How to support newcomers working in Cafe Europe

HAND GUIDE FOR YOUTH WORKERS: Intercultural Competence: Cultural sensitivity

Cafe Europe

Co-funded by the European Union

Table of Content

Learning aims and objectives	3
Introduction	4
The iceberg Model	5
Culture and identity	6
intercultural sensitivity	7
What is the DMIS?	8
Cultural stereotypes	10
How do we stereotype?	10
The influence of stereotypes	11
Get rid of stereotypes	12
Learning about other cultures	13
Extra Links	14

Project (2020-1-NL02-KA205-002961)

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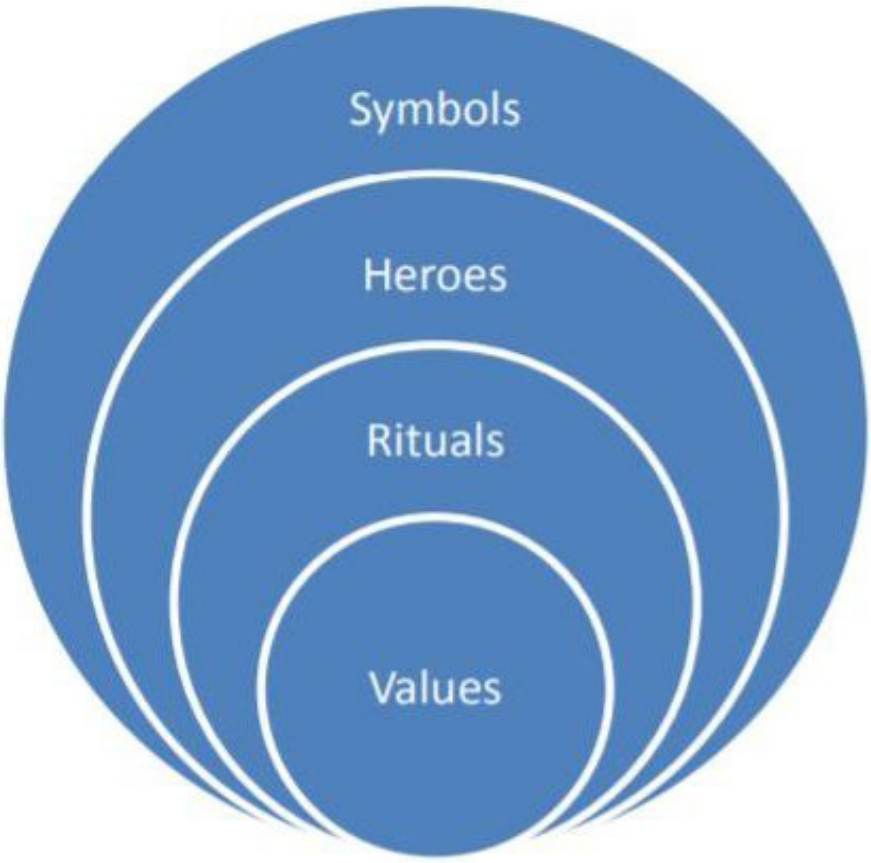
Learning aims and objectives

By reading through this chapter, youth workers and volunteers should develop an understanding of what the layers of culture are, how our cultural identity is defined by our own culture, the developmental stages of cultural sensitivity in individuals, how to confront personal prejudices & stereotypes and overcome them by developing cultural sensitivities and tolerance.

Using the knowledge gained in this chapter, youth workers and volunteers will be able to define the concept of culture and its layers, develop an understanding of how our cultural orientations shape our cultural identity and the importance of cultural awareness in achieving intercultural competences, identify how stereotypes can influence our behaviours and attitudes and reflect on and evaluate one's own cultural sensitivity and awareness and his/her impact on others.



Introduction

Hofstede defined culture as ''the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values''. Hofstede developed the onion model to explain his idea of culture. According to his model, culture has many layers like an onion.

Each culture is unique, very complex and has its own personality, own way of doing things, ways of acting, ways of communicating with the world. It is neither static, which means every one of us can belong to more than one culture simultaneously, nor hereditary, as we do not inherit it from our families. Culture is learned, it is not innate as no one is born with an inherent understanding of their culture; we learn it as we grow through interaction, observation and imitation. It is not an abstract concept either, on the contrary, it is completely embedded in our everyday lives and shaped on many levels: e.g. national, ethnical, religious, language, gender, generation and social class.

