

30901 - A righteous young man is overwhelmed with worry and anxiety. What is the remedy?

the question

There is a young man who is suffering from psychological distress, depression and worry, and he does not know what is the cause. Please note that he prays qiyaam al-layl and fasts a great deal, and he prays (the five daily prayers), but sometimes he sleeps and misses a prayer. He attends Islamic classes and reads books, and he is trying to memorize the Quran, and he listens to Islamic tapes. Despite that he is suffering from depression and worry. Please also note that this young man loves his paternal aunt a great deal and was always helping her, and the aunt is in good health.

I hope that you will answer me as soon as possible so that this young man can be helped. Thank you very much.

Detailed answer

We are happy to see your concern for this young man and your eagerness to find an effective remedy to offer him in the hope that Allah will benefit him thereby. By doing that you are strengthening the ties of Islamic brotherhood. We hope that Allah will reward you for that.

You have explained this young man's situation, and we will reply in the following points:

1 - In this dunya (this world - the name in Arabic carries connotations both of that which is close and that which is base and vile), a man's life is not consistent, rather his circumstances will vary between that which he likes and that which he does not like. The wise man, when he thinks about this world, will realize that he needs to develop an optimistic outlook and put an end to worries and distress that could disturb him and cause him stress.

What the Shaytaan wants to do is to cause the Muslim grief and stress. Being introverted and thinking constantly about pain and sorrow gives the Shaytaan a great opportunity and may cause the worries and stress to multiply. Looking forward to a happy life and being optimistic is one of the means of feeling content and at peace. It is known that this world is a mixture of ease and hardship, joy and sorrow, hope and pain, so why should a person help the dark side to prevail over the bright side?

Wisdom dictates that if a man cannot make optimism prevail, then at the very least he should think in a balanced and objective manner.

Secondly:

Feelings of stress and that life is too hard do not control a man's mind unless there are reasons that provoke these kinds of feelings. Rather they are indicative that the relationship between a person and his Lord is not sound. The more a man turns to Allah and focuses on Him, the more he will feel a sense of peace and comfort, to an extent that no one knows except Allah. Hence those who know Allah, are close to Him and fear Him are the happiest of people, to such an extent that one of them said, in a well known expression: "If the kings and the sons of kings knew what joy we have, they would fight us for it with the sword." This is also what is expressed in the Quran, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Whoever works righteousness — whether male or female — while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)" [al-Nahl 16:97]

But feeling stressed is a kind of wake-up call that alerts a person to check on his relationship with his Lord, because sins may have the effect of making a person feel scattered and unfocused. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Quran nor acts on its teachings) verily, for him is a life of hardship, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection” [Ta-Ha 20:124]

There is a great deal of goodness in the young man whom you are asking about, for he is a person who is keen to seek knowledge, and he does naafil acts of worship such as fasting, and he upholds ties of kinship with his aunt. However you must draw his attention to the fact that he has to check on his relationship with Allah, for there may be some sin that is preventing him from achieving this sense of happiness, some sin that he has committed with regard to the rights of Allah or the rights of others. So encourage him to repent and seek forgiveness a great deal, especially since you said that he sometimes sleeps and misses the prayer – this is a serious matter although many people take it lightly.

Thirdly:

It may be that this test of this person through disasters and calamities is something that has been decreed by Allah for him in order to raise him in status, if he persists in obeying what Allah has commanded, which is to be patient and accept whatever Allah decrees. Everything that Allah decrees for a believer is good for him and his affairs, both spiritual and worldly. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for all his affairs are good, and that applies to no one except a believer. If something good happens to him, he gives thanks for it and that is good for him, and if something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience, and that is also good for him.” (Narrated by Muslim, 2999)

If something bad happens to a believer, he either bears it with patience or panics. If he is patient he earns a great reward and accepts the will and decree of Allah, because he knows that it comes from Allah, so he feels content with it and accepts it. So what reason is there to panic and feel stressed?

On the contrary, if he is not patient and he reacts to what befalls him of sin with panic and anger, and worry and stress, he will lose the reward that Allah has promised to those who

are patient. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full, without reckoning” [al-Zumar 39:10]

Fourthly:

He should sincerely turn towards Allah and call upon Him (du'a'), beseeching Him to relieve him of this waswaas (whispers from the Shaytaan) and seeking refuge in Him a great deal from the accursed Shaytaan. For it annoys the Shaytaan to see a believing slave feeling peace of mind and contentment, so he whispers to him to distract him from that and make him fearful and confused.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught us a du'aa' by which we may ward off worries and distress. Ahmad (3528) narrated that 'Abd-Allah ibn Mas'ood said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“There is no-one who is afflicted by distress and grief, and says: ‘Allahumma inni ‘abduka ibn ‘abdika ibn amatija naasyati bi yadika, maada fiyya hukmuka, ‘adlun fiyya qadaa’uka. As’aluka bi kulli ismin huwa laka sammayta bihi nafsaka aw anzaltahu fi kitaabika aw ‘allamtahu ahadan min khalqika aw ista’tarta bihi fi ‘ilm il-ghayb ‘indaka an taj’al al-Qurana rabee’ qalbi wa noor sadri wa jalaa’ huzni wa dhihaab hammi (O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your maidservant; my forelock is in Your hand, Your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You which You have named Yourself with, or revealed in Your Book, or You taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the Unseen with You, that You make the Quran the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety),’ but Allah will take away his distress and grief, and replace it with joy.” He was asked: “O Messenger of Allah, should we learn this?” He said: “Of course; everyone who hears it should learn it.”

(Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, 199)

Fifthly:

Try to suggest that he change something in his daily routine, to allow himself the opportunity to do different kinds of permissible things that will relieve him of boredom and renew his energy. There is nothing wrong with travelling for leisure purposes or to relax, so long he does not go to extremes. Even better than that is if he can travel for the purpose of 'Umrah and to visit the Prophet's mosque, because a change of scene can be very beneficial.

Sixthly:

He has to keep away from places that he feels make his worry and distress worse, or that stir these feeling up again. He should avoid reading novels that tell sad stories, and he should try not to sit with people who are worried and distressed, even if his intention is to console them. On the contrary, he should try to read useful books that will take him away from these worries. If he feels stressed and upset, he should not isolate himself or think constantly about his problems in this situation.

Finally:

Our advice to this young man is that he should raise his head and look forward, and view the future with optimism and the certainty that he will succeed. I say to him: You have a great deal of potential for success and high achievement, and a lot is to be expected of someone like you. We hope that these troubles and worries will be lifted from you. May Allah make things easy for you and relieve you of your distress and worry.

And Allah knows best.