



Introduction to Working with Religious Diversity

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Aims of the session

- To discuss how faith and belief relate to equalities duties and aims
- To provide information on the diversity of religion and belief communities in the country and locally
- To describe the core beliefs of Judaism, Sikhism and Islam
- To improve confidence in discussing religion & belief, and meeting people's related needs



The three things you should never talk about with a stranger are:

football, politics and religion

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“If we take the world’s enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.”

Dr. Huston Smith

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Do you choose your religion?

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One perspective...

I don't seem to have a choice over whether or not I believe in God. I simply find that I do not. And trying to force myself to believe would be like trying to force yourself to be in love with someone that you are not in love with. Either you have faith or you don't. Either you believe or you don't. Your belief finds you and then you and it have each other. And once your faith is set it seems that only the biggest seismic change can change it. Even if you want to change it.

Ira Glass, *This American Life*

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How it fits with other Protected Characteristics

Do you choose your religion?

- Religion and belief is one of few protected characteristics (race, disability, age etc) that has any element of choice to it
- The perception of choice can make some dismiss other's religious beliefs and their impact
- Faith can be an integral part of identity – the core of who you are
- It can also be closely linked to cultural background and practises

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Religious Quiz







Before going to your breakout rooms, click on the jamboard link for your group.

Once in your breakout, as a group rearrange the jumbled table so that each element matches with the correct religion.


So eg to the right of Buddhism we will see its symbol, then to the right its primary belief etc.

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Date of founding (approx)	Name of Faith	A Symbol of the Faith	A primary belief	Important place	Important celebration	Holy book/ Reference text	Expression of the Golden Rule
1500	Sikhism		Everyone is equal before God	The Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) of Amritsar	Baisakhi	The Guru Granth Sahib	'No one is my enemy, none a stranger and everyone is my friend.'
610	Islam		There is no God but God and Mohammad is his prophet	The Kaaba in Mecca	Eid-al-Fitr	Qu'ran	'Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself'
0	Christianity		One God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit	Bethlehem	Easter	The New Testament	'In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you'
500 BCE	Buddhism		Life is suffering and the way to end suffering is to follow the eightfold path	Bodh Gaya	Full moon day in May	Tripitaka	'Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful'
1500 BCE (approx. date of exodus from Egypt)	Judaism		God has made a covenant with the chosen people and they must follow the Torah Commandments	Western Wall, Jerusalem	Yom Kippur	Torah	'What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary'
2700 BCE	Hinduism		The one God, Brahman, has many different manifestations	The Ganges River	Diwali	Vedas	'This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you'

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Core Religious Beliefs

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General Points

- We will be focusing on Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism
- As with any religion, two people who follow the same faith may have quite different beliefs and customs
- Religious belief and cultural attitudes & norms can be difficult to separate
- Sikhs & many Muslims will be of South Asian descent and have many cultural similarities

Consider what impact the beliefs may have on someone's needs

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Similarities between Judaism, Sikhism and Islam?

- Monotheistic
- Reverence of holy scriptures
- Daily prayers: 3 in Judaism, 5 in Islam
- Places of worship: Synagogues, Gurdwaras and Mosques
- Sites of special significance: Western Wall, Kaaba, Harmandir Sahib
- Charity / service
- Dietary rules
- Restrictions against idolatry
- Life after death



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Muslims and Islam

Islam was founded by the prophet Muhammad, and its holy book is the Koran. Muslims worship one God (in Arabic 'Allah')

The two main branches of Islam are Sunni and Shia. Most Muslims are Sunni

- There are five central pillars to Islam
- These include giving to charity, praying 5 times a day, and fasting during daylight in the month of Ramadan
- Muslims will not eat pork, or other meat that is not halal
- Halal meat can be bought from some shops and butchers, but often not supermarkets
- Alcohol is forbidden in Islam
- Rise in hate crime against Muslims (women especially)



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Sunni and Shia Islam

Majority (%85) of world's Muslims are Sunni
Around %10 are Shia

Separation relates to the inheritance of authority over Muslim community after death of Prophet Muhammad

- Abu Bakr was chosen as the leader
- Shia believe the Prophet's cousin Ali Ibn Abu Talib should have been chosen

Name 'Sunni' comes from "Ahl al-Sunna", the people of the tradition.

Name 'Shia' stems from "Shiat Ali" or the party of Ali

Rituals of grieving are common among Shia. Messianic – believe the 12th Imam will return

Shia are the majority in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Azerbaijan

Sunni are the majority in other Muslim countries



Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of many aspects common to both

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Jews and Judaism

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Jews believe in a covenant with G-d and seek to live according to his Commandments. 613 total Mitzvot

- Covenant with Abraham first (circumcision began)
- 1000 year later renewed. Moses & commandments
- Tanakh (Hebrew Bible): Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim

Common to differentiate between:

- Orthodox Jews: strictly adhere to laws and traditions
- Progressive, Reformist or Liberal Jews will follow some customs, reinterpret/ reject others
- Importance of shared history – many festivals commemorate atrocities
- Main cultural groups - Ashkenazi & Sephardi



