

AMIRAH MAUTHOOR



RECHARGE...

your
Faith

How to make your Ramadan Outstanding

Second Edition, 1431 AH/2010 CE

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Edited by Kherta Abubakar

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Printed in Canada.

Dedicated to my husband, Noor Syed.
What would success be without anyone to share it with.

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Let's get started

WHAT DO YOU WANT OUT OF IT?

Picture this. You're at the airport and you make your way to the ticket counter. Your luggage is ready and you know that you are going on vacation. You approach the counter and the sales person asks you, "Where are you going"? You stand there with a big smile on your face and say, "I don't know, anywhere!" At this point the salesperson looks at you like you're crazy and replies: "I'm sorry, but you need to know your destination in order for us to issue you a ticket".

As ridiculous as this scenario sounds, this is exactly how many of us go into the month of Ramadan. We know that Ramadan is approaching and we know what we should be doing to prepare, but we are at a loss when it comes to following words with action. A successful Ramadan is all about planning; you must have a clear vision of what you want to gain and specifically how you are going to achieve it. This is why, as you will soon see, the majority of this book focuses on the time leading up to Ramadan. Whether you are a working professional or a mother with children, you will find that simple strategic planning of your schedule before Ramadan will free up your time drastically for *ibaadah* (worship).

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Ramadan? Is it hunger, Taraweeh, or iftaar parties? Maybe *ibadaah*? Whatever it is, it is clear that Ramadan has become

a culture, an entity with a life of its own. When I was growing up, I remember the constant reminders: stop watching TV! Stop gossiping! Stop fighting with your siblings - it's Ramadan! Unfortunately however, that's all it was; a time to stop. Like a light switch that goes on and off.

Once Ramadan arrives, the light of eman goes on. We watch our tongues, guide our actions, and engage in as much good as possible. We're praying on time; we've switched off our TVs and dusted off our Qur'an. We've been able to quit smoking and stop listening to music all at the same time. But before you know it, Ramadan ends and the light is switched off. Darkness.

We're back in the darkness of our old habits. Despite the 30 days of spiritual boot camp, our motivation begins to dwindle. We find ourselves sinking back into the very habits we gave up during Ramadan, devoid of the light that Ramadan brought. Is this the purpose of Ramadan? Was Ramadan really meant to be a time of temporary change, being a "super good" Muslim one month out of 12? Why not strive to be an outstanding Muslim 12 months of the year? Ramadan is meant to be a time for positive permanent change. That means striving to be the best Muslim, one that worships and serves Allah in the best possible way - 365 days a year!

The biggest mistake people make in relation to Ramadan is preparing late or not preparing at all. Most of us begin prepare for Ramadan when it has already begun. The fortunate ones might start planning a few days before it begins. The problem is this: planning during Ramadan is ineffective. Precious time is wasted 'preparing' instead of living, and if you've procrastinated this late, chances are that you missed out on something important and you'll be busy dealing with irrelevant matters instead of enjoying Ramadan. How can we change this for the better?

- ✓ You want your deeds to be accepted.
- ✓ You want to be completely focused.
- ✓ You want to take advantage of every single moment this blessed month has to offer...

ITS OKAY, I'LL DO BETTER NEXT YEAR

Did you end last Ramadan with the feeling that you could have done better – better with your time, better with your worship? Did you promise yourself it wouldn't be the same this year? Many of us end Ramadan with feelings of regret. We make promises to ourselves that we won't repeat the same mistakes the next year. But a year passes, Ramadan returns, and you find yourself armed with the same excuses.

The truth is however, every year hundreds of Muslims die before they reach their next Ramadan. We are not guaranteed to live – the next Ramadan, the next month, or even the next day.

"Wherever you are, death will find you, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" (An-Nisa:78)

How many people do you know that were young and healthy and yet their lives were taken away? Neither you nor I know whether we will live to see the next Ramadan. Take advantage of the life you have been given now to prepare for Ramadan, and the life to come after it in sha Allah. Prepare now so that you can learn to live for the Hereafter. Build the habits of success by fostering good habits that last long term and are not lost in the face of temptation. Don't let yourself waste your time this Ramadan only to feel guilty at the end of the month. Guilt is a passing emotion; it leaves no change in our actions. Rather, feel regret so that you can have the resolve to not go back to bad habits or sin. Once left behind, leave it behind so that real progress can be made.

Indeed, our motivation in all aspects of our lives can fluctuate and

our iman (faith) is no different. There will be highs and lows and that is to be expected. What we want we can work on is learning how to pull our iman back up when it reaches those low points. You'd be amazed how simple planning can help maintain a spiritual high throughout Ramadan and beyond.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS BOOK?

A productive, spiritually uplifting Ramadan is possible! The question is how do we do it? In this book you will be introduced to tools and techniques that will help you plan your way to a successful Ramadan. Apply these techniques and you will find yourself "in the zone" before, during and after Ramadan, in sha Allah. These tools will not only help you keep in check spiritually, but will also help you develop all aspects of your life so that you are living a balanced and productive lifestyle.

