

## CENTER FOR WELL-BEING AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY



YUMNA QURESHI

### The Comparison Trap: How Measuring Ourselves Against Others Affects Our Well-Being

YUMNA.QURESHI@IAC.EDU.PK

There comes a moment in nearly everyone's life when we pause and wonder—Am I doing enough? Am I good enough? Whether it's scrolling through someone's perfect vacation photos or hearing about a peer's success, the tendency to measure ourselves against others often creeps in quietly but powerfully.

Comparison is a natural human behavior. It once served an evolutionary purpose—helping us learn and adapt. But today, it often becomes a source of anxiety, envy, and diminished self-worth. We end up evaluating our lives not on their own merit, but against a constantly shifting and curated standard.

Psychologists speak of upward and downward comparison. When we compare ourselves to someone we see as "ahead," it can either motivate or deflate us. Downward comparisons might offer brief comfort but rarely create true confidence. Neither truly supports well-being when rooted in insecurity.

#### How do we step out of this trap?

Start with awareness. Recognize when and why you're comparing. Practice self-compassion—acknowledge your worth without needing to outshine others. Reframe competition as personal growth, and celebrate your own path.

Gratitude is also powerful. When we focus on our efforts, small wins, and personal progress, we feel less pulled by someone else's story and more invested in our own. There's no universal script for happiness. The more we honor our individuality, the less we'll need to measure it against someone else's.



PROF. DR. SHABBIR AHMAD RANA

### The Healing Touch of Prayer and Mental Health (Part-II)

SHABBIR.AHMAD@IAC.EDU.PK

In my previous article (Part I), I emphasized the urgent need for revision of our older methods of spirituality and seeking new ways and forms of prayer. Prayer should not be confined to outdated practices or rituals. It should be something personal and dynamic, unrestricted by time and place. Prayer, in its most profound sense, is a way to connect with the Divine in a meaningful, transformative way, allowing us to feel heard, understood, and rewarded. Here are seven powerful forms of prayer that can deepen our spiritual journey:

#### 1. Prayer of Thanks, Gratitude, Joy, and Adoration

When a child receives a gift, they don't just say "thank you" for the object itself—they often express gratitude for the ongoing love and care they receive from their parents. Similarly, in our prayers, we should respond to God with more than just a perfunctory "thank you." Despite the challenges, hardships, and unfairness we may face in life, the world is still full of beauty, wonder, and love. How do we pray the prayer of gratitude? We can begin by acknowledging the small, everyday joys—whether it's the simple pleasure of good food, the stars shining in the sky, a loving friend, or even the gift of another day. Each of these is an opportunity to express thanks to God. Such a prayer increases our awareness of life's blessings, making us more sensitive to what's good and right. It helps us appreciate the gifts in our lives, and, perhaps most importantly, it helps us develop humility, as we recognize that everything we have is a gift. The true purpose of this prayer is not for personal gain but to give God what is due to Him.

#### 2. Prayer of Confession, Penitence, and Forgiveness

Reflecting on God's purity and clarity of purpose, we are inevitably reminded of our own flaws and imperfections. Confession, too, is an act of transformation. Through it, we receive the power to forgive others. When we acknowledge our own imperfections, we gain compassion for the faults of others, and the process of forgiveness becomes easier and more genuine. We all fall short of the standard we know we should live by, and it is vital to take time each day to assess where we have failed. The prayer of confession is an act of honesty and humility. It's easy to offer a vague, blanket confession like "forgive me and help me become a better person," but true penitence requires specificity. "Today, I lied to someone," or "I hurt a loved one in a moment of pride," are the prayers that carry real weight. It's in the specific admissions of guilt that we truly confront our imperfections, and only by doing so can we experience the profound cleansing that confession offers. God's forgiveness is always available to us, for His love for us exceeds that of even the most devoted parents.

Continued on next page



NAILA JAMIL

### Living with Purpose: A Reflection on Ikigai and Self-Growth

HEAD OF PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
GREEN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, LAHORE.  
NAILA.JAMIL@GIU.EDU.PK

**Ikigai**; The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life offers a refreshing reminder to slow down and live with intention. In a world driven by hustle and achievement, it teaches that true fulfillment comes not from grand successes, but from small, meaningful actions aligned with our passions and values. Drawing on the wisdom of Japanese elders, especially in Okinawa, the book shows how joy and longevity arise from living authentically and with purpose. Blending philosophy, lifestyle, and real-life stories, Ikigai is a gentle guide to self-growth, balance, and a life well-lived.

