

CLASS 2

PHYSICALLY STRENGTHEN BASED ON SUNNAH

Islam is a code of life. Muslims do not practice only during the weekends or festive seasons; rather religion is an ongoing part of daily life. Islam is organised in a spiritual and moral way, taking into account humankind's innate needs and desires. The tenets of Islam are derived from the Quran and the authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad, known as the Sunnah, these two sources of revelation are a guide, or a manual for life.

The Prophet ﷺ and his Companions were naturally physically fit. Life was tougher, long distances were covered on foot, men hunted and farmed their food to survive, and there were no useless recreations to produce laziness and waste many hours of otherwise constructive time. The 21st century contains many distractions and forms of entertainment that encourage laziness and induce ill health.

Although advanced technology has many benefits, it is important that time is not wasted in front of the television screen or game console to the detriment of our health. It has been conclusively proven that obesity in children increases the more hours they watch television. Other studies have indicated that this is equally true for adults. Exercise on the other hand has many benefits.

Health is the biggest blessing

After Islam/Imaan, one of the biggest blessings from Allah S.W.T. is good health. We can easily say after Islam, the biggest blessing is health, the ability to see, hear, touch, walk, work perfectly is a blessing from Allah, that we cannot thank Allah enough for.

Ibn al-Qayyim said, "Since health is one of the most precious favours Allaah has given to His servants, the most generous of His gifts, and most plentiful of His bounties, nay more, absolute health is the most precious of all favours, without exception - it is fitting that whoever is granted a portion of this good fortune, to cherish, preserve and to guard it against harm. Bukhari has related in his Saheeh form the hadeeth of Ibn Abaas: Ibn Abbas reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, *"There are two blessings which many people waste: health and free time"* ... (Zaad al-Ma'aad 4/196).

In the Sunnah we see that the Prophet ﷺ maintained habits that were all very healthy.

Opt for healthy living, opt for Sunnah living.

HEALTHY HABITS FROM THE SUNNAH

BRISK WALK

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) said, *“I did not see anyone walk faster than him ﷺ, as if the earth folded for him. A few moments ago he would be here, and then there. We found it difficult to keep pace when we walked with him, and he walked at his normal pace.”* (Al Tirmidhi)

EARLY TO BED, EARLY TO RISE

It is well known that early to bed and early to rise is the practice of the successful people of this world, it is healthy, it keeps the mind fresh and gives us time and energy to work.

The Prophet Mohammed ﷺ encouraged his companions not to be involved in any activity after Isha prayer (which is around 1.5-2 hours after sunset). In hadeeth quoted in Bukhari, the Prophet ﷺ said, *“One should not sleep before the night prayer, nor have discussions after it”*, calling everyone to sleep early. (Abu Dawood)

Now it is obligatory on us to wake up and offer Fajr Prayer in the morning which is an hour before the sunrise, and hence expecting everyone to get up early. It is not from the Sunnah to just get up pray and go back to sleep, the Prophet ﷺ did not sleep after *Fajr* prayer. As a matter of fact, he recommended work to be done in the early hours of the day.

The Messenger ﷺ said: *“O Allah, bless my people in their early mornings.”* When he sent out a detachment or an army, he sent them at the beginning of the day. Sakhr was a merchant, and he would send off his merchandise at the beginning of the day; and he became rich and had much wealth. (Abu Dawud classed as Sahih Albaani)

Ibnul Qayyim (rahimahullaah) said that the righteous predecessors disliked sleeping between Fajr prayer and Sunrise, because it is a time in which great benefit is obtained. And even when they stayed up late at night (i.e. in worship), they still stayed up until after sunrise, for indeed it is the early part of the day and its beginning time, the time in which provision descends, the time in which one receives his portion of provision and the time in which blessings are obtained...

This is proven by many scientific facts & also practical examples, almost any successful man you go to & ask about his routine, he would answer that he gets up early for work.

VOLUNTARY FASTS

Fasting a great worship that draws one closer to Allah and far away from hell fire. Fasting is not restricted to Ramadan it is an act of worship that should be kept alive throughout the year and in some months more so, because of its virtues and rewards revealed in ahadeeth.

Many scientific researches has proven the health benefits of fasting, a great surge of the concept of intermittent fasting in the western world is testimony to that.

Voluntary Fasts recommended in the Sunnah (from Sahih hadeeths): -

- Fasting Mondays & Thursdays
- Fasting 3 days (13th, 14th & 15th of the Moon) in a month
- Ashoora (10th of Muharram and adding 9th to it as part of the Sunnah)
- Day of Arafah (9th of Dhul Hijjah)
- Fasting for Six days in Shawwal
- First 9 days of Dhul Hijjah
- As much as possible in Muharram
- As much as possible in the first half of Sha'baan

HIJAMA – CUPPING

Hijama is one of the best treats and treatments for our bodies; this is proven by many ahadeeth where the prophet emphasized on the benefits and blessings that come with it.

Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *“I did not pass by an angel from the angels on the night journey except that they all said to me: Upon you is cupping (Hijama), O Muhammad.”* [Sunan ibn Maajah 2477]

Also the Prophet ﷺ said, *“Cupping treatment /Hijama is the most helpful procedure for human beings to cure themselves.”* [Sahih Bukhari 5357] [Sahih Muslimi 1577]

PHYSICAL/HARD WORK

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, *“No food is better to man than that which he earns through his manual work. Dawud (A.S.), the Prophet of Allah, ate only out of his earnings from his manual work.”* [Al-Bukhari].

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *“Prophet Zakariyya (A.S) was a carpenter.”* [Al-Bukhari].

SPORTS FOR STRENGTH

It is very good for the believer to engage in permissible sports so that he will be physically strong and will preserve his health, which will help him to do acts of worship and strive for the sake of Allaah.

There are matters of Islamic etiquette that one should pay attention to when playing sports and doing exercises to strengthen the body:

- Seeking reward with Allah, and doing these things to help one worship Him and support those who have been wronged.
- These activities should not involve anything that is contrary to Islamic teachings, such as participants bowing to one another, striking the face, uncovering the 'awrah, gambling, and so on.
- It should not distract one from obeying and worshipping Allah, honouring one's parents and other important priorities.
- One should not spend great amounts of wealth on it, to the point of extravagance; rather one's involvement in such activities should be based on moderation and within the framework of Islamic teachings.

The Prophet ﷺ wrestled with Rukaanah (may Allah be pleased with him) before he became Muslim.

Abu Daawood (4078) narrated that Rukaanah wrestled with the Prophet ﷺ and the Prophet ﷺ threw him to the ground. (Classed as hasan by al-Albaani in *al-Irwa' 5/329*).

He ﷺ raced with his wife 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her).

Abu Daawood (2578) and Ahmad (26277) narrated that 'Aa'ishah said: I went out with the Prophet ﷺ on one of his journeys when I was still young and had not put on weight. He ﷺ said to the people: *"Go on ahead."* So they went on ahead, then he ﷺ said to me, *"Come, let me race with you."* So I raced with him, and I beat him, and he said nothing. Then when I had put on some weight, and I had forgotten about it, I went out with him on one of his journeys, and he said to the people: *"Go on ahead."* So they went on ahead, then he said to me, *"Come, let me race with you."* So I raced with him, and he beat me, then he smiled and said: *"This is in return for that."* (Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh Abi Daawood*.)

Archery

Al-Bukhaari narrated in his *Saheeh* (3373) that Salamah ibn al-Akwa' (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet ﷺ passed by a group of Aslam who were competing in shooting arrows. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *"Shoot, O sons of Ismaa'eel, for your father was an archer. Shoot, and I am with the tribe of So-and-so."* One of the two groups stopped shooting, so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *"What is the matter with you, why are you not shooting?"* They said: O Messenger of Allah, how could we shoot when you are with them? He ﷺ said: *"Shoot, for I am with all of you."*

Undoubtedly the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) used to train in horsemanship and the skills of fighting and running, and they were extremely strong and tough.

Swimming

It is soundly narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: *"Everything in which there is no remembrance of Allah is idle play, except four things: a man playing with his wife; a man training his horse; a man running between two lines (as in a race); and a man learning how to swim."* (Narrated by an-Nasaa'i 8889; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *as-Saheehah* 315).

Exercise and Body Building

Exercise increases muscle tone, improves flexibility, enhances endurance, strengthens the heart and fights depression. Exercise also helps achieve significant weight loss. Aerobic exercise fights heart disease and high blood pressure, and reduces the risk of diabetes, while weight training increases muscle strength and reduces fat, increases bone density, fights back pain and arthritis, and improves overall mental health.

Bodybuilding aims to make the body strong and sound, which is an important and desirable goal.

But when Islam accepts sports and encourages us to engage in them, it does not make them a goal in and of themselves, rather sport is considered to be a means of protecting the sacred limits of Islam and the dignity and rights of the Muslims, in the belief that strength is one of the most important means of achieving victory and prevailing in the face of challenges and warding off the threats that face Islam.

Please note bodybuilding with the intention to show off a toned body is not from Sunnah, infact it is haram to uncover the awrah in front of others and also it is not permissible to show off the body shape (even for men) i.e. to wear skin tight clothing which men who workout tend to wear.

What is good in this regard is that which helps the Muslim to maintain good health, to practise Islam, to strive for the sake of Allaah and to do the acts of worship which require physical strength such as Hajj or helping the Ummah by volunteering.

What benefit can a Muslim gain if his body is as strong as a bull, but his heart is devoid of faith and all virtue?

Diet and Nutrition

Islam's holistic approach to health includes treating our bodies with respect and nourishing them with, not only faith, but also with lawful, nutritious food. A major part of living life according to the Creator's instructions is implementing a suitable diet. Choosing wholesome food and avoiding the unwholesome is essential to good health.

Allah says in the Quran, "... *Eat of the good things which We have provided for you.*" (Quran 2:172) "*Eat of that which is lawful and good on the earth.*" (Quran 2:168)

The Quran contains many verses of advice about healthy eating that relate to the interconnectedness of physical and spiritual health. Encouragement to eat only good and pure food is often combined with warnings to remember Allah and avoid Satan. Healthy eating not only satisfies hunger but also has an effect on how well we worship.

