

How you can navigate life during the fasting period

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While it is rare for major religious seasons to overlap, this year, the holy fasting periods of Ramadhan and Lent began on the same day. This unique moment brings together Muslim and Christian believers in a shared journey of sacrifice, reflection, and spiritual growth.

Whether you are observing Ramadhan or Lent, this season serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of discipline, faith, and self-improvement. It also presents an opportunity to grow emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

Yet, fasting is not always easy for young people. During this time, many of you struggle to balance schoolwork, friendships, family expectations, and personal emotions while remaining committed to your faith. The long hours without food, academic pressure, and social distractions can test patience and resilience.

To successfully navigate this season, it takes one to demonstrate a certain level of maturity that includes proper planning and having strong personal values.

Strengthening connections

The fasting season is a special time for families. Teens should use this opportunity to learn from parents and elders about faith, culture, and life values. This can include having shared meals, prayers, discussions and participating actively in family activities to build respect, strong bonds and responsibility.

With the rise of mental health issues, such shared spaces provide emotional security helping those who feel overwhelmed, lonely, or pressured, to heal and be able to also belong.



In his Lenten message, Pope Leo XIV encouraged people to use this period for deep reflection, repentance, and renewed commitment to living meaningful lives guided by love, humility, and service to others. This message carries a deeper meaning for people to take advantage of this fasting period to look inward, improve character, and strengthen their relationship with God and fellow human beings.

For you, fasting becomes not just a religious obligation, but a practical lesson in patience, responsibility, and self-discipline. As such, when embraced with understanding and purpose, this season can shape you into stronger, more focused, and compassionate individuals.

Understanding the purpose of fasting

Many young people often see fasting as a difficult period that is marked by hunger, tiredness, and restrictions. Some may even view it as a punishment or an unnecessary struggle. However, it is important for you to understand why people set aside time to fast.

Many people believe fasting is staying away from food and drinks, but in reality, it is a spiritual exercise meant to build self-control, humility, patience, and closeness to God. It teaches believers how to manage their desires and focus on what truly matters in life.

Hamza Matovu, an Islamic religious educator explains that fasting provides an opportunity to correct mistakes and develop better habits. He shares that during this time, teens need to reflect on their behaviour, and this includes examining how they speak to others, how they treat their parents, teachers, friends, and relatives, and how they make decisions in difficult situations.

This period also challenges young people to reduce negative behaviours such as lying, gossiping, fighting, bullying, and disrespect. Instead, Mr Matovu encourages teens to practise kindness, honesty, forgiveness, and responsibility.

"When you understand that the period is about improving character and strengthening values, you begin to see it not as a burden, but as a meaningful opportunity for personal growth and self-development," he notes. This can be done in the following ways.

Taking care of your general health

Fasting places extra demands on the body, with long hours without food and water often leading to weakness, headaches, dizziness, and reduced concentration. For teens, failing to take care of your health during this period can make everyday activities such as school, chores, and social interactions much harder.

Henry Luyinda, a food and nutrition educator, emphasises that eating proper meals before and after fasting is crucial for maintaining energy and overall health. While school routines often dictate meal times, teens should aim for balanced, nutritious meals that provide lasting energy. This includes incorporating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein sources such as eggs, beans, or lean meat, alongside drinking sufficient water to stay hydrated.

Luyinda also advises teens to avoid unhealthy habits, such as skipping meals, overindulging in junk food, or drinking too many sugary drinks. These habits may give temporary energy but often lead to fatigue, mood swings, and difficulty concentrating in class or during studies.

Another essential aspect of staying healthy during fasting is sleep. Many teens stay up late reading, scrolling on phones, doing homework or reading, only to wake up early for prayers or school. This lack of rest can affect both mood and academic performance and establishing a consistent sleep routine such as getting enough hours of uninterrupted rest helps the body recover, improves focus, and supports emotional well-being throughout the day.

Maintaining academic focus and discipline

While school responsibilities such as tests, assignments, exams, discussions, curricular activities do not pause during fasting seasons, for teens, this can make studying and participating in school life feel more challenging, especially in the afternoons when energy levels tend to dip

To stay productive, you can adopt effective strategies such as breaking tasks into smaller, manageable parts that can prevent exhaustion and stress. These include planning study sessions for early mornings or after breaking the fast to maximise focus and retention, as these are times when the body and mind are more alert. Also, learning to manage time wisely can help ensure that academic work remains consistent without overwhelming energy reserves.

According to William Mukwaya, a school administrator, communication during this period is key and you ought to be honest and proactive with your teachers about any challenges you face while fasting.

"If as a student you feel unwell or extremely tired, politely explaining your condition can lead to understanding and support, rather than pushing yourself to the point of collapsing. This teaches responsibility and self-advocacy," he explains.

Managing emotions and behaviour

Hunger and fatigue often affect emotions. This can cause a teen or any other person who is usually calm to become impatient, angry, or withdrawn during fasting. Sometimes this can lead to small disagreements turning into big arguments.

However, the season provides an opportunity to practise emotional control. Instead of reacting immediately, you should learn to pause, breathe, and think, choose respectful words and calm actions since these can strengthen character.

When you act rationally, this helps you to learn to forgive quickly, avoid fights, and remain polite, even when tired, which is a great achievement of fasting.

Dealing with peer pressure

While during normal life, many of you are largely influenced by your friends, during fasting, it is important to desist from tempting others into break their fast. As such, upholding strong values during the period can help you resist negative influence.

This includes choosing friends who respect personal beliefs to encourage others to feel confident in standing for what they believe, even when it is unpopular. Similarly, social media is part of modern teenage life, but during fasting, it is important to minimise its use.

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