

Types of Mental Illness According to Islamic Tradition

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The psychotherapy of the Muslim tradition is spiritual healing. Thus mental illness is cured once individuals reconcile themselves with their Creator, or God. Western approaches in psychotherapy are derived in some way from the concept of original sin, whereas Muslim traditional psychotherapy starts with concept of the human as a healthy being. The role of knowledge is emphasized by Al-Ghazzali in the method of treatment--spiritual disease is ignorance and knowledge is the cure.

Diseases are classified into two categories: functional and organic. Functional disorders are more harmful than the organic diseases. Organic diseases are physical and can be treated reasonably. But functional disorders come from ignorance and can lead to estrangement from God. Al-Ghazzali identifies various types of spiritual diseases and their methods of treatment. Some are:

1. Al-amal: A disease that is caused by ignorance and doubt. This is a sickness in which people become self-centered and are caught up in their own appetite and desires

due to their ignorance and isolation. This creates self-aggrandizement and delusion, they lose touch with reality, develop a distorted perspective, and set aside all norms to become their own measure.

2. Malic: A spiritual disease also caused by *Al-amal*. When the *Qalb* is afflicted with the egotism of the *Amal*, the afflicted one feels that they are immortal. They become addicted to wealth, status, and fame which brings them into conflict with the world. This results in anger as they try to control and manipulate other people. This fosters hatred and diminishes love.

3. Ignorance (*Jahl*): This is the foundation of all diseases. When the darkness of ignorance afflicts the *Qalb*, the *Qalb* is alienated from divine guidance and the patient's development toward perfection is thwarted, so much so that they can become as blind. This disease is the opposite of knowledge, the enemy of reason, and is ultimately fatal. Once it has corrupted thinking, it becomes incurable.

4. **Cowardice** (*Jubin*) : This is a spiritual disease associated with ignorance. Since the ignorance is directed inward, its cure is *taqwa* (piety). The one who cultivates *taqwa* before God develops a life of strength.
5. **Cruelty** (*Jafa*): This is a disease of ignorance. Since the ignorant are cruel to others, in the process they become cruel to themselves. Since they confine their *Nafs* to ignorance, denying it the light of knowledge, they develop a tendency to sadism.
6. **Lust** (*Hawa*): This is a major spiritual disease. When the *Qalb* is infected with *hawa*, it develops many other diseases. Desire is the objective and a person is cut off from the light of virtue . They are led astray by desires and deviate from the path of righteousness because *Hawa* is opposed to guidance (instruction). Thus they become prey to self-righteousness and are commanded solely by his or her own desires. *Hawa* is actually the root of all the evils of life. When the *Qalb* is blocked from virtue, it loses its potential and becomes weak and salvation in it. Its cure is restraining and abstinence.
7. **Melancholia** (*Waswas*): This disease comes from doubt about the path of righteousness. False and evil suspicions take hold, and *Hawa* also encourages it. There develops a chaotic distrust in the *Qalb*, and the *minr*; can become despondent. Outer misgivings and circumstances can affect their *Qalb* as well. They then succumb to *ash-shaytaniyya*, lose their intuition and are lost in the bizarre chaos of their desires.
8. **Malevolence** (*Za'arat lu-no ture*): In this disease the *Qalb* develops propensities to excess and loses the sense of balance. The patient denies the blessing of God, lacks temperance, and is dominated by ignorance. People are lost in absurdities due to excess. Its cure is to develop the habit of balanced thinking.
9. **Calumny** (*Zoor*): This disease infects both the principle and the action. It develops from the desire for the unhealthy and depends upon one 's bad judgment. Such People become hostile which blocks their progress to the right path and ultimately destroys them.
10. **Envy** (*Hasad*): This is a fatal

disease. A person can be destroyed by jealousy. It eats into the *Qalb* as injury fidoes into the body. It spreads like leprosy. It defies all cures and its root is ignorance, in which patients are seized by the object of their jealousy who loves in comfort and blessings. Envious people feel very uneasy and become highly irritated. They enjoy neither food nor drink, and are frequently tortured by jealousy and are often consumed by it. Its cure is possible only through total submission to the will of God and acceptance of this destiny.

11. Deceit (*khush*): This is a serious spiritual disease. Its inherent cause is jealousy when the heart is infected with the love of worldly glamour- The patient becomes jealous of another's prosperity and happiness. Ignorance and lack of insight cause this irritating disease, and its cure is to rest in providence and submit to destiny disease is caused by ignorance and lack of insight and its cure is to rest in providence and to submit to destiny.

12. Avarice (*Tama*): This is a miserable spiritual disease.

Greed obliterates faith from the *Qalb*. This is a branch of the tree of greed. Greed spoils mutual relationships and the greedy covets the material possessions of his or her friends. The real root of greed is ignorance and stupidity. Its cure is contentment and avoidance of the objects of greed. Worldly comforts should not be overemphasized, and the attitude of indulgence should be renounced. Its remedy is not to covet what belongs to others (al-Ghazzali, 1988).

Some people claim that there is no free will; they deny that human character is capable of improvement. They argue that neither the inner *khulq* nor the Outer *khalq* (the two forms of character) can be changed. But Al - Ghazzali claims that human character can be changed and improved that there is a degree of free will. He alleges the experience of practical life in refutation of this. If it were indeed impossible to improve character at all, then all moral imperatives would have no meaning, and all instruction, exhortation, education and self-discipline would be of no avail at all.

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