20130 - Our worries are bothering us a great deal!

the question

My question is about a problem that my husband and I are suffering from, namely that we think about every little thing and we worry a great deal. This is affecting our worship; all the time we think about the worries and problems that we are going through. Is there any solution to this?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I thank you for your trust and ask Allaah to give us and you strength and wisdom, and to show us what is true and help us to follow it, and to show us what is false and help us to avoid it, and not to let it confuse us and lead us astray… With regard to what you asked about, my comments on it are as follows:

1 –Thinking about the matters of our daily lives, and our private and public affairs is something that is essential and important, it is necessary in order for us to deal with these matters and benefit from them in the appropriate manner. The Qur'aan – which is the word of Allaah – urges us to think, in more than one verse, for example:

"…and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): Our Lord! You have not created (all) this without purpose…" [Aal 'Imraan 3:191]

"And on the earth are signs for those who have Faith with certainty.

And also in your ownselves. Will you not then see?" [al-Dhaariyaat 51:20-21]

"Will you not then take thought?" [al-An'aam 6:50]

"Have you then no understanding?"[al-Baqarah 2:76]

And there are other verses which encourage us to think about our affairs and indeed about the life and creation around us.

So thinking in and of itself is not a problem, rather it is required, important and essential, and it is enjoined by our religion and encouraged by our Qur'aan.

2 – This "thinking" may become a psychological or social problem if it prevents a person from playing his natural role that is expected of him in life.

Such as thinking that things are more serious than they really are, or thinking too much about matters where thinking about them will not change anything at all, rather that only causes distress and becomes an obstacle prevents one from taking any initiative, and make him hesitant and confused, and unable to take any decision.

Thinking may become a problem in shar'i terms if it makes a person go beyond his intellectual limits in thinking about matters of the unseen and things that he can never comprehend, which may open many doors for the accursed Shaytaan to influence him.

3 – With regard to thinking a great deal about everything and worrying about every problem, this is to some extent a natural thing, so long as it does not prevent you from living your lives in a natural manner. What I mean here is, is this thinking helping you to come up with solutions to these problems that you are facing? Do these situations deserve all the time that you are spending on thinking about them? If the answer is yes, then there is no problem! But if the answer is no, then you yourself are admitting that they do not warrant that, and then you are halfway to solving the problem, which is to identify the problem and take a decision concerning it. Because when we know what the problem is, it is easy for us to find the right way of dealing with it.

4 – Overcoming these problems needs some discipline and some time. You can make the decision to start and you are able, with the help and support of Allaah, to do that. You have to trust yourselves in this regard!

5 – I suggest to you that you divide your concerns and problems into three categories or levels:

·Concerns and problems that have a direct impact upon your married and social lives in a serious manner that may lead to breakdown in relationships. These must be given their due measure of objective thought and you should try to reach an agreement and settle the matter. They should not be ignored for so long that it becomes too difficult to deal with them.

·The second level is concerns or problems in which the positive and negative aspects are equal and in which you are involved. In these cases you should pray istikhaarah to Allaah, and it is o.k. to consult others concerning them and to weigh up alternatives, then decide what you think is the solution, bearing in mind issues of sharee'ah and custom, without going to extremes in worrying about it.

·The third level is concerns and worries that do not concern you at all, because they have to do with other people. It is better not to get involved in them and waste your time with them, because they simply do not concern you and your opinion does not matter.

6 – The concerns and matters of our daily lives inevitably fall into one of three categories:

·Matters which are in the past and are over and done with. We should not worry about these too much, except to the extent from which we can learn from our mistakes and experiences when dealing with things in the future. The past cannot come back and there is no need to worry about things that are over and done with.

·Matters which lay ahead in the future. It is more appropriate not to think about these a great deal before they happen, because the future is part of the unseen, and all that we have to do in this case is to examine the choices we have in this matter if it comes to pass. When the time comes, we have to put our trust in Allaah and take a decision.

·Matters of day-to-day life. This is where we attempt to weigh up all the available alternatives, and it is o.k. to consult others with regard to these things and to exchange ideas without going to extremes or worrying too much. In the end, things will turn out as we hope, by Allaah's leave, so long as we pursue the means of praying istikhaarah and consulting others, and good lies in that which is chosen by Allaah.

7 – Getting used to this requires some discipline. You could agree with your husband to cooperate in this matter and remind one another when you are worrying more than you need to about a matter. Gradually you will find that you are becoming able to deal with day-to-day matters in an objective manner.

8 – There is a good book on the topic of anxiety which gives practical means of dealing with this matter, and I advise you to read it. It is called How to Stop Worrying and Start Living by Dale Carnegie.

9 – First and last, have a good intention and pray sincerely that Allaah will give you strength and help you and set your thinking straight.