This book is not meant to be read sitting down relaxing on a couch. It is meant to involve your full body and mind. The intention of this book is to aide you in achieving what you desire - you are the key ingredient to your success. Each section will end with an activity to solidify your learning. Do not skip any of the exercises. Take the time to write down your thoughts and answer the questions honestly. As each section builds on the next, take time to reflect upon your personal progress.

Prepare yourself for the best Ramadan ever! If you follow the activities according to the directions outlined for you, you are guaranteed to witness dramatic changes in the quality of your Ramadan and life in general. I look forward to sharing this journey with you!

WHAT IS RAMADAN?

So what is Ramadan? The first thing we must realize is that Allah subhanu wa ta'ala has made certain times, places, and actions more blessed than others. For example, the Prophets (alayhim assalaam) were not like other people, the cities of Makkah and Medinah are not like other cities, and Jummah is not like other days of the week. In the same vein, the month of Ramadan is not the same as other months. One of Allah's greatest gifts to mankind that He created a month that is equal to a thousand in blessing. It is out of His kindness that He has gave us something to look forward to; a period of time to be spiritually revived after a long year of internal struggle. Indeed, this is something to be grateful for.

There are many benefits to Ramadan and not all can be enumerated. For the sake of time and space, we have limited the list to the above points, and Allah knows best.

"Whoever fasts in Ramadan with Eman and wants reward from Allah will have all his sins forgiven"(Bukhari)

Many of us have heard this hadeeth at least once before, but how many of us take it seriously? Imagine, right before you is the chance to have every sin of yours forgiven! What an opportunity!

Let's get started on what we can do to make sure you capitalize on every second this month has to offer.

Before Ramadan

ARE YOU READY?

Here are two questions to think about before you read on. Have you prepared for Ramadan yet? Have you prepared for Eid? You're probably wondering why I would ask about preparing for Eid if Ramadan hasn't started yet. Let's look at it this way:

Success does not happen overnight; nor does it happen by accident. Anytime anyone has been truly successful at something, it is because they have strategically planned and prepared for that success. In Ramadan, our goal is to not only strategically plan, but to plan with *ihsaan* (excellence). The average person generally procrastinates until they are faced with an absolute deadline - or most of us that means: the day before it's due. And we've all done it before! Sadly, we have come to apply this same logic to Ramadan and our attempts towards excellence fall through the cracks. Interestingly however, our relationship with Eid is different. We find ourselves planning what we will do, what we will wear and where we will pray weeks ahead of time.

Why the difference?

In psychology we learn that when someone wants to do something well, they prepare for it ahead of time. In fact, so much time is spent planning that the majority of work is done before the actual event.

Now let's look back at Ramadan. Wouldn't it make sense for us to prepare ourselves before Ramadan begins so that our time is utilized to its full potential? Ideally, that would be the case. When it comes to ibaadah however some people would rather just "get by" - doing just enough to get you through the motions but without the effort. Yet the idea of "getting by" is the very thing that prevents us from achieving our goals. Things can't go well because we don't plan for them.

Going back to my two initial questions, you'll see that preparing for Ramadan necessitates preparing for Eid. Once Ramadan begins, many of us are consumed by iftaar parties, food preparation, and shopping. By the time we reach the last 10 nights of the month, Eid is on our minds, and we are left wondering where the month has gone. Losing out on the benefits of the beginning of Ramadan is a great loss, but watching the last 10 nights slip between your fingers is the ultimate source of tragedy for a believer. Indeed, the last 10 nights of the month of Ramadan are the most important in terms of ibaadah and we should do our utmost to preoccupy ourselves with prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, and du'a. Proper planning before Ramadan can help you ensure that you have the time to dedicate to ibaadah during these last few nights. Get started on your preparation for Eid now so that things are taken care of ahead of time. The calamity of missing out on Layatul Qadr should be the worry of every believer. It is up to you to set your priorities and manage your time accordingly. The first step in doing this is to move away from the mindset that time is on our side. Reflecting on the realities of death puts things in perspective: our present deeds are all we have to bank on. Think of this Ramadan as your last. How would your goals, actions and priorities change?

It is stated for example that the Sahabah (companions of the prophet) radi Allahu anhum would prepare for Ramadan 6 months of the year and ask for forgiveness in the remaining 6 months. How does this compare with our attitude towards Ramadan?

This is an important question to ponder. The first step towards planning for an outstanding Ramadan is to outline what it is you want to achieve during the month (your goals).

