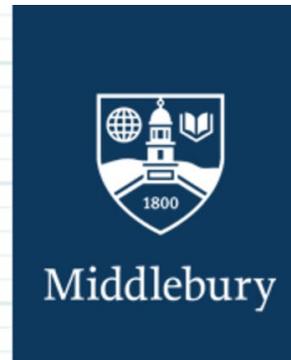


Leadership Insights



Supporting Religious Observance

As the “holiday season” begins in earnest, it’s worth taking a step back and recognizing that this time of year means different things to different people depending on their particular faith background – or lack thereof. Celebrating diversity is important to creating a healthy, thriving community, and it’s important to ensure that everyone feels included and recognized. There are a few small but impactful things you can do as a leader to ensure everyone around you feels as if their needs are recognized and met.

Be Curious, And Ask Respectful Questions

This time of year is a great opportunity to raise awareness of religious diversity in the office. Asking respectful questions like “What holiday greetings do you prefer?” or “Do you have any holiday practices I can help support?” can be a great way to avoid misunderstandings and ensure everyone feels included, respected, and that their needs are being met.

Be Mindful Of Scheduling

One way to prevent exclusion is to make an effort to be aware of upcoming religious holidays, and avoid scheduling important meetings on those days to allow observants to freely take the time they need. Using a multifaith calendar like this one from [Harvard Divinity School](#) or this one from the [Anti-Defamation League](#) can be a useful tool to anticipate and plan around major religious holidays.

Provide A Variety Of Dietary Options For Celebrations

When gathering for an office celebration where food or treats will be provided, it’s important to offer a variety of options to accommodate people’s individual dietary needs. It can be helpful to send a note or survey ahead of time to get a sense of each team member’s dietary restrictions and preferences, and then bring a variety of options that everyone can enjoy. It’s also helpful to understand that some religious holidays are observed with fasting, so be mindful that not everyone may be able to participate – it can be a nice gesture to provide to-go

containers for those who are fasting, so they can bring some home to enjoy after breaking their fast.

Celebrate Inclusion Year-Round

While many multifaith holidays occur in fall / early winter, it's important to recognize that major religious holidays occur year-round. It can be meaningful to acknowledge and recognize other holidays with educational materials or a small note/card to those people you know are celebrating a major holiday outside of this season. It's also important to recognize that almost a quarter of Americans consider themselves religiously unaffiliated and may celebrate holidays in a cultural way, or not at all, and keeping these folks in mind and finding ways to make them feel included in celebrations is equally important.

We're all Middlebury, let's celebrate that together.

Resources

The [Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life](#) is a resource for all staff, faculty, and students. Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding's [Workplace Resources](#)

Leader Pulse Survey

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