

## **What Is the Origin of Islamic Positive Thinking; How Does It Shape Our Lifestyle?**

### **What Is the Key to Embracing Islamic Positive Thinking?**

Positive thinking, optimism, and hope are powerful tools that prevent our mental collapse amid life's challenges. However, without a deep perspective, positive thinking can become superficial, lose its meaning over time, and lead to self-deception. Ultimately, it may cause more problems than it solves. In our self-knowledge school, what we call "Islamic positive thinking" is a set of views about the self, the world, and the purpose of human creation. This perspective not only prevents depression and frustration but also fosters happiness, peace, and love.

But what exactly is Islamic positive thinking, and how does it differ from the positivity promoted by social media bloggers?

In this lesson, we aim to explore positive thinking from a different, *fitri* (innate) perspective. We will also examine how Islamic positive thinking differs from positive psychology and its role in human relationships and overcoming crises. If you are seeking a deeper understanding of positive thinking, its distinction from superficial optimism, and its place in an ideal lifestyle, join us.

### **Positive Thinking or Hiding Problems?**

Have you ever wondered why some people, even in the toughest crises, continue on the path of growth with hope and effort instead of complaining and despair?

What makes some individuals trust others despite bitter experiences, think positively about problems, and strive to build a better future? The answer lies in the concept of Islamic positive thinking. This perspective, unlike superficial interpretations and common psychological techniques, is not just a mental technique or a simple solution for peace of mind. Rather, it is a manifestation of faith in God, reliance on Him, and positive trust in divine promises.

Islamic positive thinking means returning to our divine *fitrah*, which God has placed in all human beings. This innate disposition naturally inclines us toward goodness, growth, and reform. It reminds us that humans are created for perfection and are tasked with seeing opportunities even in hardships and working to improve their condition.

Children, for example, understand smiles, respond to kindness, and feel compassion for others without external training; these behaviors reflect their innate monotheistic, divine nature. When humans stray from this *fitrah*, their outlook darkens, and they replace trust in and contentment with God's decree with complaints and despair. Good things are overlooked, and the pain we receive from crises is doubled: once because of the crisis itself and a second time because of our incorrect and negative view of it! The Quran states: "Indeed, with hardship comes ease" [1]. This principle is the foundation of a monotheistic view of life. Thus, Islamic positive thinking can be seen as a return to God, our *fitrah*, and hope.

In a time when superficial motivational messages and quick psychological tricks dominate, we must ask: Are what we call positivity today truly rooted in human nature, or are they just masks hiding reality and pain?

## ***Fitrah*, The Starting Point of Islamic Positive Thinking**

One fundamental question about positive thinking is: Why do some people, even after experiencing failures and bitter moments, still hold hope for reform and reconstruction? The answer lies in the essence of structure of the human creation.

Humans possess a divine *fitrah* [2], a natural inclination toward goodness, kindness, growth, and reform, from the very beginning. According to this view, humans are not only capable of solving problems and overcoming difficulties but are naturally inclined to seek light and perfection. Therefore, Islamic positive thinking is not just an acquired skill or a mental technique; it is a manifestation of the pure *fitrah* that God has placed in every person.

However, if this innate positive tendency exists, why do some people lose it or become quickly discouraged when faced with problems? The answer is that, although *fitrah* is present in everyone, it can be weakened, hidden, or forgotten due to sins, neglect, improper upbringing, or bitter experiences.

These factors can obscure the bright light of *fitrah*, leading to focus on weaknesses and limitations, which causes depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. But the truth is, *fitrah* is never destroyed. It may be dormant, but through repentance, returning to God, and renewing one's focus on divine values, it can be awakened and reactivated.

The Quran says: "Say [that Allah declares,] 'O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah will forgive all sins. Indeed, He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful'" [3]. This shows that even if someone has strayed from their *fitrah*, return is always possible, and God has opened the way for spiritual renewal.

Another verse promises that hardship is always accompanied by ease [4]. This divine promise is the core of Islamic positive thinking, an outlook that is realistic, *fitri*, divine, and guiding. It keeps the hope for improvement alive from within, inviting a person to move, reform, and strive.

### **The Role of Faith in Cultivating Innate Positive Thinking**

Unlike modern psychology, which mainly focuses on mental skills and cognitive exercises, Islamic positive thinking is deeply rooted in monotheism, servitude, and trust in divine promises. Positive psychology primarily focuses on mental skills, cognitive exercises, and individual abilities to generate a good feeling and improve psychological function. However, from a monotheistic perspective, these abilities, without reliance on God, trust in His promises, and acceptance of divine wisdom, cannot sustain true growth.

Faith, as a central element of a divine lifestyle, fosters a form of positive thinking that goes beyond superficial and suggestive optimism. It invites us to see ourselves and others with compassion and depth. From this perspective, we must not judge people based on their past. Focusing on mistakes, slips, and weaknesses is a common tactic of Satan to discourage us. Instead, faith encourages hope for change, repentance, and rebuilding. A person with this outlook is active and always capable of transformation, even after years of being on the wrong path.

Therefore, in a faith-based lifestyle, someone who chooses to repent is not rejected but is given a valuable opportunity for change. The life story of Prophet Muhammad and the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them) exemplify this. Even in the most difficult circumstances, they maintained hope in guiding others. For example, Imam Hussain

(Peace be upon him), during the Battle of Karbala, continued to awaken conscience and open doors for human return, even as the enemy was arrayed to martyr him. About thirty-two of Umar ibn Sa'd's soldiers eventually joined his side [5].

