

## A Positive Mindset

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In his address, at the inspection of this year's Ahmadiyya Muslim UK Annual Convention, His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, stated that he only had two pieces of advice to give the volunteers for the success of the event. One had a deeply profound effect on me. It was to ensure that while we served the Convention guests we always had a smile on our face.<sup>(1)</sup> It seemed too simple. How could we expect the success of an international event, with tens of thousands of expected guests, to be based on our countenance? Surely, there must be something else? However, the reality was that this convention was taking place during the hottest days of 2018, and suddenly it took every effort in me to smile. Why was it suddenly so difficult to smile? It was then that I genuinely forced a smile upon my face and not only did it lift my spirits, it made the heat seem easier to bear. It is truly a piece of advice that has stuck with me since then, and each time I remember these special words, I am encouraged to do better, to go further, and to enjoy whatever it is I am trying to do.

I think sometimes it's easy for us to forget how beneficial a smile can be. It doesn't take much for us to smile so we have ceased to give it any importance – that is, if we ever did give it importance. However, if we look at the social and scientific benefits of smiling and keeping a positive attitude, we must ask ourselves, why are we not doing this more often?

Indeed, the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated 'be mindful of your duty to Allah and do not neglect the smallest good you can do, even if it should be no more than pouring water from your bucket into that of one who is thirsty, or meeting your brother with a smiling face.'<sup>(2)</sup> Therefore, it is incumbent on every Muslim to spread cheer, which can be done ever so simply, with just a smile. A peaceful and harmonious society starts with a smiling countenance.

Not only does smiling improve our societal relations, there is ample evidence to suggest that smiling

improves our physical health. It increases the lifespan because it can increase our pain tolerance, improve our immune system, and keep our stress levels low, which ultimately reduces the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. It can also reduce our chances of developing depression and helps to keep our mental health in check. <sup>(3)</sup>

Furthermore, multiple studies have proven that keeping a positive mindset has similar effects for the body's health, as smiling does. According to the Mayo Clinic, an organisation with over 4,500 physicians and scientists, and 58,400 administrative and allied health staff, keeping a positive attitude distances us from many physical and health dangers.<sup>(4)</sup> However, it is not only beneficial to our physical growth, but also in our maturity and ability to handle difficulties and negative situations. It seems that incorporating positive mindsets into one's everyday personality actually proves to be valuable when faced with genuine issues. Positive thinking allows us to keep our heads clear and face situations for what they are and therefore find a potential solution. It stops us from acting rashly and only exacerbating the situation. Not only does it teach us the ability to look past a bad situation, but also how to overcome it.

Positive thinking does not mean to close our eyes and refuse the existence of a bad circumstance. It merely means to know that there is a way out of that circumstance. Indeed, His Holiness Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (may Allah be pleased with him) the son and second successor to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has written in his book 'Way of the Seekers' that to strengthen the will one must "Generate hope. Be ever hopeful. This also fosters self-respect. Continue to be optimistic. This promotes self-confidence."<sup>(5)</sup>

I accept that it is true this is all easier said than done. One cannot wake up one day and banish all negative thoughts forevermore; however it is small changes in our ordinary lives that can make it possible, for example trying to smile more often or adapting our vocabulary to give a more hopeful outlook. Thinking positively isn't something that you just 'do', it's something that you continue to practice until it becomes a part of you. We need to remember that there is something that we can be sure of: there is no negative aspect to a positive mindset.

## REFERENCES

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