

Fundamental Solutions for Healing a Hardened Heart

How to Revive a Dead Heart?

Five Practical and Effective Methods for Healing a Hardened Heart

What is hardness of the heart, and how is healing a hardened heart possible? In previous lessons, we discussed the concept of a sound heart and the necessity of acquiring it. We introduced various afflictions and diseases that threaten the soundness of the heart and eventually lead to its hardness and rigidity. Now, we aim to learn together the methods for healing a hardened heart and apply them in our daily lives, so that if any traces—even limited—of this mysterious illness exist within us, we can cleanse them before they spread and take over the entire heart.

Before delving into the treatment methods, it is helpful to once again review the concept of a sound heart as the benchmark and standard by which we should measure ourselves throughout the healing process and evaluate our success.

What Is a Sound Heart, and When Does Hardness of the Heart Occur?

We stated that the true essence of our existence, what remains of us after death and is transferred to the Hereafter, is our immaterial dimension known as the "soul, heart, or true self." The heart is our sole capital for eternal life. Except for the heart, all worldly possessions—on which we spend time and energy—are like the umbilical cord detached from the fetus at birth; they are severed and discarded at death. The only remaining impact is the positive or negative influence they leave

on the heart. Our heart functions like a memory card that stores various data, which fully manifests only when the heart connects to the system of the Hereafter. The Hereafter system opens this compact capsule and reveals all hidden contents—actions, thoughts, intentions, loves and hatreds, attachments, and more ¹.

In brief, if we define a sound heart in a single sentence, we can say: “A sound heart is one which, when examined and its inner reality revealed, contains nothing but its true beloved and deity, who is God.” This alone unveils countless secrets. A heart with this characteristic has clearly passed all life's tests—big and small—successfully. Its hierarchy of love is properly organized, its family and social relationships are sound, its worship is effective, and in sum, despite possible flaws and mistakes, the overall result of its worldly life is positive and acceptable, leading to a human inner state and a healthy spiritual birth.

With this definition of a sound heart, the concept of hardness of the heart becomes clear ². Hardness of the heart occurs when, due to imbalance in the nourishment of the soul's faculties and disruption in the hierarchy of love, our lower, animalistic aspects dominate over our supra-rational faculty. As a result, false and illusory beloveds replace the true Beloved in our hearts. These false beloveds can be anything or anyone—from inanimate objects like money and wealth, to animalistic beloveds such as family members, to intellectual ones like seeking knowledge. Even becoming engrossed in sacred rituals or worship detached from God can be considered a false beloved and ultimately leads to hardness of the heart.

¹. “on the Day all secrets will be disclosed.” (Quran, 86:9)

² Imam al-Sadiq (Peace be upon him) regarding the Quranic verse “Except he who comes to Allah with a sound heart”: “A sound heart is the one that meets its Lord without anyone else within it. Any heart that contains polytheism or doubt is rejected.” (*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 16)

In summary, someone afflicted with hardness of the heart has patience for everything and everyone except God! Such a person is indifferent and cold toward God and His manifestations. Acts of worship like reciting *dhikr* (remembrance), reading the Quran, attending mosques and sacred places such as the shrines of the Household of the Prophet (Peace be upon them) weigh heavily upon their shoulders. They usually either avoid worship or perform it out of habit, fear of Hell, or desire for reward—not out of genuine closeness to God.

Considering these points, hardness of the heart is a toxic and deadly disease that completely changes the heart. It turns a person who derives all their identity from God into a corrupt, unbalanced individual distant from God. Naturally, such a complex and dangerous disease cannot be cured by superficial or external interventions alone. A deep, intrinsic, and lasting transformation of the heart is necessary. The following methods are among the most important for healing a hardened heart, though they are not exhaustive.

The First Step to Healing a Hardened Heart: Guarding the Soul's Inputs and Outputs

The first and most important step to healing a hardened heart and prevent the hardness of the heart is controlling the soul's inputs and outputs. As discussed regarding the soul's perceptive faculties, the five senses are the gates to the soul. If they become tainted, this impurity passes successively to imagination, estimation, and ultimately to the intellect and the heart. Therefore, if we want to keep our hearts healthy, we must carefully guard our eyes and ears so they do not see or hear inappropriate things, and also maintain purity and wholesomeness of

what we eat. Sometimes, a stain caused by witnessing an improper scene, hearing vain talk, or consuming forbidden or impure food settles on the heart and is not easily cleansed.

Guarding the soul's outputs—which include thoughts and intentions, bodily actions, and speech—is as important as guarding the inputs. Although these are outputs produced by the soul and heart, their effects are again acquired by the heart. A tangible example is when we utter improper words, insult others, slander, or gossip. If you pay attention, you will feel a heaviness in your soul long after committing such acts, and find it harder to maintain a warm and intimate connection with God. Understanding this heaviness correlates directly with the purity of the heart. Those who have advanced into severe stages of hardness often feel this heaviness less, or even enjoy these acts, which itself is a major warning sign.