Before you begin planning, there are 3 important questions you must ask yourself:

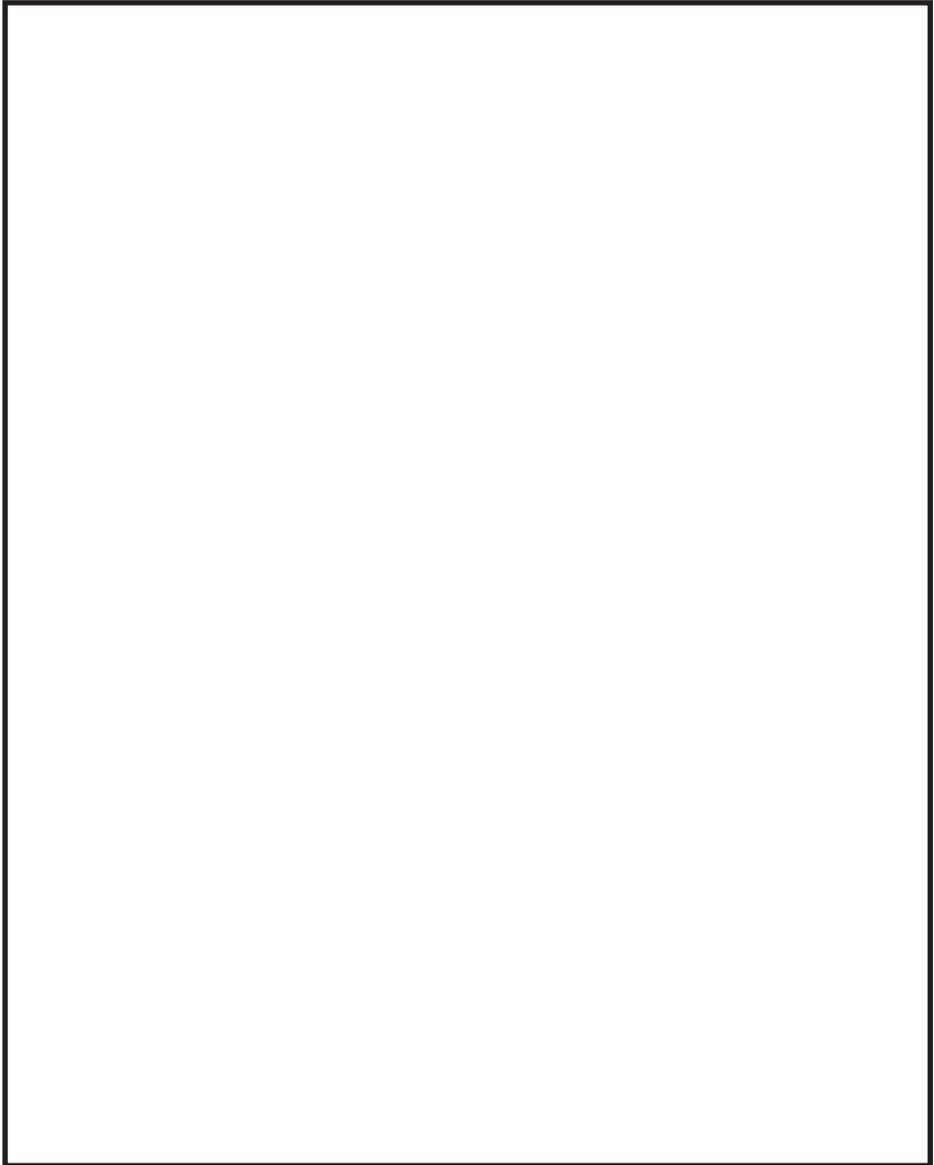
1. Where am I now (in terms of planning)?
2. What do I want out of Ramadan?
3. How will I get there?

Think about the way the Sahabah prepared for Ramadan. Now you may be thinking, "I'm not a sahabi". And you definitely aren't, but what is stopping you from emulating their actions; preparing yourself the way they prepared themselves? The defining characteristic of the sahabah is that they would give their absolute best in everything they did - they worked with ihsaan. If you tell yourself that you cannot do what the sahabah did then you have already given up - by setting up a belief in your mind (and heart) that there is no point to change, you are effectively telling yourself not to change. This brings us to our first exercise.

Let's get started.

