# LUNCHEON BUFFET LESSON PLAN

**Overview:**

This activity originates from a study abroad orientation that occurred over 30 years ago. The purpose is to prepare participants for ambiguity and help them brainstorm potential adaptive strategies when they are faced with unexpected or unfamiliar situations. Facilitators will ask participants to bring a bag/sack lunch to an event/meeting. However, participants will be asked to place their lunches on a table as they enter the event space, and facilitators will turn their food into a buffet for everyone to share.

**Objectives:**

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

1. Prepare for moments of uncertainty and ambiguity.
2. Reflect on how they react during moments of uncertainty.
3. Brainstorm potential adaptive strategies when faced with unexpected or unfamiliar situations.

**Time:**

45 minutes

**Group Size:**

Entire group

**Materials:**

Table, food trays, plates/bowls, utensils, napkins, cups, drinks, and gloves for food handling

*Note*: Facilitators should be prepared for potential backlash from participants. They should also be sensitive to people with food allergies and prepare a snack break for those who were unable to eat due to any dietary restrictions. Facilitators may also choose to allow individuals with dietary restrictions to opt out of the activity.

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

**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).

The origin of this activity is unclear, but it may have come from the Experiment in International Living: https://www.experiment.org/

Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

**Other Skills:**

Teamwork, Emotional resilience

**Activity Instructions:**

1. Prior to the event/meeting, ask participants to bring a bag/sack lunch.
2. As they enter the meeting space, instruct participants to place their lunches on a table.
3. During a break before lunch begins, facilitators should go through the lunches and arrange them on trays according to different types of food: sandwiches, snacks, fruit, dessert, etc. Facilitators should also ensure that there are plates/bowls, utensils, and napkins available for participants.
4. Ask participants to form a line and pick out their lunch from the arranged buffet items. It will quickly become evident that participants may not get the food that they brought.
5. After eating, debrief with the following questions:
    - How was that experience for you?
    - What was your first reaction to this exercise? Were there any feelings that came up for you?
    - Were there positive aspects? Were there negative aspects?
    - Did this exercise underline your prior assumptions?
    - What are the lessons to take away?
        - How does this relate to the study abroad experience (or other experience that this event/meeting is addressing)?
        - Do you think it is possible you might encounter such a situation in your experience?
        - What other types of uncertainty might you encounter?
        - What adaptive strategies might you employ?
    - What do you wish you had known? What would have made this easier for you?

**Related Tools:**

*Similar tools:*

- Taste of Culture, A

*Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson:*

- 5Rs of Culture Change, The
- Adapt or Be Yourself
- DIVE (D.I.V.E. Model) (Describe-Interpret-Verify-Evaluate)
    - These three tools can be used to help participants analyze their experience during and after this lesson.