

## **COURSE TITLE    Diversity on the Job: Diversity and You**

**COURSE ID        pd\_07\_a02\_bs\_enus**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Just as organizations must respond to demographic and social changes that introduce new languages, cultures, values, and attitudes to the workplace, so must you as an individual. To understand and appreciate diversity, you must develop an understanding of yourself and the ways in which you and others view the world. Your ability to use a variety of strategies to effectively deal with diverse situations in and out of the workplace is very important. Equally important is the ability to share these effective strategies openly, to leverage the diversity that exists within the organization.

This course identifies strategies to help you become aware of your attitudes toward diversity; increase your acceptance of diverse cultures, people, and ideas; and become an advocate for diversity within the workplace. Materials designed to support blended learning activities aligned with this course are available from the Resources Page.

### **COURSE GOAL**

To develop your own capabilities to be able to leverage and embrace the diversity that exists in your workplace

In today's global economy, people of all ages, races, religions, cultures, and backgrounds work together – in the same work environments and across worldwide electronic networks.

Note about diversity: This course has some examples that could reinforce stereotypes, so please be very careful when you show images of more than one person on the page. I've tried to avoid inflammatory language, but we also need to be careful about the images. If you have any doubts or questions, please let me know.

And with the availability of a much larger talent pool, nearly all organizations are working to harness the promise of diversity – that increased creativity and synergy are forged when people of differing talents, ideas, and backgrounds work together.

But diversity comes with problems too. Whether you're dealing with a teammate from another country or a client with a different educational background, communications are complicated. Misunderstandings and frustrations are the order of the day when people from different backgrounds apply their own behavioral standards and expectations to each other.

For you to succeed in a diverse environment, you must be able to work well with others who aren't like you. The three topics in this course deal with three different aspects of diversity: Self-awareness and Diversity, Embracing Diversity, and Communicating in a Diverse Setting.

## **Topics**

### **Self-awareness and Diversity**

### **Embracing Diversity**

### **Communicating in a Diverse Setting**

#### **Self-awareness and Diversity**

The first topic presents the importance of self-awareness in succeeding in a diverse environment. You'll learn about some tips for determining your core values, core beliefs, and biases, as well as for taking control of your self-talk.

#### **Embracing Diversity**

The second topic presents some methods you can use to work successfully with people from different backgrounds. Methods include developing a nuanced world view and investigating the rationale for behaviors that may seem strange to you. This topic also covers actions you can take to become a diversity advocate.

#### **Communicating in a Diverse Setting**

The third topic presents some techniques for communicating effectively to ensure your message gets across to people who may communicate very differently than you do.

Diversity is important – and it's becoming more important by the day. Take to heart what you learn in this course. By embracing diversity, you're preparing for the future.

### **Self-awareness and Diversity**

Recognize what you can do to become aware of your values, beliefs, and biases

To become comfortable working with others in a diverse environment, you must know yourself. This involves knowing your core values, core beliefs, and biases.

Which actions can you take to gain awareness of your own values and core beliefs?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT)      Identify the principles that make you who you are

OPTION 2 (CORRECT)      Examine your cultural background

OPTION 3 Ask your friends to critique your openness to people from other cultures

OPTION 4 Work out a formula for a good work/life balance

OPTION 5 (CORRECT) Determine how your family's attitudes and beliefs shaped your thinking

OPTION 6 (CORRECT) Think about how your childhood peers influenced your beliefs

Joaquin and Marissa work on the same team. Marissa tries to avoid Joaquin as much as possible. He has a strong accent, and Marissa sometimes can't understand him. When Marissa has information to share with Joaquin, she sends him an e-mail.

Which question can Marissa ask herself to determine whether she's biased?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) "If Joaquin didn't have an accent, would I still try to avoid him?"

OPTION 2 "Is Joaquin's accent evidence that he's less or more intelligent than I am?"

OPTION 3 "What accent? I just found an efficient way to deal with this situation."

Self-awareness can help you handle diversity in your community and your workplace. To be self-aware, you must know your values, core beliefs, and biases.

Which actions can help you learn about your own core values and core beliefs?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) Identify the principles that define you deep down

OPTION 2 (CORRECT) Think about how your cultural background influenced your behavior as a child

OPTION 3 Identify skills that can help you manage others' perceptions of you

OPTION 4 (CORRECT) Identify how your educational experiences contributed to negative attitudes about particular groups

OPTION 5 (CORRECT) Determine how your parents affected your attitudes and beliefs about yourself

OPTION 6 Ask your boss for feedback on how well you interact with others

Roberta is staying at a hotel while she travels on business. At the end of a long day, Roberta is standing in the lobby waiting for an elevator. Two women of a different ethnicity are also waiting. When the elevator arrives, the women enter, but Roberta waves the elevator off.

Which question can Roberta ask herself to determine whether she's biased?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) "Would I have gotten in the elevator if the women were more like me?"

OPTION 2 "Should I just forget about the incident altogether?"

OPTION 3 "What women? I just wasn't ready to get on that particular elevator."

Recognize how self-awareness can help you develop the skills needed to leverage the opportunities provided by the diversity within your organization.

Recognize how to adjust your self-talk to manage your reactions in challenging situations involving diversity.

Sulyn is late finishing her project. Every day, she worries that the boss is going to fire her and assign her project to someone else. Sulyn's negative self-talk plays constantly through her mind: "I never finish things on time," "Other people are more capable than I am," and "I'm going to be fired any minute."

Which is the most appropriate way for Sulyn to manage her self-talk?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) Isolate the negative messages and determine which messages are irrational. Then, exchange the irrational messages for positive beliefs, such as "I'm a valuable contributor. Even if I'm late on this project, I'll do better next time."

OPTION 2 Identify the negative self-talk and do her best to ignore it. Tell herself, "I'm not that behind. If I stay late, the boss will see I'm doing my best." Then use these messages to drive herself to work harder.

OPTION 3 Isolate the internal messages as negative self-talk and verify which ones are true. Then, discuss her fears of being fired with her boss.

Myron is the leader of a team of laborers. One of his workers, Raoul, is generally late for work and leaves early whenever he can. Myron's mind sends him messages like "Raoul is lazy, just like the rest of the people in the