

## Self-Care and Clarity of Mind...a weekly column by Princess Lakshman (Sister Iqra)



Welcome to my weekly column on **Self-Care and Clarity of Mind**. If you're taking time out to read this, pat yourself on the back because you have shown commitment to taking care of your mind and body.

Today, In Shaa ALLAH, we will explore the topic: **Happiness and Joy...what is the difference?**

You may be familiar with this common adage "Pursuit of Happiness". I've always wondered why it is that we must pursue happiness. I used to be one of those people who worked really hard at pursuing happiness. One wonderful day I realised that as ALLAH's highest form of creation I was blessed with an inherent, pure thing known as JOY.

Once I realised this, embraced joy and began to live from it, I stopped pursuing happiness. It sounds bizarre.

### **Difference Between Joy and Happiness?**

The English dictionary may display both these terms as synonyms, however, society has designed a paradigm for human beings which defines happiness as something that results from fulfilment of material and physical desires. In other words, happiness, in today's world, is circumstantial.

Joy, on the other hand, is something that we feel in our "fitra" and is not defined by physical and material desires. Joy is the elation we feel when we operate from our inherent spiritual virtues of love, kindness and compassion.

Once you operate from joy, the pressures that society places on you vanish - the six-figure salary, the mansion, the perfect body shape - none of these material and physical desires will matter anymore. Living from joy makes you a joyful being and spreads joy to the rest of the world. Instead of the six-figure salary, ask yourself if you love what you do for work. Instead of the mansion that you live in (probably under mortgage), ask yourself if your home is a space that is spiritually fulfilling. Instead of obsessing over a perfect body shape, ask yourself if you are using your body and its energy to spread goodness and perform righteous deeds.

### **How to Cultivate Joy in Your Life**

Living authentically and being true to yourself helps you be true to others. "Fake it till you make it" may not be the most authentic approach to living joyfully. Rather, a daily practice of experiencing joy in small things can make every moment of your life be a joyful experience.

- Smile more

- Laugh out loud
- Write a heartfelt note to someone special to thank them (handwrite it, it's more personal)
- Breathe deeply, fully and exhale slowly
- Do a fun activity that moves your body and makes you sweat
- Spend a few minutes daily to connect with nature
- Say out loud to yourself - five things about yourself that you are grateful for
- Say out loud to yourself - five things about your life that you are grateful for
- Say out loud to yourself - five things about another person that you are grateful for
- Do something nice for someone without their knowledge
- Cook a wholesome meal for yourself and your family
- Hug your loved ones often and tell them you love them
- Visualise yourself in Jannah

If you feel confused about whether you are pursuing material and physical happiness or whether you are living joyfully, the one question you need to ask yourself is “Is what I’m pursuing pleasing ALLAH or pleasing people?”

Choose to please ALLAH and ONLY ALLAH. When you please people, you fall into the trap of material and physical desires.

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