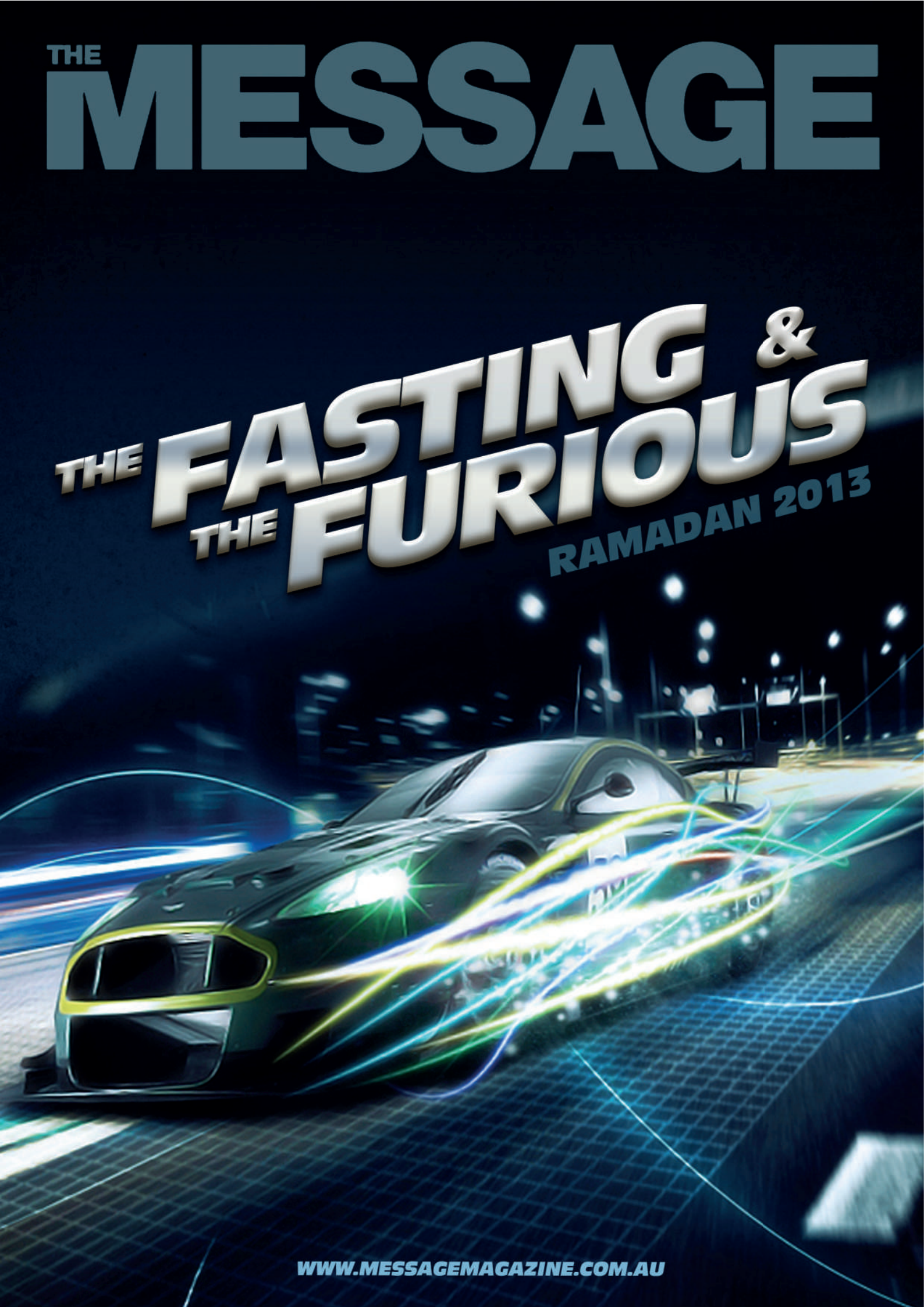
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RAMADAN

THE MONTH OF FORGIVENESS

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"THE *BEST* CHARITY IS THAT GIVEN IN RAMADAN"

[at-tirmidhi]

رمضان شهر العطاء و المغفرة


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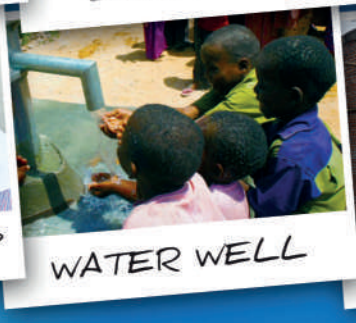
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THE FASTING & THE FURIOUS

HOW TO DRIVE YOUR MOTIVATION ALL THROUGHOUT RAMADAN

Ramadan is like a 3-lap NASCAR race that most kick off with a well-oiled and fuelled machine only to discover it needs maintenance by the time it hits Lap 2. Because they haven't prepared for the middle slack before they rev again into the last 10 days of Ramadan, they've suffered a major loss, the foremost being in ibaadah (worship).

Each year, we prepare ourselves for the coming of Ramadan. We attend many workshops on how to prepare for Ramadan, but each year, we fool ourselves into believing that we will drive right through all 30 days fully equipped with tools of ibaadah, fully indulged in the blessed days of the month.

How many times have you:

- Fell behind in your Qur'aan reading schedule?
- Felt too tired or demotivated to go to Taraweeh?
- Became too drained to wake up for suhoor?
- Shortened your time in Qiyaam because you did pretty ok yesterday?
- Said to yourself: "I'll take a break now so that I can be fully energized for the last 10 days"?

What if you could drive right through all the days of Ramadan without feeling the motivation dip in the middle?

What if you could truly capitalise on the middle days of forgiveness? What if your last 10 days of Ramadan were built on the foundations of strength and vitality from the days preceding? What if this Ramadan was the most exceptional Ramadan of your life?

"Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month (Ramadan) shall fast throughout it…" 2:185

Could you deprive yourself of the most exceptional Ramadan this year?

Tune in to this issue of the Message Magazine and:

- Discover how to overcome your middle Ramadan slump
- Equip yourself with the tools of revitalisation and motivation
- Learn the methods and strategies the Sahaba implemented during Ramadan
- Comprehend the importance of a fully-rounded Ramadan
- Unleash your full potential as a worshipper and servant of Allah
- Anticipate and destroy any roadblocks that will arise during the month of Ramadan

Is it not about time you are foremost in your ibaadah throughout this blessed month? The Prophet(s) said that in this month, every action of the son of Adam is multiplied. A good action receives from ten to seven hundred times additional hassanat…. Up to seven hundred times more hassant! Is it then not time for us to get ourselves out of cruise control and to use these next 30 days to get closer to Allah (swt)?

Rev up your engines this Ramadan and be among The Fasting and the Furious!

Your brother in Islam

Muhammad Alshareef



EDITORIAL: LIFE IN THE RAMA FASTIN

Every time the month of Ramadan comes around I remember a show that was on TV about 25 odd years ago.

