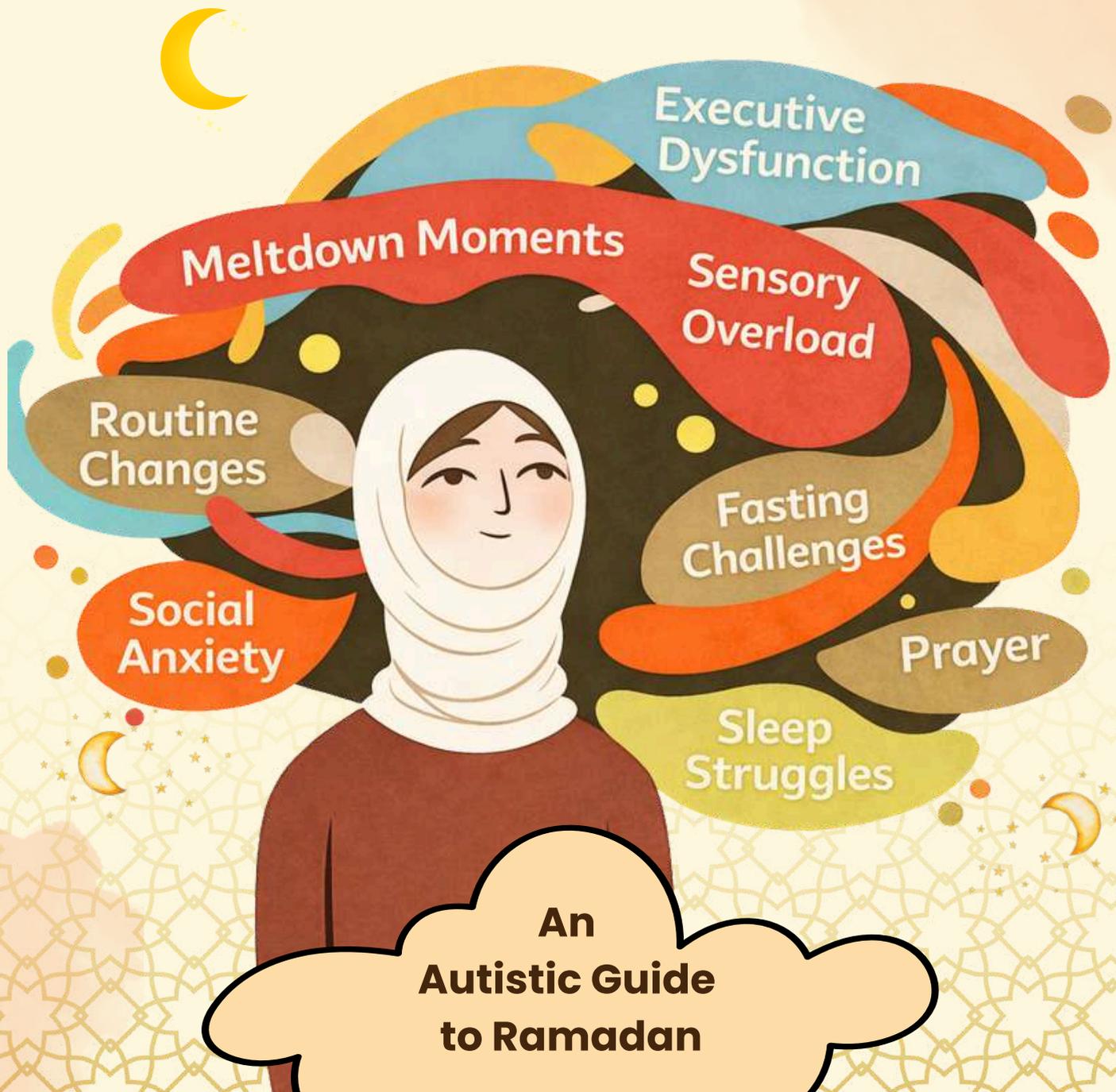


# RAMADAN THROUGH AUTISTIC LENS

2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, March 2026



# Welcome!

## Background

Over the past few years, as our community discussions have grown, the hidden experiences of Autistic during Ramadan have surfaced. There was a clear need for dinner-table conversations (pun intended) about the difficulties and support needed at this time of year. Many Autistics Muslims either don't realise why they struggle, or hide the fact that they are Autistic from family and community. The reason for both is the stigma stemming from the lack of education around understanding autism.

## Aim

This e-book is the first edition of Autistic Ramadan- the first but not the last of its kind. It is a compilation of reflections and advice from feminine Autistic experiences, drawn from social media posts written in 2024-2025. The intention is to open up conversations to improve support in the home, workplace and education settings as well the Muslim community. It is for everyone who interacts with Muslims and neurodivergent people to gain insight into our experiences and tackle the social stigma around being Autistic. We will hopefully improve and extend information in here with time as our understanding evolves our these topics.



Enjoy!  
Sofia F



# Transitioning into Ramadan



## Transitions can be difficult.

For many non-Autistic people, entering Ramadan feels natural or automatic. It may not require much preparation beyond intention. For Autistic people, Ramadan can feel like a steep and energy-consuming transition.

Ramadan changes the structure of the day. And changes in structure require energy.

## Why can transitioning into Ramadan feel difficult?

Ramadan can bring:

- Increased anxiety around change
- Days that feel and look different
- More decision making than usual
- Less time for decompression
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns
- Adjusting routines and rearranging appointments
- Extra planning around food, alarms, naps, cooking and chores
- Increased acts of worship such as additional salah and Qur'an
- Increased social time, including iftars and Taraweeh
- Each of these requires mental processing, flexibility and energy.
- For Autistic people, these demands can be significantly more draining. When multiple changes happen at once, it can lead to shutdowns, meltdowns, exhaustion or a combination of all three.

## Transitions can be difficult.

### The Role of Understanding

When workplaces, schools, mosques and families understand that the first week of Ramadan can be particularly demanding, their responses can be kinder and more supportive.

What matters is Gentle words, Flexible expectations, Patience with energy levels.

### Community Support

Understanding yourself is key. Knowing your strengths, your limits and your sensory needs allows you to prepare in a way that honours your capacity.

It also helps to connect with others who experience the world in a similar way. Being around people who understand Autistic experiences can reduce shame and increase confidence in navigating Ramadan in a way that works for you.

We also explored these themes in more depth during our Autistic Ramadan discussion with [Dr. Sofia Rehman](#).

**[Listen to the whole conversation.](#)**



# New Muslims



It is not uncommon to discover that many New Muslims are Autistic. Islam offers clear guidance. The Qur'an and Sunnah outline defined boundaries, structure and expectations. For Autistic people, this clarity can feel grounding. Clear communication and defined frameworks often bring comfort.

At the same time, entering a new faith community can feel overwhelming.

## To New Muslims

Whether this is your first Ramadan or you have experienced a few already, you may still feel like you are finding your place.

