

LEADERSHIP FOR AND WITH OTHERS

CULTURALLY COMPETENT COMMUNICATION - REFLECTION



I ask for what I desire as we begin this topic



I pray that my entire being become open to God's grace



I imagine these texts being addressed to me, and note my response

Grace: that we recognize and welcome the invitation from within to genuinely reach others who are different

Let us walk by making ourselves all things to all people by seeking out someone to help. This shedding of ourselves makes it possible for the Society to always have the face, the way of speaking, and the way of being of all peoples, all cultures, by inserting ourselves into all of them, into the specific heart of each people, to build up the Church with each of them, by inculturating the Gospel and evangelizing every culture.

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus

The Jesuit legacy of creative response to the call of the Spirit in concrete life situations is a motive for the development of a culture of dialogue in our encounters with believers from other religions. This culture of dialogue must become a specific mark of our Society, which is sent forth to the whole world to work for the greater glory of God and to help human beings.

General Congregation 34 (442)

“Teach me your way of looking at people: as you glanced at Peter after his denial, as you penetrated the heart of the rich young man and the hearts of your disciples. I would like to meet you as you really are, since your image changes those with whom you come into contact. Remember John the Baptist’s first meeting with you? And the centurion’s feeling of unworthiness? And the amazement of all those who saw miracles and other wonders? How you impressed your disciples, the rabble in the Garden of Olives, Pilate and his wife and the centurion at the foot of the cross... I would like to hear and be impressed by your manner of speaking, listening, for example, to your discourse in the synagogue in Capharnaum or the Sermon on the Mount where your audience felt you “taught as one who has authority.”

Pedro Arrupe, Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What attitudes am I bringing to my cross-cultural interactions?
2. How can I bring more life to my communication with others who are different?

CULTURALLY COMPETENT COMMUNICATION - EXERCISE

STARTING FROM EXPERIENCE

Bring to mind one or two experiences of cultural differences that led you to insight.

- What changes have you noticed in yourself as a result of this exposure?
- What knowledge, behaviors and attitudes made this interaction fruitful and increased your effectiveness in communicating?
- What blind spots might you have missed? How could you better address them next time?
- How can you increase your disposition to learning about others and yourself during intercultural interactions?

SHARING PERSPECTIVES

- Share your insights and experiences with your small group.
- Based on your sharing, develop with your small group questions and strategies that you find relevant to consider in an intercultural communication setting.

REACTING TO THE INPUT

Once you have compiled your list, read the input. You will find a list of keys and strategies for culturally competent communication.

- How frequently do you actually practice each point?
- How might one or more of these practices be helpful in managing a past experience of communication across cultures more effectively?

Gather your insights in your journal/learning log.

ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

CULTURALLY COMPETENT COMMUNICATION - INPUT

INTRODUCTION

As our world is becoming increasingly diverse and cross-cultural, it is essential that we build our capacity to relate, work together and communicate in a safe and respectful way in cross-cultural settings. This involves among others developing open mindedness, growing our willingness to recognize and accommodate other people's needs, and developing skills in facilitating and managing different communication practices.

MAIN IDEAS

A disposition to meet others

A key strategy for effective and fruitful cross cultural communication is remembering as Francis Xavier learned, that God is already at work in the "other" culture. This means developing reverence, curiosity, and willingness to accept and learn from others who have new ideas and different perspectives to bring to our ways of being, knowing and doing. It requires a flexible mind but most importantly an open and humble heart.

Achieving cross-cultural competence also requires lowering personal defenses and being careful about stereotyping and treating others who are different as being "wrong" or "less".

In her TED talk "**Take "the Other" to lunch**", Elizabeth Lesser launched an initiative to counteract the tendency to "otherize." Her idea was to have lunch with someone from a group you may have negatively stereotyped; someone who is different, who shares a distinct lifestyle or point of view. While differences are not going to melt away after a lunch, building trust and intimacy with others starts with the first step of "two people dropping the pretense of being know-it-alls (...), dropping their weapons and reaching toward each other."

Strategies for culturally competent communication

You will find below more tools to help in managing communication across cultures. Take some silent time and mindfully go through this list. Identify the suggestions that grab your attention.

- ☐ Taking responsibility for the communication.
- ☐ Practicing inquiry. This could include:
 - ☐ asking what preconceived notions about other cultures may hold back your communication,
 - ☐ looking at your cultural maps and ideas about successful communication or management conflict and putting them in perspective
 - ☐ inquiring about the mindset you are in and the emotions (intrigued, defensive,...) you experience when encountering people who are different.
- ☐ Developing the courage to recognize and let go of any stereotyping and judgment are the first steps in this direction.