This show was set in a supermarket (i.e. a Coles or a Woolworths). Every week contestants would compete against each other in a number of different competitions with the winner given the opportunity to go into a super 'bonus' round.

Every week, the host would inform the winning contestant that they would be given 60 seconds to try and fill as many shopping trolleys as they could possibly fill with what they wanted and after the time had elapsed they were able to keep whatever they had put into their trolleys.

As a young boy watching this programme on TV, I remember laughing uncontrollably when the 60 second countdown started. Every week, I saw different contestants running in the shopping aisles like chickens with their heads cut off trying to 'stuff' as many things into their trolleys as possible. By the end of the 60 seconds, some contestants were able to fill as many as 20 trolleys worth of groceries! Now that is impressive!

Afterwards the host of the show would often go through the shopping trolleys to find 'unusual' items that the contestant had placed in their trolley. I remember one time the host pulling out of the trolley of a big, bald headed guy wearing a bikie type leather jacket a pink apron with fairies on it that made the audience burst out into laughter. When the contestant was asked why the apron was in his trolley, his strategy was the same as all the other contestants who had been on the show:

Fill the trolley with as many things as possibly…worry about what was in the trolleys later.

When Ramadan comes around every year, this TV programme always comes to mind. Why? During this blessed month, Allah (swt) out of His mercy hosts His own show. A show that should make the eyes of the believer light up with joy and excitement.

Ibn Khusaima narrated a hadith that during the month of Ramadan, Allah (swt) rewards one Sunnah action performed for the price of an obligatory action and if you choose to upsize, one obligatory action is for the price of 70 obligatory actions.

In other words, the reward of my daily prayers, Zakat, being good to my parents, reading Quran, lowering my gaze and even smiling in the direction of a fellow brother is multiplied over and over again. SubhanAllah! Why wouldn't the eyes of the believer light up upon hearing this? Why wouldn't the believer wait with so much eagerness for the beginning of this month?

The host of this TV show gave each contestant every week 60 seconds to try and fill as many groceries as possible into their shopping trolleys. Out of His love, Allah (swt) has given the believer a 30 day shopping spree where any good deed performed will be multiplied up to 700 times!

We should adopt the same strategy as the contestants on this TV show all those years ago. We should have the same level of urgency as these contestants and try to fill our trolleys with as many good deeds as possible and worry about what deeds are in our trolleys later.

DAN
G LANE

We should make the effort to remind ourselves that fasting does not merely mean to abstain from food, drink and lawful sexual intercourse from sunrise to sunset, but more importantly, it is a period where one takes greater care to guard the eyes, the ears, the tongue and the limbs from any improprieties. **Allah (swt) tells us that Fasting has been ordained for us in order that we may gain taqwa (God- consciousness).** It is not a time for sleeping in, engaging in idle talk, or being caught up in worldly affairs.

At the end of each fasting day, reflect on how many shopping trolleys you think you may have filled today with good deeds. Has this fasting made me more fearful and obedient to Allah? Has it increased me in taqwa? Has it helped me in distancing myself from sins and disobedience? It is a month that Allah (swt) has sent down to help us re-charge our spiritual batteries, to purify our hearts and to correct our actions.

The companions of the Prophet (s) would work towards and prepare for the on-set of Ramadan six months before its commencement and would call upon Allah to accept their actions and deeds during Ramadan for the other six months.

Why? Because they too would gear themselves up for the month- they were hunters on a one month shopping spree attempting to accumulate a hefty account full of good deeds and rewards.

Ramadan is an opportunity to renew our relationship with Allah (swt) that may have been broken during the year. So take advantage of this month my brothers, take advantage of the rewards that are on offer my sisters and don't be of those who once the month is over find themselves standing in the 8 items or less express lane!

Be among 'The Fasting and the Furious!' Your time as a contestant starts at sunset on the very first night of Ramadan. Are you ready?

Your brother in Islam

Mohammed Adra

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THIS IS AWAKENIN

GOING FROM 0 TO 10

It's hard to describe the feeling. Imagine living your entire life in a cave and believing it was your whole world. Then suddenly you step outside. For the first time in your life, you see the sky. You see the trees and the birds and the sun. For the first time in your life, you realise that the world you once knew was false. For the first time, you discover a Truer, more beautiful reality. Imagine the high of that realisation. For a moment, you feel you can do anything. Suddenly, nothing from your previous life in the cave matters. You become empowered, fully awake, fully alive, fully aware for the very first time. It is an unexplainable feeling. This is the spiritual high that comes with newly discovered truth.

This is Awakening.

A convert to Islam knows this feeling. A born Muslim who comes back to the deen knows this feeling. Any human being who lives their life away from God, and returns, knows this feeling. This state is what Ibn ul Qayyim (RA) calls 'yaqatha' (awakening). He describes this state as the first station on the path to Allah. This is the state sometimes referred to as the "convert zeal". When a person first converts or starts coming back to Allah they are often full of motivation and energy that others do not have. The reason for this energy is the spiritual high, characteristic of this state.

Characteristics of the Station of Awakening

Allah makes worship easier: While in this state, worship becomes much easier. A person is so driven and motivated that they may easily sacrifice everything for the sake of the new reality they have discovered. This zeal can take a person from 0 to 100 in no time. It's like being on spiritual steroids. The strength you have is not from your own self, but from an aid that was given to you.

In this case the aid is given by Allah (swt). Some may advise not changing too much, too fast. I don't think fast change is the problem. I think arrogance is. I think hopelessness is. If Allah gives you a gift whereby you are able to do more, use it. But thank Him—not yourself, for that ability. And know that the heightened state is temporary. You may go from 0 to 100 in a very short time due to it, but when the high passes, don't lose hope and let yourself slip back to 0.

Temporary: Like every state in this life, this state is temporary. Life is never linear. And neither is the path to Allah (swt). Not realising this can cause despair and hopelessness once it passes.

Pitfalls of This State

The two pitfalls associated with this state correspond to not understanding the characteristics of the state listed above. These pitfalls are also the two causes of stagnation on the path to God: arrogance/ complacency and hopelessness. The arrogant person already feels they are good enough, so they stop striving. The hopeless person believes that they will never be good enough, so they stop striving. Two opposite maladies, leading to the same result: To stop moving on the path to God.

Arrogance: The first pitfall corresponds to not understanding that the increased ability to worship came from God and is a characteristic of the state—not the individual! The one who doesn't understand this wrongfully attributes the heightened ability to worship to one's own righteousness. This false attribution is very dangerous because it leads to arrogance and self-righteousness. Rather than realising this heightened 'religious state' is a gift from Allah (swt), the worshipper feels a sense of hidden pride and may look down on others who don't share similar zeal.