Trying to fit into an existing Muslim community can be difficult.

There may be Language barriers, Cultural differences, Unfamiliar mosque environments, Meeting many new people at once, Different ways of practising, Unspoken expectations and all this can feel isolating.

Take small steps to get to know people at your local mosque or within the wider Muslim community. Scotland's Muslim communities span many cultures and are often well connected.

There are online spaces you can join, including peer support groups and WhatsApp communities.

Go at a pace that feels manageable.

**Consistency matters  
more than intensity.**

## **Connect to Allah in a Way That Works for You**

Do not be hard on yourself. Many Autistic people already carry high internal pressure.

You are allowed to connect with Allah in ways that feel accessible and familiar.

You might:

- Read Qur'an and pray in your own language if you have not yet learned Arabic
- Listen to Qur'an recitations with translation
- Use an electronic prayer mat that guides you
- Listen to Islamic reflections and discussions
- Focus on small, consistent steps

## **For Mosques and Community Leaders**

Mosques should intentionally support New Muslims with clear communication and trained volunteers who understand mental health and isolation. Simple guides to ibadah, trusted resources, smaller iftars, and clear signposting for Ramadan and Eid information can reduce overwhelm. Many New Muslims experience deep loneliness, and some face family rejection, so belonging must be prioritised.



# Spirituality



There is a common myth that Autistic people lack depth in understanding beyond concrete reality or struggle with conceptual thought.

This is not true.

Many Autistic people experience the world with profound depth. For some of us, spirituality feels intensely real and deeply personal. We may feel a strong connection to the Unseen, to the Ghaib, and to meanings that go beyond what is visible.

Hyper-empathy can play a role in this. When emotions are experienced intensely, spiritual connection can also feel heightened.

## **When Words Come Alive**

Understanding the tafsir of the Qur'an can transform recitation. When meanings become clear, the words can feel alive. They can provoke strong emotional responses, sometimes to the point of overwhelm.

During salah, dhikr or recitation, focusing deeply on spiritual connection can create a feeling of detachment from the surrounding world. It can feel as though we do not fully belong to this realm.

Many Autistic people, across different faiths and worldviews, recognise this sense of being slightly apart.

**Ramadan can intensify everything.**

## **Ramadan and Heightened Emotion**

Ramadan can intensify everything.

For Autistic Muslims who experience hyper-empathy, the emotional landscape of Ramadan may feel amplified. Love for Allah, attachment to faith, and connection to the Prophet ﷺ can feel immense and all-consuming.

Deep emotion is not weakness. It is depth.

At the same time, heightened feeling can also bring exhaustion. It is important to pace spiritual practice in a way that supports your nervous system as well as your heart.



# Sleep Cycle



Sleep and fasting are not as simple as they seem.

Many Autistic people naturally experience differences in sleep. Research shows that Autistic brains often produce lower levels of melatonin and may have delayed sleep cycles. Falling asleep can take longer. Staying asleep can be difficult.

When Ramadan disrupts routines through late-night prayers, pre-dawn meals and irregular sleep schedules, the impact can be much greater.

Extreme fatigue can make fasting significantly harder. For Autistic people who already struggle with sleep, this added disruption can feel overwhelming.

## **When There Is No Time to Recover**

Some Muslims take annual leave or adjust their schedules to rest during the day. Others do not have that option, especially those in caring roles or demanding jobs.

Without space to recover, exhaustion builds quickly.

For Autistic people with ADHD, this can become even more complex. Hyperfocus, time blindness and fluctuating energy levels can mean naps are missed entirely. This can lead to burnout, insomnia and a repeating cycle of exhaustion.

Some may experience worsening of 'bedtime sleep procrastination' and continue to stay up beyond their own capacity in order to experience the silence and demand-free night.

Many Autistic Muslims share that it is not the hunger that is hardest, but the sleep disruption.



## Exhaustion builds quickly.

### The Impact of Broken Sleep

Disrupted sleep can:

- Increase sensory sensitivity
- Reduce the ability to mask, meaning someone may appear “more Autistic”
- Affect balance and coordination
- Reduce fine motor control
- Increase executive dysfunction
- Lower emotional regulation

Everyone will experience this differently.

### Reducing Harm

Ramadan is a time of worship, not self-harm.

This may be a period where demands need to be adjusted at home, at work or in education. Expectations may need to be softened.

The pressure to fast should not come at the cost of health. Communities must move away from judgement and unrealistic expectations, especially for young Autistic people navigating fasting for the first time. Ramadan is meant to bring spiritual growth, not physical breakdown.



# Restricted Foods



Autistic people are more likely to experience ARFID, including in adulthood.

For someone with ARFID, fasting can be particularly challenging. Restricted food intake, sensory sensitivities and rigid routines already shape daily life. Ramadan can intensify these difficulties.

## How ARFID Can Affect Fasting

**Meeting nutritional needs can become harder:** If someone already struggles to get adequate nutrients from a limited range of foods, fasting may increase fatigue, dizziness or other health concerns. Breaking the fast with only a small number of “safe foods” may make it difficult to replenish energy and hydration properly.

**Changes to routine can increase anxiety:** Autistic people often rely on predictability. ARFID can make meal planning even more structured. Fasting disrupts usual eating times, which can trigger stress, anxiety or meltdowns.

**Sensory challenges may feel stronger:** After a long fast, the body can react more intensely to taste, texture or temperature. Foods that are normally manageable may suddenly feel overwhelming.

**There is a risk of increased restriction:** If fasting leads to nausea, light-headedness or discomfort when eating, it may reinforce food avoidance patterns. Some individuals may then struggle to reintroduce foods, leading to further restriction.

You can find advice on eating at [ARFID Awareness](#) and [SEDSConnective](#).

## Food struggles are real.

### Supporting Yourself During Ramadan

If you live with ARFID, flexibility and planning are key.

You might consider:

- Planning meals around safe foods that are also as nutritionally balanced as possible
- Prioritising hydration and experimenting with temperature or flavour if plain water is difficult
- Breaking your fast gently with small, familiar foods
- Reducing social eating if it increases anxiety, including limiting large iftars at the masjid
- Seeking advice from a GP, dietitian or healthcare professional if fasting begins to affect your health

Islam places preservation of health as a priority. Struggle around food is not a moral failing.



# Binge Eating



Fasting and self-control are not experienced the same way by everyone.

For many Autistic people, impulse control is closely connected to routine, sensory regulation and emotional safety. When these systems are disrupted, the impact can feel paralyzing. This is not carelessness. It is neurological.

Autistic people are statistically more likely to experience addictive behaviours. This means that stopping food intake suddenly is not simply about discipline. It can be a significant sensory and habitual shift.

For some, forgetting to eat is common. For others, especially when food is linked to stimming, comfort or strict routines, remembering to fast can be difficult. The struggle may feel confusing or shame-inducing.



## Impulse control is neurological.

### Why Compassion Hurts

Shame does not strengthen self-control. It increases distress.

