

Celebrations in Times of Crisis

The first quarter of 2024 offers many holidays, anniversaries, and celebrations that are significant to providers and the families they serve.

[Black History Month](#) (February) celebrates the abundant and remarkable achievements and critical role of Black Americans in U.S. history. [Women's History Month](#) (March) celebrates the contributions that women have similarly made, with this year's International Women's Day (March 8) theme being "Women Who Advocate For Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion."

The first months of 2024 also hold numerous ethnic, secular, cultural and religious holidays that celebrate the start of the new year and the renewal and regrowth of spring such as the [Lunar New Year](#), [Nowruz](#), [Lent and Easter](#), and [Holi](#). Additionally, this March marks the observance and commemoration of [Ramadan and Eid](#), and the [Purim](#) holiday.

In addition to joyous events, these months also contain painful anniversaries. February 6th marked the first anniversary of the devastating [Turkiye/Syria Earthquakes](#) that killed over 55,000 individuals. As said by the White Helmets, "the Earthquake was not just a passing disaster; it deepened wounds and shattered lives." March also indicates the 13th year of crisis for Syrians. February 24th marked the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of [Ukraine](#), while April marks the first anniversary of the war in [Sudan](#). These anniversaries closely align with Ramadan and Easter, highlighting the emotional complexity of remembrance at times of celebration.

Considerations for Mental Health Service Providers

Holidays, celebrations, and anniversaries can be times of connection and reflection. They can also be time for complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory emotions. People may have a sense of pride in their ability to overcome and endure, while also feeling angry and disappointed in the continued oppression and fading international solidarity and support. People may have feelings like sadness, loss, anger, and guilt even during moments of joy. As such, providers can remain committed to honoring individual and communal truths, prioritizing dignity and agency, through the following considerations:

- Recognize that remembrances might look and feel different to people even in the same cultural community. People's experiences of war, conflict, and displacement are unique. Providers should avoid generalizing tragedy as part of one's identity or making assumptions about how someone should be observing the significant moment(s).
- As with many events in life, children may experience events differently than the adults in their lives, perhaps with more excitement or more sadness. Providers can support children in validating all emotions and by supporting the adults in their lives to create space for the children to experience their emotions, whatever they may be and even if they are different than their caregivers.

- Be open to different ways of discussing these moments, including not discussing them at all. Ask individuals and families around times of holidays and anniversaries, “I have noticed that March is the X Anniversary. Is this something that has importance to you?” If so, “Tell me more what this means to you?”
- Be mindful of scheduling appointments, meetings, and deadlines around significant holiday/anniversary days. For example, during Ramadan providers may want to avoid scheduling early morning or late afternoon/evening sessions, as well as avoiding lengthy sessions, for clients who are observing.
- Check in on your staff, colleagues, and partners with lived experience. These providers may be supporting others while also needing support themselves. Make space and time to listen and offer validation as needed.