G...
...D (AND STAYING THERE)

Despair and Hopelessness: This pitfall corresponds to not understanding that like all states in life, the spiritual high is temporary. This does not mean you have failed or done something wrong! Most people know what it feels like after the Ramadan high has passed. The instability of the 'high' is a characteristic of life. And that lesson is one even Abu Bakr (ra) had to learn. One day Abu Bakr (ra) and Hanzala (ra) came to the Prophet (s) and said: 'Hanzala is a hypocrite, Messenger of Allah!' The Messenger of Allah (s) said, 'Why is that?' I said, 'Messenger of Allah, when we are with you, you remind us of the Garden and Fire and it is as if we could see them with our eyes. When we leave your presence, we attend to our wives, children and estates in a state of great heedlessness.' The Messenger of Allah (s) said, 'By the One in whose hand my soul is, if you were to remain in the state you are in when you are in my presence and in the dhikr (remembrance), the angels would shake hands with you on your bed and in the street, but, Hanzala, different times are not the same.' [Muslim]

After the Spiritual High Has Passed

The most important part of this journey is never giving up! Know that you don't feel the same zeal, not because you have failed at something. The dip

Shaytan's Traps

Remember Shaytan will get at you in different ways depending on your state.

When You're High: When you're high, he'll try to get you by making you arrogant. He'll try to get you by making you look down on others. He'll try to get you eventually by making you feel so pleased with yourself that you don't think you need to keep striving because you are already so great(and better than others around you). He will consistently make you look at those who appear to do less than you to justify your own shortcomings.

For example, if you don't wear hijab, he'll make you think, "There are hijabis that do x, y, z bad things! At least I don't do those things! I do x, y, z good things that hijabis don't do!" Or if you slacken in prayer, you may think; "At least I'm not clubbing or drinking like so and so." Remember, Allah isn't grading on a curve. It makes no difference what others are doing. We all stand alone on the Day of Judgment. And this is just a tool of Shaytan to make us stop striving.

When You're Low: But when you're low, shaytan will try to get at you differently; he'll try to get you by making you feel hopeless. He'll try to make you believe that you're worthless and that there's no point in trying. He'll try to make you believe you are a failure and no matter what you do, you'll never get back to where you once were!

Or he may try to make you believe that you're too 'bad' for Allah to forgive you. As a result, you may let yourself fall further.

You may have been up once and then felt so bad about yourself because you started to slacken in your worship. And maybe because of your previous self-righteousness you didn't give people permission to make mistakes or be weak. This ends up becoming self-destructive because it further translates to not giving yourself 'permission' to make mistakes and be weak.



Since you believe you don't have permission to be human and fallible, when you do make a mistake, you are so hard on yourself that you lose hope. So you let yourself go. You may end up committing more sins, which only makes your hopelessness worse! And it becomes a self-perpetuating vicious cycle. Shaytan will also try to make you believe that you shouldn't try to repent or pray because you'd be a hypocrite since you are such a 'bad' person. He wants you to despair in the mercy of Allah. That's what he wants! These are all lies, of course. But he's good at what he does, after all. When you have sinned, that's when you need to turn to Allah even more—not less!

To protect yourself from this downward spiral, remember that the lows are part of the path. Remember that 'futoor' (the dip) is part of being human. Once you realise that this does not mean you have failed or that you are a hypocrite (like Abu Bakr (ra) thought), you can keep from giving up once you get there. The key is to develop certain habits which become your 'bare minimum'. That means no matter how you feel, how unmotivated, how low, you still do these things at the very least. You realise that when you're at your low, it's going to be harder, but you struggle to keep doing them. For example, the bare minimum is the 5 daily prayers at their appointed times. This should *never* be compromised no matter *how much* you're 'not feeling it'. They should be considered like breathing air. Imagine what would happen if every time you were exhausted or in a bad mood you decided not to breathe!

It is preferable to have other rituals that are part of the 'bare minimum'. For example, stick to certain extra prayers and athkar or daily Quran—even if it's little. Remember that Allah loves a small *consistent* action more than a huge inconsistent one. If you hold onto certain essentials during your 'low', you will ride the wave of iman and come back up, inshaAllah. And, God willing, when you do go back up, you'll be at a higher place than your last 'high'.

Know that the path to Allah is not a flat one. Your iman (faith) will go up and down. Your ability to worship will go up and down. But, know that for every dip, there is also a rise. Just stay patient, stay consistent, don't lose hope and seek help in Allah. The path is hard. The path will have bumps and drops. But, like all things in this life, this path will come to an end. And that end will make it all worth it!

Allah says:
'Oh mankind, indeed you are ever toiling towards your lord, painfully toiling…But you shall meet Him' (84:6).

Your sister in Islam
Yasmin Mogahed
Yasmin Mogahed

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MAKING ROOM IN THE BOOT...

BALANCING FAMILY LIFE, WORK AND FAITH: LESSONS FROM ISLAM'S GREATEST WOMEN

Throughout the history of Islam, women have played a major role in spreading the sacred message of Allah (glorified and exalted be He). Examples of these great women have been mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad(s) who has praised and exhorted the superiority of **Maryam, Asiya the wife of Pharoah, Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) Mother of the Believers and Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her), daughter of Muhammad(s).**

These amazing women are prime examples of productivity for modern Muslim women who want to achieve the right balance between their family life, work and most importantly their deen. Let's have a look at these four women and see what we can learn from them to achieve the right balance!

Khadijah

Khadijah was an unrivaled embodiment of faith, productivity and unconditional support. After her father's death, Khadijah inherited his vast wealth and business talents and successfully managed her father's business interests and preserved the family's fortune.

However, she did not waste this wealth on materialistic things. She used it to feed and clothe the poor, assist her relatives financially and provide for the marriage of those of her kin who had no means to marry. Not only was she a charitable and wealthy businesswoman, but a caring wife who was the first to believe in and support the Prophet Muhammad (s).
Of Khadijah (ra), the Prophet (s) said:

"The best of the world's women is Mary (in her lifetime) and the best of the world's women is Khadijah (in her lifetime)." [Bukhari]

Furthermore, Aisha (ra) narrated:
"I did not feel jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (s) as much as I did of Khadijah (although) she died before he married me, for **I often heard him mentioning her, and Allah had told him to give her the good tidings that she would have a palace of Qasab (i.e. pipes of precious stones and pearls in Paradise).** And whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would send her women-friends a good share of it." [Bukhari]



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Fatimah

Fatimah is also a legendary beacon of productivity and balance: a fervent worshipper of Allah (swt) who was deeply committed to her family. She was a loyal wife, an excellent daughter as well as a keen helper of the poor and needy.

She would often give all the food she had to those in need even if she herself remained hungry. Her life with Ali (ra) was simple and frugal, yet she remained content with this and was still able to help the poor.

Additionally, Fatimah would often bring her two sons to see their grandfather, the Prophet (s), who was exceedingly fond of them. **Despite the hardwork and time she had to put into her daily chores, she never forgot the importance of family bonding and prioritised it in her life.**

Fatimah's (ra) closeness to Rasul Allah (s) and the greatness of his love for her shines clearly in his (s) statement:
"Fatimah is a part of me, and he who makes her angry, makes me angry." [Bukhari]

Maryam

The Qur'an witnesses and declares Maryam to be the best woman that will ever exist: a role model for all Muslim women of all ages for her impeccable character. Her genuine devotion to and trust in Allah reflected her perfect worship and behavior.

