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Cultural Competence Module 2

Cultural Awareness: Visible & Non-Visible Cultural Aspects

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Module 2: Cultural Awareness (Visible and Non-Visible Cultural Aspects)

Module Estimated Time: 30-40 minutes

Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of this module is to use a tree as a metaphor for the cultural system to identify visible and invisible aspects. The discussion around what cultural qualities are visible or not will serve as a continued platform of discussion around behaviors that might result from invisible or unanticipated cultural traits. Finally, the module provides a quick overview of possible implications of different traits of behaviors on building patient/provider trust in healthcare.

Objectives:

Upon the completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

1. Identify and distinguish visible cultural aspects from invisible ones Identify importance of awareness of one's own behavior and others' behavior as part of a cultural awareness process
2. Understand the direct correlation between awareness of invisible cultural aspects, generalizations and stereotypes
3. Provide one or two examples of misunderstandings and stereotypes as a result of assumptions made on visible cultural aspects only

Terminology

	Visible Cultural Aspects	Non-Visible Cultural Aspects
Culture	Music	Leadership
Personality	Art	Spirituality
Cultural Humility	Food	Ideas of cleanliness
Character	Language	Social Interaction
Individual culture/Own culture	Gender	Celebrations
Group Culture/Others' culture	Dance	Modesty
Self-Awareness	Literature	Respect
Awareness	Drama	Conception of Beauty
Bias	Dress	Attitude towards Elders
Generalizations	Holidays	Patient/Provider Trust
Stereotypes		Quality of care
Thoughts		Sexual Orientation
Feelings		Definition of Obscenity
Ideas		Individualism/Collectivism
Patient Satisfaction		Non-verbal Communication
Misinterpretations		Kinship
Misunderstandings		Emotion
		Time
		Space and Proximity
		Rewards and privilege

1. **Metaphor - Culture is Like a Tree (Introductory Lecture)**
   Introduce the metaphor of culture being like a tree

Time: 3 minutes

Materials: White Board or Flip Chart on an Easel
1 Sharpie Marker

Preparation: Using a White Board or a Flip Chart, draw the picture of a big tree with branches, leaves, and add fruits as you introduce the metaphor of Culture being like a Tree. As you go about to introduce the idea of invisible components, add a line symbolizing the soil and below draw the roots of the tree

- **Lecture -** Start class by introducing the idea that culture is like a tree and add the following points:
- A tree has a trunk and branches and leaves and perhaps colorful flowers and fruits, and we see these as the vital parts of the tree; yet, we forget that just as much as what we see, a tree has a whole part underneath the soil that is just as vital to its life; long branching roots that provide nutrients and hydration to sustain the tree.
- Just like a tree has visible and invisible parts, Culture has visible and invisible aspects. Many times we make an opinion of a person based on the visible cultural aspects of that person (the color of their skin, for example, or their accent) and we forget to look beyond what is visible. This attitude is oftentimes referred to as "judging the book by its cover". It is human instinct to take that approach; we do it when shopping for a bottle of wine, or a cake. The visible component (or aesthetics) is what draws us or keeps us away many times.

2. **Draw your Tree of Culture (Brainstorming Activity)**
   Student groups draw their tree showing the line that separates the visible from the invisible parts of the tree, and brainstorm to fill each area with what they think are visible and invisible cultural aspects.

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: Flip Chart Paper with adhesive back or Tape
4 or 5 Sharpie Markers of different colors, except red

Preparation: Before class, stick 4 or 5 blank flip chart sheets onto walls of classroom. Write on them "Tree of Culture" as a header.

Explain to students that in this activity they will brainstorm and write down what they believe to be visible and invisible cultural aspects

Before activity - Divide class into groups of 4 or 5 students and ask each group to choose a wall chart to work on. Hand a marker with a different color to each group. Instruct groups to draw a big tree with a line for the soil and roots on the flip-chart. Students should then

discuss and decide what cultural aspects they feel should be above the line or below the line (visible vs. invisible) and, finally, they should select one person in the group that will report back to class the results of their brainstorming activity. Allow 3 minutes for students to brainstorm and write on their flipcharts.

During Activity- Words, that students may come up with are: *Religion, Age, Food, Language, Sexual Orientation, Music, Governmental Structure, Politics, Social Norms, Education, Arts, Nationality, Attire, etc.*

3. **Cross-referencing Brainstorming results (Class Discussion)**
   Student groups will report back to class their brainstorming activity and instructor will moderate classroom discussion and make necessary corrective interventions/comments

Time: 8-10 minutes

Materials: Wall Flip Chart Paper used in Brainstorming Activity 2
1 red Sharpie Marker

Before Class Discussion- Start circling all those words that were repeated by more than one group and invite the spokespersons from groups to share their brainstorming results.

During Class Discussion- Be prepared to moderate classroom discussion and make necessary corrective interventions/comments upon potential disagreement of what should or should not be considered a visible or invisible cultural aspect. Discussion may lead to examples of visible cultural aspects, such as language, that may be seen as an invisible aspect in certain circumstances.

Challenge students to provide examples that support their argument and negotiate by stating that there is not a written rule of what cultural aspect is indeed visible or invisible, rather it is all very general and also unique to a particular context.