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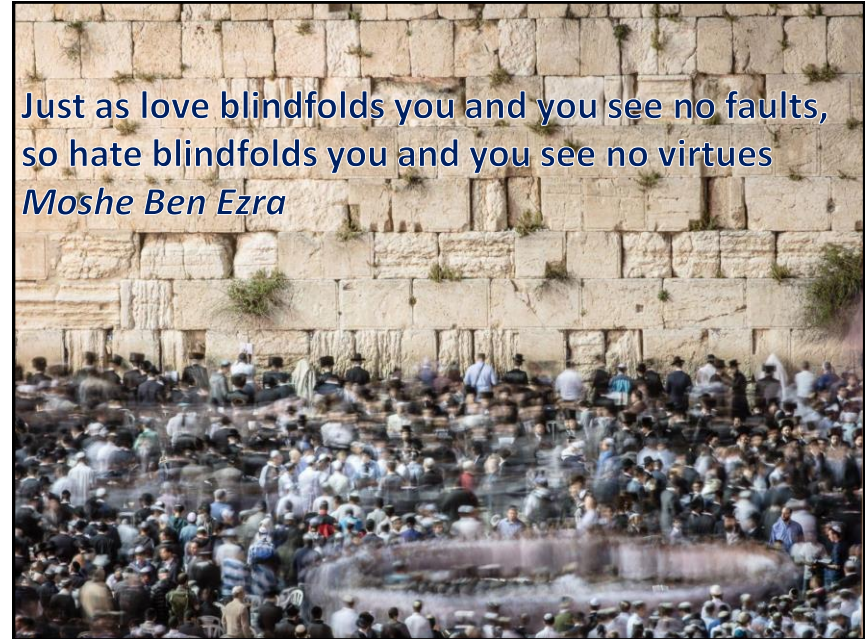
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Jews and Judaism

- 'Western Wall', not 'Wailing Wall'
- 'They are Jewish' preferable to 'They are a Jew'
- For many, comparisons to the holocaust are offensive and a form of holocaust denial
- Orthodox Jews will only eat kosher food
- Rules around kosher food preparation are complex. Pork is forbidden in any form
- Shabbat (Sabbath): Friday evening to Saturday evening. Many Jews will not work, travel, cook.
- Most will fast during Yom Kippur
- Subject of extensive conspiracy theories
- Rise in antisemitism



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Just as love blindfolds you and you see no faults,
so hate blindfolds you and you see no virtues
Moshe Ben Ezra

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Reflection time...

What has stood out for
you so far?

What connections are
you making?



Image credit: Casey Horner

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Sikhs and Sikhism

Faith developed in India in 15th Century, was founded by Guru Nanak

- Guru Nanak compared Islam & Hinduism
- Rejects the caste system & idolatry of Hinduism
- Believe in one God
- Charity & equality are central principles
- God has no gender
- Worship of God, charity provide route out of Samsara – the cycle of birth, death, rebirth
- Fight 5 evils (5 sins) - Greed, Ego, Attachment, Anger, Lust.



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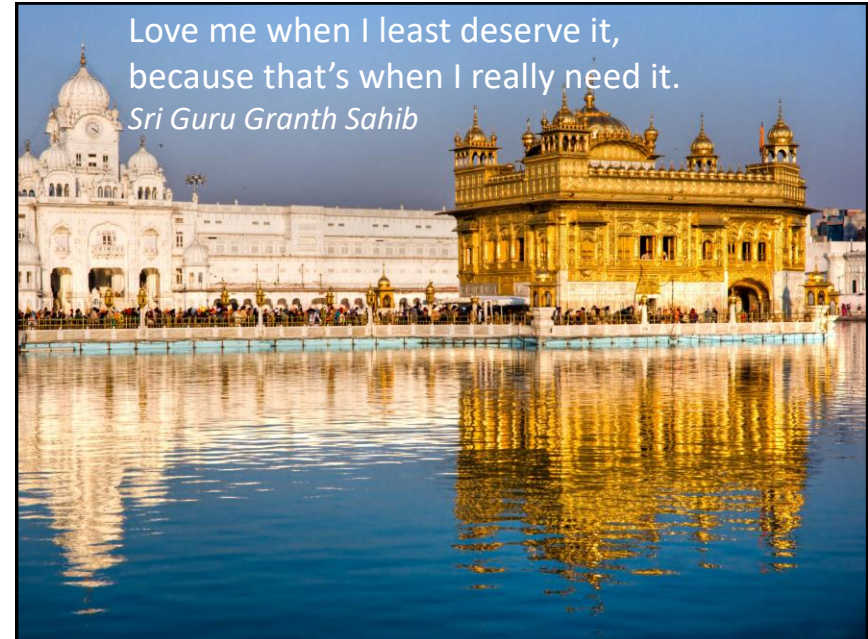


Sikhs and Sikhism

- Baptised Sikhs will wear five articles of faith – ‘the five Ks’
 - Includes not cutting hair or beard, wearing turban and carrying Kirpan (symbolic sword)
 - Started by Guru Gobind Singh
- 10 human Gurus (dispeller of darkness) & Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture
- Traditionally all men have the surname Singh (Lion) and women have Kaur (Princess)
- Many are vegetarian and avoid alcohol and tobacco
- Provide three free ‘Langar’ meals daily to any
- Often targets of Islamophobia



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Challenges we may encounter

What challenges might religion & belief present for groups & organisations? How can we respond?

Here are some common themes:

- Diet, alcohol, food preparation, and fasting
- Festivals and holy days
- Death and grieving periods
- Clothing and modesty, cleaning and washing
- Hate crime and prejudice
- Others?

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Sources of further information

www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/publications/

- Including 'Belief in Dialogue' good practice guide on building good relations between religious and belief communities

Equality & Human Rights Commission guidance for employers

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/religion-or-belief

- Includes free online training

Extensive articles/ resources on religion www.bbc.co.uk/religion

Including a calendar of religious events and festivals

BBC radio show/ podcast – 'Beyond Belief'

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