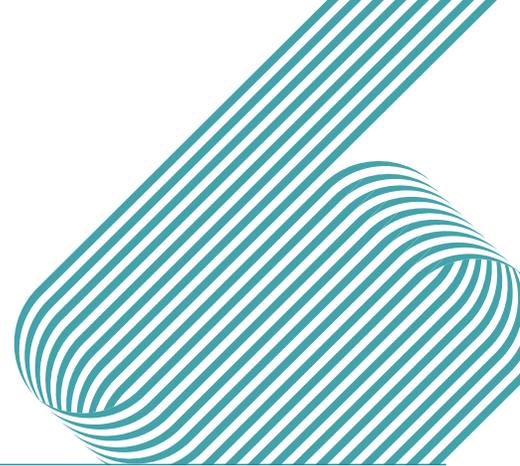


UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

NAVIGATOR TOPIC GUIDE

Yvette Johnson-Walker DVM, MS, PhD (she, her)



What is religious diversity?

Religious diversity is the fact that there are significant differences in religious belief and practice. Religion plays an important role in many people’s lives. It can inform our worldview, be intertwined with culture and identity, and can influence the choices we make.

A 15-minute meeting?

The Journey for Teams educational modules are designed for a 15-minute block because veterinary workplaces are busy! We recognize that more than 15 minutes is needed to discuss religious diversity in depth. After the meeting, we hope the team will be inspired to explore this topic further as a team or individually. Check out Dr. Johnson-Walker’s resources at the end of this guide.

Let’s begin!

Refer to the [Navigator Handbook 1.0](#) and the steps below to help you lead and facilitate discussion about religious diversity.

1 To begin the meeting, welcome everyone to the room by name.

2 Remind the group that the culture of a Journey for Teams meeting embodies engagement, open-mindedness, respect, and compassion.



ENGAGED



OPEN-MINDED



RESPECTFUL



COMPASSIONATE

3  Play the “Understanding Religious Diversity” video.

4 Read aloud the 3 take-home messages from the 3-2-1 Discussion Guide:

- **Different religious traditions approach human-animal relationships and the nature of animal life in very different ways.**
- **The goal is not to force people to change their beliefs but to find a solution that fits within their beliefs.**
- **Give clients the option to share their religious or spiritual beliefs that are relevant to patient care on intake forms.**

- 5 Ask for 1-2 comments on the take-home messages. Try to keep it brief to respect the 15-minute time commitment.

- 6 Read aloud the 2 questions from the 3-2-1 Discussion Guide.

Question for the team:

Share a time when you faced a challenge with a client or colleague due to religious beliefs. How could you manage the situation better in the future?

Spend a maximum of 5 minutes discussing the team question.

Question for individual self-reflection:

No need to share answers or thoughts with anyone.

How do my personal religious and spiritual beliefs impact my interaction with animals?

The most important part of the meeting

- 7 As a team, decide on **1 actionable and measurable behavior change** to implement in your workplace. Consider 1 from the list below, or come up with your own idea.

- Add a question to intake forms, such as, “Is there any information you would like to share about your religious or spiritual beliefs that will enable us to provide better care for your pet?”
- Incorporate consideration of dietary practices and observation of various religious holidays into workplace activity planning and scheduling.

Our actionable idea

- _____

8 Invite the team to self-reflect. Team members may consider and commit to **1 personal behavior change** (no need to share them with anyone).

- Learn about the different religions in your community, and pay attention to the beliefs about animals and the human-animal relationship.
- If you have a friendly relationship with someone from a different faith, ask them about their religion's views on death, euthanasia, and the cremation of animals.

9 **Thank everyone for contributing, and congratulate yourselves on how much you accomplished in 15 minutes!**

RESOURCES

Anderson, R. (March 2019). What the crow knows: A journey into the animal mind. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/03/what-the-crow-knows/580726>

Bristol, W. A. (2019, January). *Religion and the care, treatment, and rights of animals*. Tufts University Chaplaincy. <https://chaplaincy.tufts.edu/humanist/files/Religion-Animals.pdf>

Davis, H., Irwin, P., Richardson, M., & O'Brien-Malone, A. (2003). When a pet dies: Religious issues, euthanasia and strategies for coping with bereavement. *Anthrozoös*, *16*(1), 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.2752/089279303786992378>

Grandin, T. Improving religious slaughter practices in the U.S. *Anthropology of Food*, *5*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/aof.93>

Louis Caruana, S. J. (2020). Different religions, different animal ethics? *Animal Frontiers*, *10*(1), 8–14. <https://academic.oup.com/af/article/10/1/8/5699790>

Pluralism Project. (n.d.). *Religions*. Harvard University. <https://pluralism.org/religions>

The inclusion of resources by this author does not imply or constitute an endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.

Videos

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges. (2022). *Muslims in Veterinary Medicine, Diversity & Inclusion On Air, Episode 100* [Video].

<https://soundcloud.com/diversitymatters-at-aavmc/100-air-muslims-in-veterinary-medicine>

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges. (2019). *Religious Accommodation in Veterinary Medical Education, Diversity & Inclusion On Air, Episode 57* [Video].

<https://soundcloud.com/diversitymatters-at-aavmc/57-religious-accommodation-in-veterinary-medical-education>

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges. (2020). *Religious Literacy with Dr. Cody Nielsen, Diversity & Inclusion On Air, Episode 67* [Video]

[.https://soundcloud.com/diversitymatters-at-aavmc/67-religious-lite](https://soundcloud.com/diversitymatters-at-aavmc/67-religious-lite)

The inclusion of resources by this author does not imply or constitute an endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.