


profound happiness
and contentment

FLOW

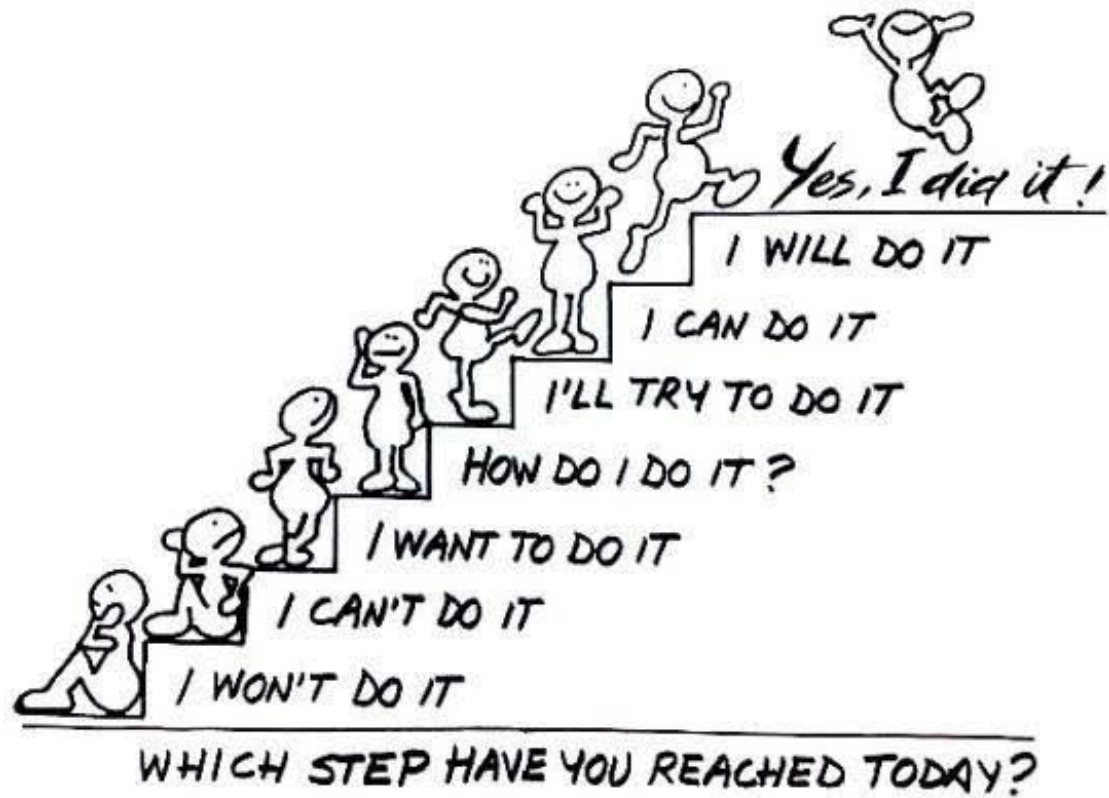
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- A cyclist wearing a white and red jersey and a white helmet is riding a mountain bike on a rocky, gravelly path. The cyclist is leaning forward in a racing posture. The background is a blurred natural setting. There are yellow and blue geometric shapes in the corners of the image.
- I'm covered in sweat and my heart is racing. I could stop and my body tells me to sit or at least slow down, but I pedal, pushing my mountain bike over the rocky path. I can't get enough air into my lungs to feed my burning legs, but I keep going.
 - No one is forcing me to go up that mountain, but the smile it leaves on my face when I get to the bottom stays in my heart long after it leaves my face. So again: Why? After riding my mountain bike, after the hard climb, I feel a profound sense of joy that only comes from achieving something worthy. The paradox is that I had to suffer to feel this. In fact, the harder the task, the deeper and longer lasting the sense of accomplishment.

- This sense of profound joy and contentment is most intense when a person is completely absorbed in an activity, when **body and mind are one, and everything is just "happening"**. It is most commonly felt during exercise, but in fact it can be achieved through a wide range of physical and mental activities.



- What are the conditions to reach this feeling of profound happiness and contentment?





