

WHAT IS CULTURE?

○ **According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary:**

- the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends upon the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations
- the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
- the act or process of growing living material (as bacteria or viruses) in prepared nutrient media

Culture (Continued)

Culture is NOT a rigidly prescribed set of behaviors or characteristics but a FRAMEWORK through which actions are filtered or checked as individuals go about daily life.



Culture (continued)

- These cultural frameworks are constantly evolving and being reworked.
- Even though people may share a common cultural background and/or history NOT all will behave in the same manner.
- Behavior is governed by many factors such as SES, gender, age, education, etc.

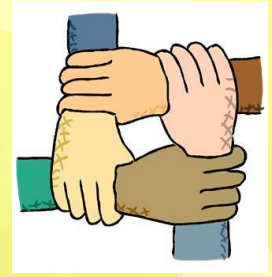
Culture (continued)

Why do we need to study diversity?

Culture (continued)

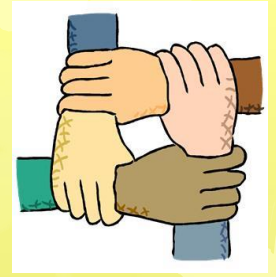
- “Cultural sensitivity cannot mean knowing everything there is to know about every culture that is represented in a population to be served. At its most basic level, cultural sensitivity implies, rather knowledge that cultural differences as well as similarities exist...” (Anderson & Fenichel as stated in Lynch & Hanson 2011).

Cross-Cultural Competence



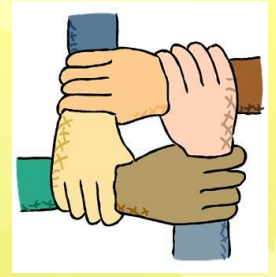
- “Behaviors, attitudes, and policies that are congruent, converge, and result in effectiveness in cross-cultural situations”.
- “The ability of service providers to respond optimally to all children, understanding both the richness and the limitations of the sociocultural contexts in which children & families and service providers may be operating”.

Cross-Cultural Competence

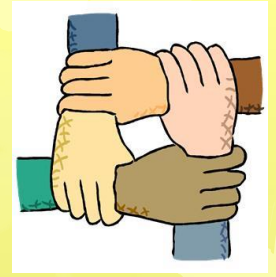


- “the ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build on ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity”.

Cross-Cultural Competence



- How does one become “cross-culturally competent”?



Cross-Cultural Competence

- There are 3 critical elements to becoming culturally competent:
 - 1. Self-awareness
 - 2. Awareness and understanding of others' cultural perspectives
 - 3. Skills that enable successful interactions (cultural continua)

Self-Awareness

- Everyone has a culture, but not everyone is aware of the behaviors, habits, and customs that are culturally based.
- Anglo-Europeans may have less awareness of the ways in which their culture influences their behavior & interactions because they have typically held positions of power and influence that have shaped society more than any other group.

Cross-Cultural Communication

- Communication is critical to cross-cultural competence (both verbal and non-verbal).
- When the language of the family and the service provider differs, communication can become compromised.
- But, speaking in the same language DOES NOT guarantee communication.

High Context vs. Low Context Communication

- High context cultures rely LESS on verbal communication than on understanding through shared experience, history, & implicit messages.
 - Fewer words are spoken & less emphasis is placed on verbal interactions.
 - More attune to nonverbal cues and messages.

Characteristics of High Context

- Strong boundaries: group knows who is accepted as belonging and who is considered an "outsider"
- Less written and "formal" information and rules.
- People "know" what the other person means. They read hidden "cues"
- Long lasting relationships
- Activities and decisions and activities based on interpersonal, face-to-face relationships.
- Sometimes an authority figure dominates

High Context vs. Low Context Communication

- Low context cultures typically focus on precise, direct, logical VERBAL communication and are often impatient with communicators and communications that don't get to the point quickly.
- May not process gestures & environmental cues that are central to effective communication in high context cultures.

Low Context Characteristics

- Rule oriented: people play by clearly defined external rules (think American football!)
- Time is "linear": time, space, activities, relationships happen in sequence
- Knowledge is meant to be shared: it is transferable
- Decisions and activities are action oriented. What matters is getting something done.