

Overview:

This activity is designed as an individual reflection that can subsequently be combined with a team debrief. The goal of the activity is for students to recognize cultural self-awareness and articulate how that might influence teamwork interactions.

Objectives:

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

1. Recognize the role of your cultural background in team communication settings.

Time:

25 minutes

Group Size:

Entire group

Materials:

A computer with access to the Internet, "[How Do We Understand Our Own Culture?](#)" video

Optional reading: "[Teamwork and Cultural Diversity](#)" from Future Learn

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).

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

Other Skills:

Teamwork

Preparation:

According to [Future Learn](#), it is important to understand individual team member's differences in order to foster harmony in a team. For instance, cultural differences such as communication styles, hierarchy and power, and risk and decision making may affect teamwork:

- **Communication styles:** In some cultures, it's considered rude to speak directly, whereas in others it is encouraged. This can cause miscommunication, resentment, and confusion. Some team members may not speak up if they disagree with another team member because it's not something that is done in their culture. In other cases, providing direct feedback or instruction may be taken as stepping on toes or taking too much authority.
- **Hierarchy and power:** Equality in the workplace is the norm in some cultures, whereas in others the structure is more hierarchical. For employees that come from cultures that focus on status and authority, speaking up about problems may be difficult because they feel uncomfortable or disrespectful. On the other hand, those that value equality may perceive others as lacking competence if they don't share their thoughts and opinions with leadership.
- **Risk and decision making:** In some cultures, making a decision requires more data and information than others. Some employees may have a low tolerance for risk and not want to commit to making a decision without having context or details. Others may be confident in making decisions without much data. This can affect the pace of the team and how work is conducted.

Activity Instructions:

1. First, participants should watch the video, "[How Do We Understand Our Own Culture?](#)"
2. Then, they should respond to the following questions in a separate document:
 - Thinking about communication styles within your own teamwork, how do you think the role of culture has influenced this process within your team?
 - How do you think your own cultural background may influence your teamwork interaction?

Note: The facilitator might also consider having participants submit an essay or a video essay.

3. The facilitator can then choose to do an optional small group debrief. Divide participants into groups of four or five. Then, ask them to share their responses with each other and discuss the following questions:
 - How did you feel as you were reflecting on your own communication style? What about as you heard about others' styles?
 - What did you learn about your own and others' communication styles in the context of teamwork?
 - How will you use what you learned during your next teamwork interaction?

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Analyzing Cultural Self-Awareness and Worldview Differences](#)