- **First**, the activity must be neither too difficult nor too easy. If it's too difficult, the person becomes demotivated; if it's too easy, the person gets bored. Ideally, it should be at the very edge of our abilities, reaching to the limit and sticking out of our comfort zone. This is because even when the task seems difficult, or even uncomfortable, the end result is that you have improved yourself. This feeling of improvement is the key because it is linked to the person's self-esteem.



Second, the activity should be defined, have a specific goal, and provide immediate feedback.

- Third, you have to be driven from within.
- This is different from being externally driven, where things like money, power, or fame are the driving force.

INTRINSIC motivation



Interest and enjoyment in the task itself

EXTRINSIC motivation



Outcome that will result by doing the task



- The point is that most of us think that happiness depends on material things, and we expend great amounts of time and effort trying to get a bigger house, a faster car, fancier clothes, but the joy we shall get from these things very soon vanishes. Soon enough we get familiar with things and get bored as soon as we get them and we strive for something new, faster, more appealing, bigger, better and when we get it we soon get bored again.

- Being happy is an inner state. It is achieved through effort, through struggle to master and to control oneself and to achieve something worthy.





- One could hardly find two more different conceptions of happiness. One is through **self-indulgence** and the other is through **self-discipline** and control of whims and desires, so it's becoming clear and the evidence is piling up as to what actually makes people happy.

- It's paradoxical. To feel true happiness you have to fight. The nobler the fight, the greater, longer lasting and deeper the joy. In this context, it is clear to see why religious people lead happier lives. **Through regular prayer, devotion, fasting, charity, etc... a person learns self-control and discipline.** Not only do they do these things when they desire them, but they do them regardless of the feelings they have. These are simple lessons in self-control.





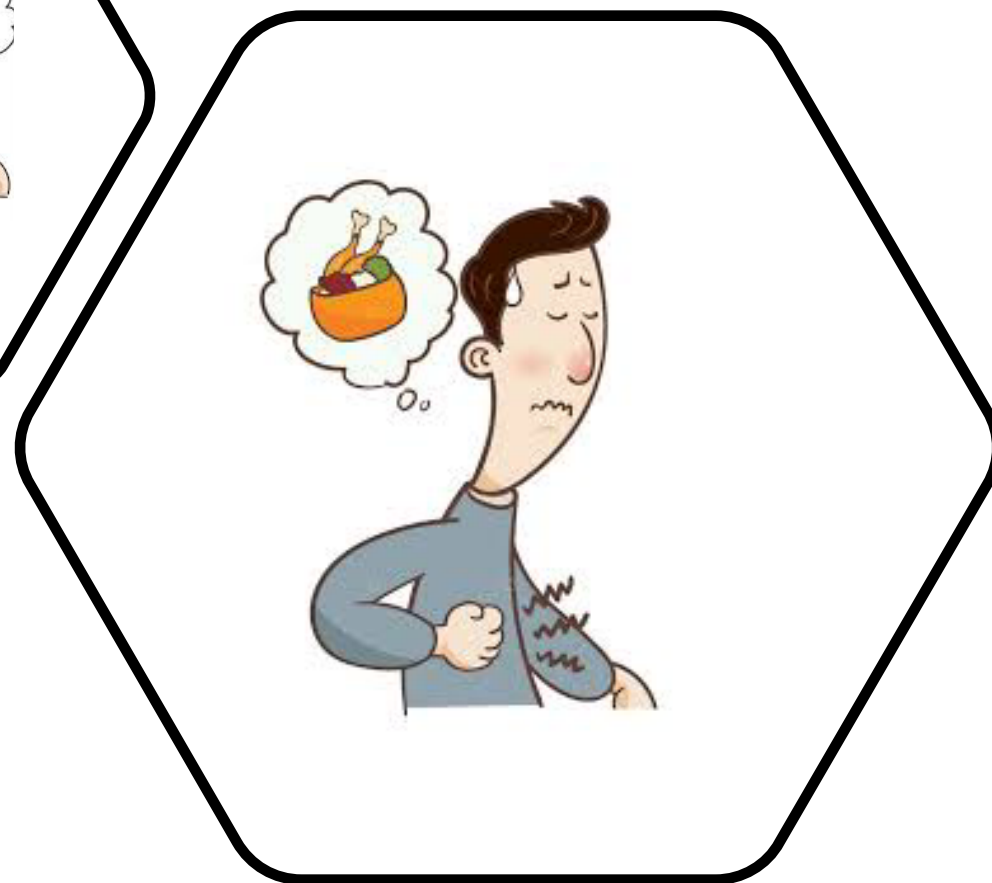
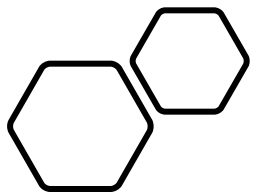
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- The ingredients for profound happiness and contentment are almost all forms of Islamic worship. These activities **require an initial investment** and self-discipline..



