Mahayana New Year

Mahayana New Year is celebrated on January 25, 2024 by Buddhists around the world.

Mahayana Buddhists observe the New Year at different times according to country and tradition, and Each region has its own customs and traditions for practicing Mahayana Buddhism.

Many celebrate it on the full moon day of January, usually mid-month. Others mark the New Year on the Lunar New Year or the secular date, January 1.

Translated to “Great Vehicle” in English, Mahayana is more than just a holiday – it represents a distinctive set of Buddhist practices and philosophies within one branch of Buddhism.

Mahayana is one of the two main branches of Buddhism and is mostly practiced in Northeast Asia — China, Japan, Tibet, Taiwan, Mongolia, and Korea.

Mahayana Buddhists believe that anyone, not just monks, can achieve enlightenment or everlasting Nirvana during their lifetime. The core idea is for everyone to seize the opportunity to attain enlightenment.

Mahayana aims for nirvana, similar to Theravada Buddhism, emphasizing that recognizing the illusion of the ego, causing pain and suffering, leads to enlightenment.

Believers mark the event with meditation and prayer, bathing statues of Buddha, visiting temples and lighting candles for good luck. They clean house, give gifts, feast with family and friends, and enjoy fireworks at midnight.

VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR (TET)

Vietnamese New Year, also known as Tet Festival, is the most significant festival of the year in Vietnam.

Tet, is an abbreviation for Tet Nguyen Dan, which is Vietnamese for the feast of the first morning of the first day of their calendar.

The Vietnamese celebration of lunar new year falls on February 10, 2024.

According to the Vietnamese zodiac, 2024 is the year of the dragon.

The dragon is known as “the holy one” and, according to Vietnam Online, people born in the year of the cat are considered to be “born talented however arrogant and tactless."

People in Vietnam and Vietnamese people around the world celebrate the new year with a festival that focuses on family, food and welcoming in good luck for the year to come.

Tet is also celebrated with parades, dances, and fireworks, as well as a lantern festival.

Tet is the most family-centered holiday, and Vietnamese people often travel and spend the holiday with their extended families.

Vietnamese people clean their homes before the festival to remove bad luck from the previous year.

Tet is also considered a lucky time of year for opening a shop or starting a new business.

The Vietnamese believe that the first visitors to a family determines their fortune for the whole year, and they like to invite someone of good morality to be the first ones visiting the house.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and is considered the holiest month for Muslims. It is a holiday that holds great significance in Islam, fostering spiritual growth, empathy and community bonding.

Fasting - During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. At sunset, the fast is broken with a meal called iftar.
Spiritual reflection - Ramadan is a time for increased devotion, self-discipline, and spiritual growth. Muslims focus on prayer, reading the Quran, and engaging in acts of kindness.
Prayer - Special nightly prayers called Tarawih are performed. These are additional prayers recited at night in congregation.
Laylat al-Qadr – "The Night of Power", which falls within the last ten nights of Ramadan, is considered the night when the Quran was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad. It is a night of intense prayer and supplication.
Eid al-Fitr – Ramadan concludes with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, a festive day marked by special prayers, feasting, and gift giving. It is a time of joy and gratitude.

Ramadan will begin on March 10th, 2024.

St. Patrick’s Day

St. Patrick’s Day is a lively celebration of Irish culture and heritage, marked by a sea of green and various festivities. It is named after Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who is credited with bringing Christianity to the country. St. Patrick’s Day is celebrated annually on March 17th, believed to be the death date of Saint Patrick in the 5th century.

Fun facts about St. Patrick’s Day:

- Wearing green is a popular tradition to avoid getting pinched. The color is also associated with the lush green landscape of Ireland.
- Saint Patrick is said to have used the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity (Father, son and the Holy Spirit).
- The first recorded St. Patrick’s Day parade was held in New York City in 1762.
- Every year the Chicago River is dyed green for the occasion. The river dyeing event will take place on March 16th this year.
- A traditional meal for the day is corned beef and cabbage. The beverage of choice is Guinness and other Irish stouts.

