

8 Practical Tips For Cultural Competency

1. **Do Not** treat the patient as you would want to be treated.
 - ✓ The Golden Rule doesn't always work across cultures.
2. Start by being formal with patients from other cultures.
 - ✓ Distance may be necessary for some patients.
3. **Do Not** take offense if the patient fails to "look you in the eye." Distance may be necessary for some patients.
 - ✓ Averting the eyes is a sign of respect in many cultures.
4. **Do Not** make assumptions about patient health beliefs.
 - ✓ Question if you need to know something.
5. Allow the patient to be open and honest with you.
6. **Do Not** discount the possible effect of belief in the supernatural on the patient's health.
7. Ascertain the value of involving the entire family in the treatment.
 - ✓ Decision making is made by extended family members in many cultures.
8. Keep communication simple, especially when relating bad news.

Hispanic/American (Latino)

- There is a “Head of household” and decisions have to be made by this person.
- Familismo (family) - strong attitudes toward family,
- Respeto (respect): children must respect family members
- Simpatia (being nice): cultural value is placed on achieving harmony in interpersonal relationships
- Curanderism – traditional health care system that will most likely be used before seeing a Western medical provider
- Fatalism is a common belief. No one has control over the outcome of his health
- Strong Catholic Faith – priest is the key figure
- Use surnames; ancestry is important, and lack of eye contact equates with respect

African-American:

- Use traditional folk-healing practices.
- Western medicine is highly respected for serious illnesses.
- Explanations of illness and disease often fall into two categories, natural and unnatural causes. Unnatural causes may result from witchcraft, voodoo, or works of the devil.
- There is a healthy paranoia or distrust of establishments based on past history.
- In Death and bereavement there are very deep “African roots”. Funerals and mourning are of high social significance.

Asian-American:

- Elder adult often the spokesman; hierarchy is important.
- Problems are handled within the family and may not be shared with the provider or other outsiders.
- There are Varying degrees of acculturation in a family.
- Equilibrium and Balance with nature are important.
- Achieving harmony in relationships is also important.
- Ambiguity and politeness are forms of communication.
- Indirect forms of communication are used, lack of eye contact = respect
- Somatization (conversion of mental experience or state into bodily symptoms) is acceptable.

Native American:

- Every American Indian or Alaska Native group will have its own unique traditions
- Tribe leader and tribe member are the social roles
- Traditional healing, medicine man, and herbal remedies are very important
- Respect is a strong, core value
- Generally fearful of death and spirits – A few of their health beliefs include taboos, that souls may be lost, and that spirits may intrude on the living.

Cultural Sensitivity Reference

Introduction

Instructors must take into account cultural background and other aspects of identity that may impact learning. Consider multiple forms of diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, linguistic background, religious orientation, and ability or disability. Worldwide, local cultures have differing communication styles, attitudes towards authority, and social customs.

This list is neither all inclusive nor exhaustive, but provides a quick overview that may prove insightful for developing interpersonal skills with international students.

Japanese Culture

Japanese students may be reluctant to respond to or ask questions during class. Allow time and offer to discuss issues and answer questions during breaks and after the session. Avoid using large hand gestures, unusual facial expressions and any dramatic movements.

The Japanese do not talk with their hands and to do so could distract your students. Pointing could be considered rude.

A professional appearance and demeanor is important to the Japanese. As an instructor, composure and confidence is respected.

A smile can have double meaning. It can express either joy or displeasure. Use caution with your facial expressions. They can be easily misunderstood.

Avoid the "OK" sign; in Japan it means money.

Chinese Culture

Chinese students may be reluctant to respond to or ask questions during class. Allow time and offer to discuss issues and answer questions during breaks and after the session. Do not use large hand movements. The Chinese do not speak with their hands. Your movements may be distracting to your students.

When pointing, do not use your index finger. Use an open palm instead.

Open displays of affection can be frowned upon. It is highly inappropriate to touch someone of the opposite sex in public. Try to avoid congratulatory pats or unnecessary contact during courses.

It will be easier to get student interaction and feedback if smaller groups are implemented.

This reduces the intimidation of a large group and avoids embarrassing an individual.

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Southeast Asian Cultures

Avoid using large hand gestures, unusual facial expressions and any dramatic movements.

Talking with expressive hands could distract your students.

Be aware of the volume of your voice. Using a loud voice can be intimidating. Avoid sudden changes in the volume of your voice.

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Indian Cultures

Directing someone with the palm up and wagging one finger can be construed as an insult.

Also, standing with your hands on your hips will be interpreted as an angry, aggressive posture.

The head is considered the seat of the soul. Never touch someone else's head.

Never point your feet at a person. Feet are considered unclean. If your shoes or feet touch another person, apologize.

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Middle Eastern Cultures

Gender can play a significant role in an educational setting. Women may not be comfortable learning and working directly with un-related men. Consider gender when forming groups and scheduling classes.

Avoid addressing women directly. It is best to talk to the group as a whole. Make yourself available during breaks and after sessions so that you can be approached for individual questions.

Avoid showing the soles of your feet. This is considered an insult. To help with this, avoid crossing your legs.

Using your left hand for gestures should be avoided. Also avoid handing objects to others with your left hand.

The "thumbs-up" gesture could be considered an insult. Verbal praise should be used instead.

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