

5 ways you can make Ramadan more autism-friendly



Ramadan. For many, it's a special time of worship and celebration, but for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it can also be a challenging time of uncertainty and anxiety.

It can be both tricky and exhausting for parents and carers too, balancing your faith and a child's ASD. Remember it's okay to be conscious of others and the challenges they face - and to adapt the traditions of Ramadan to suit the whole family.

Below you can find some ideas to help members of your family and community prepare for and get the most out of Ramadan.

1. Prepare for Ramadan in advance

Talking to an autistic or non-verbal child beforehand can help them know what to expect. Familiarise them with objects, smells and images of the occasion, and break down the schedule of events or particular prayers into stages.



Social stories are an excellent tool for helping them understand how things will work and what might be expected of them. Provide motivation by praising them for grasping concepts, trying new things, or taking other small steps.

2. Make sure they're safe

At events during Ramadan, remember to make sure children are safely supervised. All children, but especially those with ASD, can have a tendency to wander off or want to escape certain situations. Coordinate beforehand with other parents and members of the community who will be responsible for supervising the children, any areas with breakable or dangerous objects, and exits.

Remember your emotional state can affect your child's - if you're anxious because of safety concerns, you'll likely make them feel anxious too.

3. Provide a calm environment

You can help with sensory overload by ensuring there's a calm space away from the hustle and bustle at any events.

Some children with autism may find it hard to sit through whole prayers, so creating a quiet place for peaceful focus can be beneficial. Provide some favourite books or mindful activities.

When you go to the mosque, choose times when it'll be quieter and sit somewhere it's a little less busy or full of distractions. You can also bring earplugs or headphones and familiar objects.

4. Raise awareness within your community

Not everyone knows someone with autism, and you should be mindful that others will not understand certain reactions. Help them learn more about autism, how those with autism might feel or act in certain situations, and how they can respond to help and share enjoyment of the occasion together.

5. Ask experts for help

You could also contact dedicated organisations or special educational needs teachers for advice on how to make Ramadan a more welcoming and comfortable experience for those with autism, and then work with your imam to implement these ideas.

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