

# **The Positive Mental Health in Qur`anic Perspective: Its Concept and Methods of Promotion**

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## Focus Points

- i. From Islamic perspective, the physical and mental health are indispensable, each one is necessary for the other.
- ii. The scientific effort on '**mental health**' is a continuous attempt to understand the nature of man as he **ought to be**. (naturally or according to the culture or Divine guidance)
- iii. The basic presupposition of this effort has been that fact that '**the scientific knowledge of man is the key factor for his development and society**';
- iv. The above assumption has shifted the attention from the classical definition of health as '**absent of disease**' to a '**functional**' definition.
- v. There are various approaches to understand the nature of mental health, for various purposes.
- vi. This presentation, however, focusses only on two approaches:
  - a. The evidence-based scientific approach;
  - b. The value-based Islamic approach, as presented by the holy Qur`an.
- vii. Harmonizing the above two approaches may provides clear view on the complex picture on '**mental health**' or a '**healthy mind**'.

# What is '*Positive Mental Health*'?

- The phrase '**positive mental health**' was coined as a counterpart of '**mental illness**' that had dominated the classical psychiatric which aimed at the study of mental illness, causes of deviation, and malfunctioning.
- In other words, if the classical approach was focusing on '**illness**', the new approach focusses on '**Well-being**'. (Philosophers say: Replacing '**I**' by '**We**' is always useful, even '**illness**' will turn to '**wellness**').
- The scientific and Islamic perspectives approach the above question from different dimensions.
  - The scientific approach is mainly '**biological**' and '**evidence-based**',
  - The Islamic approach is '**functional**' and '**value-based**'.
- Thus, the holy Qur`an focusses on and highlights the value of mind (`Aql), its function, how it can be protected and optimally used;
  - The scientific approach, aims to understand what is mental health: its nature, causes of mental illness and deviation, and standards for measurement. Thus, it is unable to deal with the cultural and value oriented questions on mental health.
  - In fact, the above two approaches are '**accumulative**' rather than '**contradictory**'.

# Conceptual Analysis

- The scientific approach defines ‘**health**’ based on two approaches as following:
  - a. **Classical approach:** health is ‘absent of disease’
  - b. **New approach:** health is “a state of complete physical, mental, social and (spiritual) wellbeing; not merely the absent of disease or infirmity”
- Accordingly, **mental health** is defined as “a state of mental wellbeing, in which every individual is able to:
  - i. realize his own potentials,
  - ii. cope with the normal stresses of life,
  - iii. work productively and fruitfully, and
  - iv. able to contribute to the community”.
- The new approach adopts the functional definition of health.
- However, the two major challenges that face the scientific approach are:
  - 1) The question of measurement (how to measure mental health?)
  - 2) The problem of socio-cultural elements of mental health.

## **What is the Standard to Measure Mental Health?**

- Based on literature, Marie Jahoda (1958) summarises six measurement approaches:
  - i. The individual's attitude toward himself.
  - ii. Degree to which person realizes his potentialities through action.
  - iii. Unification of function in the individual's personality.
  - iv. Individual's degree of independence of social influences.
  - v. How the individual sees the world around him.
  - vi. Ability to take life as it comes and master it.
- It is obvious that, all the above standards are subjective, therefore the Qur`anic approach focuses on the functional definition.

## The Qur`anic Approach on Mental Health

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ، لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ (179) (الاعراف)

(We have created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts but they do not use it for understanding, they have eyes but do not use it to see, and they have ears but do not use it to hear. Those are like animal; rather they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.)

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۖ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ (46) (الحج)

(So they never have traveled on the earth so that they use their hearts to reason with it; and ears by which to hear? indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but the hearts which are within the breasts.)

