

Bitesized Belonging: How to be inclusive during the holidays

By now, many of us know to offer “Happy Holidays” as greeting rather than a more personalized greeting like “Happy Yule” or “Merry Christmas”. We do this because not everyone celebrates or celebrates the same holidays during this time.

Yet, it actually goes much deeper than that and it’s important we take some time to reflect on how powerfully emotional this time of the year can be for many folks.

While the holidays are a source of joy and togetherness for many, it can also be a time of great mental, emotional, and spiritual turmoil for many others.

According to a National Alliance on Mental Illness survey, “64% of people with mental health challenges report that the holiday season makes their conditions worse”. For folks in communities, like those identifying as LGBTQ+, this can be much worse, with “lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults more than twice as likely as straight adults to experience a mental health condition” ([National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)), and “transgender people...nearly four times as likely to experience a mental health condition than cisgender people” ([National Library for Medicine](#)). Many folks experience “holiday blues” immediately following these celebrations which can manifest as sadness, depression, anxiety, or many other emotions.

Knowing this, consider how you approach conversations about the holidays. Many of us are excited to chat about our plans but before asking everyone what their holiday plans are, consider those who might be spending this time alone. When you come back from break consider whether or not you should ask someone what they did for their break, particularly in a group setting.

Exercise:

In the spirit of the holidays, consider a few folks who might benefit from some extra love this year. Do you know of people who are spending this time alone? Or of folks who might see this as a sad or painful time of the year? It’s not too late to send them a card, or text message as a sign of support. Consider calling them or just letting them know you’re thinking of them. Small acts of thoughtfulness can mean a great deal to people feeling lonely.