



BEYOND DISRUPTION: DESIGNING YOUR FUTURE WITH A TIMELESS MINDSET -By Iqbal Thokan

Let's be honest: "Uncertain World" is starting to feel like a permanent label, not a temporary warning. Disruption isn't a wave coming anymore; we are swimming in it daily. From AI rewriting job descriptions to global events that flip our plans, the future can feel less like something we design and more like a puzzle where someone keeps changing the picture on the box. It's enough to make you want to hide under your Musallah, or stick your head in the ground like an ostrich.

But what if our best toolkit for navigating this isn't a shiny new tech trend, but a very old, forgotten, deeply personal spiritual practice? As we navigate the sacred month of Ramadan—a time of profound self-disruption—we find a masterclass not just in patience, but in proactive future-crafting. The theme isn't about *avoiding* disruption; it's about learning to *build* while fasting, to design while in a state of conscious constraint.

Is Tarbiyah, not in its truest sense, a form of spiritual disruption? To move beyond a reductive view of discipline, we must see it as an encompassing, comprehensive, and holistic process. It is the conscious, continuous disruption of the comfortable self—the breaking andipping off of old habits, the challenging of stagnant thoughts, the stretching of spiritual capacity—all for the singular aim of nurturing, increasing, and growing our inner being. True growth requires us to willingly unsettle our own peace, to leave

the familiar shore in pursuit of a higher horizon. The Islamic worldview inherently accepts tests and change. The Quran challenges and doesn't promise a smooth ride; it promises that with hardship comes ease (94:5-6). This life is an abode of trial. In other words, the system is designed to keep us on our toes. The goal isn't to build a perfectly static, comfortable life—an impossible task—but to build a resilient, adaptable self.

Ramadan is the annual intensive boot camp for this exact purpose. We voluntarily disrupt our most basic routines: no food, no drink, often less sleep. We do this not to suffer, but to prove a powerful point to ourselves:

"I am not a slave to my habits".

As difficult as it may be, when you can say "no" to your morning coffee because your faith commands it, you silently build the muscle to say "no" to distractions, to panic, to impulsive reactions when other disruptions hit. You are essentially doing reps for your willpower. Think of it as a spiritual boot camp, where the obstacle course is your own Nafs, and the prize is a fortified heart and a stronger mind ready for transformation.



One of the most beautiful, and honestly humorous, aspects of Ramadan is the collective clock-watching before Maghrib. The last hour can feel longer than the previous ten. But what gets us through? The certainty of Iftar, as the aroma of samosas, spring rolls and yummys fill the air. Breaking the fast is a guaranteed, joyful finish line.

This is a brilliant design principle for an uncertain world. Don't stare down the terrifying, 15-hour bow of a massive project or a life challenge. Break your day into "fasting blocks". Focus on the next hour, the next task, with the faith that there **will** be a spiritual, psychological, physical Iftar—a moment of relief, achievement, or celebration. This mindset prevents overwhelm. You're not fighting a whole war at once; you're just winning the next skirmish, sustained by the faith that relief, like the sunset at Iftar, is on its way.

No one drifts through a successful fast. It requires Suhoor. This is the quiet, strategic planning session before the day's battle. You hydrate, you eat sustaining food, you make your intention. It's a proactive, hopeful act in the stillness of night.

Designing your future requires the same Suhoor mentality. In the quiet moments—maybe during your Tahajjud prayers or in your post Fajr reflection—you plan. You equip yourself with knowledge (a good book, a skill to learn), you set your spiritual and worldly intentions; you hydrate your soul with Dua and a plan. You don't just stumble into the chaotic day; you prepare for it. This transforms you from a passive victim of uncontrolled world events into an active designer of your response. Dua, plan, act ("tie your camel"), and leave the rest to Allah, in Whose hands lies the control of our fate.

Not every Ramadaan day is perfect. Maybe you snapped at someone while hangry! Maybe you missed a reading goal! The beauty? You get to try the next day again. Ramadaan is a 29/30-day prototype for a better version of you. Each day is a test run of your patience, your discipline, your compassion.

This is the essence of "*designing futures*." You don't need a flawless, five-year, rigid plan. You need a direction, core values (taqwa), and a willingness to iterate. Did a project fail? Learn, make Istighfar, adjust, and relaunch at Fajr. The iterative, compassionate, and persistent mindset of Ramadan is exactly the agility needed for modern life.

So, as you feel the pleasant ache of the fast and the warmth and serenity of Taraweeh this Ramadaan, remember you're not just performing rituals. You're in an advanced simulation for high-performance. You're stress-testing your resilience, debugging your character flaws, and downloading the ultimate operating system update—one centred on being conscious of Allah and in control of your inner self.

When Eid arrives, you shouldn't just return to normal. You should step out armed with a designer's mindset: adaptable, intentional, resilient, and fuelled by a faith that sees beyond the immediate disruption. The uncertain world isn't a threat to your future; it's the very canvas upon which you're meant to design a life of purpose; a life that is disciplined, prayerful, meaningful, and surprisingly humorous, one day at a time.