Having supportive, non-judgemental people around you can make a meaningful difference. People who understand the complexity of impulse control. People who reinforce boundaries gently with non-threatening words. People who offer reminders without criticism.

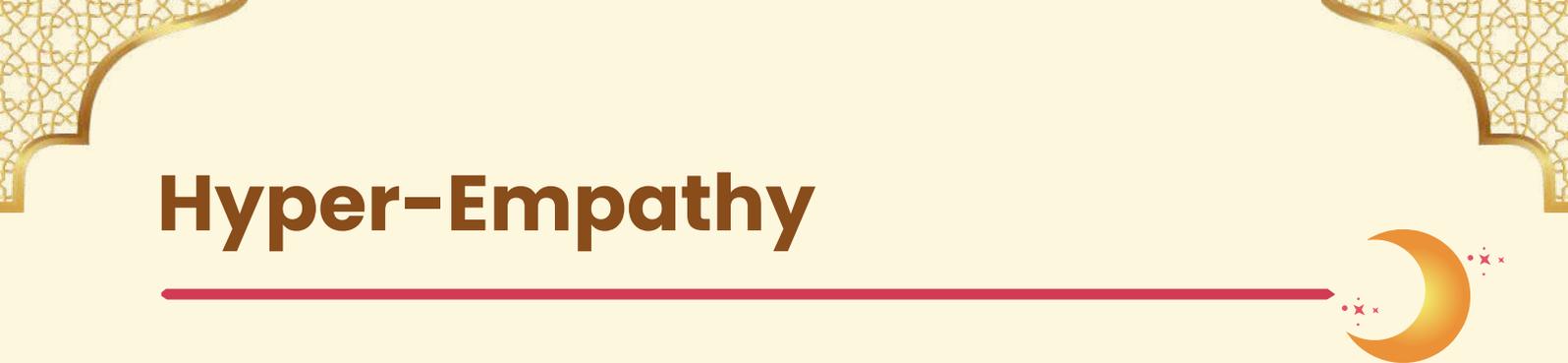
Fasting is an act of worship. It is not a measure of worth.

If binge eating or non-normative eating patterns are part of your experience, you deserve support, not judgement.

Comparing one person to another brings no benefit and only feeds into toxic standardisation of human experiences that do not fit anyone.



# Hyper-Empathy



**“Autistic people do not have emotions.”** This is false.

Many Autistic people feel emotions intensely. Some of us experience hyper-empathy. We do not only sympathise. We feel the pain of others as though it is our own. Joy is the same. When someone succeeds, we celebrate deeply.

In a world where suffering is constantly broadcast through social media, many people eventually switch off. News becomes numbers. Tragedies become statistics.

For those with deep emotional memory, these moments do not fade so easily. Grief can linger. Images stay vivid. Injustice feels personal.

## **When the World Feels Heavy**

Many Autistic people describe experiencing repeated emotional overwhelm when witnessing oppression. The suffering on a screen does not feel distant. It feels close. It feels like family.

At times, this can lead to days of intense sadness, crying or shutdown as the nervous system attempts to process compounded grief.

Hyper-empathy often draws neurodivergent people towards community activism and justice work. Intolerance of injustice can feel instinctive. What is wrong feels clearly wrong. Solution-focused thinking can create a strong urge to act.

While others may feel outrage that fades over time, some Autistic people struggle to disengage. Emotions are not easily filtered through social expectations or fear of consequences.

**We feel everything  
intensely.**

### **Ramadan and Heightened Emotion**

Ramadan is a month of deep connection to the Creator and to humanity. It is also a time when global events can feel amplified. Many Muslims witness attacks, oppression and injustice during this sacred month. The emotional weight can feel heavier.

We fast to build empathy for those who experience hunger daily. Charity, justice and compassion are central to this month. For many Autistic Muslims, the Prophetic teaching that when one part of the body hurts, the whole body feels the pain is not metaphorical. It is lived experience.

The hypocrisy and double standards seen in media and leadership can feel especially sharp. Forgetting is not easy.

### **Protecting Your Emotional Wellbeing**

Hyper-empathy is not weakness. It is depth. At the same time, constant exposure to distressing content can harm your mental health. Limiting media intake, taking intentional breaks and grounding yourself in worship and community care can help protect your nervous system. You are allowed to care deeply and you are also allowed to rest!



# Stimming

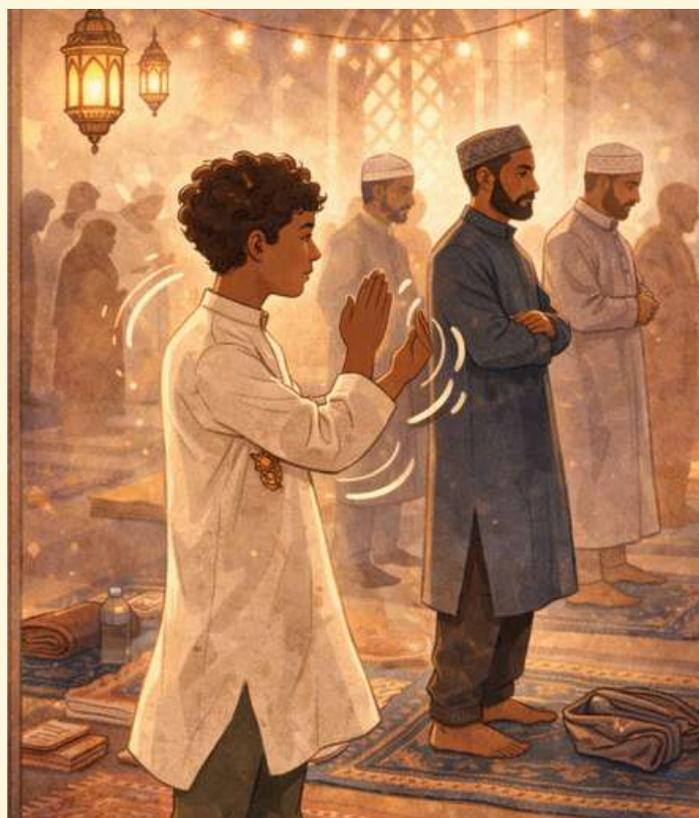


Congregational prayers in Ramadan are long, structured and physically demanding. For Autistic people, remaining completely still for extended periods can be difficult, not because of a lack of respect, but because our bodies regulate through movement.

The dysregulation caused by disrupted sleep can also increase the need to stim, especially in evenings.

Family, school and work staff may see fasting Autistic young people or adults need to stim more so towards the end of the month due to exhaustion and self regulation.

In Asian and African cultures, stimming can be seen as a problem. We need to reframe this mindset and allow for individuals to express themselves as they need to, without hurting others. Our aim is to change this culture of controlling what seems 'normal' or acceptable behaviour.



## Let Autistic bodies move!

After Taraweeh, I once asked my AuDHD child how he manages the long prayers.

