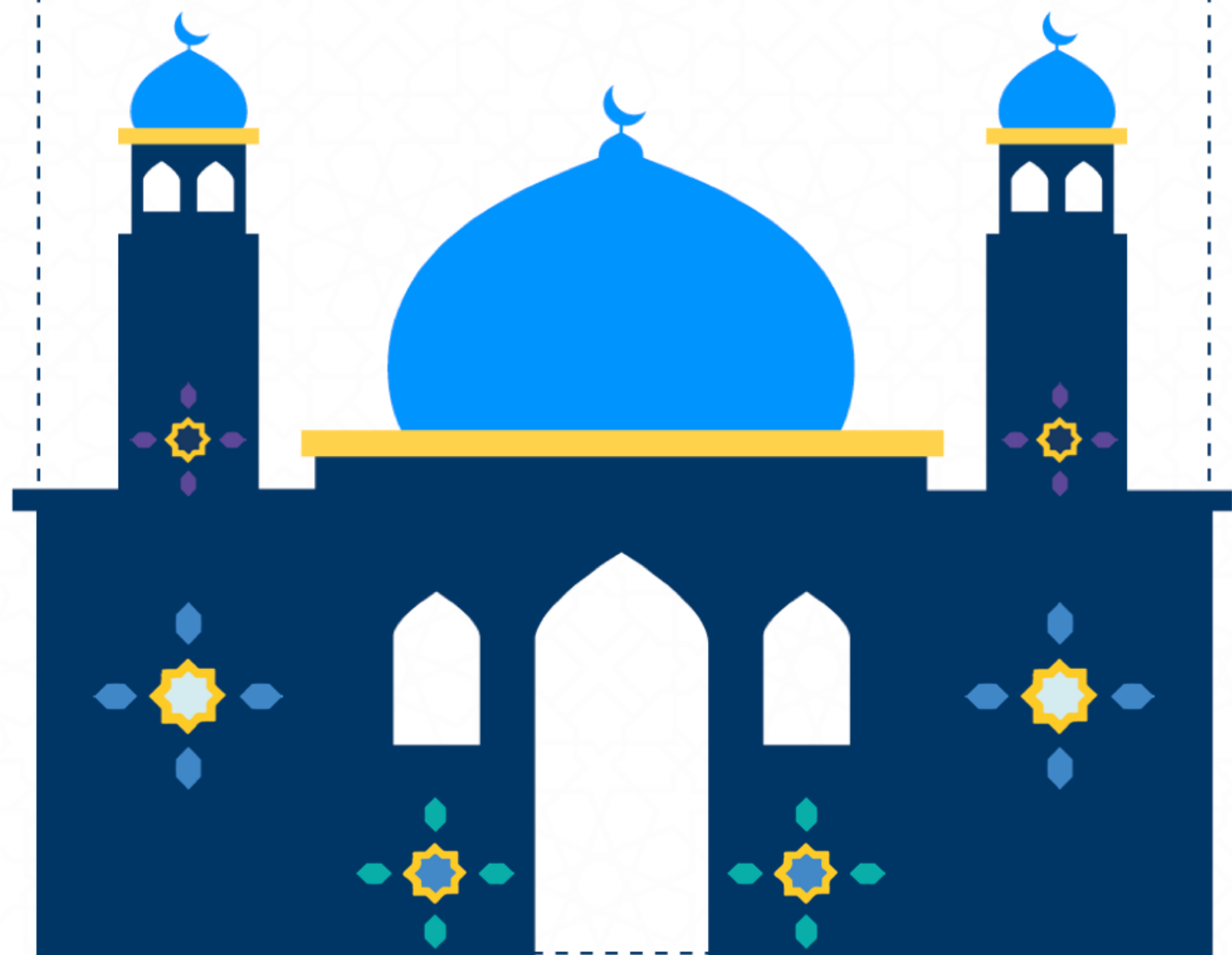# Mental Health Khutbah for Imams

As-Salaamun Alaykum,

JazakAllah Khayr for supporting Inspirited Minds.

We are a mental health charity that provides faith-based and culturally-sensitive safe spaces for those who are struggling with their mental health.

