OVERCOMING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS: DIVERSITY

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DIVERSITY

- Acceptance and respect
- Each individual is unique
- Individual differences
- Dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies
DIVERSITY IS ABOUT...

- Exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment
- Understanding each other
- Embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual

http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~asuomca/diversityinit/definition.html
**CULTURAL FAUX PAS**

- A comment, action or gesture, that offends a cultural belief, norm, value, or tradition of another culture or cultures.

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  Spoken words or gestures

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  Intentional or accidental
WHO MAKES CULTURAL FAUX PAS?

• Heads of state
• Marketing executives
• The average traveler
• Exchange students
• International businesspeople
• Interculturalists
• EVERYONE!
WHY DO CULTURAL FAUX PAS OCCUR?

• Ethnocentricity
• A lack of curiosity
• Not knowing the resources
• Too embarrassed to ask questions
• Being human
So, what can you do about it?

- Become familiar with the skills of an interculturalist
  1. What are the physical and historical concerns of this culture?
  2. What does Cultural Theory state about this culture?
  3. What are the stereotypes of this culture?
  4. Where do steps, 1, 2, & 3 meet?
SKILLS OF AN INTERCULTURALIST: DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTIONS

What do I see “above the surface”?

Skills of an Interculturalist: 
Day-to-Day Interactions

What do I sense “below the surface”?

Value systems – Dimensions of Culture – History – Geography and other information about the land – Climate – Government – and much more
WHAT IS THE INTERCULTURALIST LOOKING FOR?

Climate, Geography and Topography
• How are people “clustered” in this country?
• Do people spend an “inordinate” amount of time indoors/outdoors?
• How many people are in their household?

Cultural Friend/Foe and Shared Borders
• Who are their “friends” and “enemies”?
• Has this country had a history of “peace” or “violence”?
• Does this country have any disputes with their neighbors?

Religion
• Are there religious beliefs that influence this culture? What? How?
• How often do they attend church?

Government and Laws
• How involved is government in the day-to-day lives of these people?
• What happens if a citizen breaks a law?
• Are there a lot of rules at home?
So, what does this mean to me?

- Take some time to understand the context of another person’s life
ACTIVITY

• We have all overcome obstacles in our lives.
OVERCOMING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

1. Do not assume. Learn about people and their daily lives.

2. Acknowledge that many people have a hard time communicating.

3. Language and culture go *hand-in-hand*.

4. Communication can be more difficult when it is done across cultures.

5. Get to know their perceptions, values and attitudes.
THE GOLDEN RULE

Treat others as you wish to be treated.
THE PLATINUM RULE

Treat others as THEY wish to be treated.
THE FOUR AGREEMENTS

Be Impeccable With Your Words
Don’t Take Anything Personally
Don’t Make Assumptions
Always Do Your Best

_don Miguel Ruiz
RESOURCES

• Magazines and Newspapers
  – “The Economist”
  – “Newsweek”
  – “Time”
  – “The New Yorker”
  – Times

• Books
  – All of the Culture Shock Books
  – Children’s books that include specific culture’s fairy tales, heroes, etc.
  – Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands by Terri Morrison, Wayne A. Conaway, and George A. Borden, PhD.

• Websites
  – CIA Factsheet
  – DiversityInc.com

• Organizations
  – SIETAR (Society of International Educators, Trainers and Researchers)

• Miscellaneous
  – Colloquialisms, Regional Sayings, Idioms, etc.
  – Friends, colleagues and peers