ERF:
8. CULTURAL AWARENESS AND EXPRESSION

TOPIC NO. 1: Understanding the cultural expressions, cultural heritage and cultural communications

Have a dream

Duration: 6 hours

Project Details

Title: "Joint Development, Piloting, and Validation of Entrepreneurial Mindset and Key Skills Curricula and Training Materials for Third Countries"
Acronym: **EMSA** (Entrepreneurial Mindset and Skills for All)
Agreement Number: 101092477 – EMSA – ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CB-VET
Programme: Erasmus+ Capacity Building in the Field of Vocational Education and Training (VET)
Call for Proposals: ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CB-VET
Start Date: 01.01.2023
End Date: 31.12.2025

Training Aim

What are the key competences (ERF)

The aim of this workshop to cultivate a deeper understanding about the significance of cultural awareness and expression. By exploring the definitions of cultural heritage, and the importance of preserving cultural traditions, participants will develop a heightened awareness of the value that diverse cultural backgrounds bring to society.

Intercultural communication will also be a focal point of the workshop, participants will learn about the barriers to intercultural dialogue and discover strategies to foster respectful and meaningful interactions across cultural boundaries.

By the end of the workshop, participants will have:

The ability to effectively interact with people from different backgrounds.

- A sense of agency and the confidence to contribute positively to a more inclusive world.
- A broader understanding of global issues and the interconnectedness of cultures.
- Practical communication skills for working effectively in intercultural environments.
- Needed skills to overcome common communication barriers, and practice conflict resolution strategies that can be applied in diverse cultural contexts.

All LOs of the Competence

In terms of **knowledge**:

- . Define cultural diversity by identifying and explaining various cultural traditions and practices within different communities. Learning about a culture different from your own is the first step to eliminating judgment on someone or something you know nothing about.

In terms of **skills**:

- . Employ effective intercultural communication by engaging in respectful and informed dialogues with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Emphasizing the strong correlation between language and culture.

In terms of **attitudes**:

- . When you become culturally aware, you will begin to support cultural differences and adopt new ways of dealing with society. You will break all cultural barriers and connect respectfully with different communities.

ERF: The European Reference Framework
(Key Competences for Lifelong Learning)

Literacy

Personal, social and learning to learn

Mathematical, science, technology and engineering

Digital

Citizenship

X+Y=

Multilingual

Entrepreneurship

A

B

Cultural awareness and expression

Cultural awareness and expression competence involves understanding and respecting how ideas and meanings are creatively conveyed and shared across different cultures through various art forms and cultural practices. It also entails actively engaging in comprehending, developing, and articulating one's own ideas and sense of belonging or role in society across different contexts and settings.
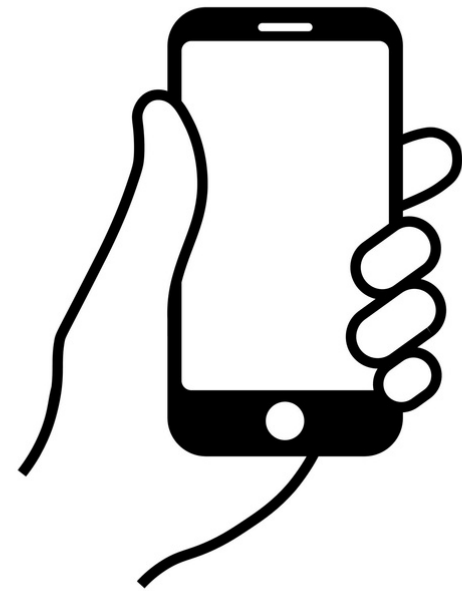
What ERF competence
is our training about?

Training Route Map *(Competence Level)*

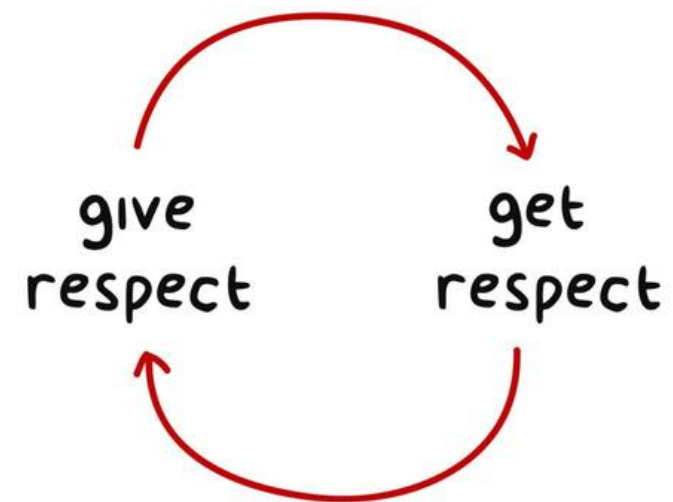**Understanding the diversity of cultural expressions and the importance of cultural heritage**