Flying on the Wings of Imagination: The Second Step to Healing a Hardened Heart

Another effective step to healing a hardened heart and acquire a sound heart is the wise and proper use of imagination. Our heart follows the imagination; wherever the bird of imagination flies, the heart also journeys there. Hence, it is not unfounded to say that people are the sum and outcome of their imaginations, and one's value is determined by the nature of their imaginations.

Imagination plays a significant role in all kinds of successes and failures. Almost every success or failure first takes shape in a person's imagination before manifesting outwardly. Spiritual successes are no exception. Therefore, to achieve significant spiritual growth and progress toward God, we must manage and direct

our imagination to kindle the longing for union with God and the enjoyment of heavenly delights within ourselves, so that our limbs and senses work accordingly.

Training and managing imagination is not easy initially due to the dominance of our lower, animalistic aspects. However, with effort and the power of suggestion, this gradually happens until our tastes become heavenly and celestial, and we no longer derive pleasure from impure or vain imaginations. We have previously discussed the influence of imagination on attaining a sound heart in a separate article, which we recommend you consult.

Using the Power of Thought for Healing a Hardened Heart

Another effective method for healing a hardened heart is utilizing the power of thought and reasoning. The intellect is the faculty closest to the supra-rational one. Therefore, when worship is accompanied by thought, the supra-rational faculty—i.e., the heart—awakens more quickly than when the body merely performs rituals mechanically. For this reason, it is advised to focus less on the quantity of worship and more on its quality and effectiveness through reflection and contemplation³.

However, intellectual activities are also subject to afflictions that diminish or ruin their impact. One such affliction is falling into doubt and skepticism. As we explained in the article "What is Intellect?", the intellect often errs and, due to its inherent limitations, cannot fully grasp the essence and inner realities of many

³. Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) said: "There is no good in worship that lacks understanding, no good in knowledge that lacks reflection, and no good in recitation that lacks contemplation." (*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 75, p. 41)

matters. Therefore, those who seek to prove the correctness or incorrectness of spiritual matters solely through intellect and neglect the element of emotion often fall into doubt and suspicion. Consequently, not only does their heart fail to transform, but they become afflicted with hardness of the heart.

Heeding Advice: The Fourth Therapeutic Method

Admonition and advice are the life of the heart and one of the most potent remedies for healing a hardened heart⁴. Listening to sermons means spending time hearing the words of the wise and aligning oneself with them. But this is not limited to formal sermons; you may have experienced inner transformations through hearing advice in various forms—whether a phrase on a wall, a passage in a book, or a short video or audio from a sincere and insightful person that deeply touches your heart.

The magical power of sermons or advice in creating inner change and awakening the heart must never be underestimated. Regardless of our status or level of education, we constantly need reminders of the purpose of creation, the origin and destination of life, and the philosophy of our presence in this world. Those who avoid sermons and fail to allocate time weekly to listen to or read wise and divine advice undoubtedly suffer from hardness of the heart and spiritual death.

Friendship with the Heavenly Family: A Solution to All Problems

⁴. "Revive your heart with advice." (*Nahj al-Balagha*, Letter 31)

One of the most important signs of hardness of the heart is our inability to establish intimacy and friendship with our heavenly family, namely the Household of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon them), especially Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his advent).

As mentioned earlier, the Household of the Prophet (Peace be upon them) are not only the perfect manifestations of God in the universe and His representatives on earth but also the true and original family of all humanity. Anyone who cannot establish a warm and intimate relationship with their true family and fulfill their need for love, affection, and power by connecting to them will certainly struggle with earthly relationships and resort to begging for affection from others. In general, companionship and intimacy with the heavenly family, longing for them, and the desire to join them in this world and the Hereafter are signs of a sound heart and among the best ways for healing a hardened heart.

The heart is the most delicate element of our existence, and when it becomes ill, it affects all the aspects of life and our relationships with ourselves, God, and others. Because the heart is so sensitive, healing a hardened heart takes a gentle, well-rounded approach so its effects can slowly touch our soul. Among all the signs of a sound heart, the most important is possessing spiritual happiness and inner peace and distancing oneself from irritability, resentment, anger, narcissism, jealousy, and other burdens that weigh down the heart and prevent it from soaring and connecting to the unseen realm. Therefore, to evaluate our progress in healing, we must constantly compare ourselves with these criteria and assess how far we are from the personality we should attain.

In this article, we only mentioned some of the most important ways for healing a hardened heart and leave the rest to you. Please share with us and other readers what other methods you know for healing a hardened heart and what experiences you have in this regard.

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