



“Why Does Allah Hate Me?” Rescripting Negative Self-Talk

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“Be with someone who makes you happy”

— Anonymous

Case study

*Ever since Rula was a young girl, she thrived in close relationships—mostly because she lacked connection at home with her parents. Her parents fought all the time and were consumed with their own issues, leading her to seek out connection with her peers at school. Her first close relationship was with a best friend in elementary school. The friendship lasted 7 years until her friend slowly began distancing herself from Rula as she fell in with a different crowd at school. The same thing happened frequently in her other friendships: Rula became very close to friends quickly and trusted them wholeheartedly, but the relationship always ended with Rula feeling confused, needy, and unwanted. As Rula got older she also noticed the same patterns as she was trying to get married. Rula would put ads on matrimonial sites and put her all into trying to make things work, but nothing ever materialized. In fact, sometimes Rula felt like she was being used or taken advantage of. Relationships for Rula seemed like trying to jam a square peg into a round hole—everything felt forced, and no matter how hard she tried she couldn’t make relationships work long-term. As all of Rula’s friends got married, she increasingly felt alone and unworthy. Eventually Rula also began to feel this way in her relationship with Allah. She would pray and desperately make duaa to Allah for things she wanted, but felt disconnected and cast off in that relationship as well. Rula wondered: Was He ignoring her? Did He not care about her? Was her constant duaa annoying and pestering Him? She didn’t understand why her prayers were unanswered, when she tried so hard to connect with Allah. In the same way Rula felt rejected by everyone else in her life she also asked herself, “**Does Allah hate me too?**”*

What is happening to me?

When we experience love and fulfillment in relationships, we feel secure in how we see ourselves and relate to the world around us. Kindness, vulnerability, and loyalty are some of the best parts of our inner selves, and when we share those qualities with the people closest to us, it makes us feel good to receive those gifts in return. On the contrary, when we put a tremendous amount of effort in trying to make a relationship work and do not have the same affection and love reciprocated, we experience a great deal of emotional upheaval. Feeling rejected is probably one of the most painful experiences in life and studies indicate that the neural pathway of rejection in the brain is the same as physical pain.¹ In other words, if you feel like you are in physical pain when someone puts you down, treats you badly, or invalidates you, it's because you are.

When you experience rejection repeatedly, whether by the same person over and over, or by many different people, it is not unusual to wonder if there is something wrong with you. You might ask yourself:

Why am I so unlovable?

What is it about me that no matter how hard I try it never works?

How come what I do is never good enough?

Feelings of rejection by family and friends can also spill over into faith and spirituality. When you are trying your best and believe Allah has the power to help you but are not seeing the results you want, then you might start to wonder if there is a disconnect. You might question if Allah doesn't like you, or if He is ignoring you the same way others in your life might be doing. Or perhaps you might consider that you are so unworthy that Allah will abandon you as well.

The thought that Allah, the Owner and Controller of the whole universe, dislikes you feels catastrophic for a Muslim. When a family member or friend hates you, you can attempt to try to smooth things out directly in person, but how can you do

¹ Kross, E., Berman, M., Mischel, W., Smith, E., & Wager, T. (2016). Social rejection shares somatosensory representations with physical pain. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 108, 6270-6275.

that with Allah? You cannot see Him or talk to Him face-to-face to assess the situation. He is so powerful and you may feel so small. Also, what are the implications of being hated by Allah? If he Hates you will you be rejected by Him and His creation in this *dunia* and in the *akhira*? Does that mean nothing in your life and the Hereafter will work out for you?

Understanding your thoughts and emotions

Meaningful relationships are undoubtedly an integral part of life and everyone experiences interpersonal conflict every once in a while, but why is it that some people struggle much more in maintaining relationships than others? Difficulties can involve patterns of intense connection followed by a huge falling-out, ongoing fighting, or perpetual fear of being alone and abandoned. Unstable relationships feel like coming home to find out that the locks have been unexpectedly changed; they cause a tremendous amount of stress because they involve people we love, trust, and expect to be there consistently.

