



سوء الظن

Suspicion

Objectives >>

Students should:

- Understand what it means to assume something, and that negative assumptions are discouraged in Islam
- Understand that to avoid negative thoughts, we have to stay away from people who have negative thoughts and attitudes
- Learn strategies for avoiding suspicion
- Understand that we have to try to avoid suspicion against us

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 3

SUSPICION

Islam encourages us to always think the best about one another in life. When we hear a word from someone, or see them doing something, we are encouraged to interpret it in the best way possible and to avoid giving it a negative or evil explanation.



Unfortunately, many of us automatically think negatively and interpret things in a bad way, leading to suspicion. Suspicion can lead to a breakdown in many relationships, especially marriages and friendships. It can also become extreme, leading people to be paranoid and to always think someone is trying to hurt them or plot against them.

An example of negative assumptions or suspicion is this: you walk in and suddenly your friends stop speaking. You automatically think they were talking about you. You get upset them and it causes a fight, and the friendship may even break down. Later, you realise they were never talking about you! They had a private issue between them that they could not share with you, this is why they stopped talking.

AVOIDING SUSPICION

STAY AWAY FROM SUSPECTING PEOPLE

Suspicion is a contagious problem so spending too much time around people who only think negatively and badly about what is going on around them leads one to automatically think like them and doubt everything in a bad way.

Therefore, one of first steps to avoid suspicious thinking is to avoid keeping company with people who are always thinking negatively. Bad habits like backbiting and slander are a result of suspicion in many cases.

Suspicion also leads to spying on other people's private affairs and breaks down trust between families and friends.

REMOVING SUSPICION FROM OURSELVES

While we are encouraged not to be suspicious of other people, at the same time we should also try to be an open book and remove suspicion from ourselves to make it easier for people to trust us. If we are in a situation that we think people might interpret in a bad way, we should explain ourselves to others and show them that we are not involved in anything negative.

One day, the Prophet (saw) was speaking to his aunt in the market when a man walked by. The Prophet (saw) told him: 'this is my aunt'. The man said 'of course, O Messenger of Allah – I would not think bad of you ever', but the prophet (saw) wanted to make sure that the man did not think the Prophet (saw) was talking in a friendly way to a strange woman so he explained himself, even though he is the Prophet.

MAKING EXCUSES FOR OTHERS & HAVING POSITIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT OTHERS

ⁱWhen we see someone in a situation that looks suspicious, we must try to make as many excuses for them as possible and try to find as many justifications as possible. The Ahlul Bayt (as) tell us:

"Interpret the action of your brother in the best way possible until it becomes very clear that he is going the wrong thing, and do not interpret a word that comes from your brother negatively".ⁱⁱ

If we really cannot find a justification, we should ask them to clarify what they were doing or what they meant.

We are therefore encouraged very much to give people what is commonly known as the 'benefit of doubt'. This means that whenever we see a situation which can be interpreted in a good and bad way, and we doubt which one it is – we must take the beneficial or positive interpretation of that doubt.

THE BENEFITS OF AVOIDING SUSPICION

Imam 'Ali (as) says that avoiding suspicion benefits us more than anyone else because it leads to calmness and tranquillity of the heart.

"Interpreting things positively (husnul dann) leads to peace of mind"ⁱⁱⁱ

Homework

Q1. Negative assumptions lead to:

- a. Protecting ourselves from others
- b. A breakdown in relationships
- c. Calmness

Q2. One of the best benefits of avoiding suspicion is:

- a. Losing friends
- b. Losing our wealth
- c. Being calm and tranquil

ⁱ References:

Mizanul Hikma vol. 4 p.1784

Lecture by Sheikh Mansour on Social Rules - Suspicion

ⁱⁱ [Mizanul-Hikma vol.4 p.1784]

ⁱⁱⁱ [Mizanul Hikma, ibid]