

Tazkiyah Halaqa
Self Honesty – Session 12
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh
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Wellness Centre, London, Ontario

Introduction

The twelfth session of the Tazkiyah Halaqa is a reflective summary that bridges theoretical understanding with practical exercises for self-honesty. Sheikh Adnan Rajeh revisits the process of growth through repeated practice, failure, and perseverance. He emphasises the necessity of experiencing roadblocks, questions, and setbacks in a safe, self-managed environment so that real-life tests find us better equipped. The session intertwines Islamic teachings with psychological notions of identity and existential suffering, especially in relation to roles, labels, and the “raw self”.

Session Overview

Sheikh Adnan focuses on “existential suffering” and the loss of self that often follows the disappearance of major life roles—common themes in psychology and sociology. He describes how identity crises after retirement, bereavement, or changes in status lead to rapid psychological decline when one’s self-concept revolves exclusively around external functions, rather than internal spiritual essence.

Key Themes and Concepts

1. The Roles We Play and the Disappearance of Self

- Many people only know themselves through the “lens” of roles—parent, professional, caregiver, etc.
- When roles disappear, existential suffering or sense of loss can become acute; rapid psychological decline is common among retirees or those who lose core social functions.
- Sheikh Adnan links this phenomenon to the lack of self-honesty and the failure to cultivate and embrace the “raw self.”

2. The “Raw Self”: Abd of Allah

- Every human being, regardless of their roles, is essentially a servant (*abd*) of Allah.
- Most prefer the social “hats” (physician, parent, spouse) because they appear more attractive than the humble reality of servanthood; many ignore or never confront their essence as *abd*.
- The Prophet ﷺ was praised by Allah most highly for his servitude—not his leadership or status.

3. Embracing Essence over Accolades

- Real fulfilment and clarity only come from accepting and loving one’s essential identity as a servant of Allah.
- Sheikh Adnan encourages daily, brief moments of reflection focused only on “just existing” without any roles, labels, or occupations—breathing, feeling, and simply being a servant.

4. Accountability and the Dangers of Deflection

- Humanity is distinctive in its ability to hold itself accountable; animals, by comparison, operate only on instinct.
- The central creed in Islam: “Allah is not questioned about what He does, but they [human beings] will be questioned.”
- Failure to hold oneself accountable leads to blaming Allah, which crosses into *kufr* (disbelief).

5. Reward, Deprivation, and Motivation

- Positive reinforcement and permissible distractions (enjoyments) are valuable tools in the process of *muraqabah* and *muhasabah*; deprivation can be used with more resistant flaws.

- Identifying specific personal enjoyments provides leverage for behaviour change, just as effective childrearing requires knowledge of what brings joy.

6. Balancing Self-Blame, Accountability, and Divine Decree

- Self-loathing is never the goal; accountability is healthy only when accompanied by recognition of Allah's decree (qada and qadr), which relieves some pressure from past mistakes.
- Divine decree is meant to help humans endure and process the consequences of their actions without becoming overwhelmed; it is not a tool for avoidance of accountability.

7. Changing Values and Beliefs

- Building or changing core ethical values is a slow process requiring persistent education, role-modelling, repetition, and environmental arrangement.
- If one repeatedly fails with a sin, examine whether the underlying value truly aligns with religious beliefs or if there is a gap.

8. Moments vs. State

- Many live by stacking occasional moments of happiness, failing to address prolonged underlying misery because they do not know, understand, or accept their true self.
- State of peace is only attainable with genuine self-acceptance as abd.

Practical Reflections and Exercises

- **Existence exercise:** Daily spend several minutes sitting quietly, stripping away labels and reflecting on being a servant of Allah.
- **Deprivation/reward strategy:** Use small personal joys as motivational tools for accountability and reform.
- **Accountability balance:** Accept responsibility for past errors to a healthy extent, recognising qada and qadr so as not to become crushed; avoid self-loathing.
- **Audit values:** Be honest with yourself about values you are taught versus those you truly hold; persistently re-educate and rearrange your environment to support necessary ethical change.
- **Moments vs. state reflection:** Seek peace not in fleeting moments, but in underlying state; commit to accepting, loving, and being present with your raw self.

Conclusion

Session twelve completes the major arc of self-honesty in the Tazkiyah Halaqa, synthesising religious, psychological, and practical strategies for authentic spiritual growth. Sheikh Adnan counsels that only through regular self-reflection, persistent accountability, and complete acceptance of one's essential identity as abd, can the believer achieve durable contentment and spiritual success in this life and the next.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGGLD4MkdUE>