If you struggle with relationships, it's important to look at three elements of your life: (i) how you view the world; (ii) how you view yourself; and (iii) how you value yourself in relation to others.

I. Cognitive perceptions of the world

When a relationship falls apart or doesn't go as planned, you want to know why. You might contemplate: “What did I do wrong for this relationship to not work out?” or “Is there something wrong with me that I can't keep a good friend or get married?” Trying to answer these questions is a way for your brain to sort through and process all the information. It's a way of synthesizing emotions and thoughts by trying to make sense of what feels like a puzzle with many missing pieces.

During these reflective times, it can be easy to go down a slippery slope in terms of making negative associations with things around you. Places, people, and things that are neutral might begin to appear negative or bad because of the difficult

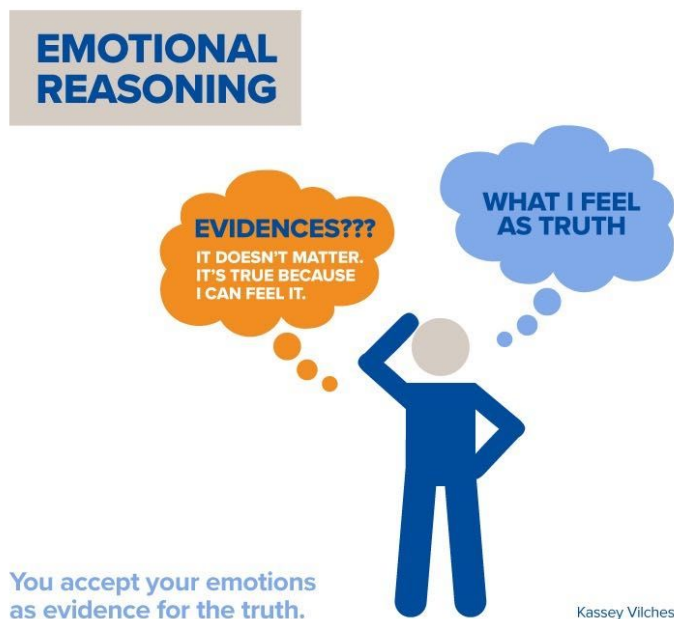
circumstances you are in. This is because the feelings we have on the inside color how we see ourselves, our environment, and the people around us. If you are not feeling good about yourself, you might begin to think others don’t like you as well. Similarly, if you are feeling pessimistic about life, then how you experience circumstances around you will also reflect that.

When we start to make decisions based on how we are feeling instead of using logic or facts, we begin to engage in a psychological process called **emotional reasoning**.² Emotional reasoning occurs when a person makes conclusions about reality based on their feelings, not facts.

“I feel ugly so therefore I must be.”

“I feel like nobody loves me and so I must be unlovable.”

“I feel like everyone hates me—I need to close myself off and protect myself from the world.”



² Burns, D. D. (1981). *Feeling good: The new mood therapy*. New York, N.Y: Penguin Books.

The same unhealthy logic we use in applying internal negative feelings to objects around us can also be applied to our relationship with Allah. Not everyone who thinks Allah hates them arrived at that feeling with the same thoughts but the cause is likely the same: emotional reasoning.

“Everyone hates me, so Allah must hate me too.”

“Bad things keep happening to me—this is Allah’s way of showing me that He is upset with me.”

“My sins are so big that Allah just wishes bad for me.”