- ❑ Committing to treating others the way they want to be treated. This does not mean sacrificing one's own cultural norms but rather seeking to understand what others consider to be appropriate communication practices and making an effort to accommodate their needs.
- ❑ Recognizing the complexity of the cultures you are interacting with and remembering that people interpret your words and actions in ways that make sense to them. Developing a deeper knowledge of others will help you know how to address them best and communicate in a way that resonates with them.
- ❑ Instead of making immediate judgments or taking the situation personally, do your best to maintain an open mind and try to learn more about their communication practices by observing and listening.
- ❑ Listening actively to increase cross-cultural awareness and create a respectful and comfortable atmosphere.
- ❑ Learning to be an observer. Make a conscious decision to be alert and on the lookout for verbal and nonverbal signs, symbols, rituals..
- ❑ Practicing reflective listening and reformulating in your own words what you heard others say to ensure understanding.
- ❑ Asking probing and open-ended questions to clarify the meaning of people's messages and actions and minimize the risk of misunderstanding. Questions also help you get to know others, understand their norms and differences and avoid making assumptions. Try not to ask double questions and give your listener the time to answer one question at a time.
- ❑ Keeping a sincere, supportive and non-critical tone of voice.
- ❑ Being honest and keeping an authentic communication. Dishonesty causes immediate disengagement.
- ❑ Being conscious about your communication content and style. As you're addressing others, develop your ability to recognize whether the pace, tone and wording you are using is adapted to their culture and needs and promotes mutual understanding. Think of it as contemplation in action.
- ❑ Communicating slowly. Remember that listeners from different cultures need to extend more energy to translate, understand and digest your message.
- ❑ Addressing people in short exchanges rather than long and complex monologues. Inviting them to take part in the conversation.
- ❑ Respecting differences and being sensible to others' communication styles and norms. While the use of humor for example often builds connections, make sure that it is not potentially misinterpreted or offensive. Be particularly careful with sarcasm and show respect to cultural formalities and etiquette. Distinguish perspectives and remember that others' experiences, beliefs, values and biases are unique. Taking the time to understand and connect with them.
- ❑ Accommodating others' communication style is about showing respect and mutuality, not about being patronising. As you are adapting your conversational speed, accent pronunciation and choice of words, make sure you do so in a respectful and non-condescending way.
- ❑ Recognizing that frustration is normal to experience in cross-cultural settings. Be patient and committed to constructively approach it in a non-personal and non-aggressive way. Be willing to share feedback with others on how they can better understand your culture.
- ❑ Exposing yourself to different cultures. Developing cross-cultural communication skills rarely happens in your comfort zone. It is best achieved by practice and structured experience (for example: visiting foreign places, reading books written by foreign authors, frequenting ethnic restaurants, listening to world music,...) followed by self-reflection.

- ❑ Improving your cultural knowledge (referring to multiple sources and references in books or online and getting into the habit of checking your facts about a given culture and researching for nuances).
- ❑ Engaging in peer learning (discussing with friends or colleagues how each one of you processes cultural interactions and clarifying your thinking process and cultural assumptions to each other).
- ❑ Capturing in writing cultural experiences you have been part of (noting down emotional reactions, fears, resistances and ambiguities, reflecting on the challenges and opportunities that the experience of working interculturally carried, and referring back to your notes to learn from them)
- ❑ Keep reviewing your perspective about your cross cultural experiences. Monitor negative attitudes and think them through.
- ❑ Finding a coach or mentor that can help you gain awareness about your thinking process and behavior in different cultural settings.

FINAL NOTE

WONDERLAND

It is a person's unquenchable thirst for wonder that sets them on their initial quest for truth.
 The more doors you open, the smaller you become.
 The more places you see and the more people you meet, the greater your curiosity grows.
 The greater your curiosity, the more you will wander.
 The more you wander, the greater the wonder.
 The more you quench your thirst for wonder, the more you drink from the cup of life.
 The more you see and experience, the closer to truth you become.
 The more languages you learn, the more truths you can unravel.
 And the more countries you travel, the greater your understanding.
 And the greater your understanding, the less you see differences.
 And the more knowledge you gain, the wider your perspective,
 And the wider your perspective, the lesser your ignorance.
 Hence, the more wisdom you gain, the smaller you feel.
 And the smaller you feel, the greater you become.
 The more you see, the more you love -
 The more you love, the less walls you see.
 The more doors you are willing to open, the less close-minded you will be.
 The more open-minded you are, the more open your heart.
 And the more open your heart, the more you will be able to send and receive -- Truth and true unconditional love."

— Suzy Kassem, Rise Up and Salute the Sun: The Writings of Suzy Kassem

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Growing our awareness to our intercultural communications
2. Developing our disposition to meet others who are different
3. Grasping different practices for effectively managing cross cultural communications

LEADERSHIP FOR AND WITH OTHERS

CULTURALLY COMPETENT COMMUNICATION- RESOURCES

GENERAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Top Ten Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication				Link
Cultural strategic thinking		Creative Commons licensed, freely downloadable	2012	Link
Take "the Other" to lunch	TED talk by Elizabeth Lesser	TED		Link
Why you think you're right — even if you're wrong	TED talk by Julia Galef	TED		Link
Cross-Culture Communication	Mindtools	Mindtools		Link
Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication	Laray Barna		1994	Link

QUOTES

- "Differences simply act as a yarn of curiosity unraveling until we get to the other side" — Ciore Taylor
- "Deep listening is miraculous for both the listener and speaker. When someone receives us with open-hearted, non-judgmental, intensely interested listening, our spirits expand" — Sue Patton Soele
- "To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way that we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others"—Anthony Robbins
- "If we are going to live with our deepest differences then we must learn about one another." — Deborah J. Levine
- "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'" Martin Luther King Jr.
- "The problem with the world is that we draw the circle of our family too small." Mother Theresa
- "What do you most yearn for? Do you yearn to defend your own beliefs? Or do you yearn to see the world as clearly as you possibly can?" - Julia Galef
- "Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." - Rumi