Cultural Diversity and How to ensure it

Effective communication skills in intercultural contexts

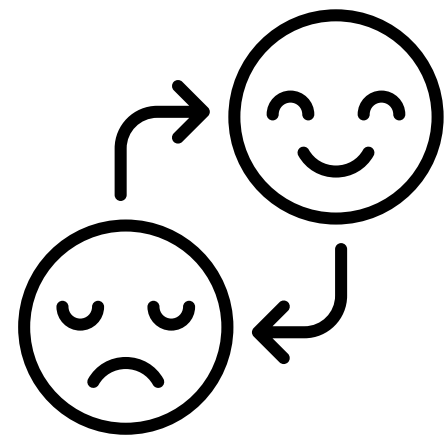# Training Rules

Participation

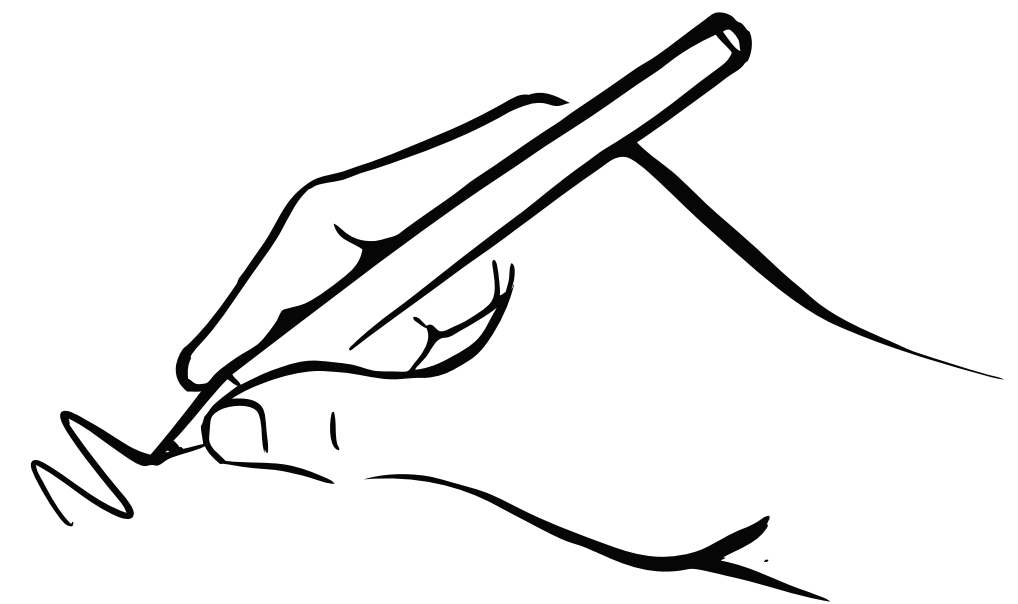give respect → get respect

COFFEE BREAK

YOUR OPINION MATTERS

Ice breaking activity

Draw your mood today!
Use as much creativity you can,
you have 5 min.

Training Route Map

1) Introduction to diversity of cultural expression and importance of cultural heritage

2) Explaining different cultural traditions

3) Importance of protecting cultural heritage

Summary and Q&A Revision

Introduction to diversity of cultural expression and importance of cultural heritage

Cultural expression refers to the myriad ways in which individuals and communities showcase their identities, beliefs, values, and traditions. This can be seen in language, music, art, dance, literature, and festivals, all of which reflect the richness of human experience. The diversity of these cultural expressions is essential to the vibrancy and dynamism of our world, as it brings together different perspectives, encourages creativity, and fosters mutual understanding among people from various backgrounds. In an increasingly globalized world, protecting this diversity is crucial to ensuring that unique cultures and traditions are not lost, but continue to thrive through intercultural dialogue and exchange. Cultural heritage plays a key role in this preservation, as it connects present and future generations with their shared history, offering a sense of identity and belonging. By safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage, societies maintain their connection to the past while embracing the creativity and cultural diversity that shape the present and future.

A case study in cultural competence

Why?
A case study in cultural competence involves examining real–life scenarios where **individuals or organizations demonstrate an understanding and respect for different cultures**. It focuses on how cultural competence is applied in specific situations, such as healthcare settings, educational institutions, or workplaces. These case studies help highlight the **importance of cultural sensitivity**, effective communication, and inclusive practices in promoting positive outcomes and reducing disparities across diverse populations.
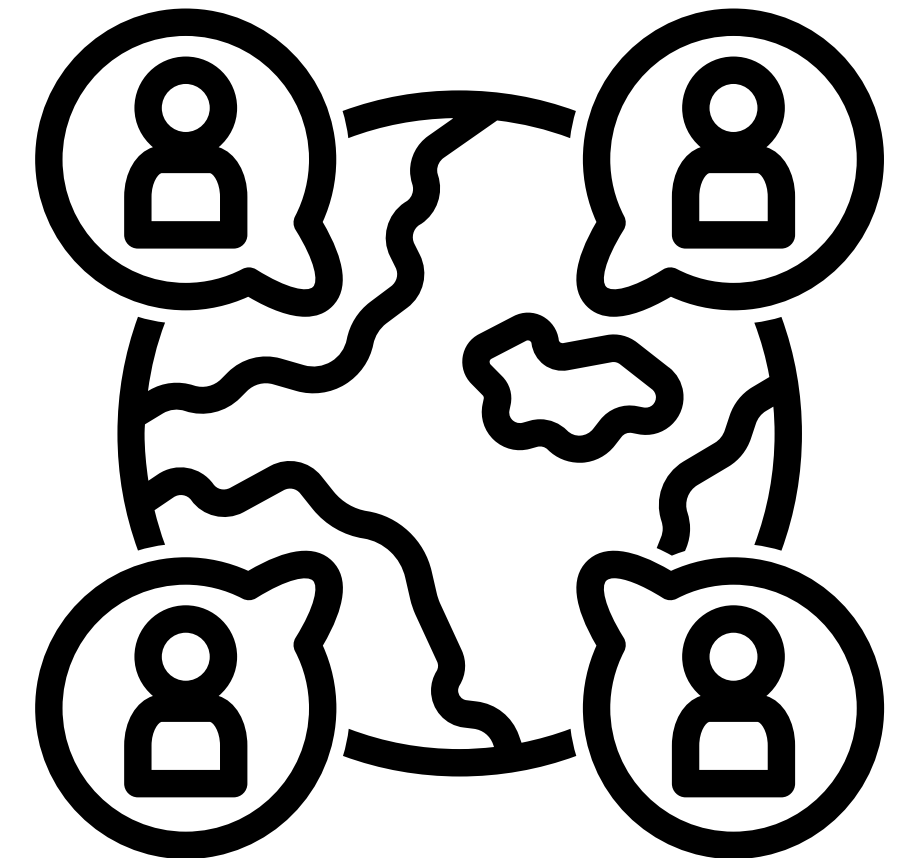
Riace, Italy

The hilltop medieval village of Riace on Italy's south coast was almost a ghost town 15 years ago. Houses were derelict and the local school was near to closing.

The village was in danger of becoming extinct as residents disappeared to northern Italy, and abroad, for jobs during the economic boom.

Since the early 2000s Riace has seen a change in its destiny, by openly welcoming a controlled number of migrants, who live and work as part of the community.

About 450 migrants, drawn from more than 20 countries beyond Europe, are living in Riace – about a quarter of the village's total population.

"What I hope from this story is to spread a message of humanity, hope and anti-racism to the world," says Lucano, the mayor, who set up a scheme, funded by the Italian government, to offer refugees the abandoned apartments and training.
It has helped to rebuild both the town's population and economy.

"This policy gave the village a new lease of life, it didn't trigger any wars between the poor, or xenophobic hysteria or fraudulent speculations. It helped to give new values to the people involved."