Emotional reasoning is very dangerous. As Aaron Beck, the American psychiatrist who is considered to be the founder of cognitive behavior therapy, stated: “If our thinking is straightforward and clear, we are better equipped to reach these goals. If it is bogged down by distorted symbolic meanings, illogical reasoning, and erroneous interpretations, we become in effect deaf and blind.”³ It’s impossible for any human being to be devoid of emotion but when a person uses emotion instead of intellect to make decisions, he or she truly becomes impaired in judgment. Emotional reasoning prevents a person’s ability to hear information clearly without misunderstanding or misinterpreting it. Allah states,

So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears with which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts. (Qur’an 22:46)

Emotional reasoning can be catastrophic for general mental health as well as for relationships because it creates illusions of problems and dynamics that aren’t actually there. When one person engages in emotional reasoning in a relationship,

³ Beck, A. (1989). *Love is never enough: How couples can overcome misunderstandings, resolve conflicts and solve relationships through cognitive therapy*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

whether platonic or otherwise, he or she is operating on an emotion-based reality that is not only unstable, but untrue, likely alienating the healthier person in the long-term. When two people in a relationship participate in emotional reasoning, then neither party is engaging rationally, making the likelihood of having a healthy and stable relationship impossible.

II. Cognitive perceptions of yourself

How we view ourselves dictates how we see and interpret the world. Emotional reasoning is not just a byproduct of faulty thinking but can also be a result of how we feel about ourselves. Sometimes emotional reasoning stems from psychological projection, which in simplistic terms is when a person blames another for doing or feeling what they themselves are doing/feeling. For example, a woman who has really low self-esteem might continuously blame her husband for not thinking highly of her, when in fact it's she who feels that way about herself. Another common example is that a man who is unfaithful to his wife might accuse her of infidelity, when there is absolutely no evidence to substantiate his claim. Projection is subconscious and not an intentional way of manipulating someone. When something is too painful to accept about oneself, it's psychologically easier to accuse someone else of doing it.

How we view ourselves also impacts how we relate to the people we seek to have meaningful relationships with. If you have low self-esteem and feel undeserving of love, you are going to bring those feelings into how you interact with friends and family on a day-to-day basis. This can be seen in how you treat others, how you think others perceive you, and how you allow others to treat you. If you think badly about yourself, you will likely also assume others think badly of you. If you think that your ideas are stupid or are of no value, you will also expect others to feel the same.

All relationships have an equilibrium and low self-esteem can disrupt healthy equilibrium in three major ways:

1. If you think you are unlovable and less deserving than the other person of happiness, relationship satisfaction, and reciprocity, then you will inevitably withdraw because you don't perceive yourself to be worthy of experiencing the benefits of a relationship with someone good. When you emotionally withdraw from the other person, they will naturally withdraw over time as well and eventually the relationship will end.
2. If you think you are unlovable and less deserving than the other person of happiness, relationship satisfaction, and reciprocity, then you may cling to the other person to compensate for all the ways you feel you are lacking. You might be needy and possessive and fear abandonment and that you will never find someone else who wants to be with you. When this happens, the healthy person will flee the relationship because it's too much for them to handle such high needs and expectations.
3. If your self-esteem erratically fluctuates, then this can affect your relationships through highs and lows with attachment and unpredictability in behavior. This might be seen in tumultuous relationships in which friends or spouses are extremely close one minute and then extremely distant the next.

III. Cognitions about Allah

In the same way that you think others don't like you because you don't like yourself, you might make similar inferences about your relationship with Allah. Allah is consistent in His message and attributes, and so if you feel that He hates you, wants bad for you, or has abandoned you, this is likely from internal turmoil. In other words, if you feel that Allah hates you, it's very likely that you feel bad about or hate yourself. Spiritual emotional reasoning might lead you to think:

I'm not worthy of His Mercy.

He is not listening to me.

He doesn't want what's best for me.

He doesn't care about me.

Additionally some emotional reasoning about Allah might come from a deeper part of your unconscious, as many people project negative feelings and experiences with their parents on to Allah. There is a fair amount of literature that suggests people project their views of their parents onto God.^{4,5,6} So, for example, if you have a history of your parents being unavailable to you in childhood, it would not be unusual for you to project the same expectations onto Allah (although not correct). If you have trust or abandonment issues because of deception from your parents you might also feel that way about Allah as a Provider of your needs. Lastly, if you feel unworthy of attention and love due to how your parents treated you, you may suspect the same from Allah.