International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes:

World Day for Safety and Health at Work

April 28th (Annually)

2024 Theme: Impacts of Climate Change on Occupational Safety and Health

Ensuring Safe and Healthy Work in a Changing Climate

World Safety Day, also known as the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, is an annual international event observed on April 28th. It is organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO), a United Nations agency, to promote and raise awareness about the importance of preventing occupational accidents and diseases. The day aims to encourage governments, employers, employees, and stakeholders to collaborate and take action to reduce workplace accidents, injuries, and occupational diseases. The theme of World Day for Safety and Health at Work in 2024 is **"Impacts of Climate Change on Occupational Safety and Health."**

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work aims to raise awareness about the importance of workplace safety and health. Here are some ways you can celebrate this day to promote a safe and healthy work environment and build a positive safety culture:

- Raising awareness
- Reinforcing Policies and Procedures
- Encouraging Open Dialogue
- Employee Engagement and Participation
- Share Information
- Recognize Safe Practices
- Continuous Improvement

Learn more about World Safety Day and what you can do to celebrate at https://safetypedia.com/safety/world-day-for-safety-and-health-at-work/#world-day-for-safety-and-health-at-work-theme-2024

Climate change disrupts weather patterns, posing significant risks to worker safety and health globally. These risks include:

Heat stress: Rising temperatures can lead to heat exhaustion and stroke, particularly for outdoor workers.
Increased UV radiation: Stronger sunlight exposure increases the risk of skin cancer and eye damage for outdoor workers.
Worsened air pollution: Climate change can exacerbate existing air pollution or create new sources, leading to respiratory problems for workers.
Extreme weather events: Floods, hurricanes, and other severe weather events can cause workplace accidents and injuries.
Industrial accidents: Climate change may increase the risk of major industrial accidents due to extreme weather events or infrastructure damage.
Vector-borne diseases: Rising temperatures and changing weather patterns can create favorable conditions for mosquitoes and other insects, leading to an increase in diseases like malaria and dengue fever.
Chemical exposure: Climate change may disrupt the storage and transportation of hazardous chemicals, increasing worker exposure risks.

Climate Change and Mental Health

Climate change isn't just a threat to our environment and physical health; it's also having a significant impact on our mental wellbeing. Here's a breakdown of the key connections:

Increased Stress and Anxiety: Witnessing extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and the destruction of ecosystems can be incredibly stressful and anxiety-inducing.
Loss and Displacement: Climate change can lead to loss of homes, livelihoods, and even loved ones due to disasters or forced migration. This can trigger grief, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Grief: These terms describe the chronic worry and emotional distress associated with climate change. People may experience a sense of loss for the environment they cherish and fear for the future of the planet.
Uncertainty and Fear: The unpredictable nature of climate change and the looming threat of future disasters can create a constant sense of fear and uncertainty, impacting mental well-being.
Heat and Air Quality: Rising temperatures and worsening air pollution can directly affect mood and cognitive function, sleep disturbance, increasing irritability and depression.

April is National Arab American Month

The first **National Arab American Heritage Month** Celebration took place in Washington, DC in April of 2017 at the New America. Along with various displays of Arab culture, including a fashion show, dancing, and singing, this event marked an important milestone for the recognition of Arab American Heritage Month to be celebrated nationally.

The Arab World is formerly comprised of 22 countries, represented by the League of Arab States. These countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. **Palestine is comprised of the West Bank and Gaza.*

In the Arab American home, you can find elements of ethnic pride and ancestral heritage. This might be in the form of artifacts carried by immigrants, pictures of villages, and/or general symbols of Arab identity.

Arabs are people who can encompass all religious faiths. The three Abrahamic traditions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism) are the faiths primarily represented among Arab peoples. All three of the Abrahamic faiths share a lineage of certain prophets, and as such bear some commonalities in traditions and faith elements (among other differences).

The category "Middle East" refers to a region of the world that is linked by a shared location, but ***not*** a common culture. Therefore, Arab Americans ***should not*** be referred to as Middle Eastern Americans.

During the month of April, the Arab American Foundation formally recognizes the achievements of Arab Americans through the celebration of National Arab American Heritage Month (NAAHM). Across the country, cultural institutions, school districts, municipalities, state legislatures, public servants, and non-profit organizations issue proclamations and engage in special events that celebrate our community's rich heritage and numerous contributions to society.

