

# CULTURE SHOCK AND CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCY RESOURCES

## CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.

### **Stages of Culture Shock:**

1. The honeymoon stage – initial excitement of arriving in a new place with many differences. As with many new experiences, there is a sense of euphoria upon arrival. Generally, people feel excited, stimulated, and enriched.
2. The distress stage – experiences no longer feel new and exciting. People may feel confused, isolated, angry, and homesick in this stage.
3. Emergence Stage – This is the stage of acceptance. People begin to feel like themselves again and start to accept where they are and the culture around them.

### **Symptoms of culture shock range from physical to emotional. They may include:**

- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping or insomnia
- Loss of appetite
- Irritability and anger over minor frustrations
- Homesickness
- A feeling of sadness, loneliness, and vulnerability
- Feeling shy or insecure
- Feeling lost or confused

### **Ways to help youth prepare, cope with and mitigate culture shock:**

- Prepare - one of the most effective strategies to mitigate culture shock is to prepare oneself. The more you know about what to expect, the more comfortable you will be.
- Journaling – recording how you are feeling and what you are experiencing helps you settle in and be more mindful.
- Have a buddy – have a predetermined buddy who you feel comfortable going to when you are feeling homesick or overwhelmed.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competence is defined as the ability of individuals and systems to work or respond effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or organization being served. Culturally competent youth workers are aware and respectful of the values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and parenting styles of people they work with.

### Ways to develop cultural competence with youth:

- Learn about your own culture and history, spend some time examining your own values and assumptions, and how this may impact your relationship with youth from both groups.
- Cultivate an awareness of your relationship to racism and colonialism in present and past contexts.
- Be opening to changing and being challenged by the youth and other leaders.
- Learn about the youth in your group and your twin group.
- Support exploration of and pride in cultural identity among youth and seek to understand them through their own self-definitions.
- Engage youth in conversations about how they see themselves and their place in the world and then suggest additional resources for them. Encouraging youth to work together is an effective way to ensure the development of inter-cultural relationships. By involving program participants in projects that demand collaboration across cultures, they will not only learn to work as a team with those who are different from themselves, but they will also experience success in aiding their communities.
- Include leaders, volunteers, and practitioners from a variety of backgrounds in programming.
- Acknowledge differences and create safe spaces for open dialogue. Diversity, discrimination, and discomfort should not be taboo topics in educational settings.
- Establish mentoring relationships between adults and youth. Invite diverse speakers and visitors from the community.
- Incorporate traditional elements from a number of cultures.
- Model willingness to participate in traditions and discuss ideas that are different from yours.
- Host events that celebrate diversity and highlight specific cultures.
- Adapt and cope with the stresses of culture shock and support youth in doing the same.

## YMCA CULTURAL COMPETENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

The knowledge you have of yourself and others is important and reflected in the ways you communicate and interact. This assessment should assist you in reflecting on your level of cultural competency. This tool is only for you. No one needs to ever see it. Be honest.

Rate yourself – Use a scale from 1 to 5 (1- never; 2-seldom; 3-sometimes; 4-most of the time; 5-always)

1. I reflect on my own cultural background, biases and prejudices on different dimensions of diversity (\*) that may influence my behaviour.

1      2      3      4      5

2. I look at my own attitudes and behaviour to determine how I am processing information and delivering programming to diverse youth.

1      2      3      4      5

3. I educate myself about the culture and experience of diverse groups (for example, ethnic, LGBTTSIQQA, gender and disability) by attending classes, workshops, cultural events, reading, interacting, etc.

1      2      3      4      5

4. I intervene, in an appropriate manner, when I observe others engaging in behavior that appear culturally insensitive or reflect prejudice.

1      2      3      4      5

5. I avoid stereotyping and generalizing about individuals and groups based on their diversity of dimensions (\*) and other diverse factors.

1      2      3      4      5

6. I believe that all youth are capable of succeeding, regardless of their dimension (\*)

1      2      3      4      5

7. I am willing to adapt and incorporate others' opinions and insights in order to create an inclusive environment which better serves diverse youth.

1      2      3      4      5

8. I am willing to initiate changes which will better serve youth from diverse cultures.

1      2      3      4      5

### **Self-Awareness Rating**

32 to 40 points:

You have given thought to and are actively involved in talking about and addressing some of these issues. What actions will you take tomorrow as a champion of cultural competence?

19 to 26 points:

Your honesty with yourself is an asset. Think about the areas that you have not thought about before. What insights do they help you discover? Now try talking about and addressing these insights with people who are different from you.

10 points or less:

Give yourself some time for introspection. You may find that it is easier to first talk this over with someone whose background is similar to yours. Without meaning to harm others, you may be unconsciously perpetuating culturally biased behaviors

*\*Dimensions of diversity: the unique personal characteristics that distinguish us as individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to: age, sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, class, creed, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.*

### **Resources:**

[http://madgic.library.carleton.ca/deposit/govt/ca\\_fed/fait\\_profileoftheieper\\_2000.pdf](http://madgic.library.carleton.ca/deposit/govt/ca_fed/fait_profileoftheieper_2000.pdf)

<https://www.mcgill.ca/globalhealth/files/globalhealth/ProfileoftheIEPfr.pdf>