

## POSITIVE THINKING: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstract**

*The topic on positive thinking is gaining widespread popularity while drawing increasing interests in academicians and health professionals. The most relevant literature to the topic, however, generally appears to overlook major religious and socio-cultural differences of communities and societies. In an attempt to fill this lacuna, the current research investigates the nature and composition of positive thinking from an Islamic perspective. The current inquiry also contrasts both patterns of positive and negative thinking in order to determine the influence of belief and religiosity on healthy thinking and attitude. This inquiry reveals the distinct character and nature of positive thinking in Islam and suggests new areas of interest for researchers and health professionals interested in issues of thinking and personality in cross-religious and cultural settings.*

**Keywords:** *Positive Thinking, Islam, sustainable, divine, fiṭrah (inner human nature), tafkīr (thinking).*

### **Introduction**

Ventrella sees positive thinking as the innate capability to produce desired outcomes with positive thoughts, a belief in possibilities even when the facts seem to indicate otherwise<sup>1</sup>. He also identifies the following ten traits of a positive thinker: optimism, enthusiasm, belief, integrity, courage, confidence, determination, patience,

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<sup>1</sup> Scott W. Ventrella, *The Power of Positive Thinking in Business*, (London: Vermilion, 2001), 24.

calmness, and focus<sup>2</sup>. Kehoe's view is that people live simultaneously in the inner reality of thoughts, emotions and attitudes, and the outer reality of people, places, things and events, and that their inner world reacts constantly because they spend all of their time simply reacting without experiencing their power<sup>3</sup>. For Humphreys the term positive thinking is a misnomer. He argues that thinking is like the weather which in itself is neither good nor bad and it is only when people project their own needs and feelings onto it that it becomes good to one person and bad to another<sup>4</sup>. As such Humphreys suggests that there is no such thing as positive thinking because the label positive implies that there is a thinking which is the medium for a chance, whereas it is the feelings with which it is infused that are the real source of power. A more accurate label for such thinking, he states, would be open thinking<sup>5</sup>.

Positive thinking is generally seen as basic reflection of mental imaging. In fact the power of immunity of the body is believed to be greatly affected by the mental level of unhappiness and emotional distress<sup>6</sup>. Kehoe for example explains how creating visualizations in our minds is not just idle daydreaming, but is a creative process which helps us control and direct the same energies that hold matter together, change water into steam and cause a seed to sprout and grow. For him, understanding the nature of these energies assists in understanding the mind, and shows us why inspiration, prayer and intuition are not supernatural phenomenon at all, but follow patterns and laws which we can discover and use at our will<sup>7</sup>. Hooper, on the other hand, argues that the conscious, thinking mind decides what

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 66-67.

<sup>3</sup> John Kehoe, *Mind Power into the 21st Century*, (Vancouver Canada: Zoetic Inc., 2002), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Humphreys, *The Power of 'Negative' Thinking*, (Gill and Macmillan Ltd. Dublin, 1996), 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Norman Vincent Peale, *The Positive Way to Change your Life* (London Vermilion, 1998), 9.

<sup>7</sup> John Kehoe, *Mind Power into the 21st Century*, (Vancouver Canada: Zoetic Inc., 2002), 7.