

**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: **The Whirlpool Of What-ifs**

Ever heard of the saying "curiosity killed the cat"? My philosophy professor at college had a great comeback for this adage:

"Stupidity killed the cat. Curiosity got the blame," he told us.

What-if questions in life are vital, in fact necessary. They open the mind to embrace different perspectives. The curious mind thrives on seeking more knowledge to find the truth and to become a better human being. In doing so, one becomes closer to ALLAH.

The mischief-maker, shaitaan, knows how to intercept your curious mind and whisper stupid suggestions that can suck you into a whirlpool of what-ifs that end up diluting your faith in ALLAH. It suggests fearful outcomes and grips you into believing them, so much so that you lose trust in ALLAH's plans and give in to fear rather than explore life with faith and curiosity. Ever felt that your imaan was getting low? Next time you feel that way, observe your thought patterns and identify how much of your day you're wasting anticipating negative outcomes about your life. Such as:

- What if I fail?
- What if I eat this and gain weight?
- What if I can't please my husband/ wife?

- What if my children go astray?
- What if I end up poor?
- What if I end up alone?
What if I can't deliver what I promised?
- What if nobody loves me?

See what I mean? This thought pattern is what I call the whirlpool of what-ifs. It's the stupid kind of what-ifs that kills the cat, not the curious type that opens your mind to greater potential and innovation. It's shaitaan's whisperings that suck you deeper and deeper into this whirlpool of negativity which has only one destination - extreme fear manifesting in symptoms of anxiety, depression and incessant worrying.

Eight Steps To Exit This Whirlpool For Good

So, how do you become aware of this when it starts to happen?...Trust me, it happens to every single person at some point in life. Unless you become aware while it's happening and take charge, the negativity of the experience aggravates and makes you even more anxious as you anticipate the next anxiety/ panic attack.

1. Ask yourself, how am I feeling right now?
2. Answer the question with regards to physical sensations, for example, if you are anxious, how is your body reacting to the anxiety? How is my breathing, my heart rate, my body temperature?
3. Now examine what thought is affecting your body to react that way...for example, is it the thought of something on social media, or the thought of a family member or the thought of your job?
4. Analyse how true this thought really is, challenge yourself to come up with solid evidence to back this thought, for example, if you are obsessively thinking that you are not good enough, write down what evidence you have that proves that you are beneath others.
5. Analyse the evidence you have gathered from your mind and ask yourself, "Is this absolutely true and correct that the future will unfold exactly as I am thinking? Am I the absolute best of planners? Or am I overthinking and creating a false reality?"
6. Remind yourself that ALLAH is the absolute best of planners. That only ALLAH knows what will happen to anyone.
7. Remind yourself that these negative thought patterns bring about negative body sensations and symptoms.
8. Acknowledge that you can control your body sensations immediately by doing the following:
 - Breathe - inhale deeply and exhale deeply
 - Become aware that your nafs (body sensations) are in your control
 - Remind yourself that your soul is purer than your nafs
 - Connect deeply with your breath and your soul and connect with the purity of your soul

- Make continuous dhikr of ALLAH with each long breath in and out.

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