Here are the key concepts regarding self-growth from the book:

#### 1. Find Your Ikigai:

Your ikigai lies at the intersection of what you love, what you are good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for.

**Self-growth insight:** Self-awareness is key. Reflect deeply on your passions, skills, values, and purpose.

#### 2. Live with Purpose and Passion:

People with ikigai live with clear direction, often working on something meaningful even after retirement.

**Growth tip:** Keep learning and contributing. A sense of purpose keeps you mentally and emotionally healthy.

#### 3. Stay Active – Don't Retire from Life:

Many in Okinawa (a region with the longest-living people) never truly "retire"; they stay engaged in hobbies, gardening, social activities, etc.



ZOHAIB SHAHID

### This Award is For You! Employee of the Month

ZOHAIB.SHAHID@IAC.EDU.PK

We are delighted to recognize Zohaib Shahid as our Employee of the Month for his exceptional dedication and leadership as Faculty Support Supervisor.

Zohaib plays a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth operation of academic support services. From coordinating with faculty members to managing resources and resolving day-to-day challenges, his calm and solution-oriented approach keeps everything running seamlessly behind the scenes.

What truly sets Zohaib apart is his unwavering reliability and professionalism. He is always proactive, quick to respond, and ready to assist, no matter how big or small the task.

Thank you, Zohaib, for your hard work, consistency, and dedication to excellence. Your contributions have a meaningful impact on our daily functioning and the success of our academic environment. We are proud to have you on the team!

### 3. Prayer for Yourself

When children approach their parents, they do so with the confidence that their needs will be met—at least, when their requests are reasonable. Likewise, when we pray for ourselves, we should approach God with that same confidence, knowing He will provide what we truly need. But there's more to it than merely asking for personal gain. True gratitude in prayer should shift our focus from what we want to how we can better serve others and God. Prayers framed this way are always answered because they align with God's greater purpose for us. The goal is not simply to ask for blessings, but to ask for the strength and wisdom to fulfill our divine calling. The more we align our petitions with the will of God, the more likely our prayers are to be answered in ways that help us grow spiritually.

### 4. Prayer for Others

Praying for others is a selfless act that often goes unnoticed, but it is one of the most powerful forms of prayer. By interceding for the needs of others, we break free from our self-centered concerns and become vessels of compassion. Prayers for others can change lives, but true intercession goes beyond words. It is easy to pray for someone in need and then forget about them. But a prayer for someone's well-being is most powerful when it's accompanied by action. As the proverb goes, "A hand that helps is holier than the lips that pray." I remember a story of an elderly friend, who once told me about a time when he was seriously ill. He was in a hospital, losing all hope. His friends formed a prayer circle and prayed for him during the night. The next day, he woke up feeling more rested and hopeful than he had in weeks. Though his physical recovery took time, the spiritual strength he gained from the prayers of others set him on a path toward healing. This experience demonstrated how prayer, combined with the love of others, can provide comfort and strength in even the most difficult of times.

### 5. Prayer in Action

While we often pray for the needs and suffering of others, prayer alone is not enough. We must also take action. Prayer empowers us to act with love and courage. Even the most well-intentioned hearts need divine strength to turn intention into reality. Prayer in action is about translating our spiritual insights into tangible change. It is the practice of combining the inner work of prayer with the outward work of service. When we pray for others, we should also look for ways to help them. Prayer doesn't just change our hearts; it inspires us to act in ways that align with God's will, bringing healing and transformation to the world.

### 6. Prayer of Discovery and Contemplation

I have come to realize that prayer is not a one-way conversation—it is a dialogue, a mutual exchange between us and the Divine. There was a time, one day, I found myself in a quiet space at home for reflection. I had recently had a falling out with a family member, and I found it difficult to resolve. As I sat there in the silence, I began to pray—not just asking God for help but also speaking openly about the situation. "It wasn't my fault," I argued. "I did everything I could." And yet, in that stillness, I felt a shift—an urge to revisit a specific moment. I replayed that moment in my mind, and in doing so, I gained a new perspective on my actions and role in the conflict. It wasn't the answer I expected, but it was the answer I needed. God's guidance doesn't always come in the form of words—it comes through understanding, revelation, and new insights. This is the prayer of contemplation: sitting in silence, asking for clarity, and listening for divine guidance.