- Let's take fasting as an example. At some point when a person is fasting they begin to feel thirsty and hungry, but we have chosen to ignore these basic biological functions and commands because we have consciously chosen that there is a more important goal. A person who fasts out of fear of being caught eating or drinking, or for health reasons, will not receive the same level of benefit as someone who **fasts entirely with the intention of pleasing God**. The first reasons are based on the outside, while the last comes from the inside.

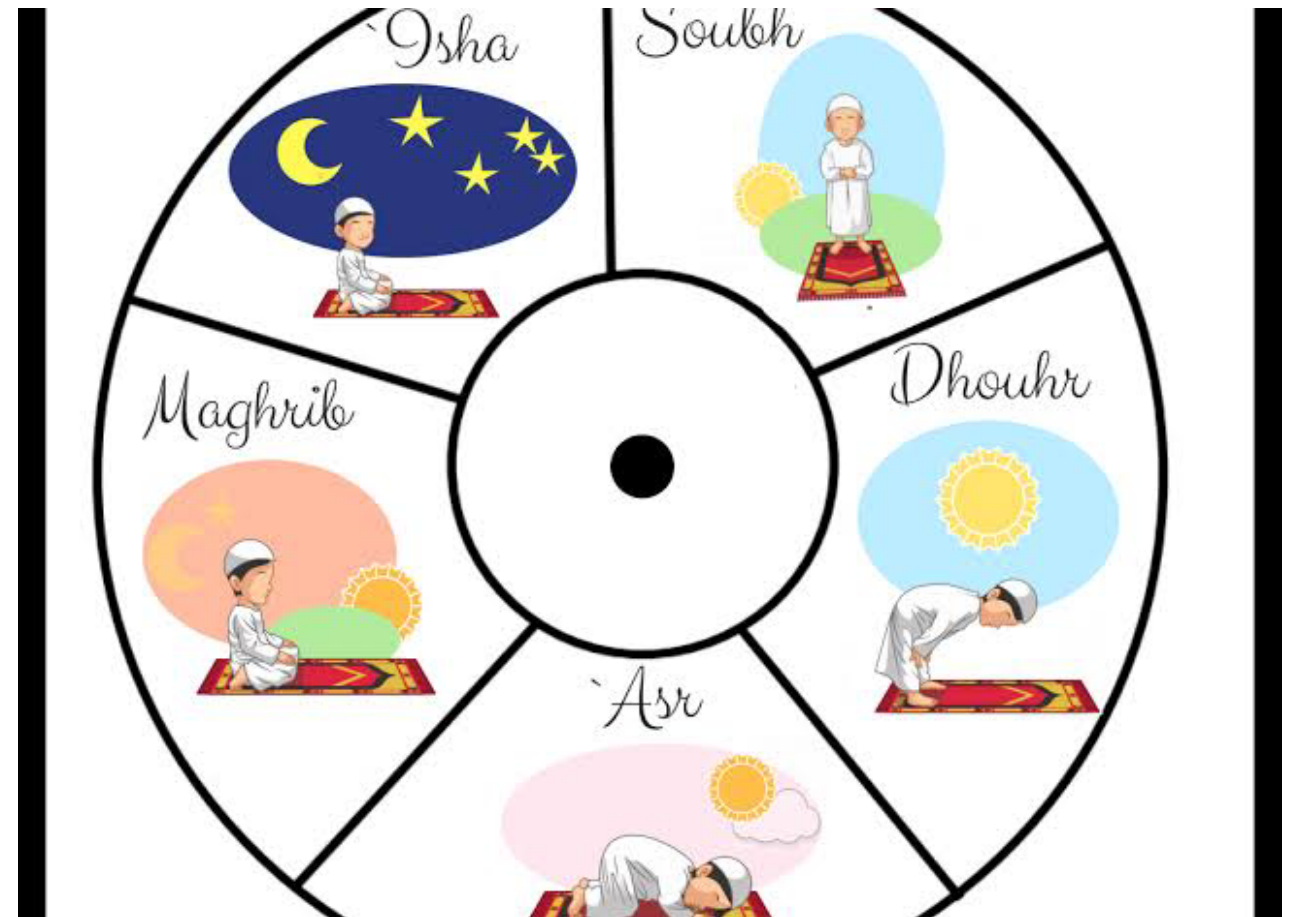


- Fasting teaches us that we can override our impulses, that we are not total "victims" of our biology.



