

Hi everyone! As a Muslim, with Ramadhan starting this week, I am here to share with you a bit more about the month as well as what we as Muslims get up to and how it affects our work.

Ramadhan is a month-long celebration of fasting, prayer, and reflection. During this time, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and any other physical needs from dawn till dusk. It may sound tough, but it's a time of spiritual rejuvenation and self-improvement. It's like a month-long detox for the soul and the body. This month also holds great significance in our lives as it marks the revelation of our holy book, the Quran, and inspires us to deepen our connection to its teachings. For me this month is about striving to make a positive, long lasting change during the month by becoming a better Muslim and a better person through religious obligations, but also improving my character.



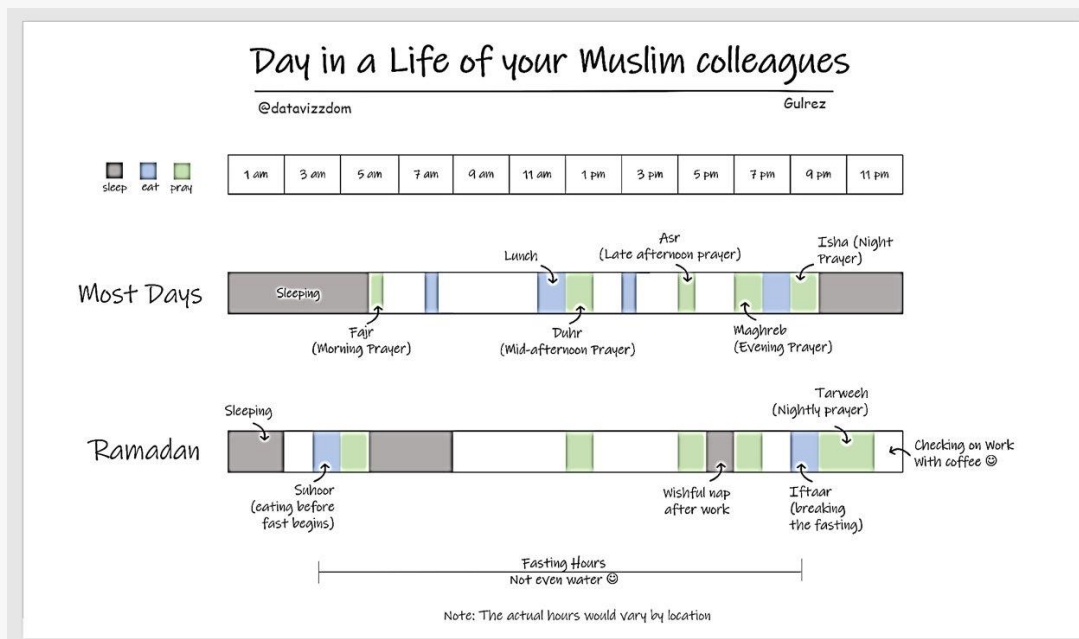
Muslims will try to read and understand the Quran more during the month

Working in finance of course we love our coffee, but Ramadhan is a time of sacrifice, and we find ways to adjust as we do not drink during the day. We make sure to eat a nourishing meal before dawn, and after dusk, we break our fast traditionally with dates and then our evening meal – which is usually culturally driven. I myself, usually have a traditional Sri Lankan dish for the morning meal – called Kanji (made up of oats, shredded chicken and of course chilli paste). This is a great opportunity for me to reflect and think about those less fortunate than myself. I know that I will have dinner when I break my fast, but for those in areas that are in poverty it's a sad reality that they do not know where their next meal will come from.



My normal traditional Sri Lankan breakfast meal in Ramadhan

One thing you may notice during Ramadhan is that our working hours may be slightly different. We may come in earlier in the morning or work from home more often. This is because Ramadhan is a time of spiritual reflection, and we prioritize our religious duties during this time, where we spend longer in prayer or acts of worship. Many people will pray additional daily prayers in the evening at the mosque during the month. Since the time has changed, I go to the mosque everyday after breaking my fast, at around 9:30pm and will be there till around 11pm, where I will listen to the Quran being recited in a melodious manner by our priest (imam).



This is how our routine changes during the month – for me the biggest impact is actually not the food or drink, but rather the broken sleep which can take a while to adjust to!

Many people ask about productivity during this month. In fact, many of us find that we are more productive and focused during Ramadhan. Fasting helps us to develop discipline and self-control, which can translate into our work. Plus, we may even have

more energy and mental clarity during this time. See below for some scientific facts about the benefits of fasting. I feel more focused during the month, and still make sure I workout with less intense sessions.

The end of Ramadhan is marked by a celebration (Eid-Al Fitr), in which Muslims will take the day off and celebrate with friends and family. For my family, we usually go to the mosque in the morning or go to pray the Eid prayer in the park and then usually a meal out in a local restaurant with the whole family. We also give gifts to one another as well as visit each other's houses to try out all the culinary delights that are on offer!



Breaking of the fast in Istanbul

Ramadhan is a month of sacrifice, spiritual reflection, and celebration for Muslims worldwide. It may require some adjustments in our working hours and routines, but it's a time of spiritual rejuvenation that can lead to increased productivity and focus. Ramadan has huge importance for us as Muslims and is an opportunity for us to get closer to God and ultimately to try and become better people within the month and beyond. This is one of my favourite times of the year as all the family get closer together, you feel more closely connected to the local community and it is also a time of deep self-inspection on how you can improve and thinking about those less fortunate than ourselves.

If you do have any questions or any reflections – please feel free to get in touch, and I will be more than happy to have a chat.

Nadeem

### **Scientific benefits of fasting:**

1. **Weight loss:** Fasting has been shown to be an effective way to lose weight, as it reduces calorie intake and increases fat burning. One study found that intermittent fasting led to an average weight loss of 7-11 pounds over 10 weeks.
2. **Improved insulin sensitivity:** Fasting has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity, which can lower the risk of type 2 diabetes. One study found that intermittent fasting improved insulin sensitivity by 50%.
3. **Reduced inflammation:** Fasting has been shown to reduce inflammation in the body, which can lower the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer. One study found that fasting for 12-24 hours can reduce inflammation markers in the body.
4. **Improved brain function:** Fasting has been shown to improve brain function and increase focus levels. One study found that fasting can increase the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that promotes the growth and survival of brain cells, which can improve cognitive function.
5. **Longer lifespan:** Fasting has been shown to increase lifespan in animals, and some studies suggest it may have a similar effect in humans. One study found that fasting every other day extended the lifespan of mice by up to 30%.