She became pregnant by Allah's decree and was to deliver her child all alone. People accused her of the vilest sins, yet she resisted pessimism and displayed immense willpower, determination and faith in Allah (glorified and exalted be He). She surrendered to Allah (swt) and placed her fullest trust in His plan and was therefore unaffected by their accusations. In this day and age, it can be easy to lose trust in Allah and surrender to sadness, but Maryam's life is a reminder to us that His help will always come if we persevere in trusting Him, and through it the highest levels of productivity can be achieved.

Allah (swt) exalts Maryam's mention in the Qur'an and declares her as being devoutly obedient to Allah in the following verse: **"And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient." [Qur'an: Chapter 66, Verse 12]**

Asiya

Asiya's greatness lies in the fact that although she was the wife of one of the most powerful, arrogant and tyrannical rulers of Egypt, she had a discerning heart that was able to see and accept the truth in the message of Prophet Musa [as]. For her, wealth, beauty or status was not the main criterion of human excellence: she realised that without faith in Allah (swt), a human being has nothing. **She voluntarily gave up all the luxuries of Pharoah's comfortable palaces for what is more lasting and beautiful: becoming closer to Allah.**

Allah had chosen Asiya to nurture and protect Musa (s) when he was an infant. When her maids brought the cradle of Musa (s) from the river, she insisted to Pharaoh that she wanted to adopt the infant as a child. Her selflessness proved her to be a loving mother to him.

In Surah At Tahrim, Allah (swt) makes Asiya (ra) an example of excellence for all the believers when He (glorified and exalted be He) says:
"And Allah has set forth an example for those who believe, the wife of Pharaoh, when she said: **"My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his work, and save me from the people who are Zalimun (polytheists, wrong-doers and disbelievers in Allah)." [Qur'an: Chapter 66, Verse 11]**

This is the level of commitment to our deen and our families we should and can achieve!

Your sister in Islam
Ayesha Salahuddin
Ayesha Salahuddin

THE EID SHOPPING SPREE...

A MUSLIM'S GUIDE TO SAVING SMARTER

As a child, I remember my mother keeping a meticulous record of things she bought with the housekeeping money my father gave her. I often wondered why; and when I asked, she'd say she needed to make hisaab, or be accountable for the money she used. Since the money was entrusted to her by my father, she had to use it responsibly.

As I entered my teenage years, I thought the idea almost laughable – would I be willing to keep track of every cent I spent? Then I became an adult, entered the corporate world and started earning my own money. Stark reality hit me like a bucket of ice cold water in the face on a cold winter's day!

I gained a greater respect for the tedious system my mother had applied to our housekeeping finances during my childhood. I finally understood it and much to my own amazement, I too, started keeping a "hisaab kitaab" (record book) of almost every cent I spent, though mine was the new-age vers
ion in the form of an Excel spreadsheet.

During my entrance into adulthood and my introduction to big, scary words such as budgeting, accountability and responsibility, the method behind my mother's madness became evident – I had learned the secrets to saving money and the art of spending it wisely.

"Saving", however, is a term not necessarily restricted to money and finance. There are many different avenues where you could potentially save. If I had to sum up the lessons I've learned over the years, it would come down to this:

Use your wealth to your benefit
So you're thinking Jimmy Choo's and Louis Vuitton handbags, shopping sprees in Paris, Milan and New York, right? Wrong!

As a Muslim, it is our duty to acknowledge that whatever wealth we have been blessed with is indeed a blessing from Allah (glorified and exalted be He). Use your wealth to cater to your own needs and halaal (permissible) desires, but always remain mindful that Allah (glorified and exalted be He) has given you a measure of wealth to test what you will do with it, whether you will hoard it selfishly or spend an amount for His pleasure:
"And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good" [Qur'an: Chapter 2, Verse 195].

Don't be wasteful
A visit to any restaurant or eatery presents the same scene: a family of four order enough food to feed a small army.

The same thing happens in most of our homes. We've become thoughtless in our disregard for the less fortunate; we've become extravagant and wasteful without batting an eyelid. Many of us, myself included, go into shopping frenzies and literally "shop until we drop," but my duaa for each of us is that we become aware of what we are spending, how much we are wasting and what the consequences of our actions are.

"O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink, But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters" [Qur'an: Chapter 7, Verse 31].

Thankfulness leads to untold treasures
When a person says "Alhamdulillah" (All praises are due to Allah) for everything that he has been granted, Allah (glorified and exalted be He) says:
"If you are grateful I will grant you increase (in your bounties) and if you are ungrateful then verily my punishment is very severe" [Qur'an: Chapter 14, Verse 7].

The message is simple: give thanks to your Creator and you shall be rewarded in abundance, InshaAllah. Islam is a practical religion, and Allah (glorified and exalted be He) has made it easy for us to incorporate our religion and its teachings, into our daily lives. Now that we know what the Qur'an and Hadith say about saving and wastefulness, let's look at some practical tips to saving:

1 Know your money: Sounds fairly simple but many people get caught in the trap of not knowing what their disposable income is. It is important to know exactly how much you have so that you know how much to spend.

2 Learn to save: Ditch the credit cards if you can – spend cold, hard cash only, and my golden rule is "If I can't afford it right now, then I probably don't need it right now". This also serves as a motivation so when I see a pair of heels that I really want, I cut back on some other luxury and save towards getting them!

3 Beat the budget blues: Sticking to a budget is an integral part of managing your family's finances effectively. Cheating on your budget is cheating yourself. Be honest when you reflect amounts (i.e. income and expenses) on your budget – you can't spend money you don't have!

Also, be mindful of saving – remember to save something every month, for those 'rainy days'.

4 Get street-smart: Watch your local stores prices. Most stores have special offers from time to time – capitalize on these! They usually offer great savings and allow bulk purchasing. This means that you get more bang for your buck if you shop during these special offer promotions.

5 Saucy secrets: Most people claim NOT to eat I leftovers. I beg to differ! Has anyone ever eaten biryani the next day and complained?! If your family is fussy about food, prepare just enough for one meal. You might also want to consider using last night's left-over roast chicken for your children's school sandwiches.

6 Out of the closet: Ladies, ladies… I know – this is a weak spot for most of us. Rule number one: if you haven't worn it in the past six months, it's highly unlikely that you're ever going to use it! Consider giving things that you don't use (that are still in good condition) to charity. And if you want to be really creative and make a quick buck, consider a jumble sale in your front yard.

I hope these tips will inspire you to start managing your money more wisely! I know I will definitely be "saving" these tips and taking my mother's pearls of wisdom with me to my own home, InshaAllah.

