

CREATING INCLUSIVE PLACES **DURING RAMADAN**

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan, also pronounced, Ramazan, is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. It is a holy month, observed by Muslims for 29-30 days. This holy month commemorates the first revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammed.

What do Muslims do for Ramadan?

They fast.

As one of the pillars of Islam (*sawm*), Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset. This means that they do not **eat** or **drink**. This includes water. They also abstain from negative or hateful thoughts and behaviors.

Muslims eat *suhur* in the morning before they begin their fast and the first prayer of the day. The fast is broken during *iftar* dinner where the community (or family) gathers for a large meal. This fast is a way for the faithful to become closer to God, detach from worldly possessions, and purify their bodies and minds.

They do charity work.

In many Muslim communities, the food left over from the dinners is given to the homeless or they are invited to join the dinner. During this month, Muslims are also encouraged to do works of charity to better their community at large. This includes food drives, fundraising, or volunteering for community organizations.

They pray.

Muslims pray five times a day, however, during Ramadan, they also perform extra prayers. These are known as *tarawih* and are voluntary.

They recite the Qur'an.

Each night, during Ramadan, Muslims recite 1/30 of the Qur'an, known as *juz'*. By the end of the month, they will have recited -or listened to - the entire Qur'an.

What can I do to create an inclusive and supportive space?

1. Be mindful.

The first and best step is to be mindful that the people who make up your diverse company community celebrate a variety of holidays that may limit their participation in events or require certain days off. Don't schedule big company events or compulsory gatherings around meals.

2. Provide a time and space for prayer.

Many Muslims pray five times a day. During Ramadan, prayer has a larger significance for practicing Muslims. Having a private area in the office where a person of any faith can have some quiet reflection time can help Muslims feel relaxed during a personal moment of faith.

3. Allow for flexible schedules or working from home.

During Ramadan, Muslims wake up earlier to have a morning meal before sunrise and perform prayers. They can not eat until after the sun sets. If travel to work requires walking or biking in the summer heat, one may expend a lot of energy before even making it to the office. Allowing Muslim employees to come in later in the day and leave later at night or to work from home empowers them to determine how they can be most productive and balance their personal and professional lives.

Is there a holiday greeting?

Yes!

Ramadan Kareem! -- at the beginning of Ramadan
Ramadan Mubarak! -- at the beginning of Ramadan

Eid Mubarak! -- at the end of the month to celebrate Eid al-fitr, the breaking of the fast.

Do all Muslims fast?

No.

Although many consider fasting obligatory, there are exceptions. If you are a child, breastfeeding, pregnant, ill, old, or if it will negatively affect your health, you can abstain from the fast. And, Muslims can observe the holy month differently based on their personal experiences or preferences. Out of respect, you should not ask invasive questions as to why a Muslim co-worker or employee is NOT fasting.



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