

Suggestions for Building a Cultural Bridge

What is Culture?

Culture is *dynamic* – neither fixed nor static. It is a continuous and cumulative *process* that is collectively *learned* and *shared* by a group. You can see it through the *behavior* and *values* exhibited by a group of people. Culture includes what is *creative* and *meaningful* in our lives. It has symbolic representation through *language* and *activity*. It is that which *guides* people in their thinking, feeling and acting.

What do you Appreciate about Your Culture?



Suggestions for Building a Cultural Bridge

Cross Cultural Competence Goals

- Respect and value cultural differences.
- Expand cultural knowledge.
- Adapt to changes in society.
- Identify how privilege makes relationships uneven.
- Devise, revise and implement action plans that include others in ways that they want to be included.

To Increase Your Effectiveness When Working with People from a Variety of Cultural Backgrounds

Be informed

Having some knowledge of another's cultural background can result in useful insights to areas of potential cross-cultural conflict.

Be interested (in the world of personal meanings)

Aspects of the individual that are under-validated in the host culture can be validated in a discussion or interview.

For instance, you may ask the meaning of a person's name, family history, attachments, etc.

Be flexible.

A person may be more comfortable going for coffee than meeting in a work or office setting, for example.

Be an astute listener.

For the person communicating in a second language, simply feeling understood can reduce anxiety and increase effective communication.

Be informative (a cultural interpreter).

Your role may include acting as a role model or a representative of the host culture for a person, whether it is a fellow student, a client, or another employee where you work.

Take your cues from the other person.

Use these techniques when you can tell whether the other person is comfortable with them.

Ask!

If you are unsure you can ask, "Is this a good time to talk?" "Would it be all right if I asked you about your name?" etc.

Develop a Cross-Cultural Perspective

- Culture in Ourselves
- Culture in Others

Respectful Interactions – What does that mean to you?