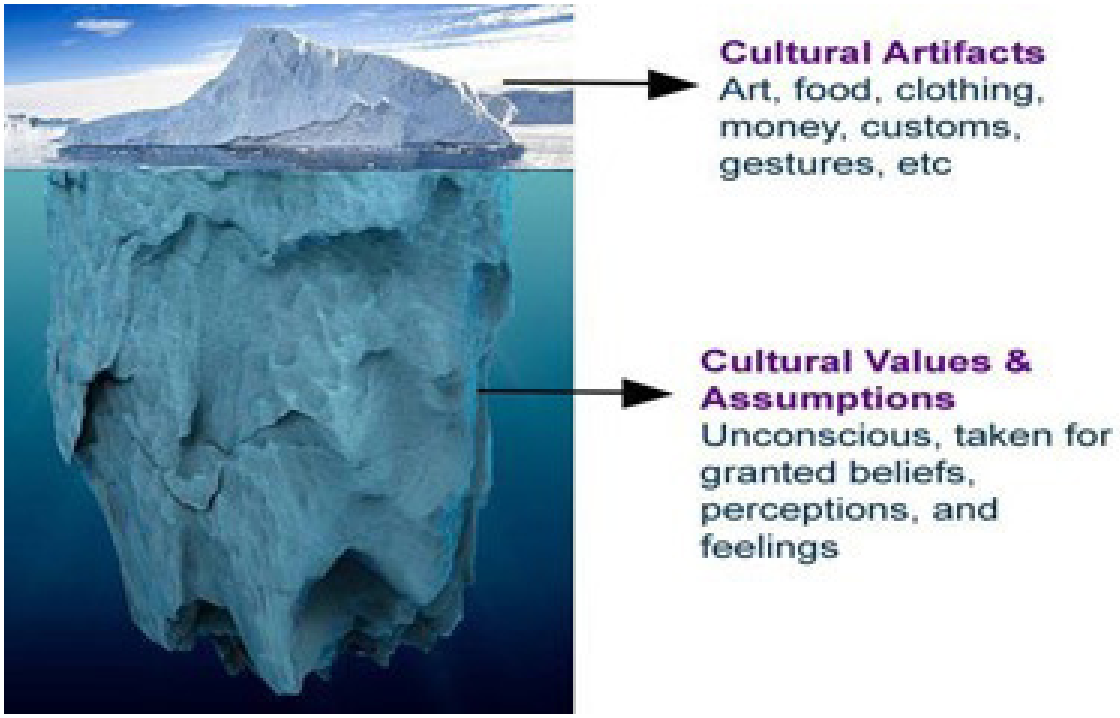
Silent Floor Discussion: Use this effective activity to discuss what culture means to each individual: https://practice-school.eu/activity3-silent-floor-discussion/

Watch the video for learning about how to facilitate Silent Floor activity: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obw_aKoFWEE

The iceberg Model

The Iceberg Model of culture was developed by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall to help explain the layers of culture. In this model, the visible elements of culture, such as food and clothes, are represented by the upper part of the iceberg while many other less tangible and visible facets of culture, such as the core values, are represented by the larger portion and they are far below the surface. However, these are just as essential to our understanding of how cultures work. Failure to understand the layers of culture is the main reason for misunderstandings in intercultural dialogue.

Exercise: Reflect on the notion of culture:
https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/culture-introduction-to-icl.217/



Questions for personal reflection
Do you see any items below the waterline that might influence or determine any of those above the line?

How do your core beliefs shape your interactions with other people?

Culture and identity

Our cultural context shapes our lives and how we see the world, how we perceive it, how we act, how we solve conflicts and how we go about creating relationships. Most often, we may not be aware of our own values and beliefs until we are confronted with someone from another culture. People born into different cultures can end up with very different types of mindsets. Cultural awareness evolving into cultural sensitivity helps us avoid imposing our beliefs and values on members of another culture and stereotyping.

Do ''The Onion of Identity" exercise to raise your awareness of various layers of your identity:
https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/identity-individual-differences-the-onion.540/

"Identity wheel": Self-reflect and think about your social identity:
https://papyrus-project.org/self-exploratory-activities/

For this activity, download and use the Social Identity Wheel template at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1LMx4iTxnPQcnpqT2RlY1FzVzA/edit

Questions for self- reflection:
Looking at your own culture, can you identify the most important elements which have influenced and shaped your cultural identity?

How is your behaviour and attitude influenced by your own culture and identity while working with a diverse group? How should you deal with it?

Intercultural sensitivity

The first step towards improving our cultural sensitivity is to know about the cultural characteristics, history, beliefs and behaviours of another ethnic or cultural group (knowledge). The next stage is "cultural awareness", which is understanding other groups and being open minded to changing cultural attitudes. The following stage is "cultural sensitivity" which means knowing and accepting that cultural differences exist, without assigning any values to these differences.
When we get into contact with people from other cultures, we need to become culturally aware, understand our own cultural influences and potential biases and assumptions, and show respect for others' differences in order to achieve competence in intercultural dialogue. Intercultural sensitivity helps us to overcome these interpersonal barriers, i.e the stereotypes, biases and prejudices, which prevent us from "seeing and recognising" one another.

