Information derived from:
Ernst, Carl. The Shambhala Guide to Sufism. Boston: Shambhala Press, 1997.
Al-Sulami, The Way of Sufi Chivalry. Inner Traditions, 1991.
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FASTING IN MUSLIM CULTURE

WHAT?

- Fasting is one of the five pillars (the core beliefs and practices) of Islam.
- Fasting is required during Ramadan, but devout Muslims may do it year-round.

WHY?

- NOT self-punishment or wanting to deny yourself.
- To empathize with those without access to food.
- To focus more clearly on God without the distraction of bodily needs.

HOW?

- No food or water from sunrise to sundown.
- Other indulgences are also forbidden, such as...

smoking

gossiping

sex

FAQs

Q: I am a casual practicer! Do I have to participate?

A: Yes, you are still expected to participate in Ramadan, and it may be seen as offensive if you do not.

Q: What if fasting is threatening to my health?

A: If you have a health condition (ex. chronic illness, menstruation, or pregnancy), you are not expected or advised to fast at all. Depending on the circumstance, you may be expected to make it up when able.

Q: Does my young child have to fast? What about someone of old age?

A: People typically fast during Ramadan from puberty until old age, if they become too weak. Children can do "practice years" before fully participating (i.e. skipping snacks, not eating lunch)

GROWING CLOSER TO OTHERS THROUGH FASTING

breaking fast with festive meals

reading 1/30th of the Qur'an every night for a month

praying in congregation

breaking non-obligatory fasts for friends

According to Al-Sulami, the Prophet Muhammad has said you should break a fast to share in the joy of your friends: "If a person who is fasting joins his brethren and they ask him to break his fast, he should break it." He believes in maintaining and finding joy in friendships comes above the practice of fasting at times.