

Imam Shafi'ee (rahmatullahi alayhi) said very beautifully in a poem:

فَأَيَقَنْتُ أَنِّي مَهْمَا أَرَدْتُ
رِضَا النَّاسِ لَا يَدْمِنُ أَنَّ أَدُمَ

"It became certain, that no matter how hard I try, Pleasing people will bring me nothing but criticism."

WILL IT GET BETTER?

The common saying of "when the going gets tough, the tough get going", should be accompanied with reminders that Almighty Allah will never burden you with more than you can bear (Qur'an 2:286), and that there is surely relief after hardship (Qur'an 94:5-6).

Turn to Allah Ta'ala when you feel overwhelmed by life's pressures, and include the recitation of this Masnoon Dua of Nabi ﷺ in your daily routine:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْهَمِّ وَالْحَزَنِ
وَاَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَاَعُوْذُ
بِكَ مِنَ الْجُبْنِ وَالْبُخْلِ وَاَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنْ
غَلَبَةِ الدَّيْنِ وَقَهْرِ الرِّجَالِ

"O Allah, I seek refuge in you from grief and sadness, from weakness and from laziness, from miserliness and from cowardice, from being overcome by debt and overpowered by men (i.e., others).



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A Youth Development Initiative of Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre

To be young in the twenty first century is to navigate an unpredictable and high-pressure world. A student once described her school as a “pressure-cooker”. Another young adult described his workplace as “an unhappiness factory”. This alone highlights the pressures that exist out there!

It may seem gloomy at times, especially when there's pressure to succeed despite the odds and put your best foot forward at all times. However, by understanding your personal experiences of pressure, it is possible to navigate and minimise its stressful effects in your day-to-day life.

Your reflection in water will be clearly visible only if the water is still. If there is disturbance in the water, your reflection will also appear disturbed. Similarly, the reflection of your life will appear steady only if you have peace of mind. However, regular stress and tension has robbed us of the true reflection of our lives.

WHERE DOES PRESSURE COME FROM?

Effective problem-solving begins by uncovering the source. Ponder the potential source of your pressure, bearing in mind that it may be internal, external, or likely a combination of both:

- **Self-imposed Pressure**

Pressure caused by our own expectations and pursuit of excellence in all facets of life. With as many as 65% of young South Africans experiencing some kind of mental health issue, low self-belief coupled with high self-expectations are common. It's healthy to have goals, but destructive to think you are not of value unless you achieve everything you think you should.

- **Peer Pressure**

The pressure of wanting to feel accepted and valued by your friends is one that affects most young people. Coping well with peer pressure means getting the right balance between being yourself and fitting in with the group.

- **Family Pressure**

This includes stress associated with family expectations.

- **Academic/Workplace Pressure**

Pressure at school, university or places of work from teachers and superiors, fellow students and colleagues.

- **Societal pressure**

Pressure from our communities, neighbourhoods, cultural norms, and society at large.

HOW WILL PRESSURE AFFECT YOU?

Moderate amounts of stress can be good sometimes, boosting our alertness, performance and memory. However, if your functionality is negatively affected, then be aware of the following:

- **Aging Before One's Time**

Hazrat Imam Musa Al-Kazim عليه السلام says: "Excessive worries advance old age." (Tuhaf Al-Uqool)

- **Mental Health**

Constant worry caused by excessive pressure can lead to decreased self-confidence and self-worth.

- **Physical Health**

Excessive pressure and stress causes headaches, dizziness, insomnia and digestive problems.

- **People-pleasing**

Feeling insecure and always worrying about the thoughts and opinions of others.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

- **Self-kindness**

Why are you pressuring yourself to have everything figured out? Take the same compassion and humanity you show others and impart it inward.

- **Reframe**

Overwhelming pressure can be a test from Allah Ta'ala, meaning that if we respond to it with grace and intelligence, we may be rewarded for it. Reframe your struggles as opportunities to gain closeness to Allah Ta'ala.

- **Cultivate an Attitude for Gratitude**

Allah Ta'ala has said in the Holy Qur'an, "If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe" (14:7). Nabi ﷺ said words to the effect, "Richness is not the abundance of wealth, rather true richness is self-sufficiency." From this we learn that a person becomes the richest of people when he is content with what he already possesses without pining for more.
(Riyad as-Salihin)

- **You against You**

Don't measure your successes and failures against others; it isn't fair. Be inspired by the journeys of others, but don't compare yourself to the extent of feeling useless and sorry for yourself. Pleasing people is not your objective. You have a much higher objective - to please Allah Ta'ala.