## Overview on *al-`Aql Al-Saleem* in the Holy Qur`an

- The holy Qur`an uses the term (*`Aql*) (healthy mind) as a fundamental tool / faculty for knowledge and cognition, based on which a human being becomes knowledgeable, ethically responsible creature (*Taklif*); (أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى)
- As a comprehensive source of knowledge and guidance, the holy Qur`an has addressed the topic of human mind and mental power in an extended manner. (the term *`Aql* is mentioned 49 times)
- The holy Qur`an provides principles, insights and useful information on mental health for analytical study and application.
- It also, provides different techniques to develop a healthy mind mental for realization of human potentials.
- The holy Qur`an adopts the method of protection and promotion (P&P) to build a healthy mind.
- Unlike the scientific approach, the holy Qur`an talks about value of mind , its function (job), and how it can be protected and optimally used.
- Accordingly, a healthy mind is the mind that able to perform its duty / function in a perfect manner.

# Analytical View on Qur`anic Approach on Al-`Aql Al-Saleem (العقل في القرآن الكريم: نظرة تحليلية)

- The holy Qur`an honors and appreciates al-`Aql al-Saleem (a healthy mind) because, it is only by `Aql we know the God and appreciate Him;
- Al-Muhasibi says: (God is never known, except by mind; and never obeyed, except by knowledge)  
يقول المحاسبي: (ما عُرِفَ الله إلا بالعقل ولا أُطِيع إلا بالعلم)
- The holy Qur`an has mentioned the term (`Aql), which stands for a **healthy mind**, (49) times, besides other terms;
- `Aql is the faculty for knowledge and responsibility (*Taklif*);
- The holy Qur`an uses the word `Aql as **verb**, never used it as **noun**.
- This may indicate that the holy Qur`an focuses on function of healthy mind, rather than its nature and reality;
- العقل فعلاً: تعقلون (24)، يعقلون (22)، عقل (1)، نعقل (1)، يعقل (1)
- As **noun**, the holy Qur`an uses other terms which may indicate degrees or different types of mental health, such as  
العقل اسماً: القلب، الفؤاد، اللب، الحجر (قسم لذي حجر)، النهى (أولي النهى).



# Methods of Mental Health Promotion in Qur`anic Approach

## (منهج بناء العقل السليم)

- The holy Qur`an adopts two major techniques to build mental health: Protection and promotion (P&P)
  - a. Preservative approach: Protection (حفظ العقل)
  - b. Promotive approach: building a healthy mind (بناء العقل السليم)

