



Coping with an Eating Disorder during Eid

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Beat
Eating disorders



I wish the love, prosperity, and happiness
of Eid always be with you. Eid Mubarak.

— Dr. Omara Naseem

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Introduction

In Arabic, "Eid" means "festival" or "feast". There are two major "Eids" celebrated by Muslims.

The first, Eid al-Fitr, Arabic for "festival of the breaking of the fast", occurs at the end of Ramadan, a month-long period when Muslims fast daily from sunrise to sunset. Also known as Sawm, it is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith.

Ramadan marks the month Allah revealed the first verses of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Eid al-Adha, generally considered the holier of the two Eid festivals, takes place about two months after Eid al-Fitr at the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. The dates of both holidays change every year, as they are based on the Islamic lunar calendar.

Usually lasting three to four days, and celebrated by millions of Muslims worldwide, the holiday begins on the 10th day of the Muslim calendar lunar month of Dhul-Hijja, at the time of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It is one of two major Muslim holidays celebrated across the globe each year.



How Eid al-Adha is celebrated

Because Ibrahim was allowed to sacrifice a ram instead of his son, Eid al-Adha is traditionally celebrated on its first day, by those with means to do so, with the symbolic giving of Qurbani. Muslim worshippers typically perform a communal prayer, or ṣalāa, at dawn on the first day of the festival, attend Mosque, donate to charities, visit with family and friends, and exchange gifts.

Celebrations like Eid may be a stressful time if you have or are caring for a loved one with an eating disorder. Dr. Omara Naseem has put together this guide to navigating some of the difficulties you might experience.



Eid and holiday planner

Take a few moments to ask yourself:

- Have you found Eid to be a particularly difficult time in the past? Yes/No
- What particular things have you found difficult? (e.g. large family meals, etc.)
- Do you feel worried about eating and being with others?
- How can all of you manage this?
- What has helped you in the past with these difficulties? (e.g. support from friends, distraction)
- What ideas do you have about things that could help you this Eid?
- How can your family help you this Eid?
- When being encouraged to eat, what words are particularly helpful?



Eid and holiday planner

My Eid planner:

- When do I break up from school/uni/work?
- When do I go back to school/university/work?
- Am I going home? Staying at university? Staying with friends? Going on holiday?
- Do I need to work? Help on a charity shelter type project? Do course work? Take time out? Be with my family?
- Think about last Eid. What was challenging and what changes need to be made to make this one smoother?
- What do I like about Eid?
- What do I not like?



Eid and holiday planner

Family members:

- Who is home for Eid?
- What do I want to do?
- What has the family planned to do together?
- What would I like to do? What are the pros and cons of this?
- What can I not manage to do? What support would I require with this?
- What will I do instead at this time?



Stress may worsen eating disorder behaviours

Recognise ahead of time that there will be moments when you feel out of control. You'll be less likely to need to use eating disorder behaviours if those moments don't feel so unexpected. This would be a good time to use a mindfulness technique to help calm the body and mind and ground yourself.

Then refocus onto an alternative activity that you find relaxing and enjoyable, such as Dhikr, Salaah, playing a game with family/friends or going outside. (A change of scene really helps!)

- Don't avoid food – by eating little and often this will reduce the urge to binge. Decide on an eating plan prior to Eid, and be proud of yourself – this is an important step!
- Don't set yourself up to fail – make your goals achievable.
- Don't beat yourself up – we can't change the past, but we can be positive about the future.
- Step back if you feel stressed and remove yourself to calm down and relax.
- Being quiet isn't the same as being boring! If anyone asks why you're not joining in, you can explain why if you're comfortable to, or you might want to ask someone else to help you with this. Remember, people should respect your choices!
- Own your part in Eid, with or without an eating disorder. It can feel like people are watching you, but in truth they're probably not. You deserve to have fun! Enjoy yourself!

Try this mindfulness exercise

Here is a three-minute guided meditation script using breathing. You could familiarise yourself with this and try it by yourself, or you could ask someone to read it aloud and time the exercise for you.

- I'd like you to pause, take a deep breath and place your feet flat on the floor. Really FEEL your feet in contact with the ground underneath you.
- Now place your hands on your stomach and take 2-3 really deep breaths, noticing your stomach rising and falling with each in and out breath. If you prefer not to touch your stomach you can lie down and place a cushion and focus on the cushion rising and falling with each deep inhale and exhale.
- And when you feel comfortable, close your eyes.
- Now, as you keep breathing deeply into your stomach, I'd like you to breathe in for a count of 4, then hold your breath for a count of 4, and breathe out slowly for a count of 4. And keep breathing, in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4.
- I'd like you to now slowly bring your attention back to the room, noticing the sounds around you, gently wriggle your fingers and toes and begin to open your eyes.

Idea: It would be good to practice this once a day when not stressed. Perhaps you can tag it on to the end of one of your daily prayers?



Positive Eid messages

Here are some positive Eid messages to consider:

- Eid can be really difficult, but it can also be a great opportunity to enjoy yourself without being dominated by the eating disorder.
- You can find strength from your iman and find real hope in your family and friends during this celebration. Eid can encourage you to live your life in a way that you enjoy.
- Eid is also about spending quality time with your loved ones – friends and family. Use Eid as an excuse to meet up with a friend you have not had the opportunity to see for a while.
- Eid is the time where everyone comes together.
- It's the time of the year when you realise how much everyone cares about you. Consider this a fresh start to a new chapter for the rest of the new Islamic year, full of opportunities for new chances.
- Eid is really about family and friends and how much each of us are cherished. It can show you all the support and love you have around you. Eid is a great time to get away from the stresses of school, work or university and to spend time with those you care about.

Helplines and links

Websites:

beateatingdisorders.org.uk

myh.org.uk – Muslim mental health Charity

inspiredminds.org.uk – Muslim mental health Charity

freedfromed.co.uk

mind.org.uk

eating-disorders.org.uk

talk-ed.org.uk

youngminds.org.uk

selfinjurysupport.org.uk

samaritans.org

papyrus-uk.org

Apps:

Recovery Record

Headspace

Calm