

CULTURAL COMPETENCE VS. CULTURAL HUMILITY

We live in an interconnected world; being able to understand and interact with different cultures is a necessity. That is easier said than done. Taking some time to reflect and put aside biases can help you approach others with humility.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence assert[s] there is an endpoint and assumes that one can learn a quantifiable set of attitudes and skills that will allow you to work effectively within the cultural context of another.

What is cultural humility?

Cultural humility is often seen as an alternative approach to cultural competence. Cultural humility is a dynamic and lifelong process focusing on self-reflection and personal critique.

Cultural competence is when you...

- Have an expert understanding of people's cultures (social, religion, customs, etc.)
- Are aware of your own lived experiences which may encompass cultural understandings or your own biases

Cultural humility is when you...

- Start from a place of not assuming to know about other's cultures, histories, and life experiences
- Take a reflective approach to cultural differences (self-reflection)
- Make a commitment to ongoing learning and understanding of different cultures

Cultural competency is most helpful in recognizing and understanding other cultures. However, using it as the lens through which we view other cultures runs the risk of reinforcing stereotypes and racism. Striving for cultural competency can also take you out of your own positionality, as part of the equation.

By focusing on self-exploration, self-diagnosis of biases, and negotiated understandings rather than acquiring expert knowledge, cultural humility can replace cultural competency as the lens through which you view and interact with other cultures.

WE ALL WIN IN A SYSTEM THAT ELIMINATES HIERARCHY

To combat this hierarchy, you must take the time to self-diagnose your biases thereby undermining the system of inequality.



HOW DO YOU PUT CULTURAL HUMILITY INTO PRACTICE?

NEED HELP WITH SELF-EXPLORATION AND SELF-DIAGNOSIS OF BIASES?

Reflexivity is a process that can help!

Definition: Reflexivity (noun) is the fact of someone being able to examine their own feelings, reactions, and motives (i.e. reasons for acting) and how these influence what they do or think in a situation.

How it works: What does reflexivity mean in terms of diversity practices? It is a deeper process of reflection, reflexive practice, which involves examining one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions and their impact on both the client and on the self as the professional. Cultural humility does not work if there is no self-exploration - this is what sets cultural humility and cultural competence apart. Our brains are elastic, meaning we can change our thought patterns.

Time for self-exploration: What thoughts do you have that you should reflect on? Here are a few examples to start your own reflection:

Am I just assuming they speak Spanish because they look Hispanic?

Am I just assuming they are from Africa because of the color of their skin?

Am I just assuming they are homeless because they don't look clean?

Am I just assuming they are gay because they have earrings?

Using cultural humility, we can recognize these thoughts as culturally insensitive and work to overcome these biases.

You must recognize cultural humility as an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-diagnosis of biases.

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You must desire to learn in a relationship with others, with the intention to honor their beliefs, traditions, and values.

Allows you to acknowledge differences and accept others for who they are.