The President of the United States recognized the month of April as National Arab American Heritage Month with a special commemorative letter to our organization. In 2022, Congress, the U.S. Department of State, and 45 state governors issued proclamations commemorating the initiative. Additionally, the following states have passed permanent legislation designating the month of April as NAAHM: Illinois, Oregon, Virginia, Indiana (Senate), and California.

Please see the below websites to learn more about this heritage month and the wonderful people that belong to the Arab American community.

ArabAmerica.Com

The Story of Arab Americans' Beginning in America

NAAHM Slides

Who Started the Movement?

The First NAAHM Celebration, 2017

Buddha Birthday

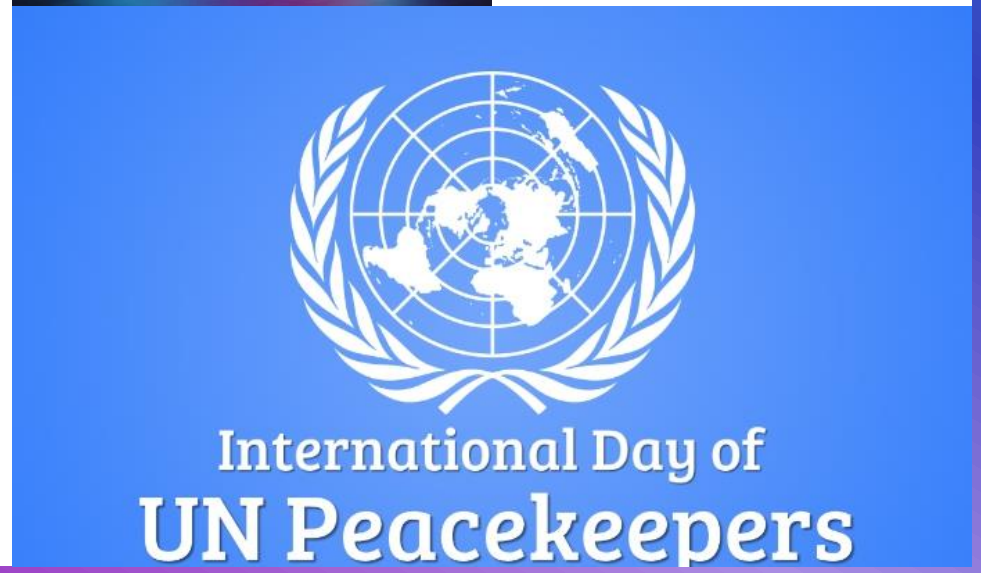
Lord Buddha was born in Lumbini, on the Kapil Vastu, in western Terai Nepal in 682 B.C on the night of Purnima (a full moon day). He was born into the family of King Suddhodhana and Queen Maya Devi. While pregnant with Gautam Buddha, She also loved to walk around the garden, so she got into labor while roaming. She gave birth to them in the garden, using the branches of the trees as support.

Buddha Jayanti in Nepal celebrates the unlimited knowledge that Lord Buddha has provided. On the day of Buddha, the Jayanti people also memorize his life, his deeds of enlightenment, and his death. People refer to the death of Lord Buddha as Mahaparinirana.

Two great stupas, Shyambhunath and Baudhanatha, were also established in honor of Lord Buddha. UNESCO has also enlisted these stupas as a World Heritage site.On this day, the government of Nepal has declared a public holiday to celebrate Buddha Jayanti. This festival is mainly celebrated around the Buddhist Monuments of Nepal: Swyanbhunath Stupa, Lumbini, Bouddhanath Stupa, etc. Near this Temple, different images of Buddha and scrolls are kept for display. Devotes from all over the country gather in the early morning to worship and walk around the shrines in ritual circumlocution on this auspicious day. On this day, devotees offer butter lamps, rice, flowers, coins, etc. Various prayer ceremonies are organized during Buddha Jayanti. This festival is celebrated not only in Nepal but also in other countries. On this day, all the Buddhist Monuments are decorated with colorful flags and flowers. Devotes spend the entire day in the Vihara, participating in group meditation, lectures on Buddhist Scripture, worshipping the Lord Buddha statue, eating Kheer, and sharing food and clothing with poor people.

