

Suhail Muslim story script

I am Suhail, 23 years old, I am from Hendon in Northwest London and I am a Muslim. My faith journey began for me when I was five years old, and it is because when I was five, I was diagnosed with something called diabetes. Now, as well as having an obvious impact on my health, what I found looking back on the years is that it also affected the way I grew up with my faith. I learnt about my faith doing something as simple as reading the Quran or praying.

The Quran is the holy book for Muslims, it is written in Arabic and praying is something Muslims do five times a day. I never really understood how to pray because I had never gone to the Mosque to learn these things. A Mosque is the place of worship for Muslims and a place where Islamic learning takes place. I never really understood these things as I grew older so going into my teen years it felt like there was a gap between me and my faith. I did not really understand what was expected of me, how I was supposed to go about praying; I did not speak Arabic so I could not read the Quran.

During my teenage years I was also dealing with very big questions in my head, like *Does God hate me, Why am I the one struggling, Why was I given diabetes*. It is fair to say that I was very unhappy inside but at the same time I knew that my faith was a part of my identity that I had not really explored. I felt like it was something that I had to reconnect with. I was not sure how it would help me but it just felt like something that I had to do, something I had to try and connect with. So, I approached an uncle of mine who works at my local mosque as a volunteer and I explained to him that I wanted to learn more, to learn Arabic so I can read the Quran. The Quran is written in Arabic because during the time of revelation to the prophet, Arabic was a native language. Muslims from that time have continued to read and speak the Quran in Arabic and fortunately enough for me, my uncle was able to set up one-on-one lessons with a teacher at my Mosque. I remember going along to my first lesson - part of me felt so nervous and apprehensive because just as my lesson was about to begin, I saw all these younger kids, some even smaller coming out of their lessons. I stood back and I thought 'Wow, these kids probably know more about Islam than I do' and a part

me felt embarrassed and sad. I thought the least I can do is give this process a go and see if I can learn anything, if it changes my life.

A couple of months into my lesson I found myself confident in being able to say the Arabic alphabet and then from there progressing eventually to learning how to read the Quran. I began to understand the times I am supposed to pray and how I am supposed to pray. The next step was to keep this momentum going, get the most of my experience and keep connecting with my faith. One of the things I did was looking into the lives of the prophets.

The Quran mentions that there are 25 prophets that Muslims should believe in and some of these you might find familiar. Figures like Jesus, Moses or David (whereas Muslims probably know them as Isa - Jesus, Musa – Moses, and Dawud - David). I looked into their lives and I focused on the life of the prophet Muhammad who is the last prophet. He is seen as the example that Muslims should follow because he is the last in the line of prophets. This was an important step for me because what I found was that during prophet Muhammad's life he had to deal with a lot of difficulties, troubles and tests. For the first time I felt like I was not alone in my own struggles and battles. I felt like now, when things were getting too much, or I could not make sense of things that were happening I could look back on prophet Muhammad's and the other 24 prophets' stories to see how they coped with their troubles. That would give me some sort of inspiration, some sort of guidance and motivate me to want to try harder and to overcome my obstacles.

Coming to terms with my faith today has given me a lot of things. I think the basic thing it gave me is the ability to put my faith into practice: knowing how to pray, knowing how to read the Quran. It has given me those tools to pray and worship. It has instilled a sense of discipline within me. Something as simple as praying five times a day regularly has put so much discipline into my life that it has almost helped me take control over my diabetes. This has made my life significantly better. It has helped me realise so much about myself that it has motivated me to want to learn about other people's faiths and beliefs. Some of the questions I ask are: *how other faiths and beliefs motivate other people, what they feel they are getting from it, what they feel like they can give to their faith or their belief system.*