Reflect on your intercultural competence and recognise your strong points as well as areas which need further development: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/pestalozzi/Source/Documentation/ICCTool2014/ICToolGB.pdf

What is the DMIS?

DMIS stands for Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The framework of the Bennett scale can be used as a valuable tool to understand the different phases of and barriers to intercultural sensitivity and to arrive ultimately at the stage where the differences are perceived as normal and integrated into one's identity.

A.Ethnocentric Stages

The first three stages of Bennett's model describe recognizing and overcoming attitudes and beliefs that place our own culture at the centre of our world.

1.Denial: ''My culture is the only one that is valid; why don't they just do things as we do in own country?"

At this stage, one sees their view of the world and their values as the only possible view of reality. They do not notice other cultures and generally are not interested in cultural differences. There is little to no thought of the ''other''.

2. Defense: ''My home culture is superior and ''theirs' ''inferior"

One's own culture is experienced as the only good and the most ''evolved" one. This stage is characterized by negative stereotyping and us vs. them thinking. People at this position may feel openly threatened by other cultures and cultural differences, so they tend to be very critical of other cultures and belittle them.

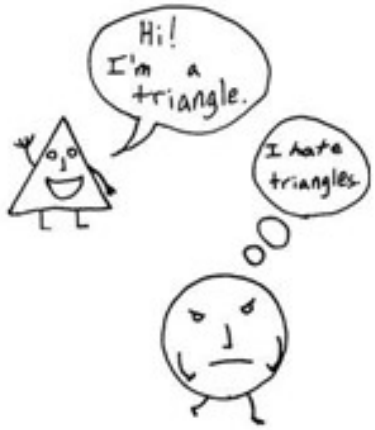
3. Minimization: ''I minimize differences and focus only on what is similar to my culture"

During this stage people begin to find commonalities between themselves and those from other cultures. They also recognize superficial differences in food, customs, money etc. They tend to expect similarities and share their beliefs and behaviours in order to "correct" others' behaviour to match their expectations.

B. Ethnorelativistic Stages

4. Acceptance: ''I am aware of diversity even if I may not agree"

In this first stage of ethnorelativism, people begin to recognize and appreciate other cultures without evaluating them negatively or positively. Although they do not yet adapt their behaviour to cultural context, they believe that numerous equally complex worldviews exist.



5. Adaptation: ''I see the world through the other's lenses"

Individuals begin to be more competent in communication with people of other cultures. The key skill at this stage is the ability to see the world through another's eyes. At this stage, they have developed empathy, one of the most important intercultural communication skills, to be able to consciously shift into another cultural perspective.

6. Integration: ''I easily move in different cultural worldviews"

People that reach this stage are able to help others understand different cultures, value a variety of cultures and integrate their cultural perspectives with those of other cultures. They are also capable of taking multiple cultural frames of reference into consideration in their evaluation of a situation.

Cultural stereotypes

"It is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice." - Albert Einstein.

We perceive the diverse cultures through our own cultural mindsets and tend to judge others' behaviour based on our own values, beliefs and cultural norms. That is why being aware of our own cultural orientations and assumptions is fundamental in raising intercultural competence.
A stereotype , which can be both positive or negative, is a mistaken idea or over-generalized belief many people have about a thing or group that is based upon how they look on the outside, which may be untrue or only partly true. Stereotypes can provide an important and revealing expression of the hidden beliefs and values of those who hold them. Prejudices, on the other hand, are stereotypes combined with emotions. Positive or negative as they may be, they often imply strong negative emotions towards a person or a group of persons. Discrimination is prejudices in action. Negative stereotypes evolve into negative emotions which may end up as discriminating against someone or/ and a group of persons.

Watch the types of streotypes and preconceived ideas international students faced when they met new people: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqE4_sp2NhY

How do we stereotype?

Stereotyping a particular group of people or a person is a type of prejudice which is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. We create stereotypes by social categorization, what we learn from other people around us, the broader society, within our family and through our peers. TV, books, movies and social media are also powerful sources. Many of us tend to stereotype when we are unable or unwilling to obtain new information to develop an understanding of people from a culture unknown to us.

The following easy- to- implement activities can help to show how people make associations and form stereotypes.

‘Cultionary’, a team game that involves drawing and guessing:https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/cultionary.1046/
’Whom would you like to live with? ‘’ Find out the power of prejudices!
https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/whom-would-you-like-to-live-with.322/

The influence of stereotypes

Stereotypes, even if they might not be true, simplify and justify social reality, they have potentially powerful effects on how people perceive and treat one another. They also lead to justification of prejudices or ignorance, biased perceptions of a group or a person, memory distortions, and differential treatment and discrimination.