- Fasting should not be too easy and not too difficult, it should come from within (for Allah only) and you can feel yourself improving as a person.

- In fact, these conditions also apply to the five daily prayers, the obligatory Zakat (almsgiving), and the pilgrimage to Mecca, in fact most acts of worship.





- The key to success in the inner struggle is intention.



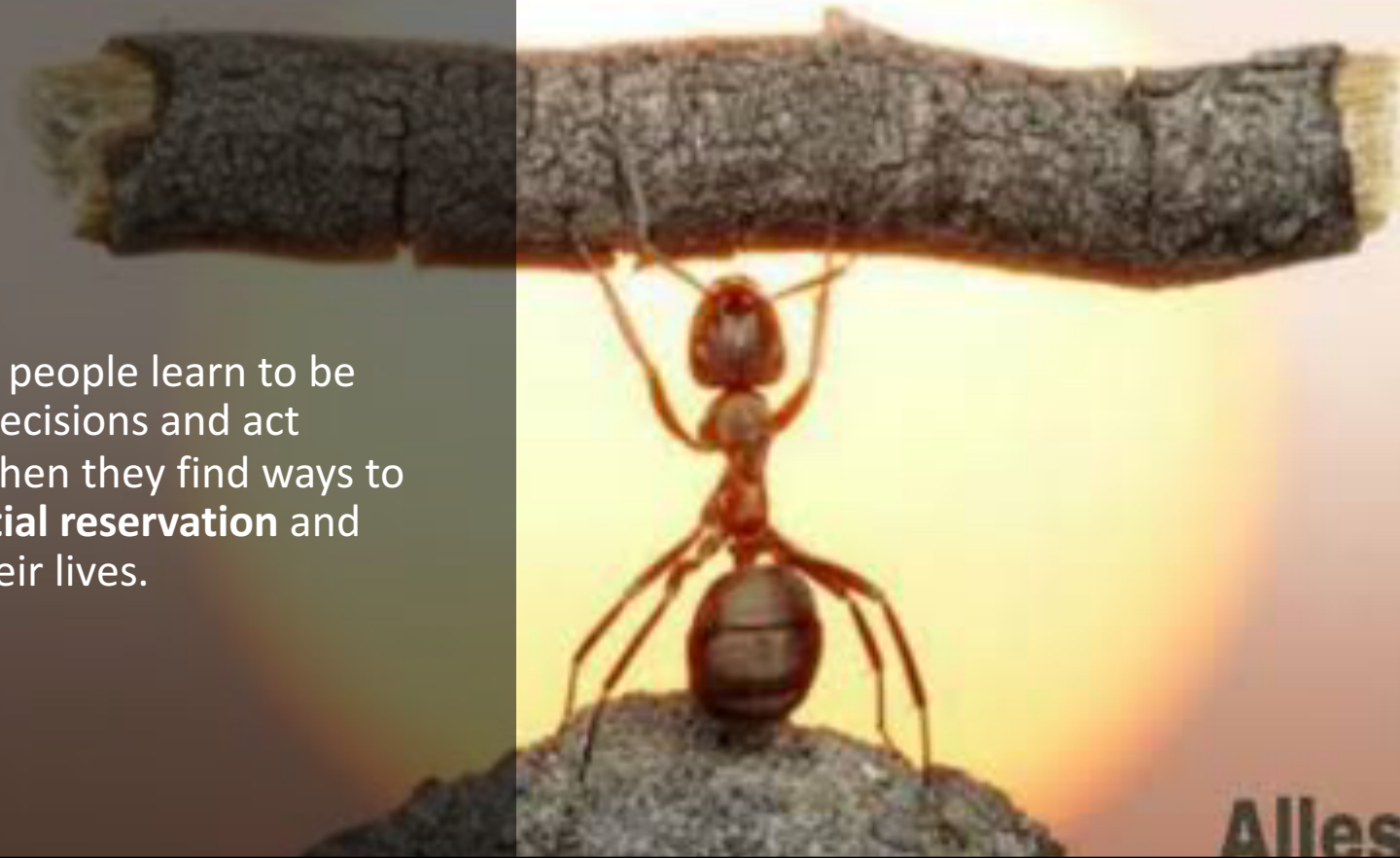
- Intent is a firm determination to do something. It's a choice. These **intentions** are very important and are the **key to controlling consciousness** and directing yourself in the direction you need to go. Here lies the **key to self-control and self-discipline**