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

- United Nations peacekeepers have worked to save and change lives in the world's most fragile political and security situations for 76 years.
- More than two million uniformed and civilian personnel have helped countries to transition from war to peace since 1948.
- More than 70,000 peacekeepers serve in 11 missions deployed in hotspots around the world today.
- Peacekeeping has evolved to adapt to the changing political landscape and nature of conflicts which have become more complex and interconnected over the years.
- UN peacekeepers come from all walks of life and with diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Peacekeepers are civilian, military and police personnel all working together to protect civilians and human rights, promote the rule of law, support free and fair elections, minimize the risk of landmines and much more.
- Join the global movement for peace.



Memorial Day

- Memorial Day is a federal American holiday, observed on the last Monday of May, honoring the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military.
- Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971 (the first national observance of Memorial Day occurred on May 30, 1868).
- Memorial Day, as Decoration Day gradually came to be known, originally honored only those lost while fighting in the Civil War. But during World War I the United States found itself embroiled in another major conflict, and the holiday evolved to commemorate American military personnel who died in all wars, including World War II, The Vietnam War, The Korean War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- By the late 1860s, Americans in various towns and cities had begun holding springtime tributes to these countless fallen soldiers, decorating their graves with flowers and reciting prayers.
- Today, many people visit cemeteries and memorials on Memorial Day to honor and mourn those who died while serving in the U.S. military. Many volunteers place American flags on the graves of military personnel in national cemeteries.
- On Memorial Day, take time to reflect on the men and women who gave it all for us.

Mental Health Month – May 2024

Theme – Where to Start: Mental Health in a Changing World

2024 Mental Health America (MHA) Key Messages (Where to Start 2024 MHA May Toolkit (mhanational.org))

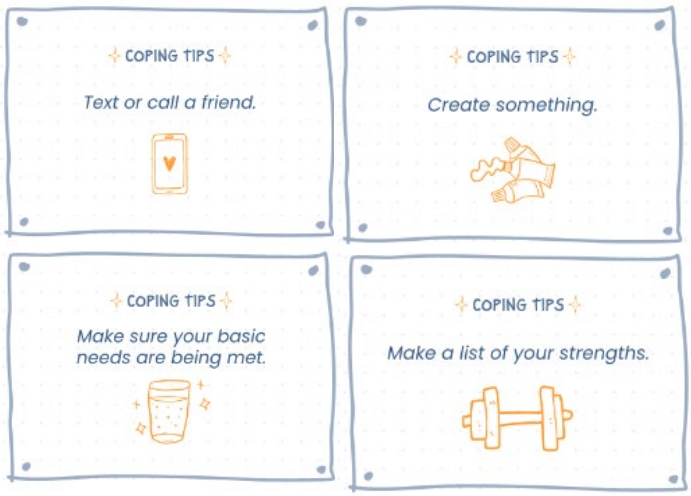
- The world is constantly changing – for better or for worse – and it can be overwhelming to deal with everything going on around you.
- We know relationships and the pressures of work and school can impact your mental well-being, but it can be less obvious when the world around you is the root cause of issues. Politics, climate change, the economy, and other factors that can feel out of your control play a role in a person's mindset.
- While society is getting more comfortable discussing mental health, it can still be hard to know "Where to Start" when it comes to taking care of your own well-being.

One in 5 people will experience a mental health condition in any given year, and everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.

Fact Sheets:

- 4 Things Likely Affecting Your Mental Health and 4 Things You Can Do About It
- Building Your Coping Toolbox
- Helpful vs. Harmful: Ways to Manage Emotions
- Negative News Coverage and Mental Health
- Things You Can Say When You're Not "Fine"
- What to Say When Someone Tells You They're Fine, but They're Not

Where To Start Calendar – May 2024



About half of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their lives, with symptoms starting by age 14 for the majority of people.

Coping Tools:

- Dealing With Tough Situations
- Looking for Good
- Managing Frustration and Anger
- Processing Trauma and Stress
- Where To Go Decision Map
- What's Underneath Word Bank