Changing your mind, body, and heart

During times of distress it might feel like it's impossible to change oneself and how one relates to others but with awareness, insight, and dedication, it is possible to change. In order to address emotional reasoning about yourself and the world, you will need to rectify three areas: how you view yourself, how you view others in relation to yourself, and how you view Allah in relation to yourself.

I. Transforming how you see yourself

If you feel empty, lonely, and negative about who you are, this may not just stem from lack of self-esteem but could also be from a lack of a sense of self. When someone knows who they are as a person, has strong connections to others, has passion, drive, and purpose, then life feels full and worth living. A lack of sense of self leads to the opposite—when a person doesn't really know who they are as an

⁴ Dickie, J., Eshleman, A., Merasco, D., & Shepard, A. (1997). Parent-child relationships and children's images of God. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36, 25-43.

⁵ McDonald, A., Beck, R., Allison, S., & Norsworthy, L. (2005). Attachment to God and parents: Testing correspondence vs. compensation hypotheses. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 24, 21-28.

⁶ Aifuwa, S. (2016). Effects of child-parent attachment and God attachment on depression in adolescent Christians. *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*. Retrieved on February 8, 2019 from <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2408&context=doctoral>

individual, their mood, purpose, and goals can drastically fluctuate with their changing circumstances.

Our sense of self develops during childhood when there is a heavy dependence on our parents to take care of us and help us navigate the world. In healthy homes, a parent’s love, time, and attention goes to nurturing a child. Nurturing involves not just providing food and a roof over the child’s head, but also emotional, psychological, and spiritual sustenance. When the child is ready for separation-individuation, a normal developmental stage in adolescence, the teenager healthily begins to separate themselves from their parent; the teenager will still rely on their parents for help, but begins to emerge as his or her own individual.

When a child from a home with inadequate nurturing hits adolescence, they also begin to separate but find themselves lost. This is because their parents did not bolster them with the adequate nourishment and care to know who they are as an individual apart from their caregivers. If you have ever planted a sapling or young plant in a pot in your home to make it stronger before planting outside, the concept is the same for children. The sapling will not survive outside because it has to grow in a safe environment first to be made strong enough to withstand the harsh elements to come. Teenagers from unhealthy homes oftentimes have inadequate strength to successfully navigate stressors outside the home, making them much more prone to anxiety, depression, and unhealthy relationships.

Developing a strong sense of self and self-esteem can take a lot of work but it ultimately starts with many intentional and incremental steps in recognizing yourself as a person worthy of respect, dignity, and love. Sometimes Muslims shy away from self-esteem work because they feel it will breed arrogance; however, healthy self-esteem is not about putting oneself on a pedestal and glorifying oneself—it’s about acknowledging blessings Allah has given you and striving to be the best version of yourself.

Start this invaluable work by doing an honest but kind inventory of your positive and negative attributes. Reflect on unique gifts, talents, and strengths that Allah has blessed you with. If you struggle with finding good personal attributes, ask a trusted friend, teacher, or family member to assist you. Making a list of negative qualities sounds counterintuitive to working on your self-esteem, but this is only true if you have no intention of working on those qualities. Taking your negative qualities and turning them into goals for change can be a great way to improve yourself, which will not only make you a better person but increase your self-esteem in the long-term. Allah has created you individually and put you on earth for a reason which means you have a purpose. Take your qualities and fine-tune them to create a life both you and Allah can be pleased with and make the world a better place.