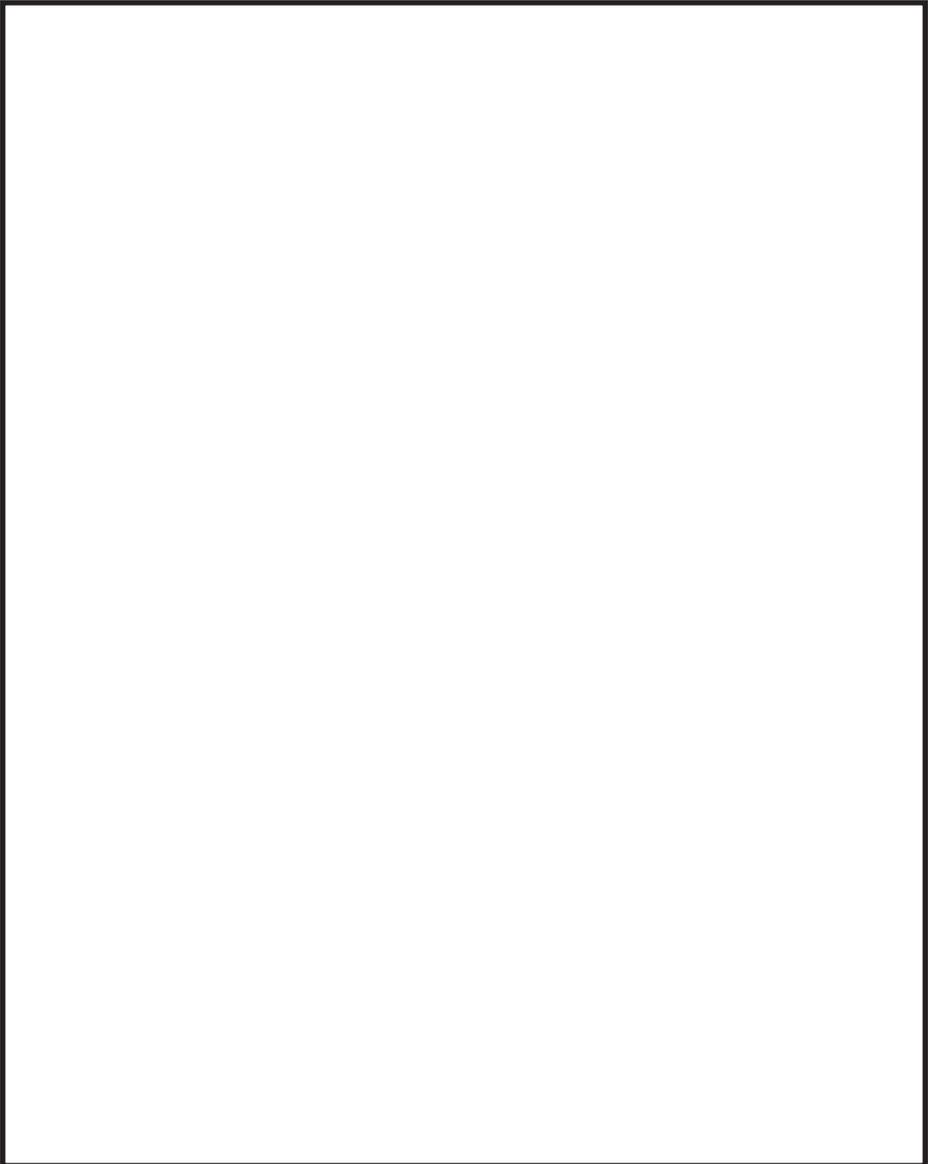
In this first box, write down in a few words that describe what a good Ramadan would be like.

GOOD

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a response to the prompt above.

Now think a little bigger and write down what a great Ramadan would be like.

GREAT

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a response to the prompt above. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the middle section.

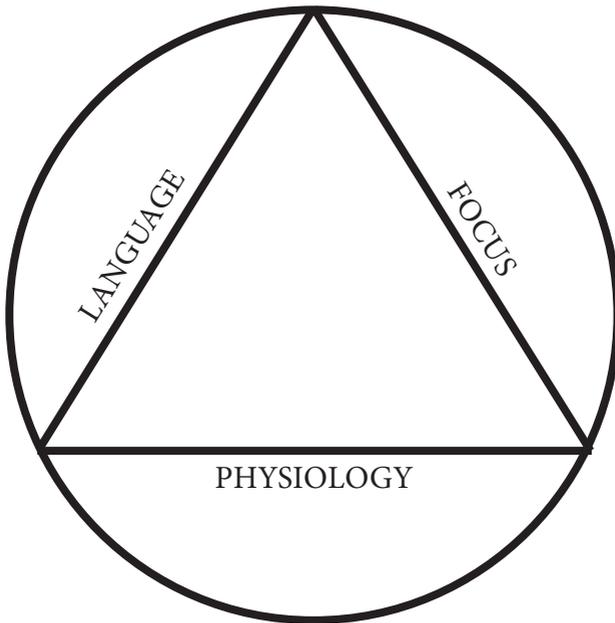
Now think BIGGER. Write down what an outstanding Ramadan would be like.

OUTSTANDING

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a response to the prompt above.

The purpose of this activity is to get your thoughts moving in a direction that allows you to think outside the 'box' of limitations. I guarantee that what you wrote down is not your absolute best. Sometimes it may take an individual 4-5 repetition of the exercise to get the picture of the Ramadan they really want. Your focus for Ramadan should be the 3rd box [outstanding]. These amazing goals are what you will work towards, in sha Allah.

GETTING INTO GEAR



Language: Language plays a significant role in how we live our lives. When you say "I can't do this!", for example, you have already made up your mind against doing that action. This is called positive versus negative association. When you repeatedly say something like "I am lazy", your mind will come to accept this as fact - you will believe that you are lazy, and this will manifest in your actions. A common example that can be cited is that of praying salatul Fajr: It's Fajr time and your eyes happen to open right on time. You glance at the clock, but your mind tells you that you are lazy and you prolong getting up as a result. Getting

up “on time” is not something a lazy person does. Now imagine if you countered this negative thought with positive one? What would happen? Statements like: “This Ramadan is going to be awesome!”, “I am going to memorize x number of Surahs!”, “I am going to wake up for tahajjud everyday!” would not only have a positive impact on your psychology, but influence your actions as well.

