

Ramadan 2019

– May 5, 2019 –

Tonight, after sunset, hundreds of millions of Muslims across the world will embark on Ramadan, the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic calendar, in which it is believed the Qur'an was revealed to the prophet Muhammad. For 30 days, many Muslims will be fasting – no food, no water – from sunrise to sunset, getting on with life while taking on one of the greatest acts of faith. Not eating, or drinking even the tiniest drop of water, is hard.

But it can definitely be done. Some will keep working out, playing football or heading to the gym, even after a day at work or school. Others will dedicate more time to meditative prayer or studying the Qur'an. As so many of us will attest, the challenge is mental rather than physical. Feeling weak or lethargic by the end of the day is common, but the body adjusts and willpower is extraordinary – as with any sort of training, fasting gets easier as you go on.

Exemptions are made for the elderly, the young, anyone who is ill, for women who are pregnant or menstruating, and for those travelling. In these cases, fasts are made by *fidyah* – donating money or food to those in need. Fasting during Ramadan isn't just about resisting the temptation to eat: it also means no sex, no smoking, no bitching, no general bad behaviour in daylight hours. Instead, love, charity, kindness and prayer are prioritised. Consider it a spiritual detox.