II. Transforming How You Relate to Others

The weaker the sense of self is, the more likely an individual will cling to relationships and find little meaning outside them because the connection to others makes them feel complete and whole. It's completely healthy, natural, and necessary to our existence and wellbeing to be connected to others, but when a person can't function or find meaning in life outside of relationships this can be problematic. You can see this in people who jump from marriage to marriage because they can't tolerate the idea of being alone, a woman who completely puts her life on hold while she searches for a husband, or a person who completely falls apart whenever they have a spat with friends or family members. When a person with no sense of self latches onto someone who appears to have the characteristics they lack (like bravery, intellect, spiritual devotion, etc.), that gives them a false sense of security; however, once that person leaves, the emptiness returns with a vengeance because now the hollowness is magnified by feelings of abandonment.

Unhealthy dependence for adults can also be troublesome from a spiritual standpoint as ideally complete dependence should only be on Allah, not other human beings. When one seeks to have their needs to be met by people, they will inevitably be disappointed because human beings are fallible and can be

undependable. Our purpose in life is to worship Allah and get to *jannah*; therefore, completely falling apart and finding no meaning in life after one’s children leave home, or after divorce, or in the absence of a best friend might suggest that one’s overall purpose in life may need to be reexamined. Life is more joyful and comfortable with relationships, and even Prophet Muhammad ﷺ grieved after losing loved ones, but that is not to say that life is not worth living outside relationships.

Insight is the first step to understanding unhealthy views about depending on others. Reflect and analyze on how much you might rely on others:

Are you dependent on others for your happiness?

Do you rely on others to make decisions for you?

Are you dependent on others’ validation to feel good about yourself?

Do you need to take care of other people's needs for your own wellbeing?

If you find in your assessment that you rely on others too much, consider going a step further and writing down all the different ways you depend on others—socially, financially, emotionally, and/or spiritually. Once you have identified the different areas that need improvement, you can begin to use cognitive restructuring (identifying irrational thoughts and replacing them with healthier thoughts) and affirmations (positive statements affirming the opposite of your negative thoughts) to correct views about your ability to do things independently.

For example, if you feel dependent on others to make decisions for you, step one would be to write out your initial unhealthy thoughts as to how this dynamic is playing out in your life. Once you have the irrational or unhealthy thought, then step two would be to write the opposite, in a way someone who cared about you would if they heard the negative thought. Lastly, take the corrected thought and turn it into an affirmation that you can repeat to yourself on a regular basis to reinforce the positive attributes you have or are trying to achieve.

Dependency: *I feel that others need to make decisions for me because I always make mistakes and don't know what I'm doing.*

Cognitive Restructuring: *Everyone errs, not just me—and it's not like I make mistakes often. Besides, how will I learn if I don't make mistakes?*

Independence Affirmation: *I'm capable of making good decisions on my own.*

If you would like to take this process one step further, follow the affirmation with real-life evidence to support your statement. This may not be possible in all scenarios, but it is good practice when applicable.

Example: *I once bought a laptop on my own that I really liked. I read reviews online, did istikhara prayer and bought it with nobody helping me—and it turned out to be a good laptop and decision.*

For individuals who are highly dependent on others, psychotherapy is usually the best course of action but if you just have dependency tendencies, assessing how you rely on others too much and shifting your thoughts might be enough to empower yourself to a healthier way of thinking.

III. Transforming Your Relationship with Allah

The long-term effects of assuming that Allah doesn't like you can be dire. Thinking that Allah hates you creates a barrier between having love for Him, wanting to do good deeds, seeking repentance, and having overall positive feelings about Islam. It's almost impossible for one have feelings of love towards Allah, His Messenger, and the religion if hate, the complete opposite, is what is filling one's heart. Shaytan loves for people to assume that Allah hates them because this makes it easier for him to lead them astray.

