

Got The Ramadan Blues? | Maryam Amirebrahimi

I am exhausted," a friend told me. "The days are so long this Ramadan. I haven't been able to keep up with my Quran goals because of work and I don't know how to balance spending time with my in-laws, taking care of my kids and having time for my own worship. I'm in a Ramadan slump!"

LIKE MY FRIEND, perhaps you're in a Ramadan slump. Work the BUGS out now—before you lose any more precious time this Ramadan!

How to Get the B.U.G.S. Out

Ramadan is like a long-distance run. Some want to beat others to the finish line, and they begin with all their intensity, sprinting from the beginning. But by the time they get to the middle, they just don't have any more stamina to keep going. They slow down, exhausted, panting to draw in shallow breaths of air. But those who've trained for the marathon know the strategy. They don't collapse because they're able to stabilize their breathing and portion their energy.

Or perhaps you're like a software trying to upgrade but recognizing you've still got some bugs to work out. All of us are struggling to upgrade our souls—all of us have bugs we're trying to smooth out.

But how do we get back on track? How do we inculcate the stamina of the long-distance Ramadan runners? How do we upgrade successfully?

Here's what we need to do to keep up the stamina:

[B] Give Yourself a BREAK

1. For those of you who are working, parenting, exhausted and barely managing—you need some 'You-Time.' And that, in and of itself, is worship. When you give time for yourself to feel replenished so you can feel rejuvenated in your worship and refreshed in your interactions with others—that is an act of striving in Allah's pleasure in and of itself.
2. Schedule some *You-Time*. This may look like ten minutes of deep breathing while sitting in a park and contemplating Allah's creation. It may look like going to your car for a ten minute nap during your 'lunch' break at work. It may look like ten minutes of writing out your frustrations in a notebook and then leaving them there to put aside for now, to deal with when you have more time instead of allowing them to fester and eat at your heart—and then taking a deep breath of clarity and focusing on the rest of your day.
3. Just as you schedule time for showers and doctor's appointments and meetings with your boss, schedule time for you and your heart to rest and feel re-energized. Even ten minutes a day of clearing your mind can significantly change the way you approach the rest of Ramadan.

[U] No More Guilt Trips

1. In our community, we frequently use guilt to motivate one another. Statements such as: "This great Imam read the Quran 50 times in Ramadan! Look at our sorry states! We can barely finish it once! How will our Ummah ever succeed?!" And: "If you can't cry in Ramadan—if you can't shed tears—then weep for the sadness of your sick, hard heart which will never soften outside of it!"

2. Okay, seriously? The Quran does not use shaming tactics on believers who are struggling to strive for His pleasure. The Prophet ﷺ never publically shamed those who were striving to do things right. And yet our own use of Muslim guilt has caused our community to become cripplingly afraid and insecure in our own *Īmān*.
3. If you are taking the time to read an article about how to move forward from your Ramadan slump, you know what that says about you? That you care! That the guilt that may be eating you alive because you don't feel you've done good enough in the first half of this month is a sign of your deep concern for faith! That the pain in your heart when you wish you were better is a sign of your desire for Allah's ultimate pleasure! They are all signs that you are a strong believer! A strong, struggling believer. And you've already made it halfway through Ramadan. The month in which *Inshā'Allah* every day your sins are being wiped away, every day *Inshā'Allah* your name may be written of those who will never touch the hellfire, the month where *Inshā'Allah* everyday you're basking in rewards that you cannot fathom in the hereafter, and forms of blessings in this life that will affect every part of your existence, *Inshā'Allah*.
4. Understand this: You are worthy of Allah's love, even as you falter in your stamina. You are worthy of His love even as you hate yourself for your mistakes. Just go back to Him. Ask for His help, His forgiveness, His guidance, His pleasure. And understand that when you ask Him, He will answer. You are halfway there. *insha'Allah* you will make it through to the end successfully!

[G] Realize Realistic GOALS

1. Re-examine the goals you've made and make them realistic for the rest of the month. If you feel like you're drowning, then reset. Instead, plan goals that you know you will complete, even if they're small. Make them those that you know will make Ramadan beloved to you, that you know your heart will pulsate with the sweetness of nearing its Creator. Allah tells us He wants ease for us, and not difficulty:

The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. *Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and (He desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful.* [Sûrat Al-Baqarah, 2:185]

2. Yet sometimes, we make things difficult on our own selves. This is the month of the Quran, and we nobly set Quran goals that we hope to accomplish—perhaps reading the blessed book cover to cover or memorizing more surahs than usual. The problem is that often, with the long fasts, our exhausted bodies and minds and our crazy work or parenting or studying schedules, we can't seem to keep up with what we had originally hoped.
3. But the Quran is our reviver. And we can still build an intimate relationship with it even by shifting our goals. For example, perhaps you had planned on finishing the Quran once this month. It's the middle of the month and you are not even halfway through. Unless you know you can make up for the amount you've missed, re-focus your target goal. Perhaps your goal will no longer be to finish it, but instead to read a lesser amount with understanding and with slow recitation, truly savoring every word on your tongue.
4. And be persistent. Regardless of the goals you set, remember: The Prophet ﷺ taught us that the most beloved deed to Allah is the most regular and constant, even if it were little (Muslim).

[S] Specialize in the SPECIAL

1. Millions of people are praying and reading Quran this Ramadan—which is an incredible honor for those doing so! But there is also something that no one is doing, or perhaps only a few people are engaged in. The focus on worship being relegated to only fasting, praying and Quran has caused many in our Ummah to both burn out and miss out of the vast opportunities for worshipping Allah in special ways in daily life.
2. Think about it like this: Who is changing a diaper, intending it to be an act of worship for God's sake? Who is feeding a stray cat, hoping all of their sins will be wiped away? Who is visiting a hospice, praying the time they spend visiting those who are facing death will be a means of their own comfort when they are at its throes? Who is offering to help clean the masjid bathroom with the custodial staff, knowing the staff is overworked in Ramadan?
3. Make Ramadan special to you.
4. And when you hit the middle of the month and you feel your throat parched, your brain in a fog and your annoyance rising with your temper, remember the feeling of the baby basking in being clean, the cat feeding hungrily, almost satiated for the first time in a long time, the people recognizing your sensitivity, their eyes glistening with mutual respect, the custodian appreciating your care, their heavy load lifted just a little because you're there.
5. Re-fuel in the middle of Ramadan with the recognition that you're doing something special that very few may have embarked on in Ramadan. Bask in the feeling of gratitude to Allah that He enabled you to serve His creation. And then do it again. Let that energize you for the remainder of the month.

BUGS Away!

It's almost time for our sprint, and we're ready to fill our lungs with deep breaths of air and propel our legs forward for the rest of this race. It's time to work out our B.U.G.S. and be ready to enjoy, appreciate and apply ourselves fully for the second half of Ramadan!

How to keep up the stamina?

B– Give Yourself a **Break!** --Ten minutes for you!

U– No More '**Uufff**' in the Ummah—Don't be hard on yourself. Depend upon Allah

G– Realize Realistic **Goals**—Re-set them when need be

S– Specialize in the **Special**—Be specially aware of worship in every act.

Bi idhnillâh, no more Ramadan Blues!