Riace, Italy

The story of Riace offers a powerful example of how embracing cultural expression can revitalize and transform a community. Once on the brink of extinction, the village found new life by welcoming migrants from diverse cultural backgrounds. This influx of new residents not only helped rebuild Riace's population and economy but also enriched the village with a variety of traditions, languages, and perspectives. Through this integration, cultural expression became a bridge between local history and the new, evolving identity of the community. The migrants, by bringing their own cultural experiences, contributed to the preservation and rejuvenation of the village, illustrating how diversity can be a source of strength, rather than division. The story highlights the universal values of humanity, hope, and solidarity, demonstrating how the openness to cultural exchange fosters inclusion and combats racism, breathing new life into communities while respecting both local heritage and the contributions of newcomers.
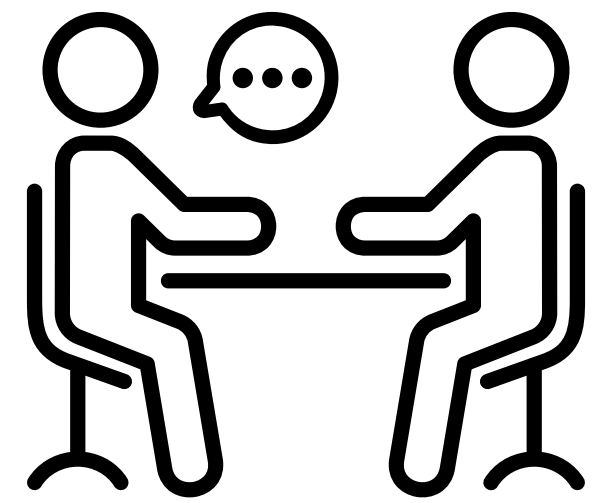
Group Discussion

Do you know any other example?
Do you know a city in your country that would benefit from this policy?
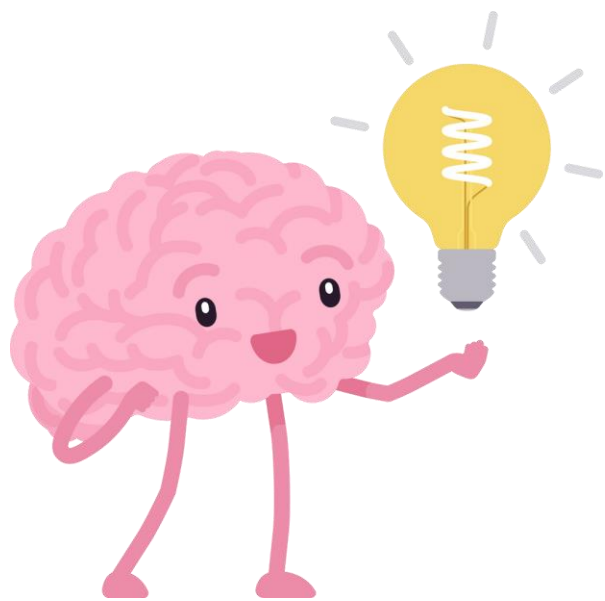
1. Introduction to diversity of cultural expression and importance of cultural heritage

1 Definition of cultural heritage (tangible and in-tangible)
2 Cultural fusion workshop
3 Importance of protecting cultural heritage
4 The importance of cultural heritage preservation

Cultural heritage

"Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments. The definition excludes ICH related to other cultural domains such as festivals, celebration etc. It covers industrial heritage and cave paintings." *UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics*

Tangible or intagible?

Tangible cultural heritage refers to things that we can store or physically touch. Examples of tangible cultural heritage include traditional clothing, tools, buildings, artwork, monuments, and modes of transportation.

Objects are important to the study of human history because they provide a concrete basis for ideas, and can validate them. Their preservation demonstrates recognition of the necessity of the past and of the things that tell its story. Tangible cultural heritage has a **physical presence**.

Intangible cultural heritage refers to things that are not physical items but exist intellectually.

Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as **oral traditions**, **performing arts**, **social practices**, **rituals**, **festive events**, **knowledge** and **practices** concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in **maintaining cultural diversity** in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

Experimental workshop

- Participants, in 10 minutes, will have to choose music and images of paintings and sculptures, on the internet or create something in the time indicated.
- Afterwards, they will make their own, trying to unite everything, trying to create their own work of art that reflects their interpretation of the cultural heritage in 10 minutes.

Importance of protecting cultural heritage

Cultural heritage plays **a crucial role in lives and history**, influencing the values, beliefs, and sense of belonging. It serves as a source of inspiration and creativity, providing a platform for artistic expression and cultural exchange.

Cultural heritage is central to protecting our sense of who we are. It gives us an irrefutable connection to the past – to certain social values, beliefs, customs and traditions, that allows us to identify ourselves with others and deepen our sense of unity, belonging and national pride

Why is important?

Identity and belonging: Cultural heritage defines identity and gives a sense of belonging. It connects to ancestors and provides a cultural framework that helps one understand the place in the world.

Historical perspective: Cultural heritage preserves historical narratives, allowing one to learn from the past, avoid repeating mistakes, and appreciating the progress made as a society.

Tourism and economic growth: Cultural heritage sites and traditions attract tourists, stimulating economic growth and creating jobs in the tourism industry.

Cultural diversity: Cultural heritage is a testament to the richness of human diversity. It reminds ones of the importance of respecting and celebrating different cultures and traditions.

The importance of cultural heritage preservation

Cultural heritage is a **reflection of society**, and its preservation is **vital for maintaining cultural diversity**, fostering a sense of belonging, and passing down knowledge to future generations.

Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in lives and history, influencing the values, beliefs, and sense of belonging.

Preservation of cultural heritage is a shared responsibility that involves individuals, communities, governments, and international organizations.

Strategies for preserving cultural heritage:

Documentation: Proper documentation of cultural artifacts, traditions, and historical sites is essential for their preservation. This includes recording oral traditions, cataloging artifacts, and creating digital archives.

Conservation: Conservation efforts aim to protect physical heritage such as historic buildings, monuments, and artworks from deterioration. This involves restoration, maintenance, and the use of appropriate materials and techniques.

Education and awareness: Promoting awareness and understanding of cultural heritage is crucial. Education programs, museums, and cultural events help raise public consciousness about the importance of preservation.

Legal protection: Laws and regulations at the national and international levels are essential for safeguarding cultural heritage. These laws may restrict activities that could harm cultural sites or artifacts and promote responsible tourism.

International cooperation: Cultural heritage often transcends national boundaries, making international cooperation vital. Organizations like United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) work to protect and preserve cultural heritage worldwide.