If you are feeling that Allah hates you, it’s not too late to change that. Know that He has never abandoned you and has always been there, although perhaps you may have distanced yourself from Him. Begin by spending time with yourself and reflecting on how you got to this point in the first place. Thoughts often don’t happen spontaneously—most of the time they are planted and become stronger over time. Go back in time and think about when you first started to feel this way:

- Did someone (perhaps an adult or authority figure) say Allah hated you?
- Are you taking characteristics or assumptions about your parents as providers and unintentionally superimposing them on Allah as your Provider?
- Did someone make *duaa* for Allah to curse you, in which you assumed that all bad things happened after that was a result of the bad *duaa* against you?
- Did something catastrophic happen that made you think Allah hates you?
- Did you feel that you are so unworthy of love that nobody, including Allah, loves you?

Once you have identified the origin of the thought, you can begin to deconstruct the unhealthy parts of it and change it. Look objectively at the circumstances of your situation using facts. Emotions are your feelings about what happened, whereas facts simply describe what happened. This sounds very simplistic but oftentimes people don’t realize they are getting the two mixed up.

If all your thoughts seem jumbled up, try writing them down. Write a narrative of what led you to feel that Allah hates you. Highlight your feelings in red and then the facts in green. Is your narrative mostly emotion or facts? Are there parts of your story you thought were true but were based on emotion? Remember, just because you feel something doesn’t make it true.

Another exercise to help identify where your feeling that Allah hates you came from is a free association technique. Write on top of a piece of paper: “I think Allah hates me because.....” followed by all the reasons you can think of. Write as many reasons as you can. Once you have identified all the reasons you feel that

Allah hates you, begin to replace the emotional reasoning with facts. Cross out the unhealthy thoughts and rewrite them with healthy ones.

Example: ~~*I think Allah hates me because my duaas are never answered.*~~

Allah answers all duaas but the response might not be immediate or might take a different form.

If you happen to notice any parallels between how you view Allah and other authority figures, like your parents or teachers, be sure to deconstruct and disassociate the two in your mind. Cross out characteristics you inadvertently transferred from the authority figure to Allah in red. Look up the 99 names of Allah and write the opposite or more fitting characteristic in green instead.

Example: ~~*I think Allah hates me because everyone in my life, including my parents, think I'm useless.*~~

Allah is Al Latif - The Kind

Allah is Ash Shakur - The Grateful

Allah is Al Wudud - The Loving

Sometimes it's painful to look at past events objectively because when you realize that Allah doesn't hate you, accountability for the traumatic incident might fall on someone else. This person could be you, a family member, or a friend. For example, you might have attributed failing out of college to Allah's hating you, when really it was because you didn't go to class or study. Or perhaps you might have thought Allah did want good for you when in fact it was that your beloved parents were feeding you misinformation about Him. The end goal of this process is not to transfer blame but to increase insight and accountability so positive changes can be made for the future.

Lastly, in addition to examining the origins of why you think Allah hates you, it is also important to reflect on how interpretation of your life events might be reinforcing your existing thoughts. For example, it is an Islamic concept that humans are punished for their sins in this life and the next, but this does not mean

that a Muslim can attribute everything that doesn't go his or her way to punishment from Allah or that Allah hates them. Let's deconstruct some common beliefs about the link between “bad” things happening to a person and that Allah hates them.

I think Allah hates me because bad things always happen to me.

Our definitions of what is “bad” are not always true. Just because something doesn't go as planned or makes you feel uncomfortable doesn't mean that it is bad. You not getting that job you wanted might be because Allah has a better one in store for you. That fight you had with your spouse might be because Allah wanted to teach you an important lesson through it. You getting into a car accident may be because Allah wanted to prevent you from more harm than what was waiting for you at your destination.

I think Allah just wants bad for me through these trials.

Sometimes bad things happen to us because of the evil things we have done, but bad things can also happen to us because they are trials and Allah wants to increase us in our rank. We know that the Prophets faced huge difficulties, but we do not attribute those difficulties to their sins. If every difficulty truly translated to a punishment, why would Allah have punished the best of humanity (the Prophets) so harshly? There is no way for us to know what bad things happen to us because of our own doing, and while it's essential to contemplate about this and make *istighfar*, it's fruitless to ruminate (keep thinking about something over and over) if (i) you don't know and can't know why that bad thing happened to you; and (ii) you did sincere *tawbah*—in which case, Allah may have already forgiven you.

