

DIVERSITY & CULTURAL AWARENESS - EXERCISE

UNPACKING CULTURAL NORMS

Part 1: Take some time to unpack some cultural norms that you consider native. Consider the following questions (do it in groups if possible):

- What do you do when first greeting a stranger? How do you greet a friend?
- How close do you get when you speak to someone in your culture?
- How do you express disagreement in your culture?
- What stereotype can describe the way people engage in conflict in your culture?
- What is a behavior that one should generally avoid in your culture?
- What are some of the “rules” of politeness in your culture?
- How do you tend to address someone much older?
- What is the custom when someone gives you a gift?
- What are key body language expressions in your culture?
- What are some communication patterns and norms specific to your culture? (consider eye contact, tone of voice, pace, talking at the same time as others...)

Part 2: How would someone from a different culture answer the above? What are key cultural norms that you have experienced when interacting with other cultures?

LET'S ASSUME

Look up for pictures of people from various cultures online. Ask a colleague or a group to share impressions/assumptions about the individual in the picture based on what they see and perceive (social background, age, marital status, nationality, language, hobbies, interests...). Compare your answers.

- Which of the answers shared were objective observations? Which were assumptions or interpretations?
- Share your assumptions with your group and invite them to challenge you.
- How often do we fall in labeling people or coming up with the wrong assumptions about them? How can these labels impact our communication and interaction with others? How can we put them in perspective and verify them?

FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION

Reflection: What insights and discoveries arose from the previous discussions? How can these cultural differences stretch you to learn new ways of interacting with others?

Action: Choose one area to experiment with during the week.

ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

1. Refer to the worksheet Effective Strategies for Culturally Competent Communication in the Practices and Exercises section. What three insights have you learned about yourself following this input?