

Tazkiyah Halaqa
Self Honesty – Session 11
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh

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Wellness Centre, London, Ontario

Introduction

The eleventh session transitions the series into a more interactive phase, focusing on Q&A related to self-honesty. Sheikh Adnan Rajeh encourages attendees to centre their questions on the current module, emphasising the interconnectedness of Islamic knowledge and how spiritual growth in one area benefits others. The session clarifies complex previous concepts and responds to common challenges, particularly around prayer (khushu'), self-value, addiction, and persistent sins.

Session Overview

The discussion addresses the vital link between self-honesty and prayer, the challenge of recognising one's "raw" self beneath roles, how to approach persistent sin and addiction, and practical strategies for both muraqabah (self-observation) and muhasabah (self-accountability).

Key Themes and Concepts

1. Self-Honesty and the Quality of Prayer

- Self-honesty is foundational to achieving khushu' (focus, humility) in salah.
- Dishonesty leads to emotional and spiritual dullness, undermining authenticity and connection with Allah.
- Most scholars consider khushu' essentially a reflection of self-honesty; the more honest a person is with their own shortcomings, the more authentic their prayer will become.

2. Finding the "Raw" Self Beneath Roles

- Each person assumes multiple roles which reflect Allah's command of istikhlaf (stewardship), but roles should not become a substitute for identity.
- Sheikh Adnan insists on the importance of knowing and being content with the core self—simply an abd (servant of Allah)—which remains constant regardless of roles or accolades.
- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplified the ability to "remove the hat" and interact as an abd, regardless of his leadership or prophetic status.

3. Risks of Defining Oneself by Roles

- Overidentification with roles leads to existential distress when those roles are lost, threatening one's sense of identity and purpose.
- True spiritual security comes from knowing oneself as a servant of Allah, independent of transient roles and achievements.

4. Questions of Addiction and Persistent Sin

- The session reiterates: addictions and serious mental health struggles require professional intervention alongside spiritual strategies.

- Self-honesty can help identify root issues, but conviction is required to successfully abandon sin—deep belief that the sin is harmful and forbidden by Allah.
- Without full conviction, repentance and behavioural change cannot succeed long-term.

5. Conviction and Change

- Behaviour change is possible only when an individual is fully convinced of the danger or wrongness of the action.
- Sheikh Adnan emphasises the need for education and reflection as prerequisites to genuine change, arguing that fear or external threats may only achieve short-term compliance.

6. Muraqabah and Muhasabah: Practical Strategies

- Begin accountability (muhasabah) by depriving the self of privileges or luxuries when falling short, rather than adding extra responsibilities that may go unfulfilled.
- This creates a clear motivational link between behaviour and consequences, similar to effective child-rearing strategies.
- For complex struggles (like attention-seeking or validation), Sheikh Adnan recommends starting muraqabah with simple, observable behaviours before tackling deeper emotions or needs.

7. Mental Health, Anxiety, and Triggers

- Self-honesty involves identifying triggers for anxiety and instability and preparing oneself for known challenges.
- Asking the right philosophical and theological questions helps uncover deeper values and misplaced fears, supporting more sustainable well-being and resilience.

Practical Reflections and Exercises

- **In salah:** Regularly practice self-honesty to clear away the barriers to khushu'; reflect on your raw state before Allah, not as the sum of your social roles.
- **Identity exercise:** List all your roles and then set them aside to observe your identity as an abd of Allah; cultivate comfort and contentment in this raw form.
- **Addiction/self-improvement:** Honestly acknowledge if a repeated failure is due to lack of conviction; seek knowledge and professional support where necessary.
- **Muraqabah practice:** Begin observing a simple, actionable behaviour before progressing to complex emotional needs; document triggers and consider deprivation of privileges as accountability.
- **Dealing with anxiety:** Identify and prepare for known triggers; ask deep questions about why certain events provoke intense emotion.

Conclusion

Session eleven reinforces the intricate relationship between self-honesty, spiritual focus, and core identity, advocating for a life anchored in servitude to Allah rather than transient social roles. Practical tools for self-observation and accountability are recommended, with a caution to seek professional help for complex psychological challenges. Sheikh Adnan emphasises that only sincere self-recognition and conviction can drive real change, making self-honesty the key to continual spiritual growth and resilience.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQE_0i3pH6w