I think Allah just wants to punish me and make me feel bad.

If Allah is punishing you for something, it doesn't mean that He hates you. One of the benefits of punishment in this *dunya* (if you are in fact being punished) is so you can feel distress enough to change a wrong you are committing and be expiated for that sin. The end goal is not for Allah to make you feel bad; it's for

you to feel bad enough to change. This is because Allah actually wants what is best for you. If you are engaging or persisting in a sin, Allah may be trying to correct you to ward off future pain, as usually there is no incentive to change without distress.

Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When Allah intends good for His slave, He punishes him in this world, but when He intends an evil for His slave, He does not hasten to take him to task but calls him to account on the Day of Resurrection.”⁷

If you’ve made mistakes in assuming that Allah hates you in the past, ask Him to forgive you and try to start over on a new page. Don’t let guilt cloud the newfound hope that you now know the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth doesn’t hate you. Feel how liberating it is to understand that The One Who has power over all things wants what is best for you.

Instead of focusing on weaknesses in your relationship with Allah in the past, refocus your energy on doing things that Allah loves in the present. How wonderful is it that Allah tells us directly in the Qur’an how to seek closeness to Him so that He loves us more:

*...Indeed, **Allah loves** those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves. (Qur’an, 2:222)*

*And spend in the way of Allah and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good; indeed, **Allah loves** the doers of good. (Qur’an 2:195)*

[They are] avid listeners to falsehood, devourers of [what is] unlawful. So if they come to you, [O Muhammad], judge between them or turn away from them. And if you turn away from them—never will they harm you at all. And

⁷ *At-Tirmidhi*, Book 1, Hadith 43.

*if you judge, judge between them with justice. Indeed, **Allah loves** those who act justly. (Qur'an 5:42)*

*So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, **Allah loves** those who rely [upon Him]. (Qur'an 3:159)*

*Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Allah the Exalted has said: ‘I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine. And the **most beloved thing** with which My slave comes nearer to Me is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing nawafil (prayer or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him. When I love him I become his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks (something) from Me, I give him, and if he asks My Protection (refuge), I protect him.’” (Al-Bukhari)*

Inspirational *hadith* and *ayat* for reflection

Narrated `Umar bin Al-Khattab: Some *sabi* (i.e., war prisoners, children and women only) were brought before the Prophet ﷺ and behold, a woman amongst them was milking her breasts to feed and whenever she found a child amongst the captives, she took it over her chest and nursed it (she had lost her child but later she found him). The Prophet said to us, “Do you think that this lady can throw her son in the fire?” We replied, “No, if she has the power not to throw it (in the fire).” The Prophet ﷺ then said, “Allah is more merciful to His slaves than this lady to her son.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 5999)

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Allah says, ‘I am as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him when he mentions Me. If he

makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws to Me a hand-span length, I draw near to him a forearm's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him in a hurry.’” (*Sunan Ibn Majah* 3822)

Practical Exercises

A. *Personal Inventory:*

A personal inventory is a great way to start working on increasing your self-esteem and positive sense of self. Below write down as many positive traits, characteristics that set you apart from others, and general strengths that you can. You can also add blessings in your life like supports and/or resources.

Positive Traits, Attributes, and Blessings

Everyone has desirable, positive traits unique to who they are as an individual, but also areas that need improvement as well. Can you think of specific areas in your life that need to be worked on? Instead of looking at these weaknesses as something negative, rewrite these traits or habits as positive, concrete, and achievable goals. Taking a perceived negative trait and turning it into something constructive can help improve self-esteem.

