



The Family & Youth Institute

Khutba Guide on Suicide Prevention

Derived from khutbas given by Sh. Yaser Birjas and Sh. Omar Suleiman

Introduction

- Suicide within the Muslim community is becoming too common
- It is difficult for community leaders to work through – overwhelming.
- We are left wondering how many more struggling privately without exposing themselves to anybody, out of fear of feeling ashamed.
- Can you imagine the thought of losing hope, the thought of loneliness, and the thought of just falling into full, complete despair, that they feel like there is no exit out of their circumstances?
- And eventually they think their tragic exit out of this world is the only answer, hoping for the mercy of Allah swt.

Community Reaction

- The reaction of the Muslim community to someone committing suicide is also shocking.
- People are focusing on theological questions – are they going to Jannah or Jahannam? Can we pray janazah on them?
- What happened to the Muslim ummah and its compassion!
- Loss of compassion is scarier than the loss of life through suicide. Scary that the community is worried more about the rules of fiqh than worrying about loss of life.
- Have we thought about why this happens in the first place? Are we responsible for it?

Our Duty

- Our duty is not to condemn the people if they decided to attempt suicide or to hurt themselves. Our duty is to try our best to help them **before** it happens.
- We are like one body, if one part aches, then the whole body should ache, as the Prophet (pbuh) taught us (Bukhari & Muslim). So what is happening to us?
- Allah swt says in the Qur'an about saving lives "whosoever saves one life, it's as if you've saved all of humanity." (Al-Maidah 5:32)
- Very naive of people to justify the circumstances and mental health issues by saying they have low iman, they lack spirituality. This is incorrect!
- Some people attempt suicide hoping in the mercy of Allah swt. Not because they lost hope in Allah swt but because they lost hope in the people--their families or loved ones!
- They feel trapped and their only hope is that Allah swt forgive them for their shortcomings. Now that is not an excuse to do it. I'm not saying this to encourage anyone to think of suicide as an exit. Absolutely not.
- There is no doubt the Qur'an and the Sunnah clearly state that suicide is not acceptable. *But it's not an act of kufr*. Our duty is to understand why this is happening. Many of these brothers and sisters take their lives not because they lost faith in Allah, but because they lost faith in us!!
- People contemplated death at the time of the Prophet (pbuh) too, but he counseled them away from it.
- Al-Abbas (ra), the uncle of the Prophet (pbuh) narrated that he told the Prophet (pbuh) "I'm an old man, I've got nothing left, and I've got no purpose. Just make dua to Allah swt to take my life. I'm ready to go". The Prophet (pbuh) "O my dear uncle, don't say that but instead say O Allah allow me to live so long as life is good for me and O Allah take my life if death is better for me. If life is better for me let me live and if death is better for me, let me die."
- This is one of several examples, young and old, of people who came to the Prophet indicating they wanted to die. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "No one of you should wish for death. Either he is a doer of good and will do more, or he is a doer of evil but perhaps he may stop." (Bukhari)
- The Prophet actively counseled people and did not condemn them for contemplating. Instead he instilled hope in them.

Why do people who are struggling feel isolated?

1. Cultural shame – Our community is very cultural – whether this is Islamic or not. The shame leads people to feel isolated--they have no one to turn to. Even if they speak to some people, they are told to just pray more or read more Qur'an, or in the cases of abuse--hide it, because of shame.
 2. Social comparison – Comparing with neighbors, family – who has bigger/better house, vacations, careers, etc. Social comparison makes people depressed. Anxious. Always in competition. So why would anyone reach out and reveal that they aren't doing well? There's not sense of community--it's "each person for his/her own" mentality
- Both of these issues are worsened by cultural gaps and identity crisis. Young people trying to lead a halal life but being pushed in different directions.
 - Power struggles between young and old, husband and wife, etc.
 - Because of all of this, **we** may not be providing support to people as they deal with being depressed, anxious, etc.
 - And that's when we get people losing hope in humanity and think about going to Allah swt.

What should we do?

- Alhamdulillah, our Muslim community is not lacking resources. We have all the resources whether it's financial, lawyers, social workers, mental health professionals, Alhamdulillah. We have it all.
- And believe it or not, the imam is not the only one who can help you.
- Driven by cultural shame – why is it ok to go to imam but not a professional? No, there's no shame in that. If you have diabetes, you will go to the medical doctor, right? Then, why is it shameful to go to a therapist when you are struggling?
- In fact it's wajib upon you if you need help to go seek help from the most qualified person in that field. It becomes obligatory upon you.
- We also have organizations like The Family and Youth Institute (The FYI). They have a suicide prevention guide on their website (www.TheFYI.org). Check it out. It's an entire guide on how to detect these signs, what you

can do, how to start a conversation, how to help people not to go down that route, how to become one community caring for another. Please check it out for your own and your family's benefit.

- Allah protect us and our families and our children.

Summary

- Emphasize again that this subject of anxiety, depression, self-esteem issues, mental-health is real within the Muslim community. Please do not overlook them – we are NOT immune.
- Suicide rate within the Muslim community is increasing. It is all too common.
- As a community, we need to learn to show compassion to others. And not opine on how Allah will judge and deal with others once they have met their fate and destiny.
- Remember the ayah where Allah swt says “whosoever saves one life, it’s as if you’ve saved all of humanity.” (Al-Maidah 5:32) We need to apply it to this context.
- We may not be professional counselors, but we can guide people to get help--to give them hope. Many who contemplated suicide said that one conversation at the right time stopped them from acting on it--you can make that difference in someone’s life.
- Take it upon yourself to be the caretaker of others - you be that person who reaches out to the one that no one is reaching out. Be the one who gives them hope--be a source of mercy from Allah (swt).
- If someone needs help, guide them to the best source – a trained professional in the field. MashaAllah we have many trained Mental Health counselors in the Muslim Community--and there’s nothing wrong with going outside of Muslim community as well.
- We also have organizations like The Family and Youth Institute (The FYI). They have a suicide prevention guide on their website (www.TheFYI.org). Check it out. It’s an entire guide on how to detect these signs, what you can do, how to start a conversation, how to help people not to go down that route, how to become one community caring for another. Please check it out for your and your family’s benefit.

- Be on alert – educate yourself on the signs – you’ll see them if you pay attention. Read the guide from The FYI on how to detect signs so we can be proactive and try to help before it is too late.
- I ask Allah to fill our lives with peace and tranquility.
- I ask Allah to fill our hearts with love and compassion for one another.