“I keep my head straight,” he said, “but I can’t stop my body from moving. I like to swing my arms when I raise them for takbeer.”

He then noticed that I bounce slightly while standing. The truth is, everyone moves. Autistic or not.

For Autistic people, though, stimming is not a habit. It is a regulation. Movement can support sensory processing, proprioception, a busy mind, or the physical discomfort of boredom. In long congregational prayers, that regulation becomes even more important.

You might notice bouncing, fidgeting, subtle swaying or shifting. This is not disrespect. It is self-regulation. There is no need to tell someone to sit still, remove a small object, or assume they are mocking the prayer.

Let Autistic bodies move. Regulated bodies allow focused hearts. And that is what matters.

—S



# Multiply Neurodivergent



It's very common to be multiply neurodivergent. These are often overlooked or unaccommodated within religious spaces, and show up when under strain.

For example, visual stress, including Meares-Irlen Syndrome, can make reading physically uncomfortable. Letters may blur, move or transpose. Light sensitivity can cause strain or headaches. During Ramadan, when reciting the Qur'an more frequently, these difficulties can become more noticeable.

For some, coloured overlays or tinted lenses can make a significant difference. The right filter can make text clearer, reduce overwhelm and improve accuracy in recitation. Something as simple as a subtle tint can transform the reading experience.

It is more common to have ADHD than learning disabilities as an Autistic person. This means some people will not come across as typically autistic or ADHD as the constraining thinking processes mask each other. Living as an AuDHDer can cause havoc when routines change, when you are dehydrated and you try to redirect your focus inwards and slow down. However, as a plus, if you're 'special interest' is Islam, then this is the month for you! You can learn about [monotropism and holotropism](#) through various autistic researchers.

In some communities, hidden disabilities are not considered the same as apparent disabilities therefore there is some unnecessary stigma around missing fasts. This includes those with long term mental health difficulties. It's best to consult a scholar for clarification and block out misguided advice.

## Participation should not require masking.

Bright mosque lighting during Taraweeh can also feel intense or painful. Wearing tinted glasses may help regulate this. Comments about “unusual” lenses can make participation harder than it needs to be.

Many Autistic people are also ADHD and or dyslexic. ADHD can affect focus and visual tracking when reading. Dyslexia can make text processing slower or more effortful. Larger print Qur’ans, overlays or screen filters can provide meaningful support.

Social anxiety and sensory overload in communal spaces are also common. Drawing attention to necessary aids can reduce confidence and belonging.

Accessibility tools are not distractions.  
They are supports.

Creating welcoming spaces means allowing people to use what helps them engage fully, without judgement.



# Iftaars



Sharing food in Ramadan is a beautiful and beloved tradition. Inviting others to break their fast, or being invited, strengthens bonds and builds community. Feeding someone who is fasting is highly rewarded and deeply encouraged.

When the days are shorter and energy is higher, these gatherings can feel joyful.

But for Autistic people, especially when unmasking becomes more natural and fatigue builds, the pressure to participate can feel overwhelming.



## Care is not always visible.

Hosting can bring layers of stress. What should I cook? Will it be enough? What if something goes wrong? Will people judge? These thoughts can become paralysing.

To others, declining invitations or keeping things simple may look like a lack of effort. In reality, it may be careful energy management.

Care is not always loud or visible.

Sometimes it is quiet.

Sometimes it is staying within your limits.

Thinking of others does not always mean gathering in large groups.

And that is okay.



# The Mind–Body Connection



Ramadan affects the whole person. Body, mind and spirit are deeply connected. When one is strained, the others feel it.

The month can be demanding even for able-bodied people. Neurodivergent bodies often carry additional layers that are rarely considered.

Many Autistic people experience co-occurring physical conditions such as hypermobility, Ehlers–Danlos syndromes (EDS), fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue or gut sensitivities. Fasting, disrupted sleep and increased activity can intensify pain, dizziness or exhaustion.

Knowing how your neurodivergent body is affected is key to putting in place adequate supports and advocating for your needs. Understanding your body's limits will help you curb burnout and aid recovery.

[SEDSCollective](#) are a great organisation to learn more about connective tissues in neurodivergent bodies.



## Mercy includes yourself.

Ramadan traditionally has a heavy toll on the matriarchs of the household. Thankfully these days we see a push back on this narrative that 1) Suhoor and Iftaar duties lie on the women 2) They must mask their ailments especially menstruation.

The neurodivergent mind will have a neurodivergent body, and this month really does test the mind and body. Therefore it is important for our society to understand the disproportionate impact on us and make adjustments.

For women (who work and may also care for family) the additional PMDD/ PCOS/ endometriosis/ fibroids and cysts that are more common in neurodivergent bodies should not be dismissed and considered as illness that impact ability to fast. (Peri)menopause also causes significant additional stress and barriers not just to the body but also the mind- how neurodivergent bodies experience this is different to neurotypical and is very often the time when many realise they are Autistic/ADHD/AuDHD (and more).

We must remember that Muslims have the option to make up fasts later if needed or pay *fidya* when they cannot fast at all.



# Sensory Differences



Many Autistic people experience heightened sensory sensitivity. Hearing is one of the most common differences.

Standard hearing tests may appear “normal”, yet the brain can process sound more intensely. Increased neural connectivity can mean amplified sensory input. Volume that feels comfortable to most people can feel painful or overwhelming to an Autistic person.

Night prayers during Ramadan can be spiritually uplifting. They can also be acoustically intense. Loud speakers, echoes and crowded spaces may make it difficult to regulate. Ear defenders or noise-cancelling headphones may be necessary just to remain present.

Places of worship should be accommodating to all by reviewing the sensory environment. Small actions such as reducing speaker volume or lighting can make a big impact.

[Aurora Autistic Consulting](#) have a checklist that can help organisations. SEMA also provide training to community places in order to improve understanding of autistic sensory differences.



## Faith should be accessible.

For some Autistic teenagers and adults, noise levels alone make the mosque inaccessible. This can lead to missing out on community and spiritual experiences.

The impact of sensory overload is not minor. It can reduce the ability to speak, cause headaches, disrupt sleep, trigger emotional outbursts, or lead to shutdown or meltdown.

Places of worship should carry out sensory checks and consider volume control, quiet areas and inclusive practices. Faith should not be inaccessible because of avoidable environmental barriers.



# Hygiene



## An Unexpected Benefit!

Fasting is not only a spiritual practice. It also gives the digestive system a break, something modern research increasingly recognises as beneficial.

Another part of the body that may benefit is the teeth.

For some Autistic people, sensory sensitivities or demand avoidance can make regular tooth brushing difficult. The taste of toothpaste, the texture of bristles or even the routine itself can feel overwhelming. This can lead to inconsistent dental care and feelings of guilt.