### 7. Prayer for Grace

Grace, by definition, is the free and unmerited love and gift of God. It is through grace that we are able to bear life's hardships and challenges. The prayer for grace acknowledges our human limitations and calls on God to provide the strength to endure what seems impossible. We ask not for God to change our circumstances but for the grace to face them. In times of great difficulty, grace is the sustaining force that helps us carry on. It gives us the strength to forgive when we feel wronged, to love when it seems hard, and to have hope when all seems lost. When we pray for grace, we are asking for divine empowerment—to face life's challenges with wisdom, compassion and courage.

To sum up, no day should be so filled with busyness that we neglect to set aside time for prayer. Whether morning, evening, or at any other time that feels right, prayer should be a constant part of our lives. It is through these moments of connection with the Divine that we become more aware of our purpose and potential. Prayer can awaken our love, strengthen our will, and equip us to build a more just and compassionate world. Through prayer, we not only connect with the Divine but also transform ourselves, becoming more aligned with the purpose God has for us. Please remember: "Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays."

**Growth tip:** Keep challenging yourself. Stagnation kills growth; movement fuels it.

### 4. Cultivate Good Habits and Daily Routines:

Routine brings structure, reduces stress, and helps you focus on what matters.

**Growth tip:** Build small, sustainable habits around learning, mindfulness, and health.

### 5. Practice Mindfulness and Be Present:

Enjoy the little things and live in the moment. Japanese culture values presence, often seen in practices like tea ceremonies or gardening.

**Growth tip:** Mindfulness enhances clarity, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

### 6. Nurture Connections:

Social ties are a core part of a meaningful life. Community and friendship are heavily emphasized.

**Growth tip:** Meaningful relationships help you grow by offering support, feedback, and perspective.

### 7. Keep Your Mind and Body Young:

Engage in lifelong learning and stay physically active. Okinawans often garden, walk, and stay mentally sharp.

**Growth tip:** Push your cognitive and physical limits regularly.

### 8. Resilience and Anti-Fragility:

The book encourages embracing challenges and growing from adversity, drawing on wabi-sabi (beauty in imperfection) and resilience.

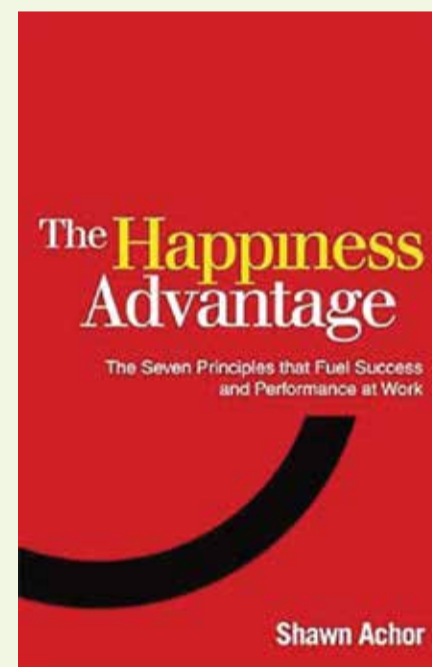
**Growth tip:** See setbacks as part of the journey; reflect, adapt, and grow stronger. Embracing ikigai reminds us that a meaningful life is cultivated through daily passion, mindful effort, and authentic connection. It's a gentle invitation to discover what truly motivates us and to live each day with purpose and gratitude.

### BOOK RECOMMENDATION



## The Happiness Advantage by Shawn Achor

ANUM.AZHAR@IAC.EDU.PK



In *The Happiness Advantage*, Harvard researcher and positive psychology expert Shawn Achor presents a compelling argument that happiness fuels success, not the other way around. Drawing on extensive research and real-life examples, Achor outlines how adopting a positive mindset can dramatically improve our productivity, resilience, and overall well-being.

The book introduces seven actionable principles, from rewiring our brains to scan for the positive to cultivating habits that increase optimism, social connection, and motivation. These strategies are simple, practical, and rooted in science—making them accessible for individuals across all walks of life.

Achor's engaging storytelling and approachable style make this an enjoyable yet transformative read. Whether you're a student striving for academic balance, a professional seeking greater fulfillment, or someone interested in personal growth, this book offers invaluable tools to help you thrive.

I highly recommend *The Happiness Advantage* to anyone looking to build lasting habits of happiness, success, and meaning.



NAWAL BASHIR

## The Psychology of Color: How the Colors Around Us Affect Our Mood and Productivity

NAWAL.BASHIR@IAC.EDU.PK

The colors around us influence our emotions, thoughts, and even our behavior in profound ways. Whether we realize it or not, the colors in our environment have the power to shape how we feel and how effectively we work. From the calming blues of the sky to the energizing red of a traffic light, each color can trigger a specific psychological response.

