. They should strictly avoid sedition and refrain from treading the path of dissension and strife. They should champion their one true God, exalted be He, through the hosts of forbearance, of submission, of an upright character, of goodly deeds, and of the choicest and most refined words.

From a Tablet

- 5 Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savor of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. V

From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 6 Again, is there any deed in the world that would be nobler than service to the common good? Is there any greater blessing conceivable for a man, than that he should become the cause of the education, the development, the prosperity and honor of his fellow-creatures?

No, by the Lord God! The highest righteousness of all is for blessed souls to take hold of the hands of the helpless and deliver them out of their ignorance and abasement and poverty, and with pure motives, and only for the sake of God, to arise and energetically devote themselves to the service of the masses,

forgetting their own worldly advantage and working only to serve the general good. “They prefer them before themselves, though poverty be their own lot.”
 “The best of men are those who serve the people; the worst of men are those who harm the people.”

The Secret of Divine Civilization

- 7 Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and like the chosen ones of God, vie with his fellows in service to the good of all; until, strengthened by the blessings and perpetual confirmations of God, he shall be empowered to raise this mighty nation up to its ancient pinnacles of glory, and restore this withered land to sweet new life, and as a spiritual springtime, array those trees which are the lives of men with the fresh leaves, the blossoms and fruits of consecrated joy.

The Secret of Divine Civilization

- 8 “Does the soul progress more through sorrow or through the joy in this world?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering.

The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will

mature him. Look back to the times past and you will find that the greatest men have suffered most.”

“He who through suffering has attained development, should he fear happiness?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Through suffering he will attain to an eternal happiness which nothing can take from him. The apostles of Christ suffered: they attained eternal happiness.”

“Then it is impossible to attain happiness without suffering?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “To attain eternal happiness one must suffer. He who has reached the state of self-sacrifice has true joy. Temporal joy will vanish.”

Paris Talks: Addresses given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1911, no. 57

- 9 Is it, then, possible to be saved from the trials of God? No, verily. There is a great wisdom therein of which no one is aware save the wise and knowing. Were it not for tests, genuine gold could not be distinguished from the counterfeit. Were it not for tests, the courageous could not be known from the coward. Were it not for tests, the people of faithfulness could not be known from those of selfishness. Were it not for tests, the intellects and faculties of the scholars in the great colleges would not be developed. Were it not for tests, the sparkling gems could not be known from worthless pebbles. Were it not for tests, the fisherman could not be distinguished from Annas and Caiaphas who were amid glory (worldly dignity).

Were it not for tests the face of Mary, the Magdalene, would not glisten with the light of firmness and certainty unto all the horizons. These are some of the mysteries of tests which we have unfolded unto thee that thou mayest become cognizant of the mysteries of God in every cycle. Verily, I pray God to illumine the faces as pure gold in the fire of tests.

Star of the West, vol. 8, no. 19, pp. 238–239

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- 10 As to your question concerning the meaning of physical suffering and its relation to mental and spiritual healing: Physical pain is a necessary accompaniment of all human existence, and as such is unavoidable. As long as there will be life on earth, there will be also suffering, in various forms and degrees. But suffering, although an inescapable reality, can nevertheless be utilized as a means for the attainment of happiness. This is the interpretation given to it by all the Prophets and saints, who, in the midst of severe tests and trials, felt happy and joyous and experienced what is best and holiest in life. Suffering is both a reminder and a guide. It stimulates us to better adapt ourselves to our environmental conditions, and thus leads the way to self-improvement. In every suffering one can find a meaning and a wisdom. But it is not always easy to find the secret of that wisdom. It is sometimes only when all our suffering has passed that we become aware of

its usefulness. What man considers to be evil turns often to be a cause of infinite blessings. And this is due to his desire to know more than he can. God's wisdom is, indeed, inscrutable to us all, and it is no use pushing too far trying to discover that which shall always remain a mystery to our mind.

From a letter dated 29 May 1935 to an individual believer

- 11 We must not only be patient with others, infinitely patient, but also with our own poor selves, remembering that even the Prophets of God sometimes got tired and cried out in despair!

...

He urges you to persevere and add up your accomplishments, rather than to dwell on the dark side of things. Everyone's life has both a dark and bright side. The Master said: turn your back to the darkness and your face to Me.

From a letter dated 22 October 1949 to an individual believer

- 12 Peace of mind is gained by the centering of the spiritual consciousness on the Prophet of God; therefore you should study the spiritual teachings, and receive the water of life from the Holy Utterances. Then by translating these high ideals into action, your entire character will be changed, and your mind will not only find peace, but your entire being will find joy and enthusiasm.

From a letter dated 15 October 1952 to an individual believer

