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Moving Beyond Cultural Competence: How to Foster Cultural Safety in the Workplace

Cultural safety in the workplace plays an important role in a trauma-informed approach. Cultural safety requires more than just cultural awareness, sensitivity, or competence and respecting all people. It is about creating a

workplace where everyone can examine their own cultural identities and attitudes, be open-minded and flexible, feel respected, be safe from discrimination and denial of their identity and needs. Some of the characteristics that indicate a culturally safe workplace include:

- clear, judgement-free, open and respectful communication
- trust between workers with all contributions valued
- stereotypical barriers recognised and avoided
- everyone is engaged in a two-way dialogue where knowledge is shared.



How can we create culturally safe workplaces?

It is a demanding and long process with no shortcuts. That is why “cultural humility” rather than

“cultural competence” is the most important step toward creating a safe workplace. Cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection and personal critique—acknowledging one’s own biases. It is also about recognizing power dynamics and imbalances, and trying to fix those power imbalances. It encourages ongoing curiosity rather than an endpoint of “knowing the right thing to do/say”. It involves listening without judgment and being open to learning from and about others to develop mutual understanding, trust, and cultural safety. More importantly, it is about understanding that one’s own values or practices are not always or the only best way to solve workplace problems.

Reflection/Take-Aways:

Below are some examples of actions that demonstrate cultural humility.

- Providing interpreters for those who need them.
- Written material in clients’/learners’ preferred language
- Understanding how cultural beliefs and practices can impact the way clients/learners make decisions and their communication style.
- Referring a client to a mental health program that is culturally specific.
- Engaging with community leaders and the culturally specific organizations to make sure services provided are respectful and culturally relevant.
- Recognizing that clients/learners (not service providers) are the authority when it comes to lived experiences.

Considering your daily work, what else can you think of? Review this

[reflection tool](#).

Cultural Humility (HUMBLE) Model

- H:** Humble about the assumptions you make
- U:** Understand your own background and culture
- M:** Motivate yourself to learn more about the other person’s background
- B:** Begin to incorporate this knowledge into your work
- L:** Life-long learning
- E:** Emphasize respect and negotiate service plans

Adapted from: [Using Cultural Humility to Navigate Challenging](#)

See examples of culturally sensitive, open, curious, and non-judgmental conversation starters and follow-ups below.

What kinds of spiritual or religious beliefs are important to you and your family?	I don't have the same experiences as you, so I don't know [culture/custom/history] the way you do. Can you tell me more?
Do you feel part of a religious/spiritual community? What would you like to tell me about that?	I've never thought of it that way. Can you explain why you think so?
What religious or spiritual practices do you follow?	I may not always know the right words, and I want to learn.

Power of Words: Ethnocentrism



Ethnocentrism is evaluating others according to your own culture’s standards and practices. It’s natural and automatic for most to conduct themselves in the way

they know how, but it can be problematic as it leads to believing that one culture supersedes others and judging other cultures negatively. In this way, ethnocentrism opposes cultural humility; it creates blind spots in how we treat others, which prevent respectful, open, and just interactions.

Resources

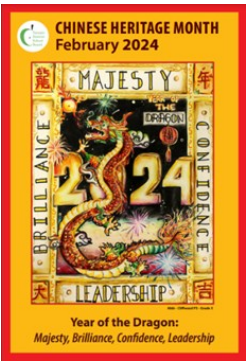
- ◆ [Cultural Humility \(Video\)](#)
- ◆ [How do we foster cultural safety in the workplace](#)
- ◆ [Creating a Culturally Safe Workplace: Strategies and Challenges](#)
- ◆ [Cultural Humility vs Cultural Competence: Providers Need Both](#)
- ◆ [Cultural Safety and Humility: Laying the groundwork with education and moving forward with a standard of practice](#)
- ◆ [Practice Self-Reflection](#)

Heritage Months/Days of Significance



February- African Heritage (Black History) Month
It is an occasion to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of peoples of African descent to Canada and the world.

The chosen theme for 2023-2024 is **Our Black Is....**
Our Black Is Resilient, Community, Beautiful, Unity, Joy, Self-Determination, Excellence, Empowering, Purpose, Brilliance, Engaging, Creative, Belonging, Tenacious, Powerful, Faith, Audacious, Powerful, Me...



February- Chinese Heritage Month
This year we celebrate the **Year of the Dragon: Majesty, Brilliance, Confidence, Leadership.**

Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is one of the most important celebrations for Chinese communities around the world. Lunar New Year is celebrated annually, and its dates are based on the lunar calendar. For 2024, it starts Saturday, February 10 and ends Saturday, February 24. The festivities include family gatherings, decorations, and of course a feast!