Here’s an important fact about the word “try”: When looked at it carefully, the word ‘try’ is really used to give someone the option out - the option out of doing an action. So when someone says, “I’ll try to get this done”, I tell myself to forget it because 99 percent of the time, they won’t do it. Try is a word of weakness. Avoid it at all costs.

Focus: Energy follows focus. Here’s an example: I don’t want you to think of flying monkey! Whatever you do, do not think of a flying monkey! Don’t think of it! Now what are you thinking of? The answer is obvious! In this same way, focusing on positive surroundings helps a person envision success. So instead of focusing on those things that don’t work, focus on what is working. Once you start focusing on positive outcomes, you will begin to a world of the difference in your perspective on life. In terms of Ramadan, you want to focus your energy on how to make it outstanding as opposed to focusing on what you want to avoid.

Physiology: Physiology is all how you carry yourself physically. Think about when you feel confident. How do you stand? How do you look? How do you feel? Imagine this scenario with someone who is not confident? How do they stand, look and feel? Physiology is concerned with how you perform in your surroundings, despite the obstacles you face. You will undoubtedly be faced with many challenges during Ramadan: fatigue, hunger, long days, hot weather, work, children, etc. But the true test of a person’s demeanor and quality of character lies in the manner in which they respond to the call of Allah. How will you respond?

ACTIVITY: Write down the language you will use to help you develop better results, what will be your focus (can be more than 1) and what will give you an outstanding physiology this Ramadan.

LANGUAGE

FOCUS

PHYSIOLOGY

GETTING IN THE ZONE

Now let's move onto physical, mental and spiritual planning.
Goal Setting for Ramadan:

Physical: This is about getting your body ready to fast. Abstaining from eating too much, fasting in Sha'baan, fasting Mondays and Thursday, eating only 1/3, etc are all ways to help your body prepare for Ramadan.

Mental: Part of mentally preparing for Ramadan is getting everything that you need for Ramadan before it begins - this includes everything you will need for Eid as well. You want to make sure that your grocery shopping is done; Plan for an iftaar gathering by picking the dates beforehand, etc. Getting rid of details as this will help you get into the Ramadan mental state before the month begins.

Activity - Based on what you've just learned about Physical and Mental preparation, write down the key things you can do to prepare yourself physically and mentally for Ramadan.

PHYSICALLY

MENTALLY

HEARTWHEEL

Now, let's move on to spiritual training and preparation:

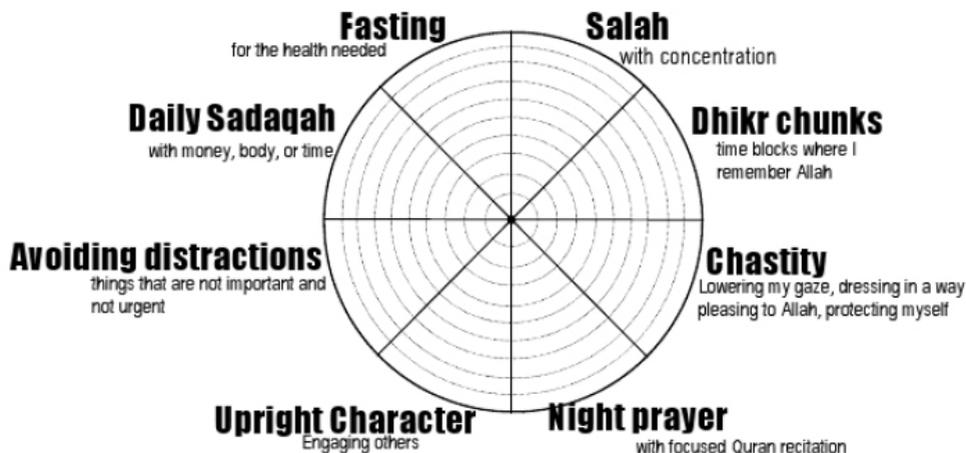
You may already be familiar with how the heartwheel works, but if there is one thing to take away from this book in terms of benefit – this is it! This exercise will allow you to analyze yourself. The heart wheel – in its different slices – is a visual representation of your heart.

For example, if you are analyzing the quality of your salah, you will rate “salah with concentration” out of 10. 1 - being absolutely lousy and 10 - being totally awesome (can't be any better than it is now – not perfect. Perfection belongs to Allah subhnu wa ta 'ala alone. We can never reach perfection; rather we can strive to do our utmost best). Once you get a feel for where you stand in each category you can move on to making the necessary improvements.

Now go ahead and rate the following 8 categories. Remember, rating yourself a “10” doesn't mean you're perfect, rather means that it is a level of ihsaan where know that you are performing to the absolute best of your ability.