Your sister in Islam
Faiza Dean

Faiza Dean



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LIFTING UP THE BONNET ON ZAKAT

15 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Message Magazine consulted Sheikh Shady Al Suleiman to find out about some of the frequently asked questions about Zakat and their answers.

Below are the questions and answers he has given. (Please note that Imams do differ on some of the answers):

Question #1: What is the difference between Zakat al-Mal and Zakat-al-Fitr?

Zakat al-Mal is related to the saved money over the course of a lunar year, whereas Zakat al-Fitr is paid by the head of the household on behalf of other family members. Also, Zakat al-Mal is to be paid when the savings reach the prescribed nisab (minimum amount on which Zakat is due), but Zakat al-Fitr is to be paid by the person who has food for one day.

Both forms of Zakat are an obligation for those who meet the nisab.

Question #2: How much Zakat do we give?

The amounts are the following:

- 2.5 percent-on annual savings that are Zakatable.
- 5 percent-on agriculture being taken care of by a farmer who is planting and irrigating from his own money. During harvest time, he pays five percent from the total crop.
- 10 percent-on a farmer's product if it is being irrigated by rain.
- 20 percent-on resources like oil or precious metals (i.e. gold, silver) which you find on a piece of land that you own. Sakr notes that this is "your property, no one has the right to nationalise it". You would pay - 20 percent on what you produced in one year.

Question #3: What is Nisab

It is the amount which savings, capital or product must exceed in order for the Muslim owner to be obliged to give Zakat. The nisab is based on 85 Grams of Gold. At the time of the writing of this article (June 2013), the minimum threshold of wealth (nisab) needed in order to pay Zakat was $3962 AUD.

Question #4: I have $5000 in my savings account; do I have to pay Zakat?

A. Yes, as $5000 is more than the current nisab (the minimum threshold of wealth needed in order to pay Zakat) then you do have to pay Zakat on that sum of money.

Question #5: I paid Zakat on $4000 last Ramadan. This year I have a total of $10,000 of wealth liable to Zakat. What value do I take the 2.5% from as I paid for the $4,000 last year?

A. Zakat is to be paid on the total savings regardless of what Zakat was paid on in the past. Therefore, you would pay 2.5% of $10,000; which would be $250.

Question #6: I received a large amount of money just before my Zakat was due for this year. Do I include it in this year's Zakat?

A. For the purpose of ease and practicality, I strongly recommend you add this to the wealth on which you are due to pay this year.

Question #7: I have savings which I shall use to go for Hajj, is this to be included in my wealth when calculating Zakat?

A. Yes, it must be included.

Question #8: I loaned some money out to a friend who informed me that he is able to return the money, do I have to include this in my wealth when calculating Zakat?

A. Yes, think of it as if he is just storing your money.

Question #9: 10 years ago I loaned some money to a friend who is poor and I did not expect to get it back. He has now paid me back, is this money liable for Zakat?

A. The opinion which the majority of scholars took on this issue is that you should pay one year's worth of Zakat on this money. I would strongly urge you to consult a scholar about this.

Question #9: 10 years ago I loaned some money to a friend who is poor and I did not expect to get it back. He has now paid me back, is this money liable for Zakat?

A. The opinion which the majority of scholars took on this issue is that you should pay one year's worth of Zakat on this money. I would strongly urge you to consult a scholar about this.

Question #10: My Zakat is due in dhul-Qa'dah but I would like to pay in advance (in Ramadan). I have a debt which must be paid in Shawwal (after Ramadan). Can this be deducted from my wealth when calculating Zakat?

A. The general answer would be yes, but I would strongly urge you to consult a scholar about this to clarify your exact circumstance.

Question #11: Can I give Zakat to my family members?

A. Zakat can only be given to people from one of eight categories (see www.zakatfund.com.au for list of categories). If a family member is from one of those categories (e.g. he/she is poor and is unable to provide for himself) and he/she is not already dependant on you, then according to the majority of scholars, he/she can be given Zakat. But if he/she is one of your dependants, then you are obliged to spend on them anyway and cannot give them anything from your Zakat. Similarly, a wife can give Zakat to her husband but a man cannot give Zakat to his wife for the same reason.

Question #12: What is the definition of the poor and needy?

A. The scholars differed greatly over this. One of the opinions is that the Fuqara (poor) are those who are unable to sustain themselves and their dependants for half a year whereas the Masakin (needy) are those who are unable to sustain themselves and their dependants for a full year.

Question #13: I owe several years of Zakat, how do I pay?

A. For every year that you owe Zakat, take 2.5% from the total wealth you had at the end of that year and pay that in Zakat. If you are not sure how much wealth you had, you must estimate it to the best of your ability. E.g. It is now Ramadan 2013. You have not paid Zakat for the last 5 years. You need to work out how much wealth you owned every Ramadan for the last 5 years and pay 2.5% of that.

Question #14: I normally give a lot of money in charity throughout the year; do I still have to pay Zakat?

A. Yes you do. Zakat must be paid with the intention of paying Zakat. If one gives to any other charity, it cannot be counted as Zakat as they did not have the necessary intention so you would still have to pay Zakat. Voluntary charity is a Sadaqah and not Zakat.

Question #15: Together, my wife and I have a combined wealth valued at $25,000. Can I pay Zakat for the both of us?

A. As Zakat is an individual obligation, you must compare the nisab (the minimum threshold of wealth needed in order to pay Zakat) with your own wealth and her own wealth to see if each of you has to pay Zakat. If you do, you may pay Zakat for both yourself and your wife as long as she consents to that.

To find out more about Zakat, go to **www.zakatfund.com.au.**

Your brother in Islam,
Sheikh Shady Al Suleiman

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GETTING THE SPECS ON RAMADAN:

THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF FASTING

As the noble month of Ramadan has arrived, it is relevant for us to look into some of the rulings associated with fasting. It is incumbent on Muslims to be aware of Allah's mandates, prohibitions and permissible actions in order that we worship Allah with sure sightedness.

Things Which Break the Fast

Eating and drinking deliberately: Any Muslim who eats or drinks intentionally has broken their fast. Whoever does this must repent to Allah, asking Him for forgiveness. Many of the Muslims scholars are of the opinion that he should also make up this day before the next Ramadan. Imam Abu Hanifah holds the opinion that in addition to repenting and the making up the day, he must also feed a poor or needy person. This view is also attributed to Imam Malik.

Induced vomiting: The soundest view amongst the scholars of Islam is that as long as vomiting is unintentional then the fasting remains valid. The Messenger of Allah (s) said: **"If someone had a sudden attack of vomiting, no atonement is required of him, but if he vomits intentionally he must make atonement."** If any vomit is accidentally swallowed, the fast is not affected.

Menstruation and post-natal bleeding: A woman who bleeds due to any one of these two reasons has broken her fast, even if a woman gets her period seconds before sunset. This is the opinion of the majority of the scholars. The number of fasting days missed must be made up prior to the next Ramadan.

Ejaculation: Regardless of whether this resulted due to the husband kissing his wife, caressing her etc. This is the opinion of the majority of the Muslim scholars and Allah knows best.