Hygiene plays a big part in Islam. In fact there is a credible Hadith that says purification is half of faith. However this is personal and does not mean this is used to pressure or shame neurodivergent people who experience executive dysfunction. This is where the support of family members is crucial. Kind words, non judgemental, non-threatening and neuro-affirming language can alleviate strain.



## Struggle is not laziness.

During fasting hours, the teeth are not exposed to constant food and drink. This natural pause can offer a small period of rest from continuous use.

Some Muslims use the miswak, a traditional tooth-cleaning twig from the Aarak tree. It has natural cleansing properties and a different texture from a standard toothbrush. For some Autistic people, this texture may feel more tolerable and easier to manage.

Small adjustments can make hygiene more accessible. Struggle with routine is not a reflection of character.



# Iftar Preps



Ramadan is meant to reduce, not increase, pressure.

For some, cultural expectations around iftar can mean hours in the kitchen while fasting, even during pregnancy, illness or exhaustion. Over time, many Autistic Muslims begin to let go of these unrealistic standards.

Extravagant meals are not an obligation.

The spirit of fasting is simplicity, reflection and restraint. In some households, food preparation can become excessive and disconnected from that purpose.

There is also the reality of health. Heavy, fried or elaborate meals every evening can leave the body feeling worse, not nourished.



## Simple is enough.

Executive dysfunction can make cooking difficult even outside of Ramadan. Add fasting, sleep disruption and low blood sugar, and the demand can become overwhelming.

Preparing a simple meal is enough.  
Sharing responsibility is reasonable.  
Reducing expectations is not failure.

Many Autistic Muslims also live with eating disorders or other co-occurring conditions. These layers make food, fasting and family meals more complex than they may appear.

Compassion should extend to the kitchen as well.



# Focus



Taraweeh is meant to train the mind and heart towards focus. For many Autistic Muslims, it can feel like the opposite.

Standing still for long periods while managing sensory input, restlessness and wandering thoughts is not simple. The body fidgets. The mind drifts.

If the day has been emotionally charged, whether positive or difficult, thoughts may replay on a loop. A conversation you regret. A moment of embarrassment. A lingering worry. Meanwhile, the imam continues reciting.

Even when praying alone, the mind does not always cooperate.

This is not a lack of sincerity. It is how some brains work.



## Wandering thoughts are human.

Gentle regulation may help. Decompression time before prayer. Grounding exercises. Subtle movement. Familiar scents. Short pauses between acts of worship.

There may not be a perfect solution. Sometimes it is enough to know that you are not alone in this experience.

There is no competition on worship. There should be no shame in reframing what worship looks like in different personal circumstances. It is not always about salah and charity. Caring for loved ones, yourself, and dhikr are also forms of worship.



# Transitions



Transitions are not limited to the start of Ramadan. One of the most significant transitions we experience is becoming unwell.

Illness and menstruation disrupt the routine we have worked hard to build around suhur, iftar and Taraweeh. For Autistic people, sudden change requires energy. It can feel destabilising.

Autistic women often experience periods differently. Cycles may be irregular. Sensitivity to hormonal shifts can be stronger. There is a higher likelihood of conditions such as endometriosis, cysts, PMDD, underactive thyroid and PCOS.

Illness is unpredictable. Autistic inertia can make restarting routines difficult. Sensory experiences may feel heightened. When combined with interrupted sleep and reduced food intake, recovery can take longer.



## Rest is not weakness.

During menstruation and illness, it is permitted not to fast. Even so, stepping out of the fasting routine can bring feelings of exclusion or guilt. It is another adjustment to navigate.

Rest is not weakness.  
Adaptation is not failure.

Understanding your limits is essential. Connecting with others who share similar experiences can reduce isolation and provide reassurance.

Try to join a small peer support space for Autistic Muslims during Ramadan, where members can share experiences, ask questions and feel understood.



# Charity



Ramadan is a key time for giving in charity.

Muslims are among the highest charitable donors in the UK, disproportionate to our percentage of the population. This generosity is something to be proud of.

For many Autistic Muslims, hyper-empathy deepens the urge to give. When we see suffering, it feels personal. We may want to give more than we realistically can.

At the same time, Autistic people are more likely to experience financial insecurity due to systemic barriers to employment. Many rely on family support or unstable income. Autistic Muslim women can face even greater challenges.

Generosity should not come at the cost of personal stability.



## Generosity needs boundaries.

There is also increasing pressure from emotionally persuasive fundraising. Continuous urgent messaging can feel overwhelming. For some, especially those with a PDA profile, being pushed or guilted into giving can trigger resistance. Autonomy matters. Giving should feel intentional, not demanded.

Islam teaches that charity does not decrease provision. Trust in that promise can bring comfort. Still, charity must remain within one's means.

Some people find structured tools helpful, such as setting up automatic giving schedules. Choosing the amount and the causes in advance can reduce executive load and remove last-minute pressure.

Give with compassion.

Give within your capacity.

Give without guilt.



# Interoception



Not everyone experiences hunger in the same way.

Poor interoception, the ability to sense internal body signals, is common in Autistic people. Recognising hunger, thirst, fatigue, or the need to rest does not always happen automatically.

For some, this can make fasting feel easier. Hunger cues may be weak or go unnoticed.

But there is a downside. Dehydration, exhaustion and health risks such as urinary tract infections can develop without clear warning signs. Forgetting to eat at suhoor or iftar is common, especially when executive dysfunction makes planning and self-care harder.

Structure becomes essential as well setting reminders or even intervention like taking electrolytes.



## Listening to your body matters.

Setting alarms, planning meals in advance (with others if possible) and having supportive reminders can reduce risk of dehydration. Visual schedules or written plans may also help, or having family members placing water in proximity.

Ramadan is not about ignoring the body. It is about balance, intention and awareness.

Listening to your body is part of worship. This is an opportunity to look inwards and understand yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually .



# Memory



Many Autistic people describe their memory as different from neurotypical peers.

Working memory, which holds information briefly, can be limited. This is even more noticeable for those who are also ADHD and or dyslexic. Holding small pieces of information in mind while focusing on something else can be challenging.

During Ramadan, this can show up in prayer.

Remembering which raka'ah you are in during a four-unit salah can suddenly feel unclear. The same can happen when counting adhkar or repeated supplications. Losing track is common and can feel frustrating.

Short-term memory challenges do not mean weak memory overall.

Did you know there are 'rakah counters' that can help!



**Different does not  
mean deficient.**

Many Autistic people have exceptionally strong long-term memory. This can support memorising du'as, Qur'anic verses and longer passages with accuracy and dedication.

Islamic tradition values committing the Qur'an to memory. The focus, repetition and deep interest often associated with Autistic cognition can make this a strength.

Struggling with counting does not erase your capability.

Different memory profiles bring different gifts.



# Neurodiversity and Disability



We are often harsher with ourselves than anyone else.

Many Autistic Muslims have spent years trying to fit in, masking differences and absorbing criticism. Feeling judged, especially as women, can shape how we see ourselves.