"O mankind, eat of that which is lawful and good on the earth and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy." (Quran 2:168)

If one becomes obsessed with food or indulges in too much unwholesome or junk food he or she may become physically weak or distracted from his primary purpose of serving Allah. On the other hand, if one concentrated exclusively on spiritual endeavours and neglected their health and nutrition, weakness injury or illness would also result in failure to carry out obligatory worship. The guidance found in the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advise humankind to maintain a balance between these two extremes.

Eating Less – The Solution To Many Problems

Abu Juhayfah said: "A man burped in the presence of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ and he said: *"Keep your burps away from us, for the one who eats his fill the most in this world will be hungry for the longest time on the Day of Resurrection."* (al-Tabaraani-Saheeh)

After hearing that Abu Juhayfah RA did not eat his fill until he departed from this world; if he ate breakfast he would not eat dinner and if he ate dinner he would not eat breakfast, and he said: "I have not filled my stomach for thirty years."

Yet, we force our kids to eat, to just simply stuff themselves until they are completely full. And we do the same ourselves. What we don't realize is that, not only is this bad for health, and against the wise teachings of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, but this excessive eating also makes us lazy and distracts us away from the sincere and focused worship of Allaah. This is because eating one's fill makes the body heavy, which leads to yawning and laziness in worship and work.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "*A believer eats in one intestine, and a kafir (unbeliever) or a hypocrite eats in seven intestines.*" (Bukhaari)

That means; a believer is satisfied with a little food, while a non-believer or a hypocrite eats too much to satisfy himself.

The Prophet ﷺ also said: *“The son of Adam does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat a few morsels to keep him alive. If he must fill it, then one-third for his food, one-third for his drink, and one-third for air.”* (al-Tirmidhi –saheeh by al-Albaani)

Not getting too comfortable whilst eating

The Prophet ﷺ said: *“I do not eat whilst I am reclining.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5399).

One of the reasons said is that because when we are in a very comfortable position we tend to eat more. And we have seen in the Ummah today that some brothers even loosen their pants to eat. This is definitely against what the Sunnah teaches us. Sit in a position where the stomach is being pressed a little so that you feel full sooner and have a part of the stomach empty.

It is a pity that we have one of the two kinds, one, which is the majority, where Men of this Ummah tend to keep shape and stay fit till they are married and once that’s done, it is as if there is an unsaid rule that one can just let go and become lazy. We should always be fit, so that as and when needed we are there to help the Ummah in which ever way it is needed. The other one is obsessed with their body and physic, for them working out is a necessity and it is above everything, for some even above going to the Masjid to offer Fard prayers.

True believers need healthy bodies and minds in order to worship Allah in the correct way. To maintain a sound mind, a pure heart and a healthy body special attention must be paid to health. The heart and the mind are nourished by remembrance of Allah, and worship performed in a lawful way, and the body is nourished by partaking of the good and lawful food Allah has provided. Attention to diet and nutrition is a part of the holistic health system inherent in Islam.

Build Endurance

Looking at the process of the call to Islam of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Mecca and then in Medina, one can easily perceive that patience and endurance had a fundamental role in it.

Allah says

- *Seek Allah's help with patient perseverance and prayer. It is indeed hard except for those who are humble." (2:45)*
- *"Oh you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer, for God is with those who patiently persevere." (2:153)*
- **ISBIRU WA SAABIRU** - *Oh you who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy. Vie in such perseverance, strengthen each other, and be pious, that you may prosper." (3:200)*

Unfortunately men of today is confined to air conditioned rooms and hoping to make a change from there because they cannot stand the pain and the difficulty they would face going out for Dawah or to help the Ummah. Forget the noble act of giving away our life to help the Ummah, we are scared to just get hurt. No one wants to come out of their comfort zone. People aren't just born with a higher pain tolerance. Pain tolerance is something that's built up over time and with efforts. We need to work harder for the Sake of the Ummah.

A Strong Man

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *"The strong man is not one who is good at wrestling, but the strong man is one who controls himself in a fit of rage."* [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

The Prophet ﷺ passed by some people who were wrestling. He asked, *"What is this?"* They said: *"So-and-so is the strongest, he can beat anybody."* The Prophet ﷺ said, *"Shall I not tell you who is even stronger than him? The man who, when he is mistreated by another, controls his anger, has defeated his own shaytaan and the shaytaan of the one who made him angry."* (Reported by al-Bazaar, and Ibn Hijr said its isnaad is saheeh. Al-Fath, 10/519)

The Strongest

We conclude this chapter by reminding the ultimate source of strength is faith. The Life of the Sahaba is the example, not all of them were built like Umar R.A. but each one of them could take on many enemies in battle, it was their strong believe and the hope for rewards in the hereafter. The strongest amongst us would be the person who has good health and uses it to worship Allah and exerts himself or herself to help the Ummah for His Sake. What use is strength if it is just to show off or to oppress others by bullying them? Do not make this great blessing a means of being questioned or punished on the day of Judgement.