Sexual Intercourse: If a fasting person has sexual intercourse during the day of Ramadan, irrespective of whether ejaculation takes place or not, the fasting has been broken. In this case a person must repent, seek forgiveness from Allah and make up this day. Furthermore, he must free a slave if he owns one, if not, then two consecutive months of fasting must be done prior to the next Ramadan. If fasting two consecutive months is detrimental to one's health then sixty poor or needy people must be fed.

Supplements, nutritional injections and drips: These dietary intakes also break the fast as they defeat one of the main objectives of fasting, namely, to undergo thirst and hunger.

Controversial Issues

Water Entering the Stomach Accidentally: The correct opinion is that the fasting is not broken as this has occurred unintentionally. Although sniffing water up the nostrils during wudu is desirable, the Messenger of Allah (s) advised that it should be avoided during fasting.

Use of Puffers: Puffers used for asthma do not break the fast according to a number of scholars. This is because it is considered as compressed gas that goes to the lungs, and does in no way nourish or quench the thirst.

Your brother in Islam
Sheikh Bilal Dannoun

Related article:
Read about the other controversial fasting issues of Unintentionally Eating or Drinking after the Break of Dawn or before Sunset, Use of Nose Drops, Eye Drops, Intravenous Injections, Perfume and Breastfeeding.

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LOVE YOUR CAR? TRADE IT IN FOR A ROMANT

I have a distinct memory of my husband and I holding hands as we drive to Tarawih prayers. He is wearing a crisp white thobe and, as we drive along the freeway, a cool breeze drifts in through the windows. He recites Qur'an along the way, a soft recitation just audible above the humming sounds of cars and trucks outside. Such a moment is so simple, yet I can still remember the feeling in my hands, and it makes me smile every time.

Ramadan can be a beautiful month for you to connect with your spouse, to utilise the safe haven it provides away from Shaytan, with the increased remembrance of Allah, and the increased levels of worship taking place in your lives together. Unfortunately, this month often becomes thirty days of frustration and resentment simmering beneath the surface because couples fail to create a focused goal they are both striving towards together.

In this article I am going to tackle some key areas of tension Muslim couples face in Ramadan and practical solutions to tackle them, insha'Allah.

Less Food, More Worship!

I find iftaar time really special with my husband. The kids and I set out the dates, start filling up cups with water and we all wait together for Maghrib to arrive. I think it is an honour to hand my husband a date and glass of water for him to break his fast with, to rush to serve him and share in the quiet space while we make du'a upon breaking our fast. The evening is quiet outside, the sky is beautiful and we pray Maghrib together as a family.

There is no rush and as we all sit down at the table, after a busy day that took place while fasting, we reconnect and relax over a hot meal before preparing to leave for Tarawih prayers.

In many households, however, iftaar time is stressful and definitely not spiritual. One of the main reasons for this is hosting large and regular iftaar parties in the home. While it is wonderful to earn the reward of feeding those who are fasting, honestly, this trend of having to host and entertain to exhaustion has to stop.

This practice affects mainly women because they are the ones expected to do all the cooking, cleaning and prep work involved for hosting large iftaar parties. It robs a wife of time and energy better spent in greater acts of worship and creates a strain between her and her husband. She often feels overwhelmed with the amount of work involved, with whiny children in the background who are getting ignored.

There is no time to connect with her husband, her children, or feel loved and appreciated because both are busy running around for guests and, once meal time is over, her husband is out the door for Tarawih, leaving her to do the clean-up. Do this once, maybe twice in the entire month of Ramadan, on a weekend when there is more time to help each other out, but not throughout the week or on a regular basis.

IC RAMADAN

The goal of Ramadan is less food and more worship! You can entertain friends all year long – and cook for them whatever you would like – but this month is a time to recharge your "iman battery," to have extra time to reflect on your character and to cultivate new spiritual practices.

Too many social gatherings not only prevent you from this extra time, they also keep you away from your spouse. "But we live together, we have all year to spend time together," you might be thinking. Let's look at this the other way around: You have all year to spend time with friends, but only this one month to revisit what marriage means at its highest level, to strive the hardest in honouring and serving your spouse, this beautiful human being put into your life, the person that allowed you to complete half your deen. You both desperately need time to reconnect on what matters most, to realign yourselves as individuals, then as a couple, with the greatest purpose of your beating heart, which is to worship Allah (glorified and exalted be He) with every action.

Serve each other, donate together, recite Qur'an near one another. Hold hands, share long hugs, make du'a for each other, even kiss one another while fasting as our beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was reported to have done with Aisha while he was fasting. Put each other and your family first before the rest of the world. Soon enough, the fast pace of life will return, Shaytan will be back trying to interfere in your happiness, and the energy of this beautiful month will slowly fade.

Having focused on each other and on your love and commitment to one another, as well as to fear Allah in the way you treat each other, to seek His pleasure in the way you love your wife and respect your husband—the barakah of this month will continue in your marriage throughout the year Insha'Allah.

And that is true romance isn't it? Love, affection, words and touch all with the remembrance of Allah, with the angels busy writing down each exchanged glance and kind word between the both of you, preparing for you a palace in Jannah.

Your sister in Islam

Megan Wyatt

Megan Wyatt



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FROM BURN OUTS TO CARTWHEE

DOES FASTING KILL YOUR P

I know that you expect me to say no, absolutely not. But the truth is, yes it does. We cannot deny that if by fasting you mean only refraining from eating or drinking, your production and achievement rate will decrease in every aspect of your life. You will probably try to do as little as you have to, sleep as long as you can and keep your mind off from food by any means – even if this consists of playing games, listening to music or entertaining yourself with idle talk.

'How many of those who fast get nothing from it but hunger and thirst?!'

This saying of the Prophet Muhammad (s) should be taken as a warning. Many Muslims are fasting without any benefit to themselves, neither experiencing any spiritual elevation nor being able to leave sin and draw closer to Allah, The Exalted. SubhanAllah! Fasting becomes a matter of merely skipping meals and at iftar the missed food is 'made up for' in the form of a feast.

However, if you are practicing a truly Islamic fasting then it is a completely different experience.

Ramadan is the month in which the rewards for good actions have no limits, the month in which we discipline ourselves and thus increase our productivity!

What are your productivity boosters?

Sincere intentions, clear plans, a sense of purpose and responsibility, sustained focus, high motivation and a positive attitude help you achieve your goals.

What are your productivity drainers?

Productivity drainers include procrastination, emails and spam management, tedious office tasks, negativity, unclear aims and interruptions. If you analyse these elements you'll realise that they have nothing to do with food intake or physical energy levels!