Cultural heritage is a precious legacy that reflects shared humanity. Its preservation is essential for **maintaining cultural diversity**, fostering a sense of identity, and passing down knowledge to future generations. While challenges persist, individuals, communities, governments, and international organizations must work together to protect and celebrate a cultural heritage. By doing so, one can ensure that **the treasures of the past continue to inspire and enrich the present and the future**.
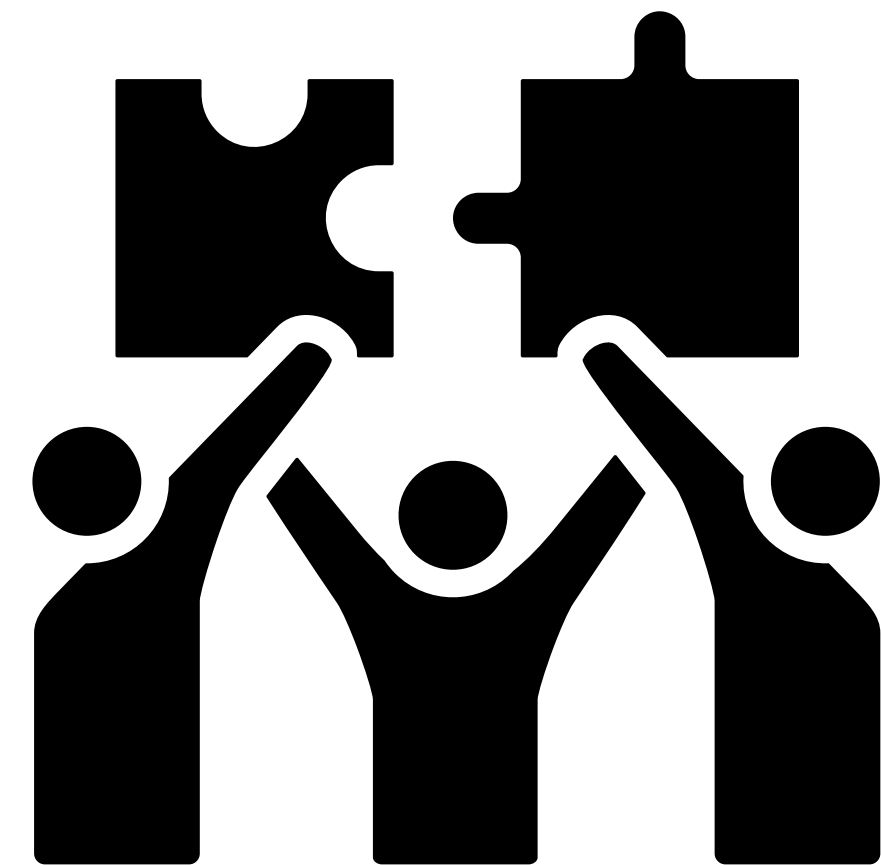
Role Play – Research

- What happened to Tutankhamun's mask while preservation in 2014?
- Make your research and note the problem that happened.
- If you were in the restoration team, what would you have done differently?

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2. Explaining different cultural traditions

1 Definition of cultural tradition and how it shapes social values
2 Significance of different cultural tradition
3 Respect to different cultures awareness

Definition of cultural tradition and how it shapes social values

Cultural tradition refers to the practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills **passed down through generations** within communities, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects that hold value in terms of cultural identity and diversity.

It is an integral part of human society. It shapes our beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors. It is what makes us unique as a species and defines us as individuals.

It also has a **significant impact on society**. It shapes our institutions, laws, and governance systems. It influences our economic activities, from the types of goods and services we produce to the way we organize our labor force. It also impacts our social structures and relationships, influencing the way we form families, communities, and other social groups.

Culture shapes our values. Our values are the things that we believe are important in life. They guide our decisions and our actions. For example, in some cultures, the value of family is very strong. This means that people in these cultures are likely to put a lot of emphasis on their relationships with their family members. In other cultures, the value of independence is more important. This means that people in these cultures are more likely to value their own personal freedom and autonomy.

Culture shapes our beliefs. Our beliefs are our understandings of the world around us. They influence how we interpret events and how we make decisions. For example, in some cultures, people believe that the supernatural is a powerful force that can influence events in the world. This belief may lead people to engage in rituals or practices that they believe will protect them from harm or bring them good fortune. In other cultures, people may not believe in the supernatural at all. This belief may lead them to take a more scientific or rational approach to understanding the world.

Culture shapes our norms. Our norms are the rules that govern our behavior in society. They tell us what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior. For example, in some cultures, it is considered rude to make eye contact with someone you don't know. In other cultures, eye contact is seen as a sign of respect. Our norms also tell us how we should interact with each other in different social settings. For example, in some cultures, it is considered polite to shake hands when you meet someone new. In other cultures, it is considered more polite to bow or kiss the other person's cheek.

These are just a few of the ways in which culture influences human behavior. Culture is a complex and dynamic force that shapes our lives in many ways. By understanding the role of culture, **we can better understand ourselves and the world around us**.

Significance of different cultural traditions

Cultural traditions are an important part of our lives, allowing us to connect with our history, values, and beliefs. They provide us with a **sense of identity, community, and belonging**. They can also be a source of comfort and strength in times of difficulty.

They also provide us with a **sense of belonging**. They help create a shared identity within a group or community. Participating in traditional activities helps people feel connected and strengthens social bonds. These activities often provide a shared understanding of what it means to be part of a particular culture or group.

Finally, cultural traditions help to **promote acceptance and understanding between different cultures and communities**. As we learn about other cultures and participate in their customs, we become more tolerant and understanding of the beliefs of others. This helps foster mutual respect and appreciation for the differences that exist between us all.
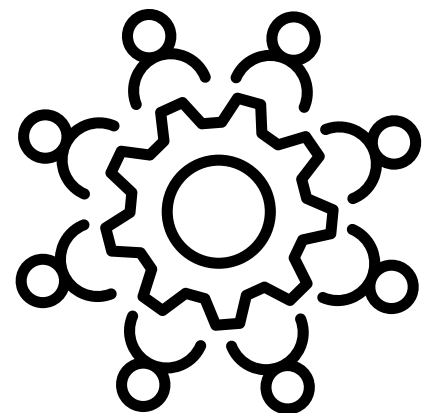
Significance of different cultural traditions

In conclusion, cultural traditions are vital to maintaining our sense of identity, community, and belonging. They help us remember our ancestors and honor their legacy by passing down their knowledge and values. In times of difficulty, they provide us with comfort and security by reminding us of who we are and where we come from. Finally, they help promote acceptance and understanding between different cultures by encouraging us to learn about other customs and practices. Valuing your cultural traditions is essential for strengthening your connection with your heritage as well as **promoting peace among different cultures**.

Cultural identity

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Cultural identity refers to the shared beliefs, norms, values, and practices that characterize a specific group of individuals. These groups are often bound by common factors such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Cultural identity shapes the way individuals see themselves and their connection to the world around them, influencing their behaviors, attitudes, and interactions. It provides a sense of belonging and frames how individuals within a group relate to others outside their group.

