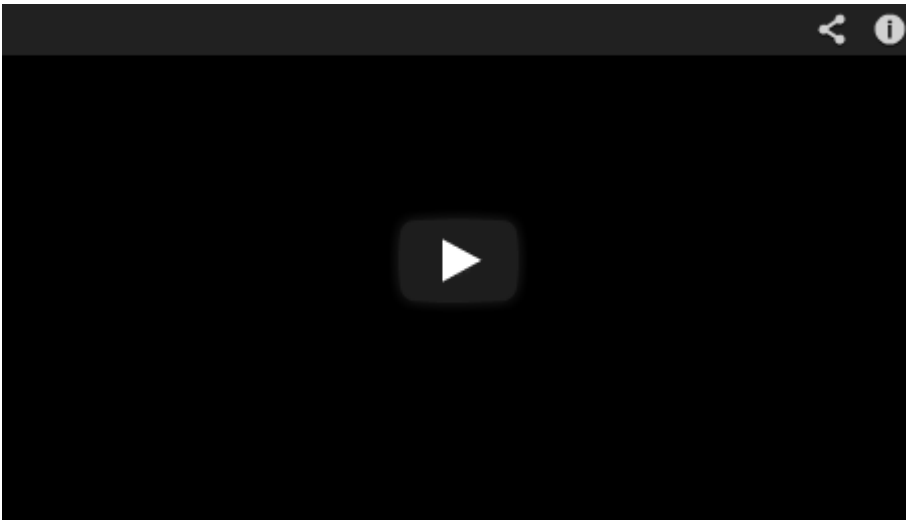


Dubai feels the burn at 900 degrees Celsius, as firewalking rage heats up

Firewalk was one small step that transformed into one large leap

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Last weekend, I walked on burning hot coals at temperatures that went north of 900 degrees Celsius.

Yet, even as the flames licked my blackened feet and fuelled a nagging blister, Neil Armstrong's defying moment 44 years ago gave steel to my spine.



The firewalk was that one small step for the intimate group of hopefuls on the night, transforming that courageous

move into one large leap that would define their lifetime.

Fear was conquered, illusions were shattered and boundaries were etched once again to deliver a message: yes we can.

Conducted by Certified Trainer of NLP and Life Coach and Managing Director of Oxygen Management Consultant, Muneer Samnani, the public firewalk was held at the Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club, drawing in a diverse crowd of individuals, each searching for some hidden answer that continued to elude them.



“Fear of failure limits beliefs,” said Samnani, as he spoke with passion to his captive audience. “What if you learn to challenge those beliefs? Would you not embark on a journey of self-empowerment?”



With nearly a decade of experience in motivating people, Samnani simplified the act of firewalking by saying: “Most people will probably say you are a fool to walk through fire, on burning hot coals that hit temperatures of 1700 degrees Fahrenheit. That is their belief.



“I say, if beliefs can be built, then they can also be changed. You hold the on/off switch to do that.

“If your fear is holding you back with thoughts that the fire will burn you; you can school your mind to rise above the fear and take that first step. It is all about that first step.”



Twenty-four year old Misra Durrani knew all about that fear, suffering from a knee injury, yet braving the moment to accompany her sister Maha on the night, who couldn't contain her excitement to brave the firewalk.

"I am petrified. I can't even begin to explain how scared I am," said Misra, before the night progressed.



A few hours later, as she stood in front of the burning coals with tears streaming down her face, her courage drew a resounding applause from the group.

She later recalled: "It was my fear holding me back. But the tears, they were not just for the moment, but a therapeutic release that had tied me down for so long.

"I didn't just walk through fire, but I broke through all the chains that were holding me back. It was all in taking that first step."



Perceptions changed for many that night, who bravely wore their courage on the soles of their feet, some even encouraged to prompt Samnani to fuel the flames further to push the limit.

NLP practitioner and nutritionist, Ahlaam Ali, who was attending the session with her 14-year-old son, called the firewalk 'a piece of cake' by the end of the evening.

"It wasn't fear that gripped me when I faced the flames that first time, but rather a feeling of standing at the edge of a cliff, mere moments before you jump off," she explained. "Also, with my son accompanying me, I did not want to frighten him by showing my fear. I guess you could say, his presence gave me strength."

Bringing a child to a firewalk may deter many worrisome parents, but Ahlaam thought it important to bring her teen son Jibran to a life-altering experience that teaches them to simply "believe in themselves."

For the mother-son duo, which walked the coals at one point hand-in-hand, which belief appeared one they would carry together across a lifetime.

However, Ahlaam wasn't the only parent to have encouraged her son to conquering firewalking so young.

In fact, Samnani surprised onlookers by admitting that his son Jazib was merely six-years-old when he successfully attempted his first firewalk, while daughter Zeba was only three.

Quiz him and he says: "Anyone can walk the walk; all you have to do is try."

As for this reporter, who crossed the inferno seven times that cold, dark night, the bragging rights alone will fuel many more such steps in future.

The next public firewalk will be organised on February 7 at the same venue, by Oxygen Consultant.

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