Remember, rank according to your ability and control.

HEART *wheel*



Developed by Muhammad Alshareef

Now that you can visualize where you stand in each of these categories, the next step is to analyze, reflect, and write down what can you do to make each category a 10. For example, if you rated your salah 7 out of 10, what could you do to make it 10? Remember that a 10 means that you are performing to the best of your ability.

You should take 30 minutes or more to complete this activity. Your most utmost honesty is required.

Salah

Dhikr

Chastity

Upright Character

Qiyam

Avoiding Distractions

Daily Sadaqa

Fasting

RPM

An RPM is a goal-setting tool that stands for Result, Purpose, and Massive Action Plan (MAP). This next section of the book will assist you in outlining your goals so that they are more concrete - here you are aiming for clarity and definition.

RESULT: BE S.M.A.R.T

So far we've talked about how to prepare for Ramadan. Now it's time to work on some actual goals. Before we get to that, it's important to understand the following S.M.A.R.T concept. S.M.A.R.T stands for Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound. Every goal you set must be S.M.A.R.T.

Specific: Whatever your goal, make sure it is as specific as possible. That means having all the details about how you are going to reach your goal specified. Let's say your goal is to lose weight. Make the goal specific by stating how much you want to lose and in what time frame. The same principle applies to spiritual goals. If you want to memorize a portion of the Qur'an, specify your goal by setting a definite target - for example: "I am going to memorize 3 Juz by the 28th of Ramadan". To make it even more specific, break it down day by day, and then week by week.

Measurable: This is one of the most essential ingredients in goal setting. If it is skipped, the entire process of goal setting will fall apart. You can only know when you've succeeded at something once you've completed the task. Therefore what you want to do with your goal setting is to chart your progress so that you can physically see the changes on paper. When charting, you will see that you are either progressing towards your goal or falling behind. If you are falling behind, one of two things will happen:

1) you will either feel the pain of falling behind and this pain will motivate you to get back on track or

2) You will stop charting your progress and give up on the goal all together.

Attainable: – Proper goal setting means that you choose goals that are within your control. Sometimes we make goals that are dependent on forces beyond our control. One important lesson in goal setting is to not rely on outside factors to reach success. Goals should be tailored to what you as an individual can achieve.

Realistic: Whenever you have a goal, you should make sure that it is realistic (i.e. achievable). While you do not want to limit yourself or make your goals too small or too big, you should keep in mind that your goal must be in line with what can physically and logically be achieved at the time. If you are feeling nervous about your goal then you are doing the right thing! Nervousness is a sign of good goals!

Time-Bound: Each goal you set for yourself should be locked in time. This means that there is a deadline by which your task or goal should be completed.

ACTIVITY: What are your Ramadan goals? List your Ramadan goals following the S.M.A.R.T rule.

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

Purpose: The most important ingredient in achieving one's goals is to have a purpose behind them. Why are you doing this? What's the point? This step may seem redundant, but it cannot; I repeat, CANNOT be skipped. Your purpose in goal setting defines why you are willing to put the time and effort into achieving your stated outcomes. Why do you want to memorize this many Juz this Ramadan? Push yourself to find the answer – what is driving your desire?

Understanding your purpose will be the driving force in your success.

For each purpose that you write down, ask yourself what would happen if you did not achieve the goal. What is the consequence of not achieving the desired results? What does not achieving this goal lead to?

Now ask yourself, what would achieving this goal lead to? How will you feel when you achieve this goal? What do you see yourself doing when you succeed?

MASSIVE ACTION PLAN

Now that you have your goals laid out and your purpose for each goal is clarified, we will now move on to your plan of action.

What steps will you take to achieve your goals? Did you know that 80% of your results are achieved by 20% of your effort? That means that out of the list you come up with here, analyze which one those steps will give you 80% of your result and then list the rest them in order, from most effective to least. When making your action plan, be mindful of possible road blocks you may hit along the way. There is nothing sweeter than preparing for possible obstacles than by knocking them down when they appear.

CHECKLIST: The check list is a list of things you have to get done before Ramadan. This will function as your prep list. Remember, this Ramadan is not going to be good; it's going to be OUTSTANDING! In order to achieve this outcome, we need to plan for it. Go ahead and make a checklist of all the things you need to accomplish before the beginning of Ramadan.

TASK	DEADLINE
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____

During Ramadan

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

Focus. What is our focus during Ramadan? Worship.

What is our ultimate Focus? Jannah. Obviously everyone wants Jannah. Is there anyone out there that wouldn't want to enjoy the pleasures of Jannah? Of course not! It doesn't make much sense to "not want" Jannah. We can all agree on this.

Unfortunately however, not everyone does things that make sense. Take some practical examples: Eating healthy is important, but 65% of Americans are overweight. Statistically, it is safer to be in a plane than it is in a car, but more people are afraid of flying. The logic transfers to our faith as well. We all know that we are supposed to fulfill the ties of kinship, yet how many of us know a family member who is angry with or not talking to another family member? Similarly, we want to make sure that our efforts in Ramadan are logical and focused. Perform each action when it best to be preformed and stay focused by keeping your end goal in mind - Jannah.