Contrary to some modern ideas, the ultimate goal of strengthening Islamic positive thinking is not just achieving mental peace or worldly success. These are secondary goals; the main purpose is to serve Allah and attain nearness to Him. Without this divine purpose, positive thinking can turn into delusional optimism, carelessness, arrogance, or the denial of reality. But when rooted in faith, it becomes a deep, balanced outlook that fosters hope while encouraging responsibility and effort.

### **The Impact of Innate Positive Thinking on Education and Human Relations**

Islamic positive thinking, far beyond a mental skill or behavioral technique, is a perspective on the human being, human relationships, and the potential for growth and reform. Rooted in *fitrah*, it helps us understand that humans, despite their weaknesses and limitations, have the capacity for change, rebuilding, and spiritual elevation.

In daily life, our attitude toward the behavior and character of others shapes our relationships. If we focus only on their flaws and mistakes, our relationships drift toward coldness, distrust, and pessimism. But if we recognize the good intentions, hidden talents, and potential for reform in every person in line with our *fitrah*, we plant seeds of kindness, patience, and growth in our interactions. This perspective is not superficial or emotional; it is based on human insight and divine teachings. As Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him) narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him and his family), “Dealing kindly with people is half of belief and leniency

to them is half of life” [6]. This kind of tolerance is only possible when a person stops finding faults in others and looks instead at the opportunities for growth within relationships.

In family life, couples who appreciate and trust each other manage problems better and find peace. Conversely, couples who constantly criticize and focus on faults weaken their relationship. The same applies in workplaces: A manager who only highlights mistakes and ignores achievements and creates a tense environment demotivates staff, while one who both corrects errors and recognizes efforts and talents nurtures organizational growth.

In raising children, innate positive thinking plays a key role. Constant criticism and blame cause discouragement or stubbornness. By contrast, focusing on abilities, encouragement, and positive reinforcement foster hope and self-esteem. Parents who respond to their child’s mistakes calmly, respectfully, and with hope teach their children the value of positive outlooks.

Ultimately, Islamic positive thinking is not just a personal virtue. It is a human responsibility and part of serving God. Improving human relationships is a foundation for personal growth, societal peace, and the movement of society toward perfection and nearness to Allah. In the *fitri*-based perspective, every relationship is an opportunity for construction, and every person has the potential to grow and flourish.

## **Positive Thinking in Facing Suffering and Hardship: A *Fitri*-Based Perspective on Life's Challenges**

Life is full of difficult moments, tests, and pains that are unavoidable and part of the world's structure and our servitude [7]. Experiences like illness, failure, humiliation, neglect, loss of loved ones, or feelings of worthlessness can either lead us to despair or serve as opportunities for growth and renewal. What determines our fate is not the severity of hardships but how we view these events.

This is where Islamic positive thinking finds its meaning. Unlike positive psychology, which mainly emphasizes mental techniques, the *fitri* and divine perspective holds that positive thinking originates from faith in divine wisdom and trust in His promises. This perspective is not an illusion or escape from reality but a profound, meaningful view of suffering that calls human to rebuild and move forward amid crises. We have explained this worldview in lessons on the [gym-like nature of the world](#). We clarified that our view of the mathematics of God's creation and our status in the womb of this world can influence all our beliefs and actions, turning them into purposeful deeds and opportunities for growth. This is something that no other worldview, except for Shiite human-centered perspective, can fully encompass.

In a *fitri* based lifestyle, hardships are not the end but opportunities for spiritual training, awakening the intellect, and expanding the heart. The Quran teaches that with every difficulty comes ease, and believers, even in darkness, do not lose hope in God's mercy [8]. These verses are not just messages of comfort; they are rules for nurturing a resilient, hopeful person on the path of growth.

Innate positive thinking is not just a mental or internal approach; it reflects in our actions, decisions, and social interactions. Someone who, in tough times, seeks understanding and realistic solutions instead of complaints will manage their situation better and positively influence others. Such a person becomes a model of patience, trust, and hope, showing that constructive engagement with problems is possible even in the hardest circumstances.

This outlook does not ignore or downplay problems. Rather, it sees them as part of natural human growth. In this framework, pain and problems are not obstacles but elements that shape human character.

According to this view, experiencing failure or enduring pain does not mean the end. As long as a person believes in the possibility of renewal and maintains their connection with divine mercy, their path of growth remains open. This realistic hope is the essence of Islamic positive thinking.

In this lesson, we explored the concept of Islamic positive thinking from a *fitri* and faith-based perspective, showing that, unlike superficial or technical views, it is rooted in human existential structure and trust in God. We also examined how it differs from positive psychology. Furthermore, we discussed how innate positive thinking not only helps us overcome crises but also plays a key role in education, relationships, and spiritual growth. Finally, we emphasized that a positive outlook on life is not just a learned or acquired skill but a way to return to our *fitrah*, unlock our potential, and move toward perfection.

What are your thoughts on innate positive thinking versus positive psychology? Which approach do you find more effective? Share your opinion with us.

## References

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[1]. Holy Quran: 94:5

[2]. Holy Quran, 30:30

[3]. Holy Quran, 39:53

[4]. Holy Quran, 94: 5

[5]. Ibn Ṭawus, Ali ibn Musa, *Al-Luhuf fi Qatla al-Tufuf*, 2001. vol. 1, p. 57.

[6]. Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, Vol 2, Book 1, Chapter 57: <https://thaqalayn.net/hadith/2/1/57/5>

[7]. Holy Quran, 2:155

[8]. Holy Quran, 94:6