The purpose of this article, in part, is to emphasise that a correlation between fasting and productivity does truly exists. **Fasting may just be the perfect solution to overcome your productivity drainers.**



ELS...
PRODUCTIVITY? (PART 1)

Performing Wheelies: 5 Major Factors on How Fasting Enhances Your Productivity:

1. You become more conscious of your behaviour and thought patterns.

In the first three days in particular, you will realise how our minds are put on "automatic" mode. Most of the time we don't actually pay attention to everything we do. Reminding ourselves that we are fasting makes us more conscious of Allah, and aware of our actions and thoughts. This 'consciousness' we experience whilst fasting enables us to eliminate any unproductive behaviour you may want to engage in.

2. Breaking habits is facilitated.

Many Muslims give up smoking during this month, for example. Unproductive habits are nothing but actions done so often that they become part of our life. When we refrain from such a basic and innate need such as eating and drinking, we realise we also have the ability to stop those nasty habits which we thought we 'needed'.

We witness the true strength of the mind and heart during Ramadan and are reminded that we are capable and obligated to be doing more good and less bad. Which habits are you willing to take up and which do you decide to let go?

3. Fasting reduces common time wasters such as coffee, cigarettes or snack breaks.

If you think about it, we do spend a lot of time preparing snacks/meals, eating, and then washing up, so on and so forth. The simple fact that you are not interrupting your work will help you stay on track and finish sooner and give you more free time. On average it takes us 15 to 30 minutes to recapture the same level of concentration we had before the interruption and sometimes we feel we have just missed the necessary 'mood' to complete the activity

4. Fasting improves concentration and focus.

One of the most beautiful effects that fasting has is the channelling of your energies into productive projects. We learn to say "No" to our impulses thus improving the control of the mind over the body. When we discipline ourselves, for a determined period, we are in fact reinstating control over our nafs (inner desires) and our limbs. We start breaking the mental barriers that held us off in the past.

5. Fasting allows your body to start the healing and regenerating process.

If you suffer from health problems, fasting is often required to put your body in the right environment to start healing. When you think back to a time when you were ill.

You will also remember your lack of appetite. This is necessary so that your body takes advantage of every bit of energy in the curative process. Also, you will likely feel younger and healthier (yet another great productivity booster).

If you are not convinced yet that fasting actually increases your productivity, or want to discover more ways in which fasting can benefit your efficiency and productivity we invite you to read part two that can be downloaded off the message magazine website www.messagemagazine.com.au

Your sister in Islam

Jihan Anwar

Jihan Anwar

WE ALWAYS ASK...

1) WE ALWAYS ASK: Why was I TESTED?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "Do men think that they will be left alone saying,' We believe', and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false." [29:2-3]

2) WE ALWAYS ASK: Why I never get what I wanted?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "It is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that you love a thing, which is bad for you. But Allah knows, while you know not." Surah Al-Baqarah [2:216]

3) WE ALWAYS ASK: Why was I burdened this way?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "Allah does not place a burden to a soul greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns." Surah Al-Baqarah [2:286] & " So verily, with every difficulty there is relief: (repeated) Verily, with every difficulty there is relief." Surah Al-Insyirah [94:5-6]

4) WE ALWAYS ASK: Why am I losing hope?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For you will be superior if you are true in Faith." Surah Al-Imran [3:139]



5) WE ALWAYS ASK: How can I face it?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "O you who believed! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah that you may prosper." Surah Al-Imran[3:200] and "And seek(Allah's) help with patience, perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a humbly submissive (to Allah)." Surah Al-Baqarah [2:45]

6) WE ALWAYS ASK: What do I get from all these?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and properties (in exchange) for that they will have the garden (of Paradise)..." Surah At-Taubah [9:111]

7) WE ALWAYS ASK: To whom could I depend?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "(Allah) suffice me: there is no god but He: On Him is my trust- He the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme." Surah At-Taaubah [9:129]

8) WE ALWAYS ASK: But I can't take it anymore!

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "...and never give up hope of Allah's Soothing Mercy; truly No one despairs of Allah's Soothing Mercy. except Those who have no faith." Surah Yusuf [9:87] and "Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins for He is Often- Forgiving, Most Merciful." Surah Az-Zumar [39:53]

9) WE ALWAYS ASK: Who will provide for me and my family?

AL-QURAN ANSWERS: "And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. And whoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Indeed Allah has sent a measure for all things." [65:2-3)

Your sister in Islam

Anjuman Haque

Anjuman Haque

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A GUIDE TO EATIN
AN EGYPTIAN'S
THE ULTIMATE, SUP
6 SPEED QUICK SHI

Some light humour:
No matter where you are in the world, if you ever dine at an Egyptian's house you should be prepared. And when I say prepared, I mean fully armed and ready for what can easily become a tragic turn of events.

Daily Visits to Family and Friends

From the moment you step foot in Egypt, until the day you leave, your schedule must include daily visits to family and friends. When you live in Sydney, a 23-hour flight can be pretty exhausting to say the least, but that is no excuse to sleep.

"There is no such thing as jet lag!" exclaims my excited cousin, who is practically waiting in my apartment when I visit.
And so it is customary for me to dump my luggage in the corner, rest my eyes for twenty minutes, then shower before visiting my eager relatives.

Mind you a person who hasn't slept for almost a day doesn't exactly look her best. After carrying numerous backpacks and duty free bags, my limbs have turned into jelly, and sitting in a confined space for so long has turned my posture into that of the Hunchback of Notre Dame. So you can imagine the scene – a girl whose eyes are half closed with lifeless arms, walking very slowly in a slouched-over position. It's no wonder they always say "Look what living abroad is doing to our children!"

What does this have to do with food you ask? Well, no matter the time of day, the amount of notice given or the occasion, you will be subject to excessive amounts of food, even if you have just been on a tedious trip from a country thousands of miles away.

In any case, I have prepared a "Guide to Eating at an Egyptian's House" in order to help others survive the inevitable outcome which befalls those who think they are merely visiting for "a cup of coffee." You may want to print it and carry it in your wallet on your next trip to Egypt: A Guide to Eating at an Egyptian's House

1 If you are ever dining at an Egyptian's house, make sure you fast for 3 days prior to the event because the minimum serving size is usually enough to feed a small country for a week.

2 Relatives do not take 'no' for an answer. If you are offered an extra plate of hummos then for goodness sakes accept it, or suffer the constant nagging from your aunty who will double the serving as punishment for your insolence.

3 If you are ever asked the trick question "Do you like the food?" never reply with "yes" – this is an open invitation for another kilo of chicken to be loaded onto your plate. The best thing to do is to divert the focus onto an unsuspecting brother or sister by pointing at them very quickly and stating "She is too shy to ask for more."



4 In the rare occasion that an Egyptian dish is not to your liking, the ONLY way to avoid eating from it is to spot it before it gets served. Quickly fill your plate with the other dishes being served so that there is no room available for the

G AT HOUSE
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one you dislike. By the time you finish,you can quite politely state that you are full, but disappointed that you were unable to try the dish. Do not go overboard – this can be quite easily misunderstood as an invitation for another helping.

