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ANYONE OBSERVING THE fast during Ramadan will tell that it can be physically exhausting.

But the real problems are not derived from the deprivation of food and drink from sunrise to sunset, rather it is the dietary choices made at Iftar where people tend to overindulge in large quantities of fatty foods. The gluttony that often accompanies the holy month is made even more detrimental to our bodies by a complete lack of exercise or a break from fitness regimes.

Body builder and Red Dragon Gym fitness instructor Payam Mofarrahi sees first-hand how Ramadan affects people's food and fitness routines. But he believes that not only can mistakes during the month be avoided, they can also serve as an education to be carried on long after fasting has ended.

Mofarrahi shares some of his favourites tips to help maintain a healthy lifestyle during Ramadan and beyond.

Stay fit fast

Fitness expert Payam Mofarrahi guides us through some of the best things to keep in mind during the holy month

DON'T OVEREAT

It may sound easy enough but following a long day of fasting, the mind and the stomach are not aligned. During Iftar when observers have their first meal of the day, as well as during late-night Suhour, people tend to really pack it in. Instead of filling up your plate with rice, meats and sweets, eat fast-digesting foods that will rapidly restore glucose levels – and always eat small portions.

DITCH BAD HABITS

Fasting provides people with the perfect excuse to break bad dietary habits like eating sugary and processed foods. Abstaining from these types of foods and snacks during the month will gradually allow your body to not miss them once Ramadan is over. So if eating a fatty burger for lunch was a normal part of your daily routine, depriving yourself of such harmful foods during the month will mean you're less likely to go back to them. So avoid the fried food and stick to complex carbs, veggies and fruits for a healthy dietary balance.

MAKE A ROUTINE

If you were regularly working out at a gym, walking or running, or just staying generally active, why stop? The most important thing to maintain while fasting is your already healthy routine. While fasting can make you feel lethargic and generally lacking energy, breaking your fast with a light, healthy snack, followed by a light workout and meal, can make a world of difference in helping you cope throughout the fasting period.

AMP UP YOUR METABOLISM

This may surprise some people but your metabolism can actually become more efficient when you're not consuming throughout the day, meaning the amount of nutrients you absorb from food can improve. Ramadan can be a fantastic way to detox and burn away harmful toxins in the body, but these benefits only work if you make smart choices when eating late at night, so never go to sleep with a belly full of heavily processed and saturated foods. If you eat light and smart you'll actually be able to shed fat throughout the month rather than gain inches around the waist.

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Keep it simple

MANY PEOPLE SPEND thousands of dirhams decorating their homes. Interior decorators are hired, the best materials are sourced and expensive furniture is bought. Everything needs to be perfect. However the trend these days is to use opulent objects to make the house look posh. Very little thought is given to the function of the room. The main aim is to decorate everything in the finest of materials so you feel good. The thought is noble, but is it required?

Let me give you an example – I was invited for dinner to my friend Mariam's house last month. She had just purchased a new home and was keen to show it off. Upon arrival I was in for a real treat – there were lavish chandeliers, antique carpets, expensive furniture, manicured lawns... Everything was picture perfect except one thing; Mariam and her husband were constantly arguing in front of the guests. It was obvious that their relationship was under pressure. But I was still not able to figure out what was wrong with the Feng Shui of their new home. However when I visited one of the toilets, I found my answer.

The toilet was decorated in bright red colour with beautiful crystals on display. The basin counter had lovely display of crystal statues. Expensive paintings were hung on the bathroom walls along with family photographs. One could have easily mistaken this toilet for a bedroom. If a small couch was placed here; I am sure people would fall asleep in the toilet. The energy was way too calm and very relaxing for a toilet. Upon doing a compass reading I discovered that the toilet was located in the relationship or the mountain area of the house. As a result of which there was a lot of imbalance in the relationship. Secondly by decorating the toilet in a grand way, the bad energy within the toilet was enhanced and was causing trouble in the relationship area. It was not easy to convince Mariam to tone down the design of the toilet. However once she realised the damage it was causing, she toned it down. After implementing the suggested changes, her life has taken a turn for the better and the arguments with her husband have gone down considerably.

When houses were built in ancient China or India thousands of years ago, the toilets were always positioned outside the house. It was believed that toilet has bad energy and therefore it is best to leave it outside your home. However, these days' toilets are inside the house due to convenience and lack of space. But we need to remember that the toilet is not the main area of the house and design it accordingly. Firstly, never use bright colours in the toilet as it enhances bad energy. Colours such as white, silver, black, and grey are better suited for toilets. Secondly avoid displaying family photographs or mementos in the toilet. Keep those for your bedroom or the living room. Remember to light a scented candle to clean up the bad energy from time to time. Avoid using chandeliers or crystals in the toilet as it stagnates bad energy. The key to designing a good toilet is to keep it simple and quiet. Just remember – simple design is the most effective design for toilets.

Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Institute which offers effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing

