

Having just finished the month of Ramadan and with some of our Muslim students celebrating Eid, we spoke to Amir about his experiences this year.

What does being Muslim mean to you?

It means helping out where you can. Every weekend, we go and buy food for the homeless people. Sometimes we cook it and hand it out so everyone is equal and everyone has the same. It means they don't have to worry and can find a job. It's just helping out when we can, where we can.

Can you explain one of the Five Pillars of Islam that you feel is especially important?

They're all equally important. I don't like picking favourites.

How do you celebrate major Islamic holidays like Eid?

Actually, we didn't do much this year. Normally we do it after Ramadam. In May, because it's the second month, we go to Tunisia to celebrate with my family. It's not just family, it will be everyone in the community. There will be a lot of food and normally there are presents, but I'm not really focussed on those. It's more about spending time with my family. Last time we visited, there was a massive storm which damaged part of someone's house so we all worked together to repair it. It was a lot of fun.

What is your daily routine like when it comes to practicing your faith?

Because I can't pray during school, I do it before breakfast and before my evening meal.

Is there something you wish more people understood about Islam?

It saddens me that there are a lot of negative stereotypes associated with Islam. When I speak to people, it starts off as normal but if Faith is brought up, people can change their mindsets. Sometimes people can be really nice and we can have a really good conversation but then it can change. I'm not embarrassed about being a Muslim but people's attitudes can sadden me at times. You can't really change people but people's own experiences can mean that they discriminate against whole groups of people, not just an individual.

Do you wear any religious clothing or symbols, and if so, what do they mean to you?

Not normally – it can be quite hard to find Islamic clothing in the UK. I remember this woman who I used to go to and help, and one day she asked me to stop visiting to help because other people didn't like it and she didn't want me to be hurt. In Iran at the moment, I have nothing to do with it but people can make comments like "You're all the same".

Are there any cultural traditions in your family that are connected to Islam?

Helping people out and making everyone feel equal.

Have you ever had to explain your religion to others, and how did that go?

Yes, quite a lot. It normally doesn't go well. When we're in times of world peace, it can be civil, but often it can generate hate in others.

What do you think is the most peaceful or meaningful part of Islam?

Probably the whole time because you're meant to make everyone feel equal to each other and nobody is missing out. I try to be a kind person to everyone.

