Bringing Awareness to Unconscious Bias in the Culturally Diverse Workplace

First Steps Towards Cultural Competency

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Components of Culture

- Culture
  - Values
  - Beliefs
  - Attitudes
  - Behaviours

01 Cultural Diversity and Competency

- Commonly
- Understood
- Learned
- Traditions and
- Unconscious
- Rules of
- Engagement
Diversity

“... the demographic characteristics of populations attributable to perceptible ethnic, linguistic, cultural, visible or social variation among groups of individuals in the general population.”

Source: College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Standards of Practice (effective January 1, 2012)

Cultural Competence

A professional individual demonstrates cultural competence through:

- knowledge of values, beliefs, behaviours, assumptions of other cultural groups
- the skill with which they communicate with diverse folks
- the sensitive and enquiring attitude with which they approach diverse others
- the behaviours or ways in which they interact with people from other cultures
- personal attributes, such as openness and empathy around difference

Presentation Take-Aways

1. self-awareness is key to understanding how our biases work
2. an openness to learn about other cultures is the starting point
3. what helps are efforts to interact and communicate better with those who are different from us
Two cognitive processes of reaction

Bias is one of our most basic cognitive processes that allows us to make sense of the world around us.

1. **Amygdala**: reactive, detecting danger, like an alarm bell
2. **Prefrontal cortex**: where we reflect before reacting

A study of racial bias

- three-month old babies: clear preference for faces from own racial group
- newborn babies did not show preferences
- we are not born biased: what we learn, we can resist; we can unlearn


Review of bias

- To be biased is to be human
- We are not born biased, we learn to be biased
- Capacity to step back, reflect, and change our response
- Capacity to empathize with the thoughts, feelings and experiences of others

Cycle of bias

How it works
1. thinking “they are…”
2. thinking “they are like…”
3. thinking “we will (or won’t)…”
4. acting on our prejudice
5. they respond, confirming our bias
Cause for PAUSE

- Pay attention
- Acknowledge
- Understand
- Search for
- Execute your plan

Unhelpful assumptions

- Do not assume your knowledge of another’s culture is correct.
  Your knowledge may not be accurate/applicable for that individual.
- Do not assume that English spoken with a foreign accent means there are significant cultural differences, or that the speaker is not intelligent or knowledgeable.
- Do not assume that specific physical features indicate predictable differences in culture and language.

The intention behind the expression

“When sending messages to culturally different people, continuously monitor the impact you have on them.

When you have noticed that your counterpart’s reaction is not in line with your expectations, stop and clarify.”

Communicating across cultural difference

- Learn (and Listen)
- Inquire
- Assess
- Show
- Empathy

Dump these assumptions!

1. Everyone who looks or sounds the same IS the same
2. Everyone who looks or sounds like us IS like us

Unlearning bias: a new study

- participants unlearn their biases while they sleep!
- exposed to positive sounds, contradicting their gender and racial biases
- study aims to reduce unconscious bias without the need for conscious strategies

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

1. ON BIAS AND PREJUDICE


- Useful overview of racism as a social determinant of health.

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/

- Harvard’s long-running project allows you to test your own unconscious biases regarding gender, ethno-racial identity, age, etc. A useful tool to begin your self-awareness practice


- Ross also includes discussion of just how damaging bias can be, and what advantages and privileges people from dominant cultural groups acquire by acting on their bias.


- Like Ross' work, this is an accessible and readable book with lots of straightforward examples and explanations. You'll find out more about how we learn our biases, how to build self awareness, and what more we can do to challenge our biased reactions to people who are not like us.

2. CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND CULTURAL LITERACY


- The first two sections of this guide offer simple, well-laid out overviews of cultural competence and the key ideas. Specifically aimed at front-line primary healthcare providers, it includes a sample list of culturally sensitive client encounter questions and an explanation for them. Also very useful are the Eight Steps to Cultural Competence as a checklist. Some demographic detail is specific to the province, but all of the key ideas are widely applicable.


- This chapter in the Darby & Walsh textbook has a chart outlining major beliefs, practices, issues and remedies for various ethnicities and cultures, although it is focused on groups in the U.S.


- Includes some good examples of non-verbal aspects of cross-cultural interactions.


- Provides a really important critique of cultural competency approaches in the healthcare sector. Highlighting, for example, that learning about culture and becoming culturally competent is not enough to address the root causes of health disparities.
http://www.ethnomed.org
❖ Information about cultural beliefs in medical care including cultural profiles.

❖ Foundation dedicated to the ideas of Professor Geert Hofstede, self-described as the founder of comparative cross-cultural research. Contain national cultural profiles, and descriptions of his seminal idea that culture can be better understood organized into “dimensions”.

❖ This resource pack offers a collection of “cultural profiles” about different ethno-racial cultural groups including information about attitudes towards healthcare and healthcare professionals, traditional medicines and beliefs, food and diet, as well as observations about verbal and non-verbal styles of communication.


❖ Provides an outline and definitions of best cultural competency practices as well as a checklist of recommended self-awareness and communication capacities for the individual healthcare provider.

❖ This textbook offers many clear, solid definitions of key concepts such as culture, diversity, stereotypes, and ethnicity. It also describes the strengths and weaknesses of different cultural competency approaches, tracing their history. As well, the opening chapter includes a summary of essential best practices for the culturally competent healthcare provider.

3. CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

 A very clear, well-laid out, and simple guide to what social anthropologists call the “dimensions of culture”, as well as lots more about cross-cultural communication, written as a guide for teachers of English as a Second Language by Beverley Chambers for Alberta Employment and Immigration.


 Chapter 1 suggests strategies for becoming self-aware and for better communication in cross-cultural situations.

http://www.diversityrx.org
 Information for healthcare professionals on communication and cultural competence to further better healthcare outcomes for culturally diverse populations.

http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/manage-diversity/diversity-equity-accommodation/
 Videos on cross-cultural interactions in the workplace, plus many informative articles


 Chapter 2 focuses on cross-cultural communication, and other sections of the book show how to use observations about cultural behaviour in workplace scenarios.