

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY



“It is because we are different that each of us is special.”

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

What is cultural diversity?

Obvious things to look for include religion, ethnicity (race), national origin (language) or gender. Less obvious areas to look for include age, education, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and mental or physical challenges.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is the ability to understand others’ perspectives, values, beliefs, behaviors and communication styles.

What should I do when I meet someone who has different beliefs than me?

- Accept the person for their beliefs (If their actions create a health and safety risk report this to the Case Manager, the Nurse or the Resource Consultant).
- Be neutral.
- Be considerate
- Recognize the difference.
- Show respect.
- Be Person-Centered.

What types of differences might I expect to see?

- Language or speech.
- Eye contact and touching.
- Gestures or personal space.
- Beliefs (foods, clothing, religion, etc.).
- Behaviors (actions).

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What are the basics in being culturally competent?

- **Awareness:** Know your reactions to other individual's differences.

Right Way: I am a conservative but I am also a professional who will not share my conservative views while in the work place.

Wrong Way: I am a conservative and think everyone else should think that way, too.

- **Attitude:** Be aware of any personal biases or beliefs.

Right Way: I know my family has strong opinions of people who live in the city. As a professional, I am always ready to serve anyone.

Wrong Way: My family never trusted anyone from outside the hollow. I am always leery of new people I meet from town. You just never know about city-folk.

- **Knowledge:** Be aware that what we believe does not always match what we do.

Right Way: If what you are going to speak will have a negative effect on the audience you are presenting it to, then don't say it at all.

Wrong Way: One time I told a joke at a party. It was funny and everyone laughed. Later I thought, why did I say such a mean thing about anyone? My actions definitely don't reflect the joke that I told.

- **Skills:** Practice communicating and interacting with others who have different beliefs or cultures than ours.

Right Way: Mrs. Jones, would you like to go to the Synagogue today? It's on your Plan of Care. It's such a nice day to go.

Wrong Way: Mrs. Jones, can we skip going to the Synagogue today and go on Sunday? It's supposed to be warmer Sunday.

How do I value the differences in people and their beliefs?

- Valuing diversity means accepting and respecting differences.
- People come from very different backgrounds, and their customs, thoughts, ways of communicating, values and traditions vary accordingly.
- The choices that individuals make and activities that people participate in are powerfully affected by culture.

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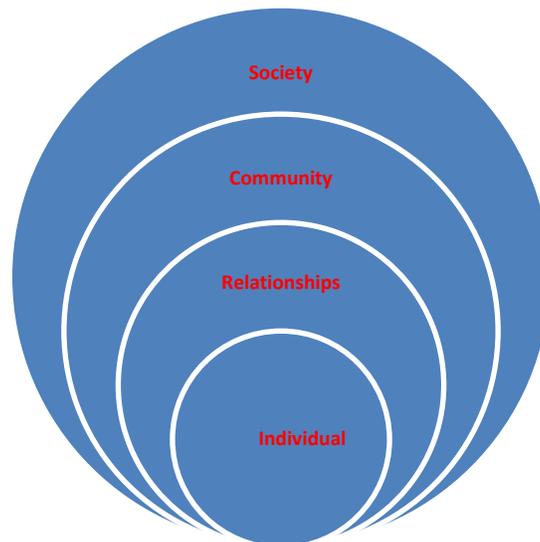
- Diversity between cultures must be recognized, but also the diversity within them. Individuals may share nothing more than physical appearance, language or spiritual beliefs.
- Factors such as gender, geographic locality and socioeconomic status can be more powerful than racial factors.

Cultural Self-Assessment:

- It is important to understand how actions from our own beliefs affect others.
- The most important actions to be conscious of are usually taken for granted. For instance, physical distance during social interactions varies by culture. Some people are not accustomed to touching.
- Miscommunication can be avoided by understanding the boundaries of our own beliefs and culture.
- If a person is aware of his or her own beliefs and culture, he or she can learn to adjust their actions when appropriate.
- Communication is the key to understanding both your values and beliefs and the values and beliefs of others.
- Do not allow your own beliefs or actions to adversely affect others.
- Awareness is the most important factor.

WHO IS IN MY CIRCLE?

THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL



To better understand the members that we serve, we need to understand that there are factors that affect the members that we assist. These factors may affect their behaviors and may have nothing to do with the actual situation at hand. This is called a socio-ecological model. This

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relationship model considers the complex interaction between the individuals, relationships, the community, and society as a whole. When thinking of ways to improve relationships, think about activities that occur at all levels. This approach is more likely to bring about positive interactions over time.

- **Individual:** Some of the individual factors that may affect a member's behavior are their personal history, age, education, history of substance use or abuse or physical or mental disability.
- **Relationship:** It is important to be aware that close relationships may influence a person's behavior. These influences may be the member's closest social circle such as their spouse, close friend(s), partner or family member(s). The interactions between the member and their close social circle can have a predominant effect on their behavior.
- **Community:** The member's relationship with his/her community may have an impact on their behavior. His/her community **is defined as** neighborhoods, churches and organizations, in which social relationships occur. It is important to understand that these institutions have an impact on the member's quality of life which in turn has an influence on their behavior.
- **Society:** The fourth level looks at the broad factors in a society that help create an environment in which healthy interactions are encouraged. These factors include social and cultural norms. Other large factors include the health, economic, educational and social policies that help to maintain economic or social differences between groups in society.

Example: George is 85 years old and had a stroke last year. He has financial struggles trying to pay his bills with his social security and food stamps. He was a veteran of World War II and still belongs to the local VFW. His son expects him to financially contribute to their household since he lost his job. He worries about his grandsons and whether they have enough to eat. Last month, someone stole his food stamp card and he had to get food from the local food bank. He was upset about this because he has never taken a handout since he served his country. Over the last week, he is agitated when the worker comes to his home. He has been displaying his hostilities toward the worker.

Activity 1: Use this scenario to discuss how situations affect the relationship with this member.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Listening is one of the most important aspects of effective communication. Successful listening means not just understanding what the speaker is saying, but also understanding how the speaker feels about what they are saying.

Effective listening can:

- **Make the speaker feel heard and understood**, which can help build a stronger, deeper connection between you.
- **Create an environment where everyone feels safe** to express ideas, opinions, and feelings, or plan and problem solve in creative ways.
- **Save time** by helping clarify information, avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.

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- **Relieve negative emotions.** When emotions are running high, if the speaker feels that he or she has been truly heard, it can help to calm them down, relieve negative feelings, and allow for real understanding or problem solving to begin.

Tips for improving how you read nonverbal communication

- **Practice observing people** in public places, such as a shopping mall, bus, train, café, restaurant, or even on a television talk show with the sound muted. Observing how others use body language can teach you how to better receive and use nonverbal signals when conversing with others. Notice how people act and react to each other. Try to guess what their relationship is, what they're talking about, and how each feels about what is being said.
- **Be aware of individual differences.** People from different countries and cultures tend to use different nonverbal communication gestures, so it's important to take age, culture, religion, gender, and emotional state into account when reading body language signals. For example, an American teen and a grieving widow are likely to use nonverbal signals differently.
- **Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group.** Don't read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all of the nonverbal signals you receive, from eye contact to tone of voice to body language. Anyone can slip up occasionally. For example, briefly cross their arms without meaning to do so. Consider the signals as a whole to get a better "read" on a person.

To deal with stress during communication:

- **Recognize when you're becoming stressed.** Your body will let you know if you're stressed as you communicate. Are your muscles or your stomach tight or sore? Are your hands clenched? Is your breath shallow? Are you "forgetting" to breathe?
- **Take a moment to calm down** before deciding to continue a conversation or postpone it.
- **Bring your senses to the rescue** and quickly manage stress by taking a few deep breaths, clenching and relaxing muscles, or recalling a pleasant memory. The best way to rapidly and reliably relieve stress is through the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. But each person responds differently, so you need to find things that are soothing to you.
- **Look for humor in the situation.** When used appropriately, humor is a great way to relieve stress when communicating. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or amusing story.
- **Be willing to compromise.** Sometimes, if you can both bend a little, you'll be able to find a happy middle ground that reduces the stress levels for everyone concerned. If you realize that the other person cares much more about something than you do, compromise may be easier for you and a good investment in the future of the relationship.
- **Agree to disagree,** if necessary, and take time away from the situation so everyone can calm down. Take a quick break, safely move away from the situation but continue to monitor the member. For example, move into another room leaving the door open so the member can be observed.
- If there is verbal or physical threats, leave the home immediately; inform the agency, legal representative or Resource Consultant of the situation; call 911 in an emergency.
- To reduce tension, reopen the lines of communication.

