

Spirituality and Psychological Healing: An Opinion on Mental Health and Personal Experience

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Received: June 12, 2026; Manuscript No: JPPC-26-3668; Editor Assigned: June 16, 2026; PreQc No: June 22, 2026 (PQ); Reviewed: December 31, 2025; Revised: January 02, 2026; Manuscript No: JPPC-26-3668 (R); Published: July 27, 2026

Citation: Ba I (2026). Spirituality and Psychological Healing: An Opinion on Mental Health and Personal Experience. J. Psychiatr. Psychol. Sci. Vol.2 Iss.2, July (2026), pp:154-155.

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INTRODUCTION

The profession of Psychology is a peculiar one: we must pay someone to listen to us, comfort us, and offer guidance. Strangely enough, the psychologist has no personal bond or affinity with the patient. How can one completely sever ties with someone who has entrusted them with their deepest thoughts and vulnerabilities? The relationship with a psychologist is measured, timed, and often confined to the boundaries of a disorder. Accompanying someone primarily for financial gain is not true accompaniment; it is a distortion of human relationships. The psychologist is not genuinely invested in our relief but rather in the fees paid at the end of each session.

Moreover, psychiatrists and psychologists often wish to hear that their treatment has helped and that any improvement is thanks to them. Yet this is far from certain. Many psychiatric medications can dull emotions, leaving individuals feeling detached or emotionally numb, and some may carry long-term side effects.

The Psychological Reduction of the Human Being

As for myself, I was involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital for one month. During that time, these so-called specialists were unable to tell me exactly what I was suffering from. Their conclusion was simply that I had “too much energy” and that such a state was abnormal.

What is most troubling is that once you enter this system, you can easily become a lifelong patient, dependent upon it. You begin to understand that true autonomy may never return. If you express a desire to stop taking medication, you are often warned that relapse is inevitable. Normally, a medicine is intended to treat a clearly identified illness. In psychiatry, however, the situation is often far less straightforward.

Modern psychology generally does not incorporate the spiritual dimension of human existence into its understanding

of the person. Instead, it tends to reduce the individual to biological, psychological, and sociocultural components.

Psychologists and psychiatrists seek to understand mental disorders primarily through these lenses. For example, bipolar disorder is often explained as the result of neurotransmitter imbalances in the brain, thereby justifying the use of mood stabilizers. Yet some respected psychiatrists and critics of mainstream psychiatry including Thomas Szasz, Peter R. Breggin, and Joanna Moncrieff have argued that no conclusive scientific evidence has definitively demonstrated a biological cause for most psychiatric disorders. No medical test can objectively reveal the precise biological origin of a person's psychiatric condition.

The fundamental challenge for psychiatry is that it cannot achieve the same level of diagnostic certainty as many branches of conventional medicine, where laboratory tests and imaging can often identify the biological source of an illness and guide treatment accordingly. While certain psychological theories may help us understand human behavior and even modify it, psychologists and psychiatrists do not necessarily possess the power to cure psychiatric disorders.

One notable example is that of Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim), the patient of Dr. Josef Breuer whose case was famously presented by Sigmund Freud in Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Contrary to Freud's account, historians have argued that she was never truly cured of her symptoms through psychoanalytic treatment. Anxiety and dependence on substances remained part of her struggle.

The Spiritual Awakening of the Self

Personally, I experienced difficulties in life that led me into depression. I repeat that, in my case, psychiatrists and psychologists only deepened my suffering. Paradoxically, this became the catalyst that pushed me to seek another path toward healing.

That path emerged through a religious journey within Islam, which ultimately delivered me from my inner distress.

How did this happen?

Islam proposes a conception of the human being according to which there exists within the heart a spark a primordial impulse that seeks transcendence. This spark drives us to ask the great existential questions: What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of death?

This innate disposition is known as fitrah. When this profound longing finds its answer, one discovers inner peace a central concept in Islam. Once this yearning has been fulfilled, the individual embarks upon an inward journey to seek God and liberate themselves from the domination of the ego by following the Islamic path (Shariah), the way that leads us back to our original nature.

With the recovery of this inner peace comes the possibility of a life centered in the heart. A new existence unfolds: our emotions become more positive, our bodies healthier, and our minds clearer and more insightful. This conclusion, for me, emerged from personal experience and experimentation.

Although significant theological differences exist among the monotheistic traditions, their spiritual objectives often converge. They encourage self-awareness, the understanding and mastery of emotions, and the attainment of harmony and a higher form of freedom.

Likewise, spiritual traditions such as Buddhism despite not centering on the concept of God share a fundamental insight with the monotheistic faiths: human beings attain harmony and inner freedom through self-mastery. We must free ourselves from the tyranny of the ego in order to achieve harmony within ourselves, with others, and with the natural world.

In this respect, the reflections of Carl Jung are particularly noteworthy. Jung maintained that psychological healing is achieved when a person journeys to the deepest dimensions of the self through what he called the process of individuation: a transformative encounter with one's inner light and the realization of a deeper, universal dimension of the psyche.

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