

QURANIC GUIDANCE: THERAPY AND ISLAMIC COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS

by Akbar Hussain. New Delhi, Institute of Objective Studies, 2021

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The need for trained Muslim counsellors to serve as chaplains has grown exponentially in our times owing to peoples' modern lifestyles. And as Islam is an all-embracing way of life that caters for the needs of those in distress, in hospital, prison or at home, the author has accomplished a valuable task in encapsulating both the theory and practice of counselling along the Islamic lines. Being an experienced, professionally trained psychologist, with scores of publications in his field of specialization, Hussain's deliberations on this timely issue, based on primary Islamic sources, are both instructive and highly welcome.

Apart from pressing home the truth that the Qur'ān and Sunnah are invaluable sources of divine guidance (pp. 9–22), the author focusses his attention on spelling out the interventions prescribed and permitted by Islam for ameliorating the plight of patients. In this context, he highlights the therapeutic and spiritual benefits of *'ibādah* (devotional worship) and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). He asserts that the '[p]rayer enhances one physically, socially, emotionally, mentally and spiritually... Performing the prayer was found to be positively correlated with overall well-being... [it] reduced muscle tension, improved cardiovascular and neuro-immunological parameters, enhanced coping skills, [thus] reducing stress, anxiety and depression, and improvement in cognitive functioning' (p. 24). It is so reassuring to note that the above inferences are contingent on clinical, empirical research and evidence. In a similar vein, he underscores a host of positive effects of Qur'anic recitation and meditating on the Qur'an. Equally alleviating for mental disorder patients is the assimilation of such basic Islamic values and traits as piety and unshakable faith in Allah which enables the counselees to formulate 'new ways of behaving, feeling and thinking' (p. 34).

Hussain is unflinchingly persuaded of the effectiveness of Qur'anic recitation as therapy. Empirical studies point to 'a calming effect in 97% of cases' (p. 35). He illustrates the Qur'anic directives for dealing, on the psychological and spiritual planes, with difficult problems, pain, sickness, stress, fear and other behavioural issues (pp. 39–45). More enlightening and helpful is his elucidation of the Qur'anic advice for managing difficult

children, anger control and jealousy. According to him, faith, particularly in the Omniscient Allah and one's answerability on the Day of Judgment, and the Islamic values of perseverance, excellent morals and manners, sincerity and affection towards fellow human beings and remembrance of Allah permeating one's heart and mind, go a long way in helping patients.

Another remarkable component of this book is the helpful advice to counsellors. Once again, this section is premised on Islamic *adab* (social norms). This book will be of much benefit to both professional and general readers. Hussain deserves every credit for presenting the relevant Islamic material of this much-needed domain.

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