Examples:

1. **Zulu Identity**: The Zulu cultural identity is deeply rooted in a rich oral history, traditional music, and dance forms, such as 'Indlamu.' This distinctive ethno-cultural identity plays a significant role within South African society, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural traditions through expressive practices like storytelling and performance.
2. **Japanese Identity:** The cultural identity of Japan is marked by a strong emphasis on harmony, hierarchy, and the fusion of ancient traditions with modern advancements. Japanese culture reflects a deep respect for these values, influencing how individuals interact with each other and how society functions. The blending of historical customs with contemporary technology exemplifies how cultural identity evolves while staying true to its core values.

Understanding Cultural Norms

Cultural Norms is like the unit that shapes the societies

Cultural norms are the shared expectations and rules that guide behavior within a group of people. These norms can pertain to virtually any aspect of social life, from basic etiquette and manners, like how to greet others, to more substantial societal structures, such as gender roles and family dynamics. They form the bedrock of a culture, dictating what is considered acceptable or unacceptable within that culture.

- Culture norms are the soldiers that maintain the cultures through generations by helping individuals grasp their roles and expectations. By offering behavioural framework to the community, they promote cohesion and stability within the one society.
- They guide behavior and facilitate interactions within the cultural context. Whether it's the food we consume or the holidays we observe, cultural norms influence numerous facets of our everyday lives.

Understanding Cultural Norms

Examples of different cultural norms

Cultural norms are part of the culture and traditions, so it influence all various parts such are greetings, Dining etiquette, Communication styles, social behaviours and much more.

- Greetings in Japan is bowing as a sign of respect. But in France greeting is with a kiss on both cheeks.

- Timing in Spain has ac concept of "mañana," where things are often not rushed and scheduled flexibly. But in Switzerland Punctuality is highly valued and being late is considered rude.

- Communication in Germany are direct and straightforward communication. While in Mexico, they emphasize politeness and often using indirect language.

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Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness can be defined as being aware and respecting the impacts and influences of different cultures. Cultural awareness leaves a positive impact on every person's roles and responsibilities. It helps us to avoid misjudging people from various cultural backgrounds.

Many of the situations where we blame people from a different background for being difficult or lazy or unprofessional could be attributed to a general lack of awareness about our own culturally influenced expectations about the 'right way' to do things. Therefore, being culturally aware will reflect on different sides. **BUT HOW TO BE CULTURALLY AWARE?**

How to be culturally aware?

- **Promotes understanding:**

By learning about and understanding different cultures, people can break down stereotypes and reduce prejudices. This fosters a more inclusive and accepting society. In "Prejudice Reduction: What Works?" article, recommended different approaches on how to overcome the prejudices. It supposed that self-educating by contacting with different groups will promote mutual understanding and reduce stereotypes.

Meanwhile, a mutual understanding can be built by cooperative learning where group tasks rely on each member's contribution help diminish prejudice by focusing on individual strengths rather than stereotypes.

This understanding helps individuals to connect on a deeper level and communicate more effectively. While interactions can improve the understanding and move the prejudices from reduction to elimination, be aware of the media interventions which sometimes refer to only one side of the stories.

How to be culturally aware?

- **Improve Communication:**

Recognizing and respecting different communication styles helps in reducing the risk of miscommunication. But how to do so? You can follow those steps to clarify and confirm through your conversation.

1. Ask Clarifying questions: When engaging with someone from a different communication style, ask questions to ensure you fully understand their message.
2. Paraphrase and Reflect: Repeat what the other person said in your own words to confirm your understanding.
3. Summarize Key Points: Summarize the main points of the conversation to ensure both parties are on the same page.

Those steps are that can build effective communication between people in business or social contexts.

How to be culturally aware?

- **Foster Inclusivity:**

Inclusive environments encourage participation from all individuals, leading to richer and more diverse ideas and solutions. You need to welcome the different perspectives and encourage different viewpoints to foster innovation and creativity. Everyone should feel valued.

There 3 steps to follow to ensure you contribute to the inclusivity around you:
1. Diagnostic Phase: Assess the current state of diversity and inclusion within the surrounding environment. Identify gaps and areas for improvement and recognize areas where cultural awareness can be enhanced.
2. Gap analysis: Analyse the differences between the current state and the desired state of diversity and inclusion. Identifying gaps in cultural understanding can highlight the need for targeted training and education.
3. Act: start raising the awareness about what you found out and act accordingly. Your actions can include your friends, family, teammates. Filling the gaps sometimes can include organizing workshops, training sessions, and cultural exchange programs.

Look forward a continuous improvement stay attuned to evolving cultural dynamics and maintain an inclusive environment.

How to be culturally aware?

- **Boosts your Adaptability:**

To be have this adaptability to understand the differences in the cultures, you need to get your culture better. Before we can truly understand others, we must first understand the range of cultural influences that impact on us, and develop an insight into our own basic values and assumptions. To truly 'know others', we must first 'know ourselves'. Specifically, you need to:

1. identify and examine the variety of cultural factors that shape us both individually and within groups;

2. build a clear awareness of our core values, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors;

3. learn to notice our cultural "red flags"—the labels we may assign to individuals from other cultures when encountering unfamiliar or seemingly inappropriate behaviors;

4. become aware of our personal and emotional responses to situations of ambiguity and uncertainty.

How to be culturally aware?

- **Boosts your Adaptability:**

After you know your culture you can educate yourself about different cultures, their values, beliefs, and practices. Put all into practice by:

1. Cultivate empathy by putting yourself in others' shoes and being open to different perspectives. This helps in understanding and respecting cultural differences.

2. Engage in active listening by paying full attention to the speaker, asking clarifying questions, and reflecting back what you've heard. This ensures you understand the speaker's cultural context.

3. seek feedback from peers and mentors about your cultural interactions. Reflect on this feedback to identify areas for improvement.

Being culturally aware allows you to find common ground with locals and other expatriates, creating a support network that can help you navigate the new culture. Not only to navigate but also this adaptability helps in managing the stress and anxiety that often accompany **culture shock.**

Case study D&G

That **stereotypes** are a double-edged sword is evident in a campaign launched by Dolce & Gabbana in 2018.
We are talking about the "D&G Loves China" campaign, where three unfortunate videos saw Chinese model Zuo Ye attempting to eat pizza, pasta, and cannoli with chopsticks. While Chinese folk music played in the background, a Mandarin-speaking voiceover said, "Welcome to the first episode of 'Eating with Chopsticks' by Dolce & Gabbana".

Everything looked and sounded wrong, from the embarrassing sexual innuendo to the voiceover, which mocked Chinese pronunciation.