The study of how color impacts human behavior is known as color psychology, and it is used in various fields, including marketing, design, and mental health. Colors can affect everything from our mood to our decision-making process, and even our productivity levels.

For example, blue is often associated with calmness, trust, and focus. This is why many offices and study environments feature shades of blue, as it encourages concentration and a sense of peace. Red, on the other hand, is a color that is energizing and stimulating. It can increase heart rate and alertness, making it a great choice for high-energy environments like gyms or brainstorming sessions. However, too much red can lead to feelings of anxiety or aggression, so it's best used sparingly.

Yellow, the color of sunshine, is often linked to happiness and optimism. It has the ability to boost creativity and bring about positive thinking. This is why creative spaces or workstations may incorporate yellow tones to inspire innovation. On the other hand, green, often found in nature, is known for its calming effect. It promotes relaxation and stress reduction, making it ideal for places where one needs to unwind or focus, such as bedrooms or meditation spaces.

Psychologist Carl Jung once said, "Colors are the mother tongue of the subconscious." This quote highlights the deep psychological connection humans have with colors. The subtle yet powerful effects of color on our minds are often subconscious but can be harnessed to create environments that foster well-being and productivity.

**The Impact on Productivity:** The colors in our workspaces can also affect how efficiently we work. Research suggests that cool colors like blue and green can improve focus and productivity, while warm colors like red and orange can stimulate energy and creativity. A well-balanced color scheme in your workspace can help you feel energized without feeling overwhelmed.

In conclusion, understanding the psychology of color can help us create environments that optimize our emotional well-being and enhance productivity. Whether it's using calming blues in a study space or energizing reds in a creative zone, the colors we choose can make a significant impact on our daily lives.

### Readers Activity: Embrace Your Strengths

Below are five core strengths that contribute to personal well-being. On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), rate yourself honestly in each area:

- 1. Gratitude** – How often do you practice thankfulness, even for small things in your life?
- 2. Kindness** – How regularly do you show kindness to yourself and others, even during stressful times?
- 3. Mindfulness** – How present are you in the moment, rather than distracted by past or future worries?
- 4. Self-Confidence** – How strong is your belief in your ability to succeed and handle challenges?
- 5. Creativity** – How often do you express yourself in new and innovative ways, whether through art, problem-solving, or daily activities?

#### Reflection:

• Which strength did you score highest in? Reflect on how you can continue to nurture it!

• Which strength could you improve on? Choose one small action you can take today to enhance it.



HAMNAH NAYYAR

## Healing Doesn't Have a Deadline

HAMNAHNAYYAR27@GMAIL.COM

We all go through things that change us—loss, heartbreak, failure, or just the quiet weight of too many stressful days. And in the middle of all that, there's this pressure to "bounce back" quickly, to smile again, to act like nothing ever happened. We live in a world that celebrates quick recoveries. The "strong ones" are the people who smile the soonest, move on the fastest, and never talk about the hard stuff. But real strength? Real strength is staying. Sitting with your pain. Facing it. And still choosing to grow. We are so focused on 'moving on' that we don't give ourselves proper time to understand our pain. But the truth is, healing doesn't follow a schedule. You don't wake up one day and suddenly feel fine. Sometimes you'll be okay for weeks, and then one random moment will bring everything back and that's still healing. That's how it works. You're not behind because your pain is ongoing.

Sometimes, we carry invisible wounds, hidden injuries remain present because they bring continuous daily weight. Surviving each day stands as its own achievement. Healing doesn't mean forgetting what happened. It doesn't mean you're suddenly okay. It means learning to live again, slowly. It means choosing yourself, even when it's hard. The healing journey includes simple actions like, getting out of bed, texting a friend back, taking a deep breath when everything feels too much.

If you're still healing, please be gentle with yourself. Don't compare your journey to others. Some people smile while they're still breaking inside. Some laugh loudly, but cry quietly at night. Everyone is carrying something. And everyone is healing in their own way.

There's beauty in being soft, in feeling deeply, in not rushing your heart to "move on." The fact that you're still here, still trying, still hoping for better days, that's something to be proud of. So, if you're still figuring it out, still feeling things, you thought you were over, still tired of pretending you're fine - breathe. You're not late. You're on your way.

As Rumi once said, "The wound is the place where the Light enters you."

Maybe that's the gift of pain, it breaks us open just enough to let something brighter in.