5 At meal times many Egyptians (and Arabs in general) prefer to wait until they have finished before washing their palette with a refreshing drink. If you are not accustomed to this tradition then make sure you have a glass of water by your side or you will die of dehydration before the meal has ended. Getting up DURING the meal to quench your thirst could be misinterpreted as a sign that you dislike the food.

6 Never be the first to declare you have finished. Doing so will allow the others to escape while you are forced to eat another rack of beef. (If you are a big fan of tea, please skip ahead to number 8. If not, proceed to number 7).

7 When tea is being served, ask for a small mug or glass or you will end up drinking 3 or 4 cups of tea, equivalent to 1-2 litres. If they do not have small cups, sip your tea slowly and keep it in your hands so as to avoid it being taken away for a refill.



8 Dessert is almost always popular but after an Egyptian meal sometimes the sight of more food can make you senile. If you were able to follow the above guidelines, a piece of cake should be a piece of cake! In other words, there should be just enough room for some sweets. If you were unable to follow the guidelines then you are probably on the verge of collapsing.

The best excuse (one which can never be argued with) is, "Thank you, but I am watching my weight." If you have a little meat on you, the host will be too embarrassed to refute this. If you are blessed with an outstanding figure, you will be able to justify your 'diet conscious' ways – since obviously your resistance to temptation has paid off.

9 After dessert, the inexperienced diner will fall into a false sense of security, foolishly thinking that the torture has ended. This, however, is when you are most vulnerable – in a relaxed and weakened state you become the perfect target for 'post-dessert' testing. Assorted fruits and nuts are often presented, often in the guise of table decoration. This is merely a test set up by the host to ascertain your level of satisfaction.

If you have refused dessert on the basis of being on a diet, the refusal to eat the healthy alternative will be a direct insult to the host's intelligence. If you indulge in more than one nut or piece of fruit, the host will assume you are hungry and ALSO be insulted. There is no way to avoid this lose-lose situation, except perhaps by immersing yourself in deep conversation long enough to keep the host distracted.

Hopefully this guide will have helped you survive the tragedy which befalls so many.

Your sister in Islam
Shaden Mohamed

Of Egyptian background, Shaden Mohamed was born and bred in Sydney, Australia, where she attained a degree in Media & Communications. As an accomplished writer, Shaden has a passion for educating and informing others in her community on the beauty of her culture. "My dream is to inspire people with my writing because I believe that literature is the most beautiful form of expression."

FIND - A - WORD

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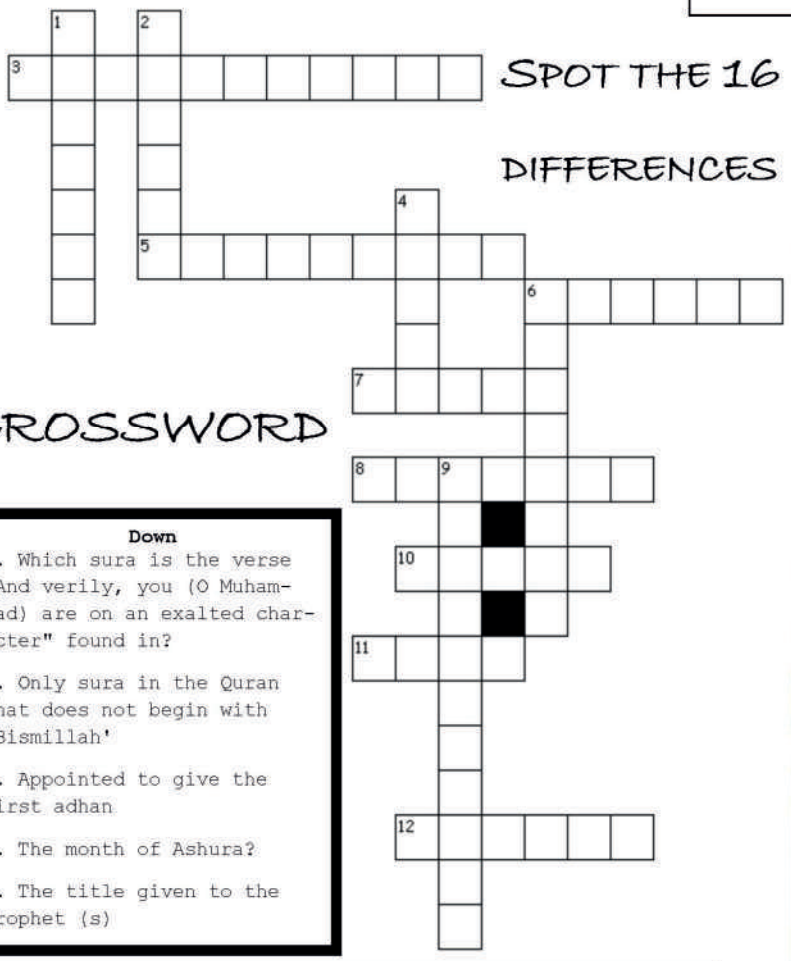
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HADITH OF THE MONTH

Narrated Anas ibn Malik; AbuSa'id: The Prophet (s) said, "O Allah, grant me life as a poor man, cause me to die as a poor man, and resurrect me in the company of the poor." Aisha asked him why he had said this, and he replied, "Because they will enter Paradise forty years before the rich. Do not turn away a poor man, Aisha, even if all you can give is half a date. If you love the poor and bring them near you, Aisha, Allah will bring you near Him on the Day of Resurrection."

A M U S E M E N T S

CROSSWORD



Down

1. Which sura is the verse "And verily, you (O Muhammad) are on an exalted character" found in?
2. Only sura in the Quran that does not begin with "Bismillah'
4. Appointed to give the first adhan
6. The month of Ashura?
9. The title given to the Prophet (s)

Across

3. Half the faith
5. What is meant by the term "munafiqin"?
6. Paradise lies beneath the feet of who?
7. Backbiting is like eating the _____ of your dead brother
8. The name of the city of Medina at the time of the Prophet (s)
10. The Prophet (s) was described as being a 'walking _____'
11. The seal of the prayers
12. A companion that inspires shyness amongst the angels

SPOT THE 16 DIFFERENCES





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The UMA Zakat Fund enables the Muslim community with the opportunity to fulfill its religious charity obligations by providing Muslims with an avenue to give Zakat. The Zakat is in turn distributed to people in need. A great portion is also integrated within our other major Dawah initiatives to sponsor students who are seeking Islamic knowledge abroad (entitling them to receive Zakat). The Zakat Fund is also used to assist new Muslims and sponsoring Du'aat (Callers of Islam) who are in need of financial assistance and fit into the Zakat recipient category.

DONATE DIRECTLY INTO THE UMA FUND BANK ACCOUNT:

Account name: ***UMA Zakat Fund Incorporated***
Bank: ***Commonwealth Bank***
BSB: ***062 099***
Account number: ***1059 0035***

For more details and ways to pay your Zakat visit:

www.zakatfund.com.au

Call (61) 1300 730 693

Mail to: info@zakatfund.com.au
Fax: (612) 9759 4455

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