THE VISION

You've done a lot of writing thus far. As you are reading the next portion, take the time to really reflect on the questions being asked. Do not write anything down, simply imagine.

Imagine its a few days before Ramadan and you're not prepared. What is it that you didn't prepare for? You still have so much to do, but now Ramadan has arrived... are you ready?

Or are you procrastinating?

Then your mind wanders, was the moon sighted or not?

Are you ready if it starts tomorrow or are you wishing, praying that it starts the day after?

Are you panicking?

Or are you relaxed?

What are you feeling?

You had time to prepare but you didn't take advantage of your time because you were just too busy?

What is it costing you now?

Are you rushing your planning?

Did you make your du'a list?

The phone rings and your friend wishes you a Ramadan Kareem!

Are you excited?

Or are you thinking of all the things you have to get done?

Now you're in the middle of Ramadan.

How is your Ramadan going?

Are you giving it your full focus?

Are you satisfied with the results so far?

Are you making du'a? Do you have a du'a list?

How do you feel about yourself?

All the things you should have done before Ramadan are getting done now. How is it affecting your Ramadan?

What is this costing you?

You're approaching the last 10 nights, you know it's important but there is something else lurking at the back of your mind...Eid. You haven't prepared for Eid!

What are you thinking about now? Where is your focus?

It's the last 10 nights of Ramadan and you have a split mind - Eid preparation or du'a?

Ask yourself what is this lack of focus costing you? Are you able to worship Allah the way you want to? The way you know you should be?

Are you happy? Or are you concerned?

It's the night before Eid, how did you spend these last 10 nights?

Now it's Eid Day, you go for Eid prayer and someone comes up to you wishing you an Eid Mubarak! They ask: "How was your Ramadan?" You nervously respond....

You're telling yourself, "in sha Allah next year I will plan better", but will you really?

Do you really know that you will make it to the next Ramadan alive?

What are the consequences of your lack of foresight? What has this cost you?

Now back to reality.

The good news is that this hasn't happened yet. You have the chance - right here, right now - to prepare for and live the Ramadan you want.

Take a moment to stand up. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in and out and read the next portion.

Imagine that you are traveling toward the future and you pass the month of Ramadan. You see yourself finishing the Eid prayer. As you look back on the Ramadan that has just passed, you discover that you've just had the most amazing Ramadan of your life.

What was it that made this Ramadan so amazing?

Was it the Qur'an that you memorized?

Was it the du'a that you made?

Or the sadaqah (charity) that you gave?

Make this vision bigger. What other amazing things did you do?

How did you feel?

What were you focused on?

What emotions did you feel?

You find yourself at ease and your worship is focused. Taraweeh is sweet; and your fasting is pleasurable.

You think to yourself, this must be the way the Sahabah spent their Ramadan!

What about the last 10 nights of the month?

You are completely dedicated to your relationship with Allah.

Now it's Eid, and you feel awesome because you know you've already prepared for it.

Your hard work has paid off.

How does it feel to know that your hard work has made your Ramadan a success?

What was it that made this Ramadan so different from previous years of fasting?

What are thinking of now?

Are you looking forward to next year's Ramadan being even better than this?

How does this feel?

Now, come back to the present and write down the actions that

helped you achieve those amazing goals.

Sit down with a straight back and write down the vision, purpose, and goals of what you want your Ramadan will be like this year. Revisit your RPM goals and redefine them. Emphasize certain aspects more for Ramadan (i.e. spirituality).

DU'A

“And when you have completed your rites, remember Allah like your [previous] remembrance of your fathers or with [much] greater remembrance. And among the people is he who says, “Our Lord, give us in this world,” and he will have in the Hereafter no share. : But among them is he who says, “Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.” Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account” (Al-Baqarah: 200-202)

DU'A LIST: In order for your du'a list to be comprehensive, you must start early!

Write down everything you want to make du'a for. This list is unlimited.

Imagine that Allah is asking you to ask Him for anything and everything you've ever wanted! Imagine the possibilities! Write down everything you want to ask Allah with no limitations (but keep it halal!) Go nuts!

Take your time writing your du'a list. If you need more paper, grab some. Be specific and put your heart into it



MY ULTIMATE DU'A LIST

After Ramadan

RAMADAN IS OVER BUT THE AJR ISN'T

Ramadan is a month of Rahmah (mercy). We feel closer to Allah; it becomes easier to do ibadaah, we are able to wake up for tahajjud, we give more sadaqah than we usually do - and as a result our iman naturally strengthens.

After such a spiritual high, it is only natural that our iman decrease. The question is however, how can we quickly pull our iman back up and still maintain the good habits that we've built over the month?

The key is continuing self-analysis. Real change does not come without pain. Keeping yourself in check means being brutally honest about your shortcomings. Use the heartwheel to continuously check your spiritual health and use the life wheel for all other aspects of life.