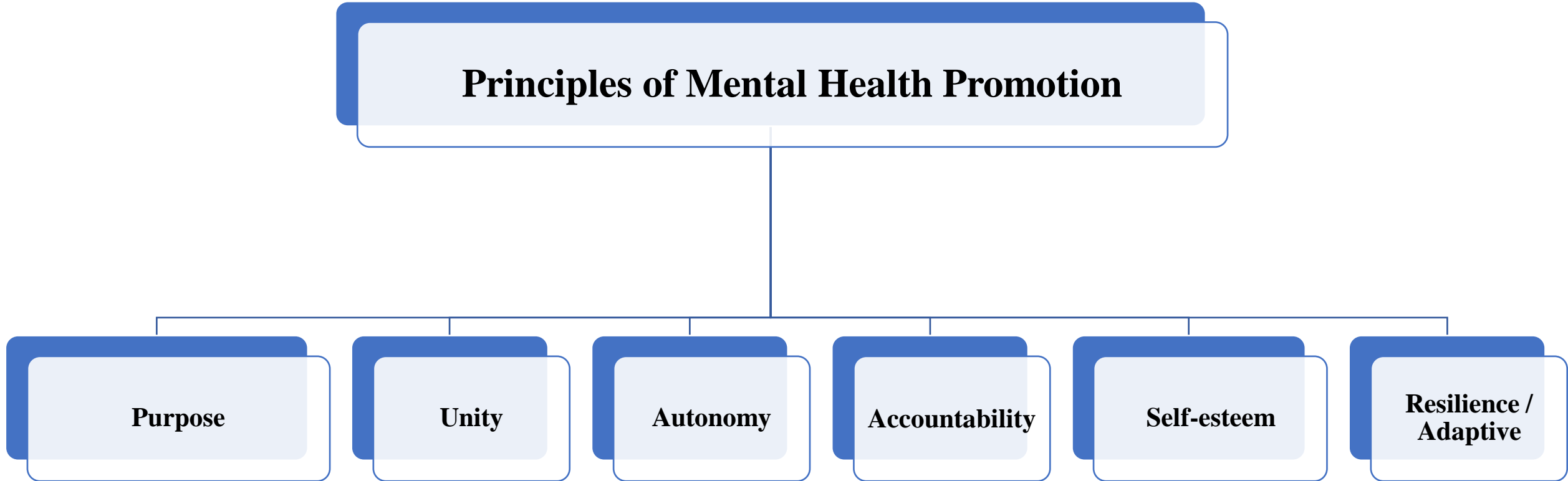
# The Protective Approach

## (حفظ العقل)

- **Protection of mind**, is first strategy adopted by holy Qur`an to build a healthy mind.
- This strategy is based on various techniques, as following:
  - i. Prohibiting everything affects mind (such as intoxicate items and harmful acts)
  - ii. Instilling a purposive goal for life to remove or reduce anxiety, stress, and depression;
  - iii. Exerting mankind to employ his mind optimally for knowledge inquiry;
  - iv. Eliminating the culture of anti-rationalism
  - v. Promoting healthy lifestyles to promote the physical and mental health;
  - vi. Enhancing the social cohesion to reduce stress and anxiety;
  - vii. Instilling hope and optimism to cope with troubles of everyday life;
  - viii. Development and improving a sense safety in the living environment

# The Promotion Approach

(بناء العقل السليم)



# The Qur`anic Principles on Mental Health Promotion

1. **Purpose:** having (i) a sublime worldview, (ii) system of values, (iii) goal for life, and (iv) method to achieve the goal. (أیحسب الإنسان أن یتترك سدى)
  2. **Autonomy:** sense of personal responsibility and ability to make a wise choice. (كل إنسان ألزمناه طائره في عنقه) (فمن يعمل مثقال ذرة خيرا يره) (لا تزر وازرة وزرة أخرى)
  3. **Unity:** having sense of belongingness and attachment to a group, such as family, and Ummah (Muslim society as united by *Tawhid*). It increases feeling of support, safely, confidence, and promotes self-esteem. (إن هذه أمتكم أمة واحدة) (إنما المؤمنون أخوة)
  4. **Self-esteem:** valuing yourself as human being and being confident of achieving your goal of life. self-esteem provides the ability to challenge and overcome the failure. (لقد كرّمنا بني آدم)
  5. **Accountability:** Sens of responsibility toward self and others (كلکم راع وکلکم مسؤول عن رعیته)
  6. **Resilience:** being adaptive, optimistic, has ability to recover problems of everyday life (إنما لا تقنطوا من رحمة الله) (العسر يسرا)
- The final goal is to control the anger, reducing anxiety and eliminate mental stress. (الشديد من ملك) (نفسه عند الغضب)

## The Goal and Final Objective

- **Discovery of the truth** is the main goal of the optimal use of al-`Aql in Islamic perspective.
- For knowledge purposes, mankind needs use his `Aql optimally to look, observe, think, investigate, ponder, discover, conclude and act. (no act without knowledge)
- **Truth, in Islamic perspective, is divided into two major types:**
  - i. **The Absolute truth:** `Aql needs the revealed guidance to understand this type which includes the metaphysical world;
  - ii. **The relative truth**, as reflected by physical world: guided by channels of knowledge, such as sight and hearing, `Aql is naturally capable to interact and understand the material world, either by experience or systematic inquiry.
- Although reason (the sound mind) can be standard to determine true and false, however it cannot be source of moral values (good and bad).
- Mind needs the revealed guidance to approach morality.

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# The End

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Thank you for your attention