One of our aims is to raise awareness of mental health and help to de-stigmatise this topic within our collective communities. Therefore, we would like to say JazakAllah Khayr for assisting us in spreading awareness within your community.

We would love to receive feedback from you as to how your use of this Khutbah within your mosque/community centre was received. Please reach out to us at communications@inspiritedminds.org.uk with images and/or written feedback.

BarakAllahu Feekum,
The Inspirited Minds Team

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful

All praise is due to Allah. We praise him, we seek His help, we seek His forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah from the vices within ourselves. Whoever Allah guides, there is none to misguide him. Whoever Allah leads astray, there is none to guide him. I testify there is no God but Allah alone, without any partners, and that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His messenger.

As-Salaamun Alaykum Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Mental health is still stigmatised within the Muslim community. There are people who do not believe in the existence of mental health problems – even though they or others around them may experience very real symptoms. Even though, much like a physical condition, they are capable of impairing our normal day-to-day lives. Even though they cause real suffering. Our emotional, psychological and social well-being affects how we think, feel and act, and determines how we handle stress, make choices and relate to others.

The reasons for not believing these problems exist are plenty, and are often reflected in the comments or thoughts people make about mental health.

"There is no such thing as having a mental health issue."

The most common misconception is that we cannot physically see the cause of a mental health problem. It is not like cancer, whose existence can be seen from a scan, or diabetes, that can be verified with a simple blood test.

By not being physically able to see what leads to a person struggling with their mental health makes people question its existence. However, seeing is not always believing - and this concept is the very basis of Islam.

We cannot see the Almighty, but we believe in His Existence and His Qadr, Love, and Compassion. We did not see the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) or any of the Prophets (AS) before him, but we believe that they were created to spread this message of truth and we believe in their legacy. Therefore, not being able to see something doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

"Mental illnesses are a sign of lacking faith in one God."

Islam has repeatedly shown that it is not separate from science, but that faith and knowledge (scientific or otherwise) go hand-in-hand and that one needs to continuously seek knowledge to excel at having a strong and firm faith. In fact, numerous scientific topics ranging from biology, child development, nutrition, sexual health, astronomy and more are all explained in the Qur'an.

Therefore, Islam is at one with the majority of scientific concepts, and the existence of mental health has been validated by science, then it follows that mental health problems do indeed exist. Mental health and wellbeing is also acknowledged in the Qur'an and Sunnah as Islam itself is a way of life. More often, mental health problems are a result of difficult life experiences. Looking back at the lives of the most noble and blessed people before us, we see that they experienced difficult emotions such as sadness and grief.

Take Prophet Yaqub (AS), for example, who mourned over the loss of his son, Prophet Yusuf (AS), for many years and eventually became blind from excessive crying. Instead of punishing him, Allah (SWT) gifted him his eyesight back and explicitly acknowledged the emotional turmoil he endured through verses of the Qur'an (Surah Yusuf).

Then there is our Holy Prophet (ﷺ), who labelled a period of life as Aamul Huzn (the year of grief), where he experienced the loss of his wife and close family members, as well as feelings of isolation. Fatima (RA) also experienced deep sadness when grieving her beloved father's absence and then passed away 6 months later.

Let us look at the verse of Surah Ad-Duha, where Allah (SWT) says,

"Your Lord has not abandoned you,
nor has He become displeased with you."
[Qur'an 93:3]

This verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet when he was being mocked by the disbelievers that His Lord had 'forgotten him'. Therefore, Allah (SWT) sent down this verse to reassure the Holy Prophet, illustrating that it is a normal part of being human to experience loneliness and sadness. And often, we do need reassurance and comfort during these times.

Would Allah tell us that He will not abandon us if we never felt lonely or feared isolation? Would He remind us that He is always there for us, always near us, loves us more than anyone if we did not have the capacity to feel sadness?

Therefore, poor mental health is NOT the absence or opposite of faith. The opposite of faith is being asleep – this is when we are mentally and physically inactive; when our intentions become superficial and when our actions start to lack purpose. Instead, suffering and struggles in life are an opportunity to strengthen our Imaan (faith) and Fitrah (innate nature), and our psychological and spiritual understanding of Islam and its principles.

"People with mental health problems are 'Majnun' (crazy)."

