Five ways to good mental wellbeing & Islam

You might find it useful to consider the following five steps to improve your mental health and wellbeing, as recommended by the NHS. These are also things which are encouraged in Islamic teachings.

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One

Connect with Allah & with people

Allah encourages us to connect with Him in the Quran:

'And when My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I respond to the du'a (prayer) of every supplicant when they call on Me' — QURAN 2:186

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing too as they can:

→ Help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth

→ Give you an opportunity to share positive experiences

→ Provide emotional support and allow you to support others

Ways you can connect with Allah:

→ Spending 5 minutes reciting or listening to Quran daily

→ Doing the morning and evening 'dhikr/zikr' (remembrance/ gratitude) as recommended by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)

→ Spending a few minutes daily doing 'dua' (supplication); ones recommended by the Prophet (PBUH) or your own personal duas in your own language

You might not be able to meet up with friends and family in the usual way at the moment but there are still things you can do to stay connected:

→ Put five minutes aside to call or text someone to find out how they are

→ Make the most of video chat apps like Skype and WhatsApp to stay in touch with friends and family

Two
Be physically active

Being physically active is highly encouraged in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, while there is good in both." — SAHIH MUSLIM

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness, it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

→ Reducing depression and anxiety

→ Lowering your risk of long-term health conditions, such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers

→ Causing chemical changes in your brain that can help to positively change your mood

You should continue to do regular exercise at this time, ideally 30 minutes or more daily, if you're well enough. The Prophet (PBUH) recommended swimming, archery, running and horse riding.

Other activities might include:

→ Slower-paced activities, such as walking around your home or garden

→ Easy, low-impact exercise whenever you can — like stretching while the kettle boils

→ **10-45 minute workouts on the NHS website**

→ Workouts on YouTube or on a fitness app that you download

Three
Learn something new each day

Knowledge and learning are highly praised in Islam as mentioned in this Quranic dua:

'Rabbi zidni ilma' (O my Lord increase me in knowledge) — QURAN 20:114

In fact, the first word to be revealed in the Quran was 'iqra' (read).

Research also shows that learning new skills can improve your mental wellbeing by:

→ Boosting self-confidence, raising self-esteem and reducing depression

→ Helping you to gain a sense of purpose

→ Connecting you with others (at the moment, this could be via the phone or internet)

There are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life and set some new goals while you're at home. You could:

→ Memorise a few verses of the Quran or short duas of the Prophet (PBUH)

→ Read books you enjoy (perhaps set up a virtual Quran/Hadith study circle with your friends)

→ Rediscover an old hobby or try a new one- there are lots of free video tutorials online

→ Learn a language

→ Cook something new

→ Sign up for an online course (e.g. through **FutureLearn**)

Four
Give to others

This is a core principle in Islam. 'Zakat' (charity) is the 3rd pillar of Islam and 'sadaqah' (voluntary charity) is highly recommended in Islam.

Acts of giving and kindness can earn you much reward from Allah. It can also help improve your mental wellbeing and happiness by:

→ Creating positive feelings and a sense of reward

→ Giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth

→ Helping you connect with other people

From small acts of kindness to more regular giving, such as volunteering, it's vital that we show compassion to everyone affected by this unusual situation. You could try:

→ Just smiling at others, this is a form of charity in Islam as per the saying of the Prophet (PBUH) **'a smile is a charity' [At-Tirmidhi]**

→ Saying thank you to someone for something they have done. The Prophet (PBUH) said **'whoever does not thank the people has not thanked Allah' [Sunan Abi Dawud]**

→ Getting some essential supplies for a vulnerable neighbour. Even if you don't have much, the Prophet (PBUH) still encouraged giving **'even half a date' [Shahih Al-Bukhari]**

→ Asking friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listening to their answer

→ Volunteering in your local community (e.g. through your local masjid or for a food bank)

Five

Pay attention to the present moment

Being in the moment and being aware of your thoughts, your feelings, your body and the world around you can improve your mental wellbeing. This is often called 'mindfulness'. This is something recommended in Islam also and is known as 'khushoo' (paying attention or humbleness) and is highly encouraged in prayers; attention to the words you are reciting, the meanings, your movements in prayer and where your eyes are focusing.

'It is the believers who are successful: those who are humble in their prayer' — QURAN 23:1-2

Some of the potential benefits of mindfulness are:

→ Improve your sleep

→ Relieve stress

→ Reduce chronic pain

You could start by:

→ Spend some time with nature and reflecting upon it

'Can't you see the earth dry and lifeless — and suddenly when we send down waters upon it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of lovely plant!' — QURAN 22:5

→ Practicing 'khushoo' in your 5 daily 'salah/namaz' (prayers)

→ Visiting the resource collections on **Good Thinking**

→ Downloading a mindfulness app — visit the **Good Thinking app library** for recommendations

→ Listening to Good Thinking's **podcast about mindfulness**.

About Us

Good Thinking is supported by the NHS and London borough councils. We provide free, 24/7, digital support to Londoners seeking mental health advice and help regardless of where they are on their journey. We offer round the clock support and self-care options that are easy to access, and simple to navigate.

Our Mission

We support individuals to look after their mental wellbeing in a way that works best for them. We encourage everyone to be proactive about their mental health and we provide tools and guidance to support this.

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For more information visit www.good-thinking.uk

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This text has been adapted by Dr Imrana Siddiqui; GP, Mental Health Lead -WEL CCGs, Wellbeing Hub Lead- Newham Training Hub, in collaboration with the London Borough of Newham Public Health Team