

Health in Islam (part 1 of 4): A Holistic Approach

Description: Islam is a way of life that takes a holistic approach to health.

By Aisha Stacey (© 2008 IslamReligion.com)

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Islam comes from the root word oesa-la-ma", as do the words Muslim (one who follows the message of Islam) and oesalaam" (peace). The root word oeSa - la " ma" denotes peace, security, safety as it does submission and surrender to Almighty God. This security is inherent in the submission to the One God. When a person submits to the will of God he will experience an innate sense of security and peacefulness. He must also understand that God is the Creator of all that exists or will come to exist, and has power over all things. With this surrender and understanding comes peace " real, easily attainable, and everlasting peace.



From the beginning of time, God has revealed Himself through Prophets and Messengers, who have come with one message. Worship God, without partners, without offspring and without intermediaries. The rules and laws were sometimes different, because they were applicable for the people of a particular time or place, but the creed of each Messenger was the same. Worship Me, and your reward will be contentment in this life and in the hereafter. When Prophet Muhammad came, in the 7th century, BCE, his message was slightly different. He called to the worship of the One God, but his call was for all of humankind. The message was now complete and revealed for all places, and in all times.

Islam was completed for the benefit of all who will exist, until the final Day of Judgement. It is not a religion belonging to the Arabs, although Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was an Arab, nor is it a religion for the Asian countries or the third world. Muslims exist in all continents and come from all races and ethnicities. There are Muslims in New York, Sydney, Cape Town and Berlin as well as Cairo, Kuala Lumpur and Dubai. Muslims are as diverse as this magnificent planet. Islam is also not a religion that accepts part time or halfhearted commitment. Islam is a way of life; Islam is a holistic way of life.

When God created the world He did not abandon it to instability and insecurity, quite the contrary, He sent guidance. He sent a rope, firm and steady, and by holding tightly to this rope an insignificant human being can achieve greatness and eternal peace. A Muslim strives to obey God's commandments and does so by following God's guide to life - the Quran, and the authentic teachings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad.

The Quran is a book of guidance and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad explain and in some cases expand on that guidance. Islam, as a complete way of life, stresses the importance of maintaining good health and offers the ways and the means to cope with ill health. The Quran is a book of wisdom. It is a book full of the wonder and glory of God, and a testament to His mercy and justice.

Through His infinite mercy, God has provided us with a holistic approach to life, one that covers all aspects, spiritual, emotional and physical. When God created humankind, He did so for one purpose " to worship Him.

oeAnd I (God) created not the jinn and humankind, except to worship Me (Alone).” (Quran 51:56)

The comprehensiveness of Islam allows every aspect of life, from sleeping and washing, to praying and working, to be an act of worship. One who is truly submitted to God is grateful for the countless blessings in his or her life and wants to thank and praise God for His generosity, kindness and mercy. Prophet Muhammad explained that we should be thankful to God in every situation, whether we perceive it to be good or bad. The reality is that God is just, therefore, whatever situation a believer finds himself in, he knows there is goodness and wisdom embedded in it.

oeIndeed amazing are the affairs of a believer! They are all for his benefit. If he is granted ease then he is thankful, and this is good for him. And if he is afflicted with a hardship, he perseveres, and this is good for him.” (Muslim)

The life of this world is not stable. Every person goes through stages and phases; happiness is followed by sadness and then relief or joy, ones' faith is strong and unconquerable, and seemingly, for no reason it plummets, next, by the will of God it slowly rises again. Periods of great fitness and health are followed by injury or, sickness, but with each twinge of pain or suffering a true believer feels some of his sins fall away.

oeWhenever a Muslim is afflicted by harm from sickness or other matters, God will expiate his sins, like leaves drop from a tree.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

Islam teaches us to be concerned, about the whole person. Following the guidance and commandments of God allows us to face illness and injury with patience. Complaining and bemoaning our situation will achieve nothing but more pain and suffering. Our bodies and minds have been given to us as a trust, and we are responsible for them. The guidance of God covers every aspect of life and there are specific ways of dealing with health issues, which we will begin to explore in the next article.

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