No wonder the campaign was a complete shipwreck for D&G. **The ads were labeled as patronizing, "offensive" and stereotypically "backward"**. Gabbana was so piqued by the comments that he replied from his Instagram account, pouring salt in the wound
Eventually, D&G's maxi fashion show in Shanghai had to be canceled (with one hundred models ready for the catwalk and 1,500 guests including local celebrities and influencers), with a considerable loss for the brand.
The mishap triggered a boycott in China and Stefano Dolce and Domenico Gabbana eventually had to plead for forgiveness in a cringing video.

Case Study discussion

Do you agree on the controversiality of this campaign?

Based on this case study, do you know any other campaign that has raised the same issues with cultural identity?

3. Intercultural communication

1 Intercultural communication

Definition

Intercultural communication refers to the process by which people from different cultural backgrounds exchange information, ideas, and meanings. This type of communication highlights how cultural differences—such as norms, values, and communication styles—affect the way individuals perceive and engage with one another. It also explores how to bridge these differences to enhance mutual understanding.

Research in intercultural communication emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity, empathy, and adaptability. Being aware of one's own cultural biases and practices is key, as this self-awareness helps to navigate cross-cultural interactions more effectively. Furthermore, emotional intelligence and patience play vital roles in managing misunderstandings that often arise due to cultural differences.

One foundational model in this field is developed by **Edward T. Hall**, who introduced concepts such as "**high-context**" and **"low-context"** cultures. High-context cultures (e.g., Japan) rely heavily on implicit communication and context, whereas low-context cultures (e.g., the U.S.) depend more on explicit, direct communication. Understanding these variations is critical to effective intercultural exchange.

In addition to fostering better personal and professional relationships, effective intercultural communication helps in conflict resolution, promotes collaboration, and enables a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity in increasingly globalized communities. By improving intercultural communication skills—through cultural knowledge, empathy, and a positive outlook—individuals can break down barriers and find common ground across diverse cultures.

Its importance in a globalized world

The importance of intercultural communication lies in its power to bridge divides, foster mutual respect, and create meaningful connections.

Globalization has accelerated the need for intercultural communication, as people from different cultural backgrounds increasingly interact in various spheres of life.

This phenomenon has led to both challenges and opportunities in intercultural communication.

On one hand, it exposes individuals to diverse perspectives, fostering cross-cultural understanding. On the other hand, it presents obstacles stemming from cultural differences and communication barriers.
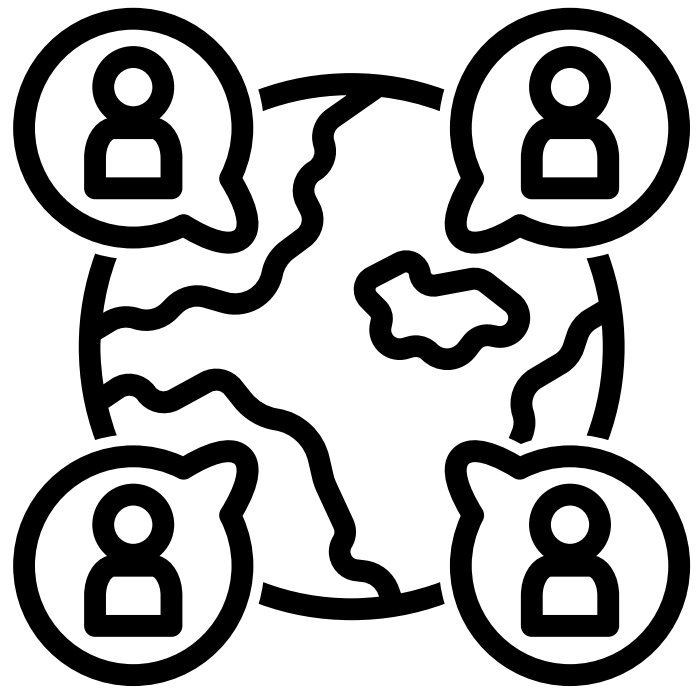
Since we are now able to travel to more places, we are exposed to other cultures and ways of living.

In today's interconnected world, the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries is **more important than ever**. It facilitates communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries, leading to more tolerance, acceptance, and, ultimately, stronger relationships amongst people of diverse backgrounds.

Barrier to effective intercultural dialogue

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Barriers to intercultural communication include **language differences**, **cultural stereotypes**, and **nonverbal cues misunderstanding**, hindering effective interaction and understanding between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Overcoming these barriers requires cultural sensitivity, active listening, and a willingness to learn and adapt to diverse communication styles.

Nonverbal cues: A nod in one culture might signify agreement, while in another, it could simply mean the listener is following along.

Work environment norms: People from different cultures might have diverse expectations regarding punctuality or hierarchy.

Individual and collective values: Some societies emphasize the goals of the group, while others prioritize individual achievements.

By understanding and respecting these different values, we can boost effective communication across cultures.

2 Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity refers to the awareness, understanding, and respect for differences between cultures, particularly in behavior, communication, values, and beliefs. It involves recognising that people from diverse cultural backgrounds may have different ways of viewing and interacting with the world. This sensitivity is crucial for fostering mutual respect, improving cross-cultural communication, and ensuring that interactions are meaningful and respectful of all parties involved.