‘’Stations of my life”: This activity aims to reduce prejudices/negative attitudes towards people from different backgrounds:
http://www.flam-project.eu/uploads/media/FLAM_handbook_EN_04.pdf , p.162

Self- reflection questions:

Recall a time when you made a cultural assumption about someone else: What assumption did you make? How did it affect the situation?

Now, recall a time when someone else made an assumption about you based on their perception of your culture: What assumption did he/she make? How did it affect you and the situation?
Imagine that you are working with a diverse group of youngsters; if one makes some sexist, discriminating and racist remarks about another one in the group or you; how would you handle this?

Get rid of stereotypes

"Prejudice is the child of ignorance."
- William Hazlitt

Be emphatetic
Avoid prejudices by getting to know people as individuals without pre-judging them and treating them as you would like to be treated.

Make an honest assessment of yourself to identify and question your assumptions and prejudices
Perceive your own cultural background, conceptions and manners to reflect on their effect on yourself and personal attitudes.

Cultivate zero-tolerance attitude against discrimination
Placing a high priority on treating each other with decency and respect and having zero tolerance for any form of discrimination is central to creating a positive work environment and well-functioning collaboration.

Keep an open attitude to avoid assumptions and suspend judgement.
Getting into real, equal-status relationships with people of a different culture helps us see them as complete human beings who belong to a social group, yet unique in their own experience.

Accept and respect cultural differences.
See the differences as something positive and opening possibilities. As we become more aware of and better informed about cultural differences, not only will our stereotypes lessen, but we will also become better equipped to educate and challenge others about their own stereotypes.

Build up your knowledge about others.
Understanding the historical and political contexts can eliminate our prejudices and lead us to address the issues of tolerance, fairness and equity effectively in our relationship with people from other cultures.

Intercultural sensitivity and avoiding prejudices are very important in order to build multicultural teams. Step 4 in "How to set up a Cafe Europe" provides extensive information about team building!

Ask yourself these questions continuously to improve your self-awareness!
What are my cultural beliefs and attitudes? Why do I have these?
What do I need to work on in order to increase awareness of my beliefs and attitudes towards others?
Am I culturally adaptable and tolerant towards other cultures?

Learning about other cultures

Ask neutral and non-judgemental questions. Observe and listen actively. People are usually enthusiastic about talking about their culture.

Socialize. Get to know people and spend time with them! Going to lunch or inviting someone to dinner are good opportunities to better understand other cultures and learn to appreciate the differences.

Experience other cultures. Social, community and educational activities such as viewing films, attending religious events, cultural panel discussions and/or speeches by cultural speakers, festivals, art exhibits, workshops and seminars, visiting recreation centers and cultural organisations or shopping in local markets are good opportunities to experience other cultures directly.

Read. Reading up on challenging themes such as assimilation, integration, racism, poverty and hate crimes helps us to get an insight into how individuals' race/ethnicity, religion, culture, geography and socioeconomic status intersect and result in vastly diverse life experiences for different groups of people.

Extra Links

- The Portfolio: an online tool that helps individuals, teams and organisations doing youth work around Europe to understand their competence and to develop it more effectively: http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/online-portfolio
- Further reading about culture, learning about own culture and different cultural aspects we have, some visible some we may not even be aware of: http://www.eycb.coe.int/edupack/08.html
- The visible attributes of culture: http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/elements_of_culture.htm
- For further reading and starting a discussion on identity and how we all come to terms with a) the way we see ourselves and b) how others see us:
- 'Stories told by young people' at: http://www.eycb.coe.int/domino/04.html
- Cultural stereotyping, types of stereotypes and how to avoid them: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/16b4jSmoLXAL9FsaD2f_XecqpLLtrypJJ0Ne9rxPreGU/edit#slide=id.g3986e8c883_0_183
- Raising intercultural awareness: https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/awareness-raising-intercultural-
- Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters contains various intercultural educational activities: https://rm.coe.int/autobiography-of-intercultural-encounters/16806bf02d
- No hate speech movement: https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign
- Education Pack, All different – All equal" (Council of Europe 2005). https://rm.coe.int/1680700aac
- Compass: A Manual for Human Rights Education for Young People visit: https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/discrimination-and-intolerance
- Curriculum "Feel like a migrant", http://www.flam-project.eu/index.php?id=11
- Pyramid of Hate exercise: Examine how bullying and discrimination based on stereotypes can escalate into acts of violence
- https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/the-pyramid-of-hate.393/
- '' Living Library": https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/living-library

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