

Postcard



Check Your Practice!

How do you support Muslim employees during Ramadan?

Once, in an anti-racism training workshop, a group of resistant participants began to question being on a team with Muslim colleagues. “What are we to do when they drop everything and go to pray in the middle of work?” “Why should they have extra time to pray when we don’t?” “This is a Christian country, so why should we make special accommodation?”

Islamophobic myths such as these are common. How do you pre-empt or address them?

1. Check your local human rights/equal opportunity legislation’s requirement to accommodate religious practices and ensure employees understand their rights and responsibilities. (In Canada, most jurisdictions require accommodation “short of undue hardship,” where it affects the organization’s viability). Even if your jurisdiction is not as stringent, consider the following:
2. Thoughtful measures to support your Muslim employees during Ramadan is more than a legal obligation: it’s a way to grow camaraderie, foster a sense of belonging and respect, and open new doorways to inclusion.
3. Implementing (or, post-COVID, maintaining) flexible working hours, compressed work weeks, flexible assignment plans, or alternative work arrangements benefits not only Muslim employees, but also others, such as parents of young children, people with elder care responsibilities, and others whose faith practices require accommodation. During Ramadan, it supports celebrating Eid and intensifying commitment to prayer.
4. During Ramadan, avoid scheduling mandatory meetings that involve food and alcohol, as Muslims abstain from food and drink, including water, from dawn until sunset.
5. Do not accept anti-Muslim rhetoric: cultivate an environment where all faiths are respected. Make Islamophobia a matter of concern for your DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) agenda. Start a conversation on Islamophobia within the workplace.

Finally, do not place the emotional burden on Muslim staff to educate you or their colleagues: educate yourself and encourage your people to do their own inner work.

To those who celebrate Ramadan, may your Ramadan be as bright as ever! Ramadan Kareem

References: <https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination>
<https://canadianlabour.ca/islamophobia-at-work/>