

When I first undertook the task of memorizing the Quran (Hifz) and understanding its interpretations, I was presented with quizzical brows by my relatives on how I was to complete this monumental task in a single gap year considering the average completion took four years. Furthermore, I found quite early on that I didn't have the talent for rote memorization; it is apparently in conceptual learning where my neurons prefer being more sociable with one another.

This knowledge motivated me to completely dedicate every hour of my day to Hifz: according to my schedule, if I worked hard enough, I'd be able to finish in eight months; with my not being willing to relinquish my goal nor take another gap year, I seem to have created a position where I would have to finish in time or risk creating a paradox.

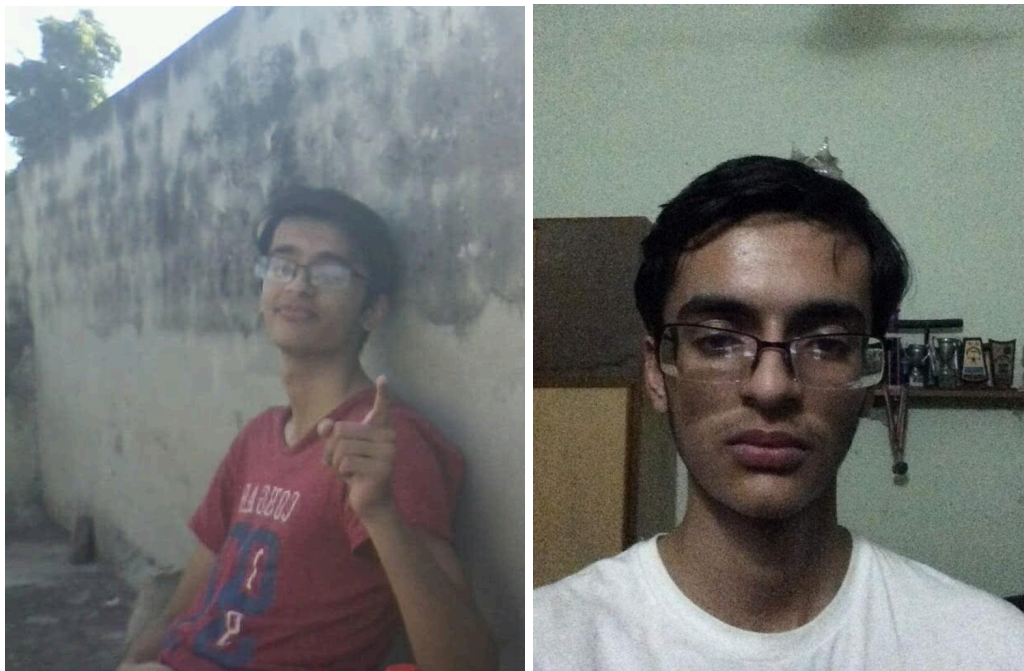
And so, I began this marathon in a sprint by dedicating my complete focus to it for sixteen hours a day. Aside from eating once a day, I did not take part in any other activity.

At the end of every day I would go to bed completely exhausted, ready to allow my brain some rest. However, every night after sleeping six hours, I would wake up confused.

It would feel as if only a minute had passed.

And so, as this eternal day continued, I lost weight, began rapidly losing hair, and became taciturn.

By the end of a three-month-long sprint, I had lost my stamina.



I was forced to take a week-long break and formulate a plan that allowed time for fun activities and a healthier diet, for which I thought the cost would be slowing my pace down to a sluggish jog. I soon learned that allowing three hours for more sleep, exercise, and reading not only allowed me to stay consistent for longer but improved my retention as well: and so my pace only slowed down to a brisk jog.

Kneeling on the floor, looking down at the Quran in front of me and rocking my body back and forth I completed chapter after chapter; each time reviewing it to correct my mistakes until finally, with a wide (and I imagine idiotic looking) grin, I would look up to my Qari-Saab: his stoic expression not dampening my exuberance at my success in the slightest.

After eleven months of this, I finally recited the last chapter. Looking up with the aforementioned grin, I witnessed what I had grown to believe was as likely as my seeing the prophesied flying pigs: a smile growing across my Qari-Saab's face. The combined effect of witnessing this and completing the program filled me with an incandescent happiness that I will never forget.

-Haider Gilani