

Introduction

During Ramadan Muslims fast from the sun rise till the sunset. The first meal is called pre breakfast (at sunrise). The second meal is called Iftar (dinner). During this meal not only the close family gathers but also the distant family members. People take it as a chance to see everyone. The iftar meal must be very rich and full of different kinds of food. All the members of the family cooperate together to prepare this meal.

Ramadan is not just a month that Muslim people perform different religious practices but it also includes different social traditions.

The main issues would be as follows: (according to the main actors during the exchange year)

On The student level:

The main issue here, the students are placed in states where not a lot of American citizens have a full picture of Ramadan and there will be no one fasting with them as well, that will be a chance for the students to be home sick because they will be having their iftar (dinner) often alone while they used to have it with big number of family members.

A good advice for the students would be, they will need to get engaged and do not take the fasting as an opportunity to be lazy, and they have to get busy so they would not feel home sick. Host families also need to be aware that some students will tend to sleep more due to the lack of food or because they are feeling home sick.

Unfortunately, a lot of students deliver a wrong message; as they look all tired and refuse to go to school and isolate themselves from the outer space. That is totally unacceptable because by this way the host family will repeat some discouraging words like you are starving yourself to death. Therefore, students need to function well and always remember that they are sending a very important message.

On the host family level:

One of the main issues is that the students face a big number of questions and comments about Ramadan and some of these questions will make them confused about fasting.

For example the most famous sentences that were said while fasting are, "you're striving yourself to death", "God don't want you to die" and "there are other ways to love God". These comments just make the fasting process even more difficult. Also it will be really appreciated if host families would prevent sending negative comments concerning fasting. Because some students would take offensively.

From the students side they should explain what are they doing that and what is the purpose of fasting like not just because God told us to do so but there is very valuable reasons.

For instance, one of the purposes of fasting is to learn to be tolerant and appreciate everything that we have. The students can also use the example of drinking coffee everyday in the morning, some people will not be able to function if they did not drink their coffee but during Ramadan you are learned to

appreciate the drinking coffee. So people learn to appreciate everything that we take for granted that we take for granted. Another important reason that lies behind fasting is to make us feel what do less privileged suffer from- concerning hunger-and that would enforce us later on to help the less privileged people by different means, for instance donating money .

Ramadan is not just fasting food but you also stop doing some habits mostly the bad one like smoking. Because it gives the person some space of time to reconsider smoking and other bad or unhealthy habits.

In other words students need to drag the purpose of fasting from the religious aspect to the social aspect so host families would have a better understanding of it.

It will be very beneficial if the host family is aware that the countries where these students come from are Muslim countries and the whole community adapted to a different system during Ramadan.

In other words, the working hours are fewer so people will have more time for worshipping and also because some people will not be able to fully function, therefore that transition will make the student more homesick and tired.

As it is explained in previous handbooks, students tend to be lazy when they feel homesick in addition to the existence of Ramadan they might feel more lazy and unhealthy.

School and peers level:

There are some students in the American school who might not know anything about Ramadan, at this case exchange student will need to explain for them what is this month and its main traditions.

Exchange students should put in mind that while explaining to other American students they need to focus on specific aspects like the social purpose of Ramadan. Exchange students must also be ready to speak in class about Ramadan and the different religious traditions. So they need to have specific points in mind that they would talk about instead of having a lot of points to cover and that would mislead the audience to the main reasons behind fasting.

One of the most difficult timings during the day would be the lunch break where all the students head to the cafeteria to have lunch. Some exchange students will feel uncomfortable sitting there in the cafeteria without eating, so another alternative would be, going to the library. It would be very efficient if the school administration would understand that issue and let them stay at the anywhere else other than the cafeteria. The counselor also will have to explain these issues to the school administration.

Final few tips:

- The students must be aware of the religious history of Ramadan itself because it enables them to explain the whole month more efficiently.
- The student must be flexible to different conditions and the existence of total different circumstances accompanying this month.
- They must also be aware that there is a huge probability that the family might not help them in preparing food as they would have their diner before his/her's
- The counselor and the family need to have an idea or a background of the nature of this month.