Requirements to the Self-Check System:

1. Honesty
2. Sincere intention (ikhlaas)
3. Willingness to change
4. No excuses
5. Patience

Abu Hurairah reports that the Messenger of Allah said: "Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven during the last third of the night, inquiring:

'Who will call on Me so that I may respond to him?
Who is asking something of Me so I may give it to him?
Who is asking for My forgiveness so I may forgive him?'"
[Fiqh us-Sunnah]

Help Him help you. Allah subhanu wa ta'ala promises us forgiveness in the last 1/3 of the night. This last 1/3 of the night is a gift from Allah to His servants; use this time to take advantage of Allah's mercy. He promises us that He will answer us, so all we have to do is call out to Him, azza wa jall.

We have unlimited opportunities to gain ajr after Ramadan:

- ❧ Visiting the sick
- ❧ Giving up free time
- ❧ Being involved in the Masjid
- ❧ Helping out a friend
- ❧ Being kind to parents
- ❧ Giving sadaqah every time you go to the Masjid

These are all things which we can do to continuously gain ajr. Our good deeds do not need to be restricted to the month of Ramadan. After all, we are worshippers of the Lord of Ramadan, not the month of Ramadan itself.

Activity: What are some things that elevate your iman? Everyone has different motivators. What motivates you? What do you visualize for yourself after Ramadan?

Everyone wants Jannah is not surprising. What defines the winners from the losers however is not desire - it is action.

You know you want jannah, but what are you willing to do for it?

Similarly, you want a lasting “eman boost”, but how are you going to get it? This goes back to linking action with purpose. If you want your eman to be elevated even after Ramadan, your purpose must be strong - there must be no other option but success!

Keeping motivated after Ramadan is extremely important. Sometimes you can self-motivate, but when the whispers of shaytaan get to you, you may find yourself getting weak. How can you combat this?

One way to do this is to have a specific, realistic post-Ramadan plan. For example, if you have a schedule that says you will continue praying tahajjud every night like you did in Ramadan, the likelihood that you will miss one night and give up all together is high. A realistic plan should balance your spiritual and physical needs. Make it routine, but make sure its “doable” in the long run.

Two things in order to be successful after Ramadan are having an Ultimate Vision and an Ultimate Purpose.

ULTIMATE VISION

What will I do to keep my eman High?

Your ultimate vision should encompass what you want for yourself. What do you envision your ultimate “dream life” to be? In order to live up to your dreams, you need to define them. Help yourself define your goals answering the following questions:

Who do I want to be?

What do I want my life to stand for?

What do I want to accomplish?

Where do I want to go?

ULTIMATE PURPOSE

Why must I keep my eman high?

We’ve already discussed the importance of setting a strong purpose for your goals. Outside Ramadan, if you want to maintain a high level of your eman, you must know why this is important. Why do you want to maintain the Ramadan eman rush? Why is this a necessity? Answer the following questions:

Why Do I want this?

What is my mission?

What did Allah create me to do?

What will it give me?

What does this mean to me?

Following these concepts, create an RPM. You can have as many RPMs as you wish for your goals. The more RPMs you have completed, the more detailed your goals will become, increasing your chances for success.

The best time to do this activity is right after Ramadan when you are still on a spiritual high. Set up goals you want to sustain you after Ramadan. Make it a point to revisit this book and your goals often. The reason behind this is that we easily forget. As they say, when something is out of sight, it is out of mind. If one is

in constant remembrance of what they need to achieve, the fruits of success will come to them. Stay motivated by have something - whether it is post-it notes or a poster that reminds you of you post-Ramadan goals and stick it up where you can see it every day. This will help ensure that you do not forget about your goals.

THE JOURNEY ENDS

Pat yourself on the back. Alhamdulillah, you've reach the end of this book. I am confident that completing these exercises has helped you prepare for an outstanding Ramadan in sha Allah.

Although the focus of this book was in preparing for Ramadan, these concepts can be applied to all areas of your life. Knowing where you are now and where you want to go in the future is the means of achieving all goals regardless of their nature.

Remember that the key ingredient to a fruitful Ramadan and many months after of Ramadan is ikhlaas (sincerity) and consistency in du'a. With sincerity and prayer planted firmly in your heart, along with desire and the patience to work hard, Allah will undoubtedly aide you in your quest.

May Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala grant you and all of the Muslims an Outstanding Ramadan and an Outstanding Life!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amirah Mauthoor is a DiscoverULife certified personal development coach with specialization in the areas of health, business and spiritual development. Working with large groups as well as individuals, Amirah has been able to help women of all ages master the art of living their best lives.

In the area of personal development, Amirah has conducted various workshops about Time Management, Habits of a Successful Muslimah and How to plan an Outstanding Ramadan. It was with the tremendous success of her Ramadan workshop that prompted the writing of this book. Attendees had profoundly benefitted and acquired strategies that have given them a new perspective in planning.

Amirah lives in Ottawa, ON with her husband.

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