

## **Finding Calm in the Current: Tawakkul as the Antidote to Anxiety May 1, 2026**

**inna l-insāna khuliqa halū‘a. idhā massahush-sharru jazū‘a. wa-idhā massahu l-khayru manū‘a (Surah al-Ma‘arij (70:19-21)**

Truly man was created very anxious, impatient; when evil touches him he is distressed, and whenever good fortune comes to him, he selfishly withholds it from others.

Anxiety is on the rise. Approximately 400 million people worldwide live with anxiety disorders. Young people between the ages of ten and twenty-four, as well as women, are disproportionately affected. Over the past thirty years, teen anxiety cases have risen by more than 50%.

Interestingly, anxiety levels are generally reported as higher in Western societies, particularly in high-income nations. The United States is frequently cited as one of the most anxiety-prone countries in the world. By contrast, rates are often surprisingly lower in other regions, such as parts of Asia and the Middle East. Some lower-income areas — including Nigeria in Africa — have reported among the lowest prevalence of anxiety rates globally.

This presents an interesting paradox: while financial instability is a known contributor to anxiety, lower-income nations often report less anxiety than wealthier ones. Cultural values play an important role here. Societies that promote individualism, prioritizing personal independence and self-interest over the needs of society, appear to suffer more. These are cultures where self-sufficiency is idealized, and individuals are less inclined to surrender control or trust in something beyond themselves to a higher merciful authority.

They do not submit to the belief that there is One who creates and recreates every moment of the future. He is Al-Hakim, the All-Wise, who can see a black ant, on a black rock, in the blackest of nights, He also sees each one of us. Knowing that the future is in the hands of the most Merciful and most Gracious should help us feel less anxious about what lies ahead of us. Our faith releases us from the burden of having to control what was never ours to control to begin with.

We must internalize that, “not a leaf falls except by His permission.” (Surah An-Nam 6:59) We must understand that nothing in this temporal world is random or forsaken, but rather woven into a plan far greater and wiser than our own.

The future is, by its very nature, unknown to us, yet we approach it with expectations. We imagine how things should unfold, how people should behave, how our efforts should be rewarded. And when reality refuses to comply, we suffer. In some cases, our attachment to these expectations becomes so strong that it blinds us to

what is actually in front of us. We see not what *is*, but only what we *wanted*, which brings frustration and anxiety.

Allah alone knows what will happen, and what should happen. He is the only power to whom we can turn when worry overtakes us: *Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in*: You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help. (Surah al-Fatihah 1:5)

Often, the object of our anxiety is absent or imaginary; it is a fear of something that may never materialize. But sometimes, the threat is real and present, like a car coming toward us from across the road. When the source of danger is genuine, taking precaution becomes not merely wise, but obligatory. In Surah An-Nisa (4:71), Allah commands us to be alert and take action, to actively guard against harm before it arrives. Islam is not a passive faith. Allah wants us to engage, to reason, to seek solutions, with the deep conviction that He will be the best of helpers in the end. To sit idle in the face of a known threat is not trust in Allah; it is negligence. Taking precautions and preparing against possible hardship is called “*tadbir*,” and it is a duty. We are called to do what lies within our capacity, to the best of our understanding of the situation. After all, Allah gave us eyes to observe, minds to reason, and tongues to seek counsel. These are gifts, and to leave them unused in the face of adversity is to turn away from what He has entrusted to us. As we strive, and take steps in the face of uncertainty, He responds to our efforts, opening doors and possibilities we could not have foreseen on our own. Expecting an outcome without striving is stupidity. It would be as if a farmer who expects to harvest crops would not prepare, weed, clean and seed his field; or, as if we were dangerously speeding in traffic, and blaming Allah for the catastrophic results. Those who do not take precautions are penalized for not following the law of Allah.

While precaution is something we may practice often, we must also understand that there is “*taqdir*.” *Takdir* is Allah’s judgment, His discretion. *Taqdir*, Allah’s judgment, is superior to all the precautions we can take. We cannot say, “I took all precautions against possible adversity, and eliminated all the risks. Nothing can happen.” This is denying that Allah-u Ta’ala’s decision is final, and claiming that we have the power to control our future beyond what Allah-u Ta’ala has written for us. No matter how strongly we build a structure, and feel secure, a small earthquake can demolish that structure in a split second. So intelligent ones do not depend on their precautions, but they trust in Allah. So we must know that *tadbir* is our responsibility, but *taqdir*, the final judgement, is from Allah. *Taqdir* is always above *tadbir*. We act upon what we know to fulfill our responsibility, and trust in Allah for the outcome, believing that whatever He decides is better than what we had hoped for. This is *tawakkul*.

By nature, our minds are quicker to sense threat or danger than to recognize opportunity, which is why anxiety so often manifests even when there is nothing concrete to fear. Dwelling on possibilities that are uncertain, or troubles that may never

materialize, slowly diminishes our experience of the present. Instead of being pulled toward what we cannot control, we must learn to plant ourselves firmly in the here and now, and act on what we actually can.

Anxiety about the future only aggravates our stress, pulling us away from the present moment where life actually unfolds. While some concern about what lies ahead is natural, the future remains largely beyond our control, and endlessly worrying about it is counterproductive. Rather than chasing solutions that align with our expectations, we must open ourselves to what Allah, in His infinite wisdom, might offer us.

The balance we seek is this: plan and strive with what we have, then surrender to the outcome. There is really only one ultimate solution: to do our best, and wholly submit to Allah's will. As revealed in Surah Al-Ahzab, He is sufficient as our Trustee and the Disposer of our affairs. And He reminds us: "I am indeed close to them; I listen to the prayer of every supplicant when he calls on Me." (Surah al-Baqarah 2:186) When anxiety feels crushing and hope grows thin, remember, we are never alone. It is time to turn to Him.

**Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi**