Cultural Sensitivity and You: Training Tips for Fostering Awareness in Your Program

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The Goal:

To create an environment where every individual feels accepted and valued.

To ensure that your message stays consistent across your program and your larger organization.
What is cultural sensitivity?

Cultural sensitivity is being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value – positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong.
Activity 1: What is Culture?

- Clothes and Dress
- Working Schedules
- Manners
- Jokes
- Celebrations
- Folk Art
- Food
- Child-rearing methods
- Religion

- Language
- Medical Treatments
- Social Relations
- Values
- Family
- Entertainment
- Education/Schooling
- Personal Space
- Sense of Time
Activity 2: Empathy Exercise

Remain cognizant of how this makes you feel.

Doing a lesson in a different language puts the person in the place of an English Language Learner.
Activity 3: What happens if a coworker, employee, or volunteer…?

➢ Doesn’t know how to handle the culturally inappropriate remarks made by someone in their classroom?
  ○ “That person is fat!”

➢ Expresses concern that a student is consistently late to class, or, when they are in class, they can’t seem to focus?

➢ Is concerned because some students seem uncomfortable and won’t even make eye contact, while other students are lively and tend to dominate the conversation?

➢ Remarks how one student made a culturally insensitive remark in class, resulting in some noticeable tension?
  ○ “Every Mexican says it wrong!”
Our Roles as Cultural Ambassadors

Encourage staff to:

➢ Be prepared to facilitate, not just instruct.
➢ Avoid being too critical of students:
  ○ Why is my student always late?
  ○ Why is my student so disengaged?
➢ Learn about their students’ cultures by inviting them to share their experiences and perspectives.
  ○ How do you find a job in your country?
  ○ What is considered family in your culture?
It’s not wrong! It’s just different.

Every tense moment is a chance to learn something new.
Questions?

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