Ramadan offers a chance to pause and reflect.

We are created as we are, with strengths and limitations. Our Creator knows our capacities better than any person ever could. Our struggles are not hidden. Our effort is seen.

Being merciful to ourselves begins with recognising that disability and difference are not mistakes. They are part of human variation.



## **Mercy begins with acceptance.**

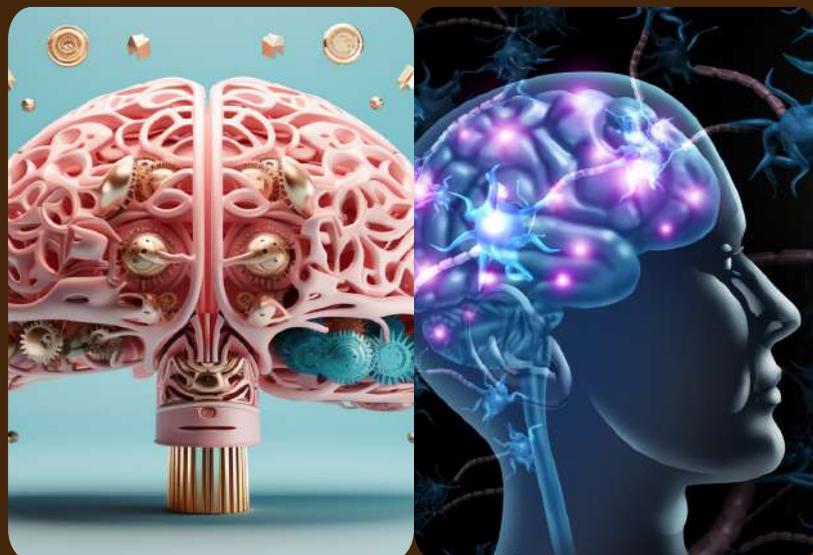
Neurodiversity exists alongside the diversity of languages, cultures and ethnicities within humanity. Brain types differ too. This diversity is part of creation.

We do not need to measure ourselves by the expectations of others. It is time we shake off the power and control the false concept of normalcy has over us.

We can strive, while also accepting our limits. We should recognise our internalised ableism in order to reframe our concept of needing help and having different limitations.

Understanding disability language helps us recognise these barriers without shame. Reasonable adjustments can exist within religious practice too.

We can seek mercy, while offering it to ourselves.



# Wudhu



For some Autistic Muslims, wudhu can become unexpectedly difficult during Ramadan.

The barrier is not about knowing how to perform ablution. It is often about capacity.

## **Executive function:**

Executive dysfunction affects the ability to move from intention to action. Knowing what to do does not always translate into being able to start or complete it. During Ramadan, exhaustion and disrupted sleep can make this harder.

## **Demand avoidance:**

Some Autistic people experience intense resistance to demands, even self-imposed ones. This is not stubbornness or defiance. It is a nervous system response. When something feels like a pressure, the body may resist automatically.

## **Sensory sensitivity:**

Many Autistic people have heightened sensory profiles. Water temperature, the feeling of wet skin or repeated washing can become uncomfortable or even painful. This can be intensified by chronic fatigue or conditions such as fibromyalgia.



## **Demand avoidance is neurological.**

Acts of worship that require physical effort, such as wudu before salah, can become genuine barriers. Joint pain, fatigue or executive dysfunction may make repeated ablution overwhelming. Often, neither carers nor individuals realise why the struggle feels so heavy.

Islam provides ease. Tayammum, purification without water, exists for a reason. Adjustments are part of the faith, not a failure of it.

Being mindful of the mind–body connection allows us to practise with awareness rather than guilt.

Be kind to your body.

Be merciful to yourself.

Just as you believe Allah is Merciful.

We discussed wudhu in our webinar with Dr Sofia Rehman last year. You can watch back on our YouTube Channel.



# Communication



Communication is not limited to spoken words. Not speaking does not mean not understanding.

Within some communities, there is a belief that speech equals intelligence. When a child does not speak, assumptions are made about their ability to learn. This is a myth that must be challenged.

Not all Autistic people have learning disabilities. In fact, most do not. Cognitive ability and speech are separate. A person who usually speaks may lose speech in certain circumstances. A non-speaking person may develop speech over time. There is a wide spectrum in between.

There is no shame in having a loved one who does not speak. They deserve respect, education and opportunity just like anyone else.



## Communication is broader than words.

Communication methods can and should be adapted. Augmentative and Alternative Communication tools exist. Understanding can be assessed in different ways, not only through spoken responses.

At the same time, those who appear to speak fluently may be using significant mental energy to do so. Eloquence in speech can come at a cost. Avoid praising someone in a way that dismisses the effort involved. That too can be a form of ableism. Also, allow for recovery time when you know your Autistic loved one has been speaking all day. By planning down time for decompression during the month, the build up towards burnout can be interrupted.

Understanding autism requires shifting how we define communication. Inclusion begins with listening differently.



# Missing Out

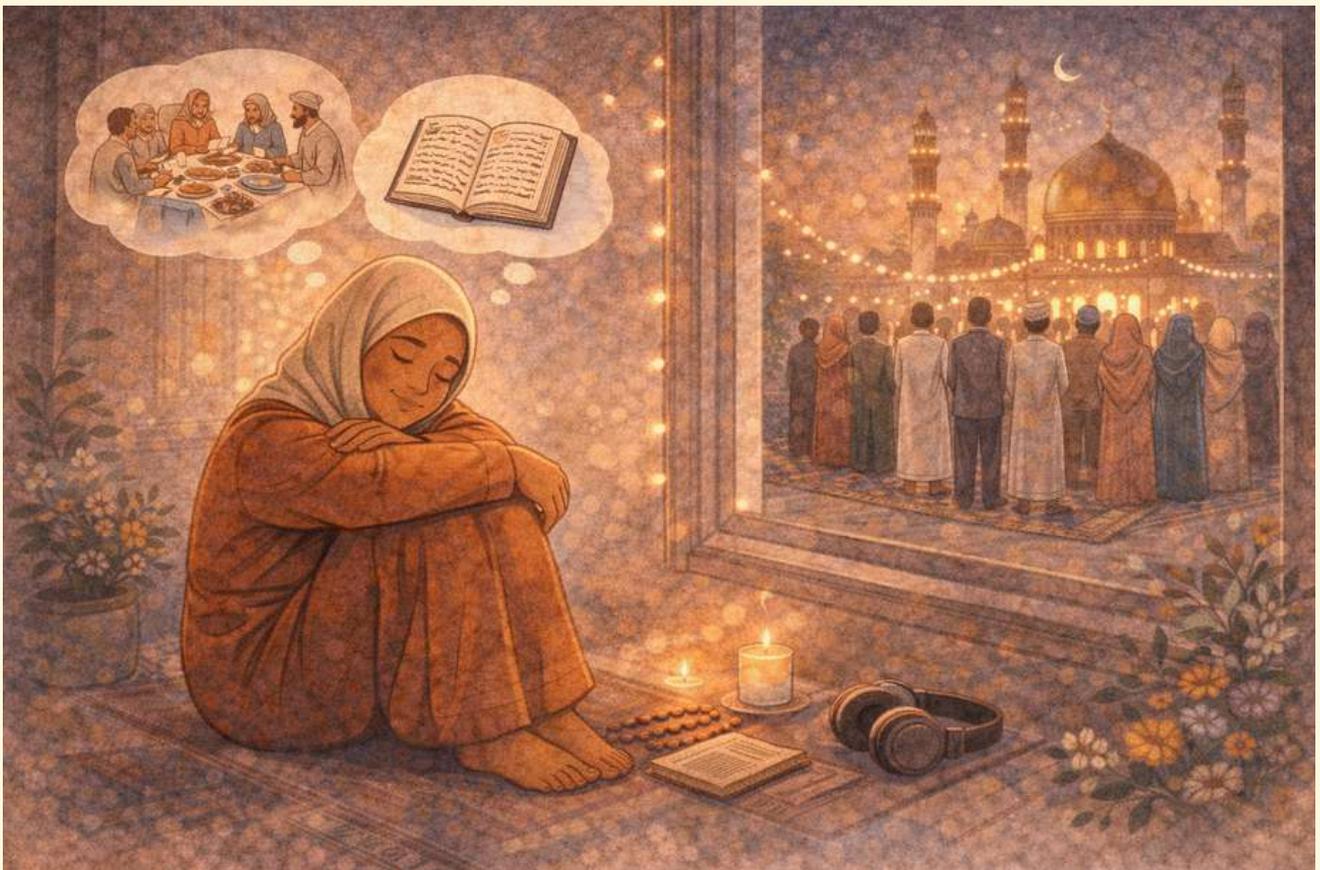


Ramadan can sometimes feel like a month of comparison.

You see others attending every Taraweeh, hosting large iftars, finishing the Qur'an multiple times, giving generously, waking for tahajjud. Social media amplifies it all.

Meanwhile, you may be managing exhaustion, shutdowns, illness, sensory overload or executive dysfunction.

It can feel like you are missing out.



**Ramadan is not a  
competition.**

Autistic Muslims often experience Ramadan differently. Energy limits are real. Social spaces may be overwhelming. Sleep disruption may make extra worship impossible.

Missing a gathering does not mean missing the reward.

Praying at home does not make you lesser.

Doing less outwardly does not mean feeling less inwardly.

Allah knows capacity. He sees effort that others do not.

Ramadan is not a competition. It is a personal journey.



# Time



When Autistic people speak with one another, a common experience often emerges. Many seem to sense time differently.

This is a phenomenon that has likely not been formally researched or documented yet, and it is not a deficit in any way.

Perception of time is individual. Yet modern capitalist society attempts to standardise everyone's pace. Productivity, schedules and constant activity become the norm, which can leave Autistic people feeling out of place because their natural rhythms diverge.

## **Why is this relevant to Islam and Ramadan?**

Year after year, Muslims share the same reflection: the month seemed to pass faster than the previous one. At the beginning it can feel like a mountain ahead, yet once it begins it moves quickly and many are left wishing they had used the time better.

The discourse around time in Islam is fascinating. Time speeding up is described as one of the signs of the Hour. Time in the Hereafter is also believed to be experienced very differently from time on Earth. The Quran invites reflection on space and time in ways that resonate deeply for many Autistic people.



## Time is relative.

In this world, people chase time through goals, achievements and success, while forgetting that eternal time awaits where stress does not exist. Many Autistic people see through the pace and expectations of capitalist society, yet trying to fit into that structure can be one of the causes of burnout.

During Ramadan, bodily demands are reduced. When consumption decreases, the constant pressure to work in order to sustain those demands softens.

Attention shifts toward spiritual needs instead.

Perhaps this is what slowing down is meant to feel like. Maybe this is closer to what people describe as mindfulness.



# Black-and-White Thinking



Many Autistic people experience 'black-and-white' thinking. Things can feel either right or wrong. Success or failure. Complete or ruined. Context is crucial to understand process and situations and this may look like extra questioning, or need for more detail.

During Ramadan, this can become amplified:

"If I missed Fajr, the whole day is pointless."

"If I couldn't focus in Taraweeh, it doesn't count."

"If I broke my fast early, I've failed."

This all-or-nothing pattern can turn a month of mercy into a month of pressure.



## Ramadan is not all or nothing.

Perfectionism often sits quietly underneath. Wanting to do everything properly. Wanting to give the best version of yourself. Wanting your worship to be sincere and complete.

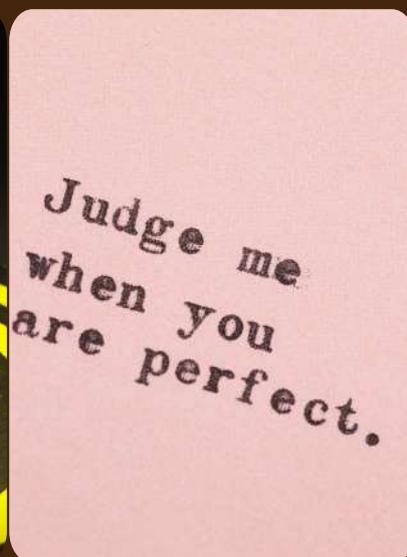
But Ramadan was never designed to be perfect. It was designed to be human.

Some days will feel focused and connected. Others will feel distracted and heavy. Both are part of worship. One missed prayer does not erase a month of effort. One difficult day does not cancel sincerity. Small, consistent acts carry weight. Mercy sits at the centre of this month.

Progress is not perfection.

Effort is not erased by imperfection.

Worship is not all or nothing.



# Children and Parenting



Ramadan can feel very different when children are involved.

For Autistic parents, fasting while managing sensory input, disrupted sleep and increased demands can already be exhausting. Adding children's needs on top can stretch capacity even further.

For parents of Autistic children, the month may bring additional challenges. Changes in routine, later nights, different meal times and mosque environments can dysregulate children quickly. Meltdowns may increase. Sleep may worsen. Energy levels may drop.

It can be difficult to create the "magical Ramadan" often shown online.

Comparison adds pressure. Decorated homes. Calm children in prayer rows. Organised crafts and structured learning.



## Safety over spectacle.

Reality may look different.

Perhaps Taraweeh happens at home.

Perhaps suhur is simple.

Perhaps some nights are about survival, not spirituality.

Children do not need perfection. They need safety, love and consistency.

Ramadan is not measured by aesthetics. It is measured by intention.

For Autistic parents, reducing expectations can protect everyone's wellbeing. Sharing responsibility, simplifying meals and adjusting routines are not failures. They are wise adaptations. Responsiveness is key to maintaining energy levels which will help sensory and emotional regulation.