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How Emotional Awareness can Improve Communication

Emotional awareness—the ability to manage all of your feelings appropriately is the basis for effective communication.

Emotional awareness helps you:

- Understand and empathize with what is really troubling other people.
- Understand yourself, including what’s really troubling you and what you really want.
- Stay motivated to understand and empathize with the person you’re interacting with, even if you don’t like their message.
- Communicate clearly and effectively, even when delivering negative messages.
- Build strong, trusting, and rewarding relationships. Think creatively, solve problems, and resolve conflicts.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What is conflict?

- A conflict is more than just a disagreement. It is a situation in which someone feels threatened, whether or not the threat is real.
- Conflicts continue to grow when ignored. When we feel threatened, those feelings stay with us until we face and resolve them.
- We respond to conflicts based on our own view of the situation. Our views are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- Conflicts trigger strong emotions. If you aren’t comfortable with your emotions or able to manage them in times of stress, you won’t be able to resolve conflict successfully.
- Conflicts are an opportunity for growth. When you’re able to resolve conflict in a relationship, it builds trust. You can feel secure knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.

What are some ways to successfully resolve a conflict?

- Manage stress quickly while remaining alert and calm.
- Control your emotions and behavior.
- Pay attention to the feelings being expressed as well as the spoken words.
- Be aware of and respectful of differences.
- Be willing to forgive.
- Know when to let something go.
- Focus on the present.

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Crisis Intervention Strategies

The following suggestions may be used when dealing with a member crisis.

- Remain professional
- Use the member's name when talking to him/her.
- Listen to what is being said and then repeat what the member said.
- Don't use any threats or empty promises.
- Be conscious of non-verbal communication.
- Let someone know if you need support.
- Don't take the member's behavior personally.
- Maintain a comfortable personal space during a confrontation.
- Explain that you will not tolerate abuse towards you.
- Promote mutual respect.
- **AVOID A POWER STRUGGLE.**
- Choose not to argue.
- Following the crisis situation, contact your agency, legal representative or Resource Consultant for debriefing of the crisis (discussing the situation can help you handle your response and reduce the stress).

A CULTURE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

There are times when you may go into a home where there is illegal use of drugs or alcohol abuse either by the member, the member's family or friend(s). Although unacceptable, this environment can be a part of the member's culture. There are specific things that are common in an addictive culture. The addict may be family, friends or the member.

- **Focus:** In an addictive culture, the primary focus is the addiction and dealing with the consequences of it. Example: Addict steals member's medication and the member spends time trying to get his/her medication refilled.
- **Manipulation:** The addict manipulates those around him/her and others in the home manipulate the addict to get him/her to stop using.
- **Coping:** Individuals will do things to cope with the addict. Examples: Excuse or cover up for the addict; cut off resources; try to control the behavior of the addict; and feel responsible for what is happening within the home. People learn to "walk on eggshells" to avoid conflict. Life in an addictive culture can be chaotic.
- **Denial:** Denial of the addiction.
- **Appearance of Normalcy:** There is an emphasis on making the home environment appear normal to outsiders. Individuals may "keep secrets" about the addiction.
- **Blaming Others:** There is a tendency to blame others and a lack of accountability (always someone else's fault).
- **Problems with Boundaries:** Addicts have problems with boundaries within relationships and other aspects in their own life (a boundary is anything that marks a personal or psychological limits). Examples: Relationship Boundary- The addict uses the member as an alibi for drug

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activity or the addict verbally abuses the member. Life Boundary- Addict may not eat for several days; neglect their health; neglect payment of utility bills.

Suggestions:

- Do not argue with the addict.
- Do not accuse or judge.
- Member should provide a safe working environment for the worker.
- Before going into the home, ask your agency or Resource Consultant about potential concerns in the home (if they know).
- Trust your own judgment. Avoid situations that don't feel right.
- Present a calm and nonthreatening attitude.
- Warning signs of impending violence: invading one's personal space, clenched fists, pacing, yelling, profanity or confrontations.
- Be aware of others in the home and those that come and go.
- If you feel unsafe, report this to the agency or Resource Consultant immediately.
- Report any suspicion of illegal activity to the agency, Resource Consultant and the police.
- Report any allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation to the agency, Resource Consultant and to Adult Protective Services.
- Don't leave your purse lying around. Keep your car keys in your pocket and cell phone in your pocket. Don't take anything into the house that you do not need to take into the house (potential for theft of a credit card, debit card or money).
- If you see signs of impending violent behavior or if it occurs, remain calm, keep a safe distance and **leave right way**.
- If you are afraid of being harmed, leave the home immediately and call the agency or the Resource Consultant. If it is an emergency, call 911.

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ACTIVITIES



Cultural Sensitivity

Activity 2: Hand out the learner activity below. Allow the learner time to respond to the questions.

Awareness: What is my personal reaction to individuals with different beliefs or culture?

Attitude: What personal beliefs or biases could influence my interaction with someone of a different belief or culture?

ADJUSTING TO DIFFERENCES

Activity 3: Role Plays- Choose one learner to represent the member and one learner to represent the worker. During this activity, the worker must act out ways he/she can show respect of the member's beliefs and culture while providing care to the member. Some situations may be a challenge.

Role Play A: *You are meeting Samir, a new member for the first time. Samir is originally from Lebanon. He has moved to America to live with his son and has been in America for 2 years. Samir does not eat pork due to religious reasons. You were not aware of this and you just fixed him bacon for breakfast.*

Role Play B: *You are meeting John, a new member, for the first time. Harold is John's partner who has lived with him for 30 years. Harold is concerned that John's workers have not provided good care and he wants to show you how to transfer John from the bed to the wheel chair. Harold is concerned that you will drop John as that has happened before.*

Role Play C: *Jessica is 24 years old. She is a new member for you. She had a DUI automobile accident that left her paralyzed from the waist down 4 years ago. Jessica has a hard time dealing with the depression and her disability. She has "friends" at her apartment when you arrive and there are empty beer bottles and drug paraphernalia all over the apartment. Jessica is asleep and her "friends" are in the kitchen when you arrive.*

Role Play D: *Frank is 71 years old, has arthritis and needs assistance getting up from the couch. He has always lived in a WV "hollow" and says "men don't let women help them". He is grumpy every time you ask if he needs help getting up from the couch. Frank's daughter says, "Dad, you know you have fallen so*

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many times when you do this by yourself". Then Frank throws the newspaper in the floor and says "You people want me to be an invalid. Leave me alone". He tries to get up by himself and cannot do it.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY QUIZ

Activity 4: Ask the learner to complete the quiz below. Discuss answers to the questions with the learners to ensure learner understanding of the concepts.

1. Which of the following is a personal quality when you are culturally competent?

- A. Accept the person for their beliefs
- B. Be neutral
- C. Be considerate
- D. Show respect and recognize the differences
- E. All of the above

2. Valuing diversity means:

- A. Rating different cultures
- B. Placing a dollar amount on a culture
- C. Accepting and respecting differences

3. When I meet someone with different beliefs or from a different culture, I may find differences in language, beliefs, behaviors, gestures, personal space, eye contact or touching.

- A. True
- B. False

4. By understanding the socio-ecological model, you can help bring about positive interactions with people over time. The levels include:

- A. Individual
- B. Relationships
- C. Community
- D. Society
- E. All of the above

5. Your agency or Mrs. Green has asked you to go to Mrs. Green's home to provide services. Mrs. Green is 85 years old and has lived her entire life in the cabin where she was born. She lives in a remote area and has been fiercely independent. Mrs. Green says "I've had to fend for myself and live off the land". She does not like change and you are a new worker. How will you begin to provide services to Mrs. Green? *(This response may be written or discussed).*

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Activity 5: Ask the learner to review the scenario below and answer the questions regarding this situation. The key is: how can the worker effectively communicate with the member and avoid a conflict?

Hazel has been told by the agency or Resource Consultant that her previous worker would not return to the home. She is upset because this worker had been in the home for 3 years and was accused of stealing medications from the member. Hazel does not know if she trusts the new worker either. Yet, she needs help today.

How can you make the member feel heard?

How can you make the member feel safe to express their opinions or feelings?

How can you clarify information to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts?

How can you help the member calm down when emotions are running high?

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