People who suffer mental health problems may be thought of or perceive themselves as less worthy or labelled as 'Majnun (crazy)' which is used to identify people who are not of sound mind.

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Whilst this is the case for some extreme mental health disorders such as Schizophrenia, or extreme cases of Bipolar Disorder, this is not true for the majority of our community members who may struggle with their mental wellbeing as it all lies on a spectrum.

For example, someone with dyslexia is not the same as someone with Autism or Aspergers. Similarly, somebody who is thin is not the same as somebody who suffers from an eating disorder. On the other end of the spectrum, having a mental health problem does not make a person less intelligent or illiterate.

We should try not to take the extreme value of something and apply it to everything/everyone else on that scale, because everything is not black-white or sane-insane or intelligent-illiterate. The lack of understanding about mental health fuels this stigma and can ultimately deteriorate relationships within a community.

When we come across someone struggling with their mental health, we should take the approach of Allah (SWT), who is Al-Lateef, the Most Gentle. He prefers gentleness and kindness above harshness.

> *"Allah is gentle and He loves gentleness. He rewards for gentleness what is not granted for harshness and He does not reward anything else like it."*
> **[Muslim]**

Experiencing mental health issues can often arise from experiencing strong emotions, such as sadness, fear, anger or frustration. Experiencing emotions is not wrong or haraam. If Islam's role was to eliminate sadness or anger, then we would never feel sad or angry. However, Allah (SWT) has given us these emotions, and gifted us with tear glands to express these feelings.

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He has gifted us with modern medicine to support ourselves, and made us social beings to seek comfort and counsel in our loved ones. As humans, it is in our nature to feel both positive and negative emotions. We also know that the Prophets of Islam experienced such emotions, but they taught us how to manage these emotions and rely on Islamic and practical tools to deal with them.

For example:
- *Making Dua, which is a form of building a connection with our creator*
- *Engaging in Tadabbur i.e. reflecting on our inner self, our behaviours, emotions and thoughts*
- *Practising Tafakkur, which is to mindfully ponder over your being and to take lessons from the things Allah (SWT) has created. In the Qur'an, such people are ones who say*

"O our Lord! You did not create them in vain. You are far from it [from creating meaningless things]. Protect us from the torment of Hell."
[Qur'an 3:191]

- *Asking for help from confidantes', support networks and trained mental health professionals if need be*

"O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I untie her and trust in Allah?" The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Tie her and trust in Allah."
[Tirmidhi]

Islam does not say that we should not seek external help for our health, as our body, mind and soul are an Amaanah (gift) from Allah (SWT), and it is our duty to look after ourselves. Just as it is incumbent on us to seek medical help for physical health issues, it is also incumbent on us to seek support for mental health issues and strive towards maintaining mental wellbeing.

Additionally, when people would come to the Prophet (ﷺ) for advice, he was described to be the best of listeners and would give support, hope and help to those who were hopeless and helpless. Therefore, we should also aim to be active listeners to those around us, and support them if they are struggling with their mental health.

We need to collectively come together to support ourselves, and those around us as well as trust in Allah (SWT).
- *It is important to create conversations around mental health to address this unwarranted stigma against mental health and urge our family, friends and local communities to seek more knowledge.*
- *We should be advocates for holistic health, which includes physical, spiritual and mental health, and not feel ashamed if you experience mental health struggles because it is part of life.*

Finally, we should encourage others to seek support when they need it, and signpost organisations and service providers. Inspirited Minds (IM) offers faith-based and culturally sensitive counselling and support services in over 10 different languages, and accessing this support is as easy as filling out the Get Help form on IM's website: https://inspiritedminds.org.uk/get-help/.

Their service involves qualified counsellors and CBT therapists who have helped over 1500 people, and they have now started offering couples counselling.

"Anyone who relieves a hardship for a believer in this world,
Allah will relieve one of his hardships on the Day of Resurrection.
Anyone who makes things easy for a hard-pressed person, Allah will make
things easy for him in this world and in the Hereafter."
[Muslim]

Was-Salaamun Alaykum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuh

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"For indeed, with [every] hardship, there is relief. Indeed, with [every] hardship, there is relief"

[Qur'an 94:5-6]

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