The most powerful lesson children learn is not how elaborate the month looked. It is how mercy was practiced within the home.



# Giving Gifts

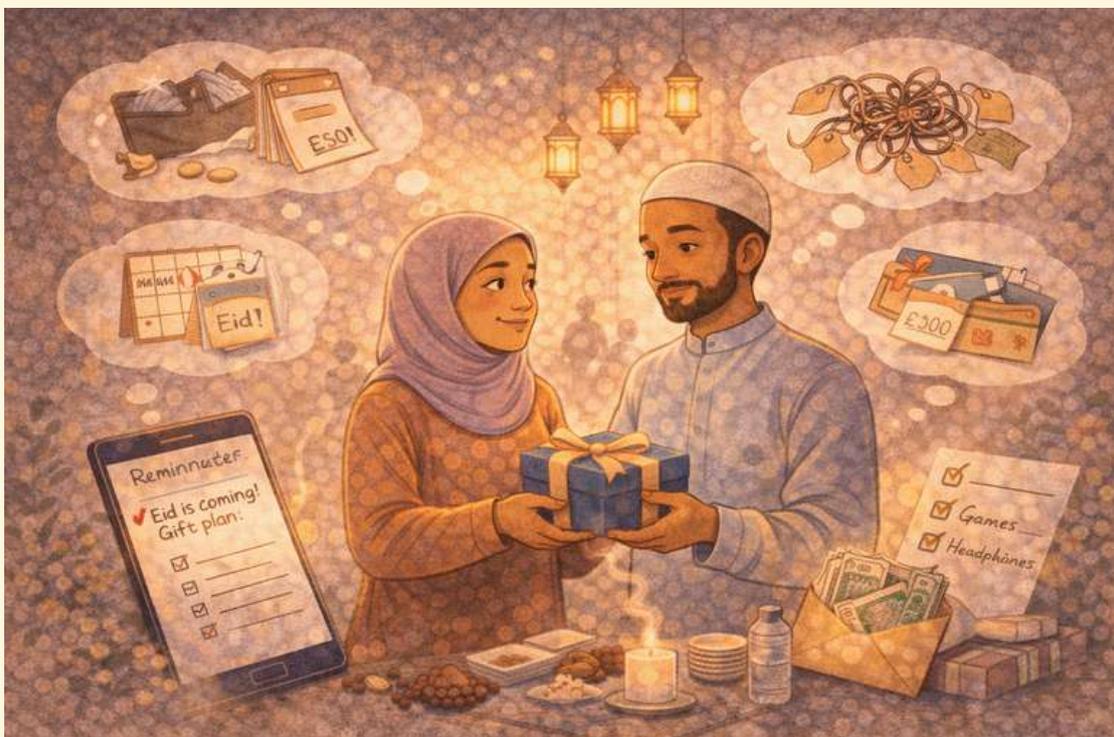


Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, a month of dedication, restraint and spiritual growth. It is a time of celebration, family gatherings and exchanging gifts.

For some, buying presents feels easy and enjoyable. For many Autistic and ADHD individuals, it can be stressful and mentally draining.

Object permanence can affect relationships in subtle ways. When someone is not physically present, they may not stay front of mind. This does not mean they are unloved. It is simply how some brains prioritise what is immediately visible or urgent.

Executive dysfunction adds another layer. Planning ahead, setting aside money, going to shops, choosing the “right” item, wrapping it and delivering it all require multiple steps. Each step uses cognitive energy. Decision fatigue can make even small choices feel overwhelming.



## Care is not measured in wrapping paper.

There is also the pressure to meet unspoken expectations. Worrying about whether the gift is good enough, thoughtful enough or equal in value can create anxiety. For some, this fear of getting it wrong leads to avoidance.

Time blindness can mean Eid arrives suddenly, leaving little space to prepare. Financial insecurity can also increase stress around gift-giving.

It is rarely about not caring. It is about capacity.

Practical solutions can help. Asking loved ones directly what they would like. Giving money or vouchers. Contributing towards something specific. Setting reminders weeks in advance. Keeping gifts simple and consistent each year.

Eid is about joy, mercy and connection. The intention behind a gift matters more than the presentation.

Connection over perfection.

Care does not have to look traditional.

Thoughtfulness can be simple.



# Transitioning Out



For many Autistic Muslims, leaving Ramadan can feel harder than entering it.

Not only because of fatigue, dehydration or disrupted sleep.

But because of the sadness that comes with the end of something sacred.

Ramadan invites us to immerse ourselves in renewal.

We reflect, we soften, we turn inward. We try to rebuild our relationship with our Creator and with ourselves.

It rarely goes exactly as planned. We miss prayers. We lose focus. We wish we had done more. That sense of longing is natural when something matters deeply.

There is also an emotional toll that is not often spoken about. Ramadan connects us to the Ummah, a community meant to transcend race, culture and status. When parts of that community are suffering, many feel it intensely.

Some have carried the grief of global events alongside fasting and extra worship. That weight costs energy, mentally and physically.

## The connection remains.

When the month ends, the structure changes again. The heightened connection softens. Routine shifts once more. Yet something remains.

The relationship renewed with Allah does not disappear. The effort invested is not lost.

For many Autistic people, hyper-empathy and heightened self-awareness mean the emotional energy spent in Ramadan runs deep. This can be seen as a spiritual renewal and boost. However, even transitioning out requires gentleness too.

You are allowed to feel sadness.

You are allowed to feel relief.

Both can exist together.



# Burnout



Most people will experience burnout at the end of the month. The difference for Autistic people is the sheer energy – physical, emotional and mental- it has taken to complete this special period.

Burnout for Autistic people is a topic not discussed in Muslim communities. Us adults need extra care and less demands to recover and the time this takes will depend on many factors. Reasons like work, caring duties, health difficulties, in addition to wider systemic harms.

In producing this resource, we hope to improve self understanding, where Autistic Muslims can relate and find words that describe their experiences. Many of us have spent a lifetime struggling and being dismissed; mocked or invisible. In order to recover from burnout, we need effective support systems around us that accept us as we are, without demanding that we change our way of being.

Our very operating systems are over active at times of rest and then go into overdrive when we are exhausted. It's almost like when the heart pumps harder when blood sugar drops. Attention should be at the cause not the symptom. Our environment.



## Reset, Renew, Refocus

The intensity and longevity of burnout can vary. It can also show up as depression and mental health difficulties while exasperating physical health problems.

It is important to recognise burnout in order to recover. There is an increasing number of resources on this available online which can be found on our website. The [Autistic Burnout Network](#) being an important one.

Ramadan is a beautiful time to reset, refocus and renew our intentions as Muslims. This will look very different from person to another. We need a community that is responsive to differences, not judgemental. This collection of internalisation is a step towards achieving this, if we collectively make intention to do better for our fellow humans.





In a month built on mercy,  
difference was never a flaw.



Sema.Scot

