

## **Episode 5: Professional and Faith Perspectives**

This podcast is brought to you by Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre, Better Place Australia, and South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Mr. Javed Mohammadi, a religious scholar with a long history of assisting the Afghan Muslim community in Australia, is one of our honored guests on this program. He holds a diploma in leadership management and social services. He has experience working for both government and nonprofit organizations. Additionally, Dr. Hana Farooqi, who got her master's degree from Catholic University in Australia, has experience working for non-profit organizations and serving as a consultant for several schools. You are welcome to our program.

Host: Dr. Hana Farooqi will open our conversation by saying that for a usual member of society, mental health mostly entails feeling depressed and unhappy. What is the definition of mental health, according to the medical staff?

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:**

Thank you and what you stated is also accurate, however according to the definition of the World Health Organization, mental health is a condition of peacefulness in which a person has the best capacity to regulate the stresses of life and accomplish duties well and can communicate with others and can establish a relationship with others. With this definition, we can say that mental health also refers to the condition that affects how we see the world, how we interact with others, how we comprehend, how we enjoy life, and how we engage in different activities.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:**

Mr. Mohammadi, do our religion teachings and lessons discuss mental health? We don't often hear about it from religious scholars.

**Mr. Mohammadi:**

Thank you, Mss. Maryam, for giving us the chance to discuss the specifics of religious texts and verses with you and our compatriots. The base and cornerstone of religion is the spiritual and psychological growth of human beings, for them to reach to prosperity and progress that God had planned for humanity when God created them. Islamic Religion views attempting and effort

in order to obtain peace as basis of the life, or It is defined in such a way that a Muslim man or woman should attempting to produce calmness and peace in himself, in his family, and in society, as well as comfort or luxury, which is connected to the comfort of the human body, should be achieved during mental calmness, and even the religion of Islam has paid so much attention that we and you can see that the acquisition of comfort, which is accompanied by the deprivation of peace of mind, is condemned by the religion of Islam. For instance, the world's wealth and a desire for them which cause deprivation of mental well-being and calmness, which is not fair behavior. This indicates that comfort comes second to peace and calmness of mind and that if comfort robs peace of mind, it is not acceptable in religion. If pursuing wealth and fame in the world may disturb our peace and calmness and distances us from God, it is not fair. Even if a person has mental illnesses, his or her business dealings cannot be accepted or considered legitimate in everyday life. It is assumed that a person who sits at the marriage table, whether it is a man or a woman if he does not have mental health, this marriage is invalid. If a person buys and sells in daily transactions in the market, if he does not have mental health, these transactions are invalid from a religious point of view. It is clear from this that the religion of Islam has a very fundamental concern for the wellbeing, peace and mental health of men and women.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:**

What can be the causes of mental health problems in our society?

**Mr. Mohammadi:**

According to my research, religion offers numerous suggestions in this area, and I've listed a few of them to explain for this meeting and all our compatriots. Envy is the first of these factors that religion defines as causing the loss of peace in an individual, in the family, and in the community. In religious narratives, envy is described as a fire that first burns the one who is feeling it and then harms the other party as well.

There is a poem that says if you are afraid of pain, don't be jealous or envied, as the wise man said that envy is an incurable pain, so envy is defined as an incurable pain in Persian poems. The second factor is, hatred, animosity, and a spiteful person is a person who always has a fire burning inside him and this fire deprives him of peace and finally comfort, it means, if he has wealth, resources

and facilities he does not enjoy it. Greed for the wealth in the world does not mean interest in the wealth of the world, but it means an immense and intense interest in the wealth of the world which may take peace from your mind and life, but Islam religion says we should work hard and get wealth, but not at the price of losing your peaceful mind and life. Islam says, if you spend or lose your wealth don't be sad and don't be too greedy that takes away peace from your life, family, and community.

A continual hater would be the other factor. A negative person who despises everything or is opposed to other people's development, character, and advancement. The fourth factor is slandering which is very common. Slandering first deprives the peace of mind of the person who is slandering and then it robs the peace of mind of the person who is accused of slandering.

The sixth, backbiting others. All of them are serious faults in the Islamic religion and cannot be pardoned. Backbiting destroys the peace of both the one who is backbiting others and the one who is being backbit. Unfair relationships with family members, whether as a parent, wife, brother, or sister, if we have a wrong or unfair relationship with each other. So, as a result, this unfair relationship disturbs our peace of mind and life. Another factor is lack of compassion, we break up our contact with our family because we don't like it. This makes us want to disturb the calm of others and ourselves. If someone reveals a secret to us who we know to be trustworthy, we immediately go and reveal it, disrupting both your and others' peace of mind. All these characteristics are seen as grave offenses and are punished in both this world and the hereafter since they disrupt our mental calmness.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:**

So, Dr. Hana Farooqi, what are the causes of mental problems in our society from a medical point of view?

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:**

Mr. Mohammadi provided many good examples that can impact mental health. Mental health is affected by many factors, such as biological, social, and environmental factors, which work together in a complex manner. I want to give a little information about four factors, for example, factors related to lifestyles, such as having a job, education, freedom from discrimination and violence, and

access to economic resources. Second, community-related factors, for example, having a positive feeling, feeling of belonging to the community, being connected with the community, activities that highlight each other's differences, community support, and participation in community-related decisions. Third, individual factors, for example, the ability to manage thoughts and control uncomfortable situations, speaking skills and how to make relationship with others. Fourth, using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, etc., which has a significant impact on young people's and their families mental health. The excessive use of these devices can lead to feelings of inadequacy in day-to-day activities and can occasionally result in constant comparison to others, mocking, lack of sleep, and social isolation.