Traits to Work on	Personal Goals	Action Item
I waste too much time.	Stay awake after <i>fajr</i> to have more productive time.	Set up automatic coffee maker for <i>fajr</i> time to increase the likelihood of staying up.
I'm overweight according to my doctor.	Obtain healthy BMI (Body Mass Index) according to doctor.	Substitute 2 dinner meals a week with big, healthy salads.

B. Increasing Independence

To decrease dependence on others, you first have to identify ways that you might rely on others socially, spiritually, financially, or emotionally in unhealthy ways. Cognitively restructure those statements and turn them into affirmations to shift your views about getting your needs met from others to yourself. Provide evidence in the past of times you were successful in these areas to demonstrate that you can do it again. Repeat the affirmations to yourself regularly for maximum effect.

Dependency	Cognitive Restructuring	Affirmation	Evidence
I feel that others need to make decisions for me because I always make mistakes	Everyone makes mistakes, not just me. Besides, how will I learn if I don't make mistakes?	I'm capable of making good decisions on my own.	I once bought a laptop on my own that I really liked. I read reviews online, did <i>istikhara</i>

Take all the red statements you wrote above and next to them rewrite the statements correctly as facts. If you can’t turn your emotion statement into a fact statement then just cross it out all together.

Emotion Statement	Fact
I was raped because Allah wanted to teach me a lesson about being out late at night.	I was raped on my way to the car from a <i>halaqa</i> at a sister’s house. I was not doing anything wrong and there is nothing in Islam that says a woman can not go out after <i>isha</i> . I was raped because this man did something evil on his own volition. He is 100% to blame.
Perhaps Allah was punishing me for something I did a few years ago.	

D. Free Association Technique:

Write on top of a piece of paper: “I think Allah hates me because.....” followed by all the reasons you can think of that He might dislike you. Write as many reasons as you can.

Once you have identified all the reasons you feel that Allah hates you, you can begin to replace the emotional reasoning with facts. Cross out the unhealthy thoughts and replace them with healthy ones.

Allah (swt) hates me because.... (Write emotional reasoning here)	Re-write emotional reasoning into a fact here
I repented for having a boyfriend and started praying my daily prayers again but my parents still found out about what I did which got me in a lot of trouble.	My parents finding out I had a boyfriend was a direct consequence of my actions. It doesn’t have anything to do with Allah hating me, my <i>tawbah</i> being accepted, or

	the fact that I should be praying my daily prayers anyway.

Case Revisited

During one day of feeling lonely and sad that she would never get married, Rula decided to do the Fact Checking with Emotional Reasoning Exercise and discovered she was using emotional reasoning a lot. Rula realized two important things: (1) that she used emotion instead of logic in most of her decision-making; and (2) that she measured her self-worth by her relationships. If she had a friend or a good candidate for marriage, she put everything into that relationship, oftentimes ignoring other parts of her life and putting important matters on hold. When those relationships ended, however, Rula felt terrible. Upon reflection, Rula understood that her self-esteem was more underdeveloped than she thought. She made a commitment that she wanted to secure her wellbeing and happiness independent of the people around her. Rula did an inventory of her positive and negative traits and uncovered that she had a lot of good attributes to work with. She set aside time to make her positive traits better and to reframe her negative traits into tangible steps she could work on.

Rula also did the free association technique about why Allah hated her and quickly grasped that Allah didn't dislike her—she just felt hated when she wasn't getting her way. Rula began to be more cognizant of when things went wrong that she should not assume that this was because Allah was angry with her. To counter this inclination, she made sure to always replace her unhealthy thoughts with healthy ones as soon as she realized what was happening. When Rula freed herself from the idea that Allah hated her, she felt empowered and started taking a more proactive stance in life. She understood that the only person putting her life on

hold was herself and that she could not wait around for a husband to live her life. Rula continued looking for a husband, but made short-term and long-term goals related to her deen, career, family, and well-being. These goals put Rula’s life back on track, gave her hope, and made her feel like herself again.