Cultural sensitivity often requires individuals to reflect on their own cultural biases and assumptions and learn how to adapt their behaviors in different cultural contexts. For example, in business or government settings, cultural sensitivity is critical for creating successful and harmonious relationships, both within diverse teams and in international partnerships. It helps avoid misunderstandings and conflicts that can arise when people are unaware of cultural norms or etiquette, which can even lead to legal consequences in extreme cases.
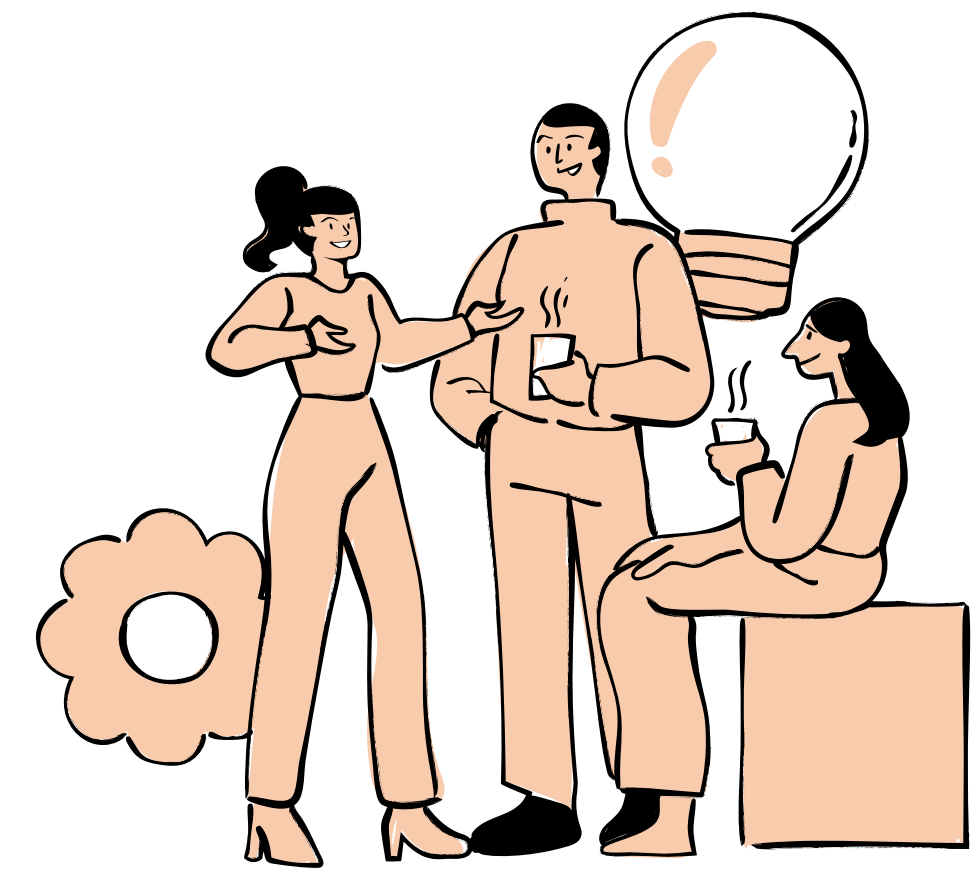
But what does that really mean?

Essentially, it means that, as you go about your **daily life**, you operate with the awareness that cultural differences between yourself and the people you meet exist without assigning them a value. You see our differences as a positive thing, and don't consider one culture better or worse, right or wrong.

Of course, this is often easier said than done. With increasingly diverse populations living together in the same communities, it's not always possible to intimately understand the backgrounds of those we're interacting with.

But having cultural sensitivity doesn't mean that you must be an expert in each culture's values. It simply means that you're willing to ask honest questions, seek understanding, and **demonstrate empathy** rather than judging those around you. It also means that, when you knowingly enter a space in which there will be cultural differences at play, you do a bit of homework beforehand and avoid knee-jerk reactions or jumping to conclusions.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, created by **Milton Bennett.** This model serves as a guide for individuals to develop greater intercultural competence, ultimately leading to more effective communication and collaboration in multicultural settings.

It outlines six stages of increasing sensitivity to intercultural differences, moving from an **ethnocentric** (where one's own culture is seen as central) to an **ethnorelative** worldview (where cultures are viewed as equally valid). These stages help to explain how individuals can grow in their intercultural competence, adapting to and appreciating cultural diversity.
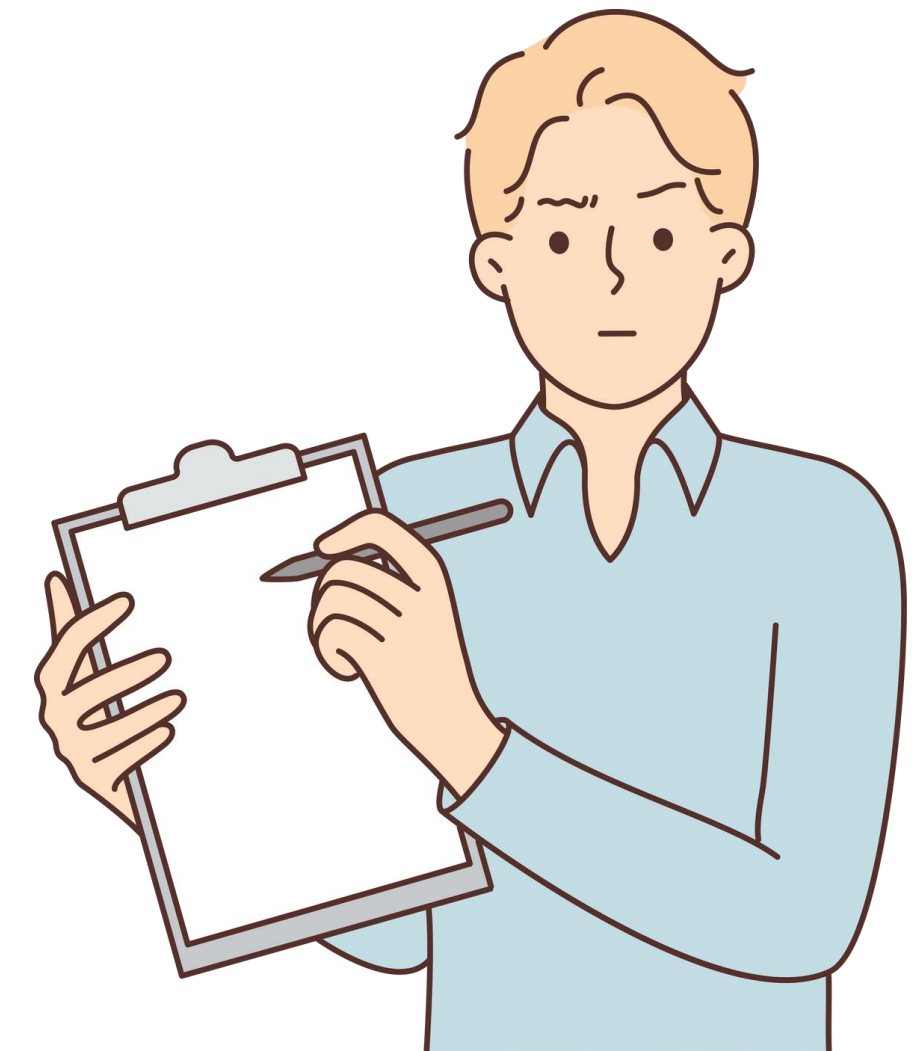
Ethnocentric Stages:

1. **Denial of Difference:** In this stage, individuals are often unaware of cultural differences. They may see their culture as the only real or "normal" way of living, and people in this stage often minimize or ignore the existence of other cultures. Exposure to cultural diversity may be extremely limited.
2. **Defense against Difference**: Here, individuals recognize cultural differences but see them as a threat. They may adopt a "us vs. them" mentality, viewing their culture as superior and other cultures as inferior. This stage is often characterized by negative stereotyping and feelings of hostility toward other cultures.
3. **Minimization of Difference**: At this stage, individuals acknowledge some cultural differences but assume that deep down, all people are essentially the same. While this might seem more open-minded, it still reflects a limited understanding of cultural diversity because it downplays the importance of cultural distinctions.