AMNA SALEEM

## Message from the Counselor's Desk

AMNA.SALEEM@IAC.EDU.PK

**Dear Students,**

As we navigate the many demands of life; academic, professional, and personal, it's easy to lose sight of our emotional well-being. Yet, it is precisely during our busiest and most challenging moments that we need to pause and check in with ourselves the most.

Emotional wellness is not about avoiding stress or staying positive all the time, it's about building the awareness and strength to respond to life's ups and downs with clarity, self-compassion, and resilience. It's about knowing when to ask for support, and allowing ourselves space to rest, reflect, and reset.

In counseling, we often speak about the importance of small, consistent efforts. Whether it's taking five mindful breaths between tasks, journaling your thoughts, or simply reaching out to someone you trust, these seemingly simple acts can bring powerful shifts in how we experience our days.

Remember: your feelings are valid, your pace is your own, and your mental health matters. Prioritizing your well-being is not a luxury, it's a necessity for living a fulfilling life.

As always, our doors are open for anyone seeking guidance, clarity, or just a safe space to talk. You don't have to go through anything alone.



AYESHA HAIDER

## Dear Counselor: How do I?

AYESHA.HAIDER@IAC.EDU.PK

Dear Counselor, how do I deal with feelings of jealousy when I see others achieving things I wish I had? I want to be happy for them, but sometimes it just makes me feel inadequate.

**Dear Reader,**

Thank you for sharing such an honest and vulnerable question. Feelings of jealousy are completely normal, yet they can be difficult to navigate, especially when they leave us feeling inadequate or disconnected from our own sense of worth.

First, it's important to recognize that jealousy is not a reflection of your inadequacy but rather a signal that you might be longing for something you value—whether it's success, recognition, or something else. It's a natural human response to compare ourselves to others, but the key is to transform these feelings into a more empowering mindset.

1. Practice Self-Compassion: When you feel jealousy arise, remind yourself that everyone's journey is different. Celebrate what makes you unique, and acknowledge your own achievements, no matter how small they may seem. Self-compassion can help shift the focus back to your growth and progress.

2. Reframe the Narrative: Instead of viewing someone else's success as a threat or a measure of your inadequacy, try to reframe it as inspiration. Their achievements are proof that success is possible, not something that takes away from your potential.

3. Set Personal Goals: Reflect on what specifically triggered your jealousy. What is it about their success that you desire for yourself? Use this insight to set your own meaningful goals and take action towards them, knowing that your success will come in your own time and way.

Remember, feelings of jealousy are part of being human, but how we respond to them shapes our emotional well-being. By practicing self-compassion and focusing on your own path, you can transform jealousy into a catalyst for personal growth.



AQSA SHABBIR

## Understanding and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome: How to Trust Your Abilities

AQSA.SHABBIR@IAC.EDU.PK

Imposter Syndrome is a psychological phenomenon where individuals doubt their accomplishments and fear being exposed as a "fraud," despite evidence of their competence. This feeling can persist even in highly successful people, leaving them plagued by anxiety and self-doubt.

The term was first coined by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in the 1970s. They discovered that many high-achieving individuals struggled with an internalized belief that they weren't truly deserving of their success. Even though they had clear evidence of their abilities, they attributed their achievements to luck or timing, rather than skill and effort.

This internal conflict often leads to feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression. Those experiencing Imposter Syndrome may avoid new challenges, fearing they'll be "found out." The fear of failure can be paralyzing, preventing growth and progress.

So, how can we overcome this? The first step is acknowledging the feeling. Recognizing that Imposter Syndrome is common and that many others feel the same way is empowering. Once you accept that these feelings are not a reflection of your true abilities, you can begin to shift your perspective.

Self-compassion is another key. Treat yourself with the same kindness you would extend to a friend facing similar doubts. Celebrate your successes, no matter how small, and remind yourself that growth is a journey, not a destination.

As psychologist Carl Jung wisely said, "The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are." Embrace your uniqueness, trust your abilities, and remember that you are worthy of your accomplishments. Overcoming Imposter Syndrome is not about perfection, but about trusting yourself in the face of uncertainty.

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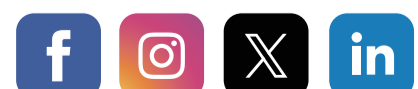
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### CONTACT

(042) 111 111 822 | <https://iac.edu.pk>

7.5 Km from Thokar Niaz Baig,  
Main Raiwind Road, Lahore.



@iacofficials