

The Original Self-Help Book: Al-Balkhi's 9th Century "Sustenance of the Body and Soul"	
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Polymath	<p>Authored over 60 books on various subjects</p> <p>Historically more famous for his contributions to the field of geography</p> <p>Mastered many sciences: theology, philosophy, linguistics, geography, political sciences, theoretical medicine, and the science of temperaments</p>
Only known medical work	<p>Wrote <i>Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa al-Anfus (Sustenance of the Body and Soul)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divided into 2 sections, one devoted to physical health maintenance and disease prevention, while the second section focuses on mental health
Neglecting mental health	Balkhi criticizes physicians of his time for limiting themselves to treating the body while neglecting the psychological needs of their patients
Mind-body connection	Makes the point that when a person experiences a physical illness, their psyche is consequently affected, and vice-versa
Riyaḍat al-anfus	The more a person trains their soul on how to overcome small distressful situations, the more they become capable of facing larger life challenges
Differences in constitution	Some people have strong endurance and can tolerate life's calamities without experiencing severe stress, while others cannot
External help	<p>When a person struggles with a psychological disorder, their psyche can become distorted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thus, the need for advice and counseling from someone external to them
Positive self-talk	Needed since a person may find themselves in a stressful situation where they cannot immediately find external support
Classification of mental health conditions	Classified various mental health conditions accurately, by in large, when compared to modern diagnostic criteria

On anger (ghaḍab)	<p>A person's temperament may account for why they become easily provoked while others are able to remain patient</p> <p>Anger management requires both external and internal approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seeking help from wise individuals who can help calm their anger when triggered - Prepare aphorisms and positive thoughts ahead of time that can later be used to control one's anger at the time they experience it <p>Avoid interacting with those who caused the anger for a period of time until psychological balance is restored</p>
On sadness and depression (ḥuẓn and jaza')	<p>Divided into 3 categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commonplace sadness - Depression of known etiology - affects people in response to a specific loss, such as losing someone or something desired - Depression of unknown etiology - continuous feeling of sadness that is not related to an unpleasant event or situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claims that the underlying cause for this type of depression can be traced back to physical changes or illnesses - Argues that medication is more important than psychotherapy in treating this form of depression
Examples of self-affirming incantations	<p>"Life is full of unpleasant events that affect all people. I must stop thinking about what I lost and enjoy what I have"</p> <p>"The most painful moment is at the peak of loss; things will get better in time"</p>
On fears and phobias (faza')	<p>Advises that dreading an undesired situation is more painful than actually experiencing it</p> <p>Most of our fears are not real</p> <p>The more life experience and knowledge a person has, the less likely they experience fear</p> <p>Offers the first description of gradual exposure therapy as a treatment modality for fears and phobias</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommends that people who fear certain things should repeatedly expose themselves to them as a form of noxious stimuli until their fears are gone
On obsessional disorders (wasawis al-ṣadr)	<p>Obsessional thoughts are typically either desired or fearful thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These thoughts can become so overwhelming that they prevent living a normal life <p>Advises a person afflicted with obsessional disorder to avoid</p>

	<p>loneliness and increase their social activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Argues that loneliness triggers obsessional thoughts <p>Encourages a person who is obsessed with fearful thoughts to look into the veracity of their fears</p> <p>Explains that obsessional thoughts may be the result of a biological imbalance in the temperaments or caused by the devil (shayṭan)</p>
Effect of attitude on health	<p>People may suffer from great illnesses or wounds yet surprisingly overcome them because they have courageous souls and a strong will</p>
Hadith on seeking treatment	<p>“O servants of Allah, seek treatment. Verily, Allah did not place a disease but that he also placed its treatment or cure”</p> <p>يَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ تَدَاوُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَضَعْ دَاءً إِلَّا وَضَعَ لَهُ شِفَاءً</p>

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