Ethnorelative Stages:

1. **Acceptance of Difference:** In this stage, people recognize and appreciate deep cultural differences in values, norms, and behaviors. They don't necessarily agree with all cultural practices but accept that they are valid in their cultural context. Individuals at this stage are open to learning about other cultures without judgment.
2. **Adaptation to Difference:** At this stage, individuals develop the ability to shift their behavior and communication style to fit different cultural contexts. They begin to incorporate different cultural perspectives into their worldview and can communicate more effectively across cultures.
3. **Integration of Difference:** The final stage involves individuals who have moved beyond their own cultural identity and can easily shift perspectives and adapt to various cultural contexts. These people often see themselves as global citizens and feel comfortable navigating multiple cultural frameworks.

The Benefits of Cultural Sensitivity

Enhanced Relationships: Respect for cultural diversity fosters trust and positive relationships among individuals, communities, and nations.

Effective Problem-Solving: Collaborative solutions are more likely to emerge when diverse perspectives are considered and respected.

Conflict Resolution: It promotes understanding, reducing the potential for misunderstanding that can escalate into conflicts.

Personal Growth: Engaging with diverse cultures broadens perspectives, cultivating open-mindedness and personal growth.

Global Citizenship: Cultivating cultural sensitivity is an essential trait of responsible global citizens who contribute positively to the world.

EMSA

- **Be clear**
  Before conveying a message, ensure your ideas are clear and consistent. Also, establish the goal of your communication to enable you to clarify the subject.

- **Choose the best time**
  Time your communication to get the most out of the exchange. For instance, you can assess the mood of the receiver to determine the best time to initiate communication.

- **Use appropriate language**
  Use language that the receiver can easily understand. Technical language, overly complex vocabulary, and idioms may confuse certain listeners.

- **Get feedback**
After conveying a message, you can follow up to ensure the receiver has understood your intended message. Answer their questions and clarify areas again if necessary.

- **Check your body language**
Body language conveys a lot of information, both intended and unintended. Ensure your body language is appropriate and matches your verbal communication.

- **Practise active listening skills**
Listening is an important aspect of effective communication, as it enables you to decipher the content of the message. Practise active listening habits, such as avoiding interrupting others while they are speaking.

- **Develop your cultural competence**
Learning about the different cultures of people you interact with can help you communicate with them more effectively.

- **Avoid giving too much information**
Conveying too much information to the receiver can lead to communication breakdowns. Instead, release only the important information and wait for feedback before sending more.

- **Monitor your emotions**
Evaluate your emotional state before sending or replying to communications. Ensure your emotions don't cause you to misconstrue the message or communicate unclear information.

Open-mindedness for Cultural Competence

Open-mindedness goes along with the active listening skill. The importance of such skills comes with the fact that in order to understand clearly what you have listened, you need to be open to for different perspectives.

Open-mindedness involves being receptive to new ideas and perspectives, and not judging other cultural practices and beliefs. It means approaching cultural differences with curiosity and a willingness to learn, rather than with preconceived notions or biases.

Open-mindedness also involves recognizing that your own cultural perspective is just one of many. It requires humility and the ability to see value in different ways of thinking and living. This mindset helps in breaking down barriers and building bridges between cultures.

Open-mindedness for Cultural Competence

In order to ensure an open-mind in cultural context, try following those tips;

- Engage Actively in Cultural Immersion:

Actively participate in local cultural activities and events. This involves not just observing but also engaging with the local community. This helps you gain first-hand experience and understanding, which is crucial for developing cultural competence.

- Keep the interactions:

Peer interactions provide diverse viewpoints and practical insights that can provide wider perspectives to you.

- Avoid first thoughts of Stereotypes:

Stereotypes are the first challenge to the communication. Facing and overcoming this will help you build resilience and adaptability, which is a key component in open-mindedness.

Active listening exercise

Participants will be provided with a list of open-ended questions related to diverse topics (e.g., culture, personal experiences, beliefs) and will take turns asking questions and practicing active listening skills without interrupting.

1. Please tell me a story about yourself or your childhood that helps explain who you are, where you came from, or what your culture is?
2. What is your definition of "culture?"
3. How do you define "family?"
4. Do you have any eating habits/rituals that are specific to your culture?
5. Define and describe the most important (or most celebrated) holiday of your culture.
6. Have you ever experienced racism? In what form?
7. Have you ever felt excluded based on your gender or culture?
8. Do you remember excluding others based on culture or gender?

Revision-Summary and Q&A

- How do you think cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, shapes the identity and values of a community?
- In what ways can workshops on cultural fusion help individuals appreciate and engage with diverse cultural expressions?
- How do you think cultural traditions influence social values and community norms in different societies?
- What role does respect and awareness of other cultures play in fostering intercultural understanding and cooperation?
- How does intercultural communication contribute to creating a more connected and empathetic global community?
- What strategies do you think are most effective for promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusive dialogue in diverse settings?

Do you have any questions?
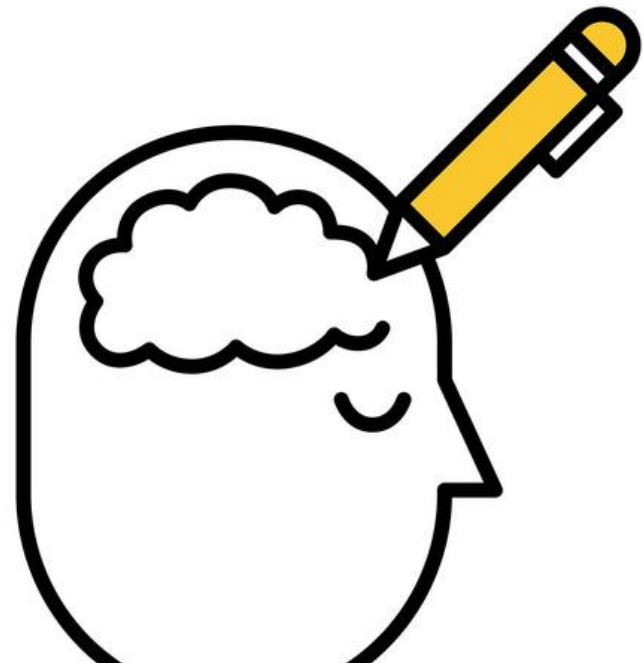
What will you keep from today's training?

Training
Evaluation

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Thank you!