4. **"Cultural Self-Awareness" versus "Partner Cultural Awareness"**
   Part 1 - Have students fill out a "Cultural Self-Awareness". Part 2 - Ask students to choose a partner , form a pair and use provided questions to interview each other. Part 3 - Instruct all pairs to fill one "Partner Cultural Awareness." Part 4 - Share actual results and comments based on different or similar results.

Time: 8-13minutes

Materials:

Part 1 - Handout: "Cultural Self-Assessment"

Part 2 - Easel, Flip Chart, Sharpie, Facilitator's handout with Interview Questions

Part 3 - Handout: "Partner Cultural Awareness"

Preparation: On a flip Chart on Easel, write these three questions from the Facilitator's handout; then turn page away so that students cannot see until it is time to make questions visible to students in Part 2.

Part 1 - Pass to each students a "Cultural Self-Awareness" hand out and ask them to take a couple of minutes to fill out. Allow 2 minutes approximately. At the end ask them to turn the page and set aside. Allow 2-3 minutes.

Part 2 - Turn page on Flip Chart so that students can see interview questions written on it. Ask students to choose a partner and sit next to their partner to form a pair. Instruct that each partner take turns to interview each other without taking notes, using the questions provided

Allow 2-4 minutes for this interview.

Part 3 - Hand out a "Partner Cultural Awareness" handout to each student in pairs and ask them to fill out, keeping in mind the visible observations each student made under the role of "interviewer" of their partner. At the end, students should give the completed "Partner Cultural Awareness" to each other. Allow 2 minutes

Part 4 - Each student should cross-reference their "Cultural Self-Awareness" with their results on the "Partner Cultural Awareness" to see how their partner has assessed their cultural traits. Allow for partners in each Pair to share results and provide feedback based on different or similar results between the Cultural Self-Awareness and Partner Cultural Awareness for each Pair partner. Allow 2-5 minutes

5. How do I see myself and how do you see me? Sharing results with class (Whole Class Discussion)

Student report results from previous activity and personal reactions

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: None

Facilitate a class discussion by asking volunteering pairs to share results from Activity #4 with the whole group. Ask partners to describe potential assumptions/misinterpretations that led to such differences by prompting them with questions that may begin with:

a. *What led you to believe that…?*
b. *Why did you assume that…?*

Make sure that students take turns, and that at least 2 students from two separate pairs report results and share their reaction to similar or different results obtained when cross-referencing the two Cultural Awareness Assessments

6. Final Thoughts (Lecture)

Time: 3 minutes

Materials: None

Conclude the session by re-capping some of the cultural aspects already discussed as possibly visible and invisible and add any of the following points:

- Some cultural aspects reflect values that are given to us from the moment we are born. These may not always be obvious to the "naked eye" and sometimes even superficial information about a person can mislead us into coming to the wrong conclusions or even stereotyping.

- The best way to understand the cultural values of a person is by asking questions that allow us to acquire more knowledge and a better understanding of that person.

- So far our activities and discussions have been centered around Cultural Awareness, which is the first step of the Cultural Competence/Humility process. Acquiring Knowledge is the next step up.

- Acquiring knowledge requires open-mindedness and willingness to move beyond bias and distortions from reality. It requires for us to question whether what we think may not be the only reality, or that there may be different interpretations that may feel as real as ours.

- The process of acquiring knowledge about invisible cultural aspects require an effort of interaction that may take us form our "comfort zone" and explore areas unknown to us or that may not be in agreement with our own values.

- Either way, remember that acquiring cultural knowledge does not require us to change our values, rather to have a better level of understanding to develop empathy and respect for the diversity that surrounds us.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PERSONAL CULTURE

1. I like to eat food that is not of my own culture

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

2. I prefer medical care from a western doctor (over a traditional healer)

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

3. I believe that men should be in charge of the family

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

4. I'd prefer not to state my opinion when speaking to people in positions of authority

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

5. I prefer to stand very close to the person I am speaking to

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

6. I am usually a late person

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

7. I feel comfortable interacting with a homosexual individual

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

8. I feel comfortable around people of different religious beliefs

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

9. Long pauses during conversations make me feel uncomfortable

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

10. I prefer not to make eye contact most of the time when I speak

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

ACKNOWLEDGE THE PERSONAL CULTURE OF YOUR PARTNER

1. S/he likes to eat foods that are not of my own culture

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

2. S/he prefers medical care from a western doctor (over a traditional healer)

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

3. S/he believes that men should be in charge of the family

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

4. S/he prefers not to state his/her opinion when speaking to people in positions of authority

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

5. S/he prefers to stand very close to the person s/he is speaking to

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

6. S/he is usually a late person

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

7. S/he feels comfortable interacting with a homosexual individual

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

8. S/he feels comfortable around people of different religious beliefs

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

9. Long pauses during conversations make him/her feel uncomfortable

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

10. S/he prefers not to make eye contact most of the time when s/he speaks

Very true 1 2 3 4 5 Not True at All

Facilitator's Handout: Interview Questions

Question #1: Where did you grow up?

Question #2: Are you a social butterfly or more of a shy person?

Question #3: Where is your family from?