

Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to reflect on their own definition of what it means to be at "home" and consider how the definition of a home is based in cultural norms and values.

Background and Information:

This activity was created by Beth Tucker, head of the International Friendship Program at Purdue University. It was demonstrated at the 2019 WISE Conference, as well as a March 2019 CILMAR Workshop at Purdue University.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Reflect on an important "home" place/memory.
2. Analyze what they consider a "home."
3. Learn about other cultures' versions of home.

Time:

45 minutes

Group Size:

Pairs

Materials:

Instructions sheet for the facilitator. Paper and pen/pencils for participants. Can use colored pencils/markers if you want the pictures to be more colorful or detailed.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

Other Skills:

Friendship; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Activity Instructions:

You are primarily leading the group through a reflection and discussion. For the reflection, the group should be as relaxed as possible. You can speak from a script or off the cuff.

Sample script for the reflection exercise:

Sit now with both feet flat on the floor, your arms at your side, and your hands resting gently on your knees. Now, gently close your eyes and relax. Breathe in and breathe out. Again. Again. Consciously relax.

Now, think back to a place where you have lived that was a happy place. A place you called home.

Now, picture the place where you are together. How big is the space? How would you describe it? When you first enter the room, what do you immediately see? What kind of light is in the room? Would you describe it as bright or dim light? Are there windows? Are they open or closed? Is there a soft breeze or does the air feel heavy and humid? What outside noises do you hear? People, animals, or traffic noises or workers taking care of business? Or is the room silent and still? Inside and out. Now think of sounds that in the silence you suddenly hear—perhaps the regular tick tock of a wall clock or music from the radio or stereo. What do the colors, light, and sounds tell you? How do they make you feel?

Now, let your mind's eye drift around the room and notice objects you remember. Think about their sizes and shapes and where each piece is positioned in the room. Are some furniture pieces? What kinds of furniture?

Besides furniture, what other important objects are in the room? Think of each object—where is each positioned? Are the objects soft or hard, sharp or rounded, made of a certain texture? What do you remember about the textures? And now let your mind's eye drift to the items decorating the walls. Let your mind rest on one or two particular pictures or photos. Why are you drawn to these? What do they represent? Why are these special to you?

Breathe in, breath out, breathe in, breath out, and this time breathe in and let your mind drift back to when you lived in this space. What different smells do you remember? What smells do you associate with this place? What memories do you have related to the smells? Are they good smells? Special foods perhaps? Do you associate certain people in this space with the smells?

Now reflect on the people who are in the room. Who are the people? Are they family or friends? How many people are there? Can you picture their faces? What kinds of activities are they doing? Are some engaged in conversation? Are you engaged in conversation with them? What are you discussing? What is the mood? How close are people to each other? Are they sitting or standing? Are they doing some kind of activity together? What kind of activity? Are they smiling or laughing, or are they still and silent? How would you describe the mood and how you felt in this space?

And, finally, let your mind remember back to a specific moment in time that you shared this space with others. Was it an everyday event, like eating a meal? Or was it a special event, such as a family celebration? If a celebration, what is being celebrated? Do you remember how old you were? Think of all the details you can remember about this particular time and place. Who were the people in the room with you? How do the memories make you feel? Why was this time and place important to you? Why is this memory still important to you now?

Now, finally breathe in and breathe out one last time. Roll your shoulders, shake your arms, move your head from side to side. Now shake your hands and then your feet, now your hands, now your feet. And slowly open your eyes.

Handout:

Using this handout, draw an image of what you were imagining. With pen and paper, take a few moments and draw the space/room you remembered in this exercise. Start with floor plan or room layout. (How you draw it is up to you.) Then, add in the furniture and the furnishings that you remember. If you have time, include the people and details from your specific memory.

Pair Share:

Find a partner and describe the place from the reflection and your drawing:

- What words describe how you felt during this reflection?
- Share your memory of the specific time and place in the place you called home. What details can you share about what happened? Who was there, and what do you most remember?
- In your home drawings, what items point to cultural differences?
- What did you learn about yourself from this exercise?

Group Share:

Ask the larger group to answer these questions together:

- What did you and your partner learn from this exercise?
- What does "home" mean to you? Is it a specific place and space?
- What needs to be present for you to call a place "home"?
- How do our ideas of "home" differ based on culture?

Optional homework or follow-up assignment:

This activity was originally created for students participating in a paired international student-host (domestic family/individual) friendship program. This assignment is given as homework after meeting with the host in their home.

Questions student guest should ask their host/s:

- How long have you lived here?
- How did you choose this place to live?
- When did this place begin to feel like home?
- Which room do you like best and why?
- Which items do you own that hold special memories?
- What specific memory can you share of what happened in this room?

Share the picture of your home and your memory with your host/family. Let them ask you questions.

Afterwards, write your reflections from this experience in a paragraph. Be sure to include what you and your host shared together about "home" and answer these questions:

- How did you both feel about doing this activity?
- How were their memories similar to your own memory?
- How were their memories different from yours?

Final Survey:

The final survey questions below will be sent to students immediately after receiving their assignment and should be completed within ten days.

Reflect on your experience this semester with your host/s using the following questions:

- What was said or observed that surprised you?
- How has your perspective about Americans/American culture changed?
- How has your experience with your host changed YOU?
- What will you do now to make your place here feel more like home?

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Brief Mindfulness Practice](#)
- [Home Questionnaire, The](#)
- [Let's Draw a House \(partner activity\)](#)

Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson:

- [Voices from the Past \(Name Tags\)](#)
 - This tool could be used as an icebreaker before participants begin the reflection exercise.
- [Draw a House](#)
 - This tool could be used as an introduction to cultural differences across homes.