“Allah hears your hearts intention,
before your lips whisper
your request.”



Where There Is A Will, There Is A Way

- Self-disciplined people learn to be decisive in their decisions and act accordingly, and then they find ways to overcome the **initial reservation** and bring flow into their lives.





- One of the most useful things in this regard is the five daily ritual prayers, which are obligatory for the Muslim to perform. There is a tradition that states that if anyone prays two units of the ritual prayer, or salah, and thinks of nothing but Allah (God) then all his sins will be forgiven him. This is indeed very difficult. It's probably easier to climb Mount Everest! This is because it is very difficult to let go of random mental activity unless you practice your concentration. This is the difference between a person who makes movements and speaks the words and one who prays properly, with understanding, attention, reverence and humility.



THE ONE WHO IS TRULY
ENSLAVED IS THE ONE
WHO IS A SLAVE OF HIS
DESIRES

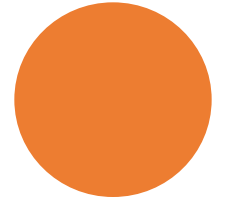
Ibn Al Qayyim

- This inner struggle is called "Jihad bil nafs" in Islamic tradition and much has been written about it. It is said to be the best jihad or fight is the fight against our lusts and passions for God's satisfaction.

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- Our intentions, the state of our hearts, is what God looks at, not our outward appearance like the color of our skin or our wealth or position. **Purifying that heart, directing our mind to the noblest goal of serving God, is the key to success (Falaah), and indeed it is the meaning of life.** Serving God means not only praying, praising and remembering God, but also providing for the needs of His creatures.



- Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of God be upon him, said:
- “Verily Allah, the Almighty and Exalted, saith on the Day of Resurrection: 'O son of Adam, **I was sick and you did not visit me when I was ill.**'
- He says, "O my Lord, how can I visit you when you are the Lord of the Worlds?"
- Thereupon Allah says: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so was ill and you did not visit him? did you not know that if you had visited him you would have found Me there? O son of Adam, **I asked you for food and you gave Me none.**”
- He says, "O Lord, how can I give you food, and you are the Lord of the worlds?"
- Allah says: "Didn't you know that My servant So-and-so asked you for food, but you gave him none. did you not know that if you had given him food, you would have found it with Me? O son of Adam, **I asked you for drink and you gave Me nothing to drink.**”
- He says, "O Lord, how can I give You something to drink, and You are the Lord of the worlds?"
- Allah says: “My servant So-and-so asked you for a drink and you gave him nothing to drink. If you had given him the potion, you would have found it again with Me.”[2]





- The paradox of joy is that as soon as you start looking for it, it flees from you. **Only if we take up the inner struggle can we find ourselves on the path to true happiness.**



- Whole article
- „Flow“, Fasten und Falaah ()
- **Abdurahim Green**
- Islam House.com