



Your Life Matters!
To Others . . . To this World . . . To God.

Islam

In 2009, to further the progress of faith communities in preventing suicide, the national Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) convened an Interfaith Suicide Prevention Dialogue, which was supported by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Participants included representatives of the five largest faith groups in the United States: Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu. The final report of this meeting can be found at: http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/faith_dialogue.pdf

Representing the Islamic faith were Dr. Abdul Basit, former Professor of Psychiatry at Northwestern University and Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, and Mrs. Najah Bazy, Transcultural Registered Nurse Specialist and Health Ministry Liaison at the Islamic Center of America in Michigan. Dr. Basit is a practicing Sunni, and Mrs. Bazy represented both the Sunni and Shia perspectives. Key ideas they presented are as follows.

In general, the predominant view of suicide among Muslims is that suicide takes away the gift of life that God gave us, and we definitely do not condone it. The *Quran* says to trust God, have faith in the mercy of God, support the family, have patience, and do not destroy life. Despite the teaching that one should not destroy life, Muslims generally do not condemn the individual who dies by suicide. They believe that the death is a personal matter between the victim and God. Often it becomes evident that the victim had suffered emotionally or had a mental illness that the community was unaware of. The victims are buried with the rest of the community.

Regarding the spiritual consequences of suicide, Muslims believe that the soul is eternal, that it never dies. It is a gift of intellect and discernment, that is, a gift of choice. The issue of choice makes suicide a difficult discussion. If you take your own life, you are choosing to sin against God. Muslim suicide is often associated with the sins of drinking and gambling, which further complicates the issue, for God has warned humanity to stay away from such vices. Quantity of life is as important as quality of life because all moments are sacred. To take a life prematurely would almost be equivalent in some respects to aborting a life, which is looked upon unfavorably in Islam. Muslims believe that those who take a life unjustly, be it their own or another, is the equivalent of taking all of humanity. Likewise, to save a life is the equivalent of saving all humanity.

Muslims generally understand that suicide results from psychological illnesses and severe life stresses. In the United States, many Muslims are scholars and doctors who see suicide as a result of depression and not as a sin. There is sympathy and a search for reasons to explain why the suicide happened. Our role ought to be to make sure that suicide does not happen. We never condone it. We don't want to create a perception of giving permission, nor should it ever be glorified.

From a theological perspective, *Muslims would certainly agree that most suicides could be prevented.* We are encouraged to think about the verses in the *Quran* and what they mean. There is a saying, "God gives a soul no more than it can bear." This is a message of healing, especially if someone is on the edge, such

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as surviving family members.

Page | 1

The Muslim community would be enthusiastic about engaging with the community at large to prevent suicide. A major opportunity that would help engage Muslims is based on one of our core beliefs – in Islam, we are all interdependent. Few outside the Muslim culture understand the nuances of how we view our interdependence on one another, and more importantly, on God.

The following resources were recommended by The American Muslim Health Professionals (Khizer Husain/ khusain@amhp.us and the Chair of Mental Health Education for AMHP: Dr. Rukhsana Chaudhry/chaudhry.rukhsana@gmail.com)

Quranic verses on Patience:

"Oh you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer, for God is with those who patiently persevere." (2:153)

"Oh you who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy. Vie in such perseverance, strengthen each other, and be pious, that you may prosper." (3:200)

"Be patient, for your patience is with the help of Allah." (16:127)

Quranic verses to aid in suicide prevention:

"It is He Who gives life and who takes it, and to Him shall you all be brought back" (Qur'an 10:56)

"But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily God hath been to you Most Merciful! If any do that in rancor and injustice,- soon shall We cast them into the Fire: And easy it is for God." (Qur'an 4:29 - 4:30)

The following material from the Q'uran is recommended by Imam Jamal Rahman:

"O my servants who have transgressed against your own selves!
Do not despair of the compassion of Allah!
For Allah forgives all mistakes;
For He/She is oft-forgiving, Infinitely Merciful." [39:53]

"By the glorious morning light
and by the night when it is still
your Sustainer has not forgotten you, nor is He displeased.
and truly, that which comes after will be better for you than the present." [93:1-4]

"For the one who remains conscious of God;
God always prepares a way of emergence
and God provides for him/her in ways that he/she could never imagine.
And if anyone puts his/her trust in God, sufficient is God for him/her.
For God will surely accomplish His purpose;
truly, for all things has God appointed an appropriate measure." [65:2-3]

"O you who have attained to faith!
Remain conscious of God and have faith in His messenger,
and God will grant you a double portion of His Mercy:

God will provide for you a light by which you shall walk, and He will forgive you:
for God is Ever-Ready to Forgive, and is the Most Merciful.” [57:28]

“It is God Who sends to His servants clear signs
that He may lead you out of the depths of darkness
into the Light.
And truly, God is to you Most Kind and Merciful.” [57:9]