**Host Mariam:**

You mentioned controlling feeling upset, how do we control ourselves when we are upset or angry?

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:**

You are correct; it is challenging to control someone when they are unhappy or angry. The first thing we do when we become emotional is to breathe and try to take slow, deep breaths. Yes, talking to someone can help you feel less stressed.

**Host Mariam:**

Mr. Mohammadi, What are your views on this?

**Mr. Mohammadi:**

We appreciate Ms. Hina for bringing up such crucial and useful points today. I wish to talk about what is written in our religious texts and verses. The first is remembering God because remembering God offers calm and gives us peacetime, which is followed by comfort because someone with a healthy soul and spirit can work, study, and have healthy relationships with other people and family, therefore the first of them is the remembrance of Allah, "the meaning of a verses of Quran is "remembering and stating the name of Allah, bring peace to your heart". Only when we remember Allah do our life and soul find peace and comfort. What exactly does it mean to remember God? Sometimes people mistakenly believe that remembering God entails praying constantly or reciting

the rosary, but remembering God entails considering our origins, purpose for existing, the logic behind it, and where we are going after this life. By understanding the philosophy of life that reach us to God and our Creator, all of our deeds, actions, and words are then recognized as acts of worship.

When a Muslim or believer comes to the realisation that there is Allah and that he has faith in God, even the efforts of providing support to his family are considered worship. Even sleeping is considered worship. All his actions are regarded as acts of worship after he had a firm trust in God and understood why we were created, what our purpose in life is, why we are alive, and where we are going after this life. The second thing is praying that brings peace, praying to God, prayer does not only mean that we are praying five times to our God, every pray and even it is not in Arabic or it just setting somewhere and presenting our request and needs to Allah, expressing our wishes to God and share our secrets and needs with God. Third, according to a verse in the Qur'an, marriage is one of the factors that contribute to peace and calmness. God says, I created you as a man and a woman, to be married and live in harmony. When you get married, God will bring true love between the pair, and they should both tell each other they love one another. Marriage brings forgiveness, forgiveness to man and woman after marriage, what is forgiveness, for instance, of the husband and wife is uncomfortable, the other party goes consoles him with kindness and love, gets close to him and speaks to calm the anger instead of viewing his anger and impatience as aggression and going to confront him. Fourthly, peaceful nighttime sleep is necessary for healthy sleep, as Mrs. Hina said. Many of my friends struggle with anxiety and other issues. I realised that they work at night and sleep during the day. Sleeping during the day is uncomfortable because it is not done correctly, the deep sleep that brings comfort does not occur during the day, and this leads to mental stress. When you sit by your brother's side in a kind manner, sit by your wife side, sit by your uncle's side, or get in touch with them and support them, all of these things contribute to your mental peace as well as your family's and friends' peace.

Host Mariam: Another question is where to go if we have a problem and where can we get help?

**Mr. Mohammadi:**

Perhaps Ms. Hina can offer some advice on this. What is advised in religion, and what I advise as a religious scholar, is that if someone has mental issues, they should visit a religious scholar, go back to their regular prayers, and then the religious scholar can help them relax using the same religious techniques and religious guidance. Second, don't stop only with scholar advice, Islam advises that anyone experiencing difficulties always seek the advice of a specialist of that field. For instance, the month of Ramadan is coming. If a person is ill and unable to fast, and a specialist or doctor determines that fasting worsens the condition or that it is the cause of the illness, the individual's fasting is invalid, so in such cases fasting is not required and the obligation is removed and he should fast again at another time. Islam advice is to refer to experts, both scholars and relevant experts who can help them.

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:**

Yes, he said correctly, Mr. Mohammadi, and regrettably, we did not seek assistance in the early stages. When a mental health issue emerged, it would be quite difficult to seek assistance or visit someone. Therefore, the first people we should turn to for advice are our family, friends, instructors, and religious leaders. The GP is the finest resource and can assess you together before referring you to a psychologist if the issue continues, even after you have spoken to your family and the issue still exists. So you can talk with your GP, and if you want someone who is familiar with your language, GP will refer you to the right place or person, and after referring you, that source will help you.

**Host Mariam:**

Are there any services in the mosque and religious centers that can help those who have mental problems?

**Mr. Mohammadi:**

Yes, all religious rituals in mosques—such as Jamaat prayer or any other event—are intended to promote mental calmness. Consider the possibility that God is not in need of anything and does not require our prayers; all prayers and other forms of worship are intended for people.



The Jamaat prayer fortifies a person's heart, boosts his spirits, and makes him have more friends. All religious rituals and ceremonies, as well as other gatherings where people share food and chat with each other's, foster calm, quietness, and the development of both men's and women's minds. When someone's daily problems have taken on a life of their own and have deprived him or his families of comfort and peace, religious scholars have always spent time sitting with them both in religious centers and in other appropriate places. If a person has personal problems that, in addition to referring to prayer and supplication, asking religious scholars for guidance, religious scholars have always talked to him either in religious centers or any other suitable place or through the phone. As a result, all religious activities, including prayer and other meetings, serve to both treat and prevent mental health issues.

**Host Mariam:**

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