

# Celebrations throughout the Festive Season

The end of year holidays are almost here and Christmas isn't the only holiday celebrated during the winter season. This infographic is aimed to help you be inclusive around all holidays this festive season.



## Christmas

Celebrated around the world, Christmas is considered both a religious holiday, honouring the birth of Jesus, and a cultural one, with a history and tradition that combines Christian beliefs with ancient folklore and pagan rituals. For some, Christmas isn't about Christianity at all, but a time for trees, Santa, and food, and for some others, family.



## Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa, which is observed from Dec. 26th to Jan. 1st, is a holiday that celebrates African culture and community. With activities focused around what is called the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles), Kwanzaa focuses on celebrating traits such as collective work, creativity, and purpose where communities join together with feasts, music, dance, and a continued commitment to cultural values.



## Hanukkah

The Jewish festival of Hanukkah is an 8 night celebration that commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean Revolt. It begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar, which usually occurs in November or December. Celebrations include meals with traditional foods, the lighting of the menorah (candlestick), and eight nights of games and gifts.



## Winter Solstice

Just when you think December has enough to celebrate between Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and the impending New Year, there's yet another reason to gather with your loved ones and celebrate: the winter solstice. You might be more familiar with the winter solstice as the day with the shortest amount of sunlight. But around the world, many cultures still celebrate the longest night of the year with unique winter solstice traditions.

There are numerous celebrations around the world, and all have their own unique traditions. From St. Lucia's day in Scandinavia, to Dōngzhì in China, to Shab-e Yalda in Iran, to Tōji in Japan - these are just a few of the celebrations that occur during this time of year!

# How can you be inclusive in your workplace this festive season?

For some employees, their religion helps define them as people and religious holidays can be reminders or expressions of those values. During this festive season in particular, it is a great opportunity to practice inclusiveness in the workplace, ensuring that all employees have a positive experience this season.

Let's take a look at five tips for keeping your place of work inclusive for all.

## Inclusive Messaging

As we have mentioned there are numerous celebrations throughout the festive season, but how we communicate is key.

Season's Greetings or Happy Holiday Season is a great way to acknowledge all celebrations.

## Days Off

A great inclusive initiative is for employers to encourage time off for other religious holidays. Generally, employers offer paid days off for set holidays, but implementing a floating holiday would allow employees to celebrate a holiday that's most important to them.

## Gift Exchange Games

For some, the holiday season can be a financially stressful time of the year, for others it may be that their religious or non-religious beliefs do not align with the concept of gift exchanges. It is best to communicate that such activities are optional and that participation is not mandatory.

## Seasonal Blues

The holiday season can be a joyous time, however for some this time of the year can be extremely difficult. It's important to be mindful that some may be experiencing their first holiday without a loved one or friend. While it is fun to be festive at work, we must be sensitive to others' feelings.

## Create Awareness of Other Religions

Ask employees which holidays are important to them and recognise those religious holidays throughout the year and help others learn more about them and what they are all about.

## Avoid Scheduling Mistakes

Check an interfaith calendar to avoid scheduling the end-of-year celebration on any of the holidays that might fall in December. Any events you do schedule, make sure they are optional and have inclusive options in terms of food etc.

There's more to this than just religion. Many factors outside of work come into play at this time of year. Things such as geographic location, marital or parental status, socioeconomic status can be areas of stress around this time. If employees aren't "feeling the holiday spirit", try to be empathetic of their environments outside of the office and recognise that not everyone experiences the holidays in the same way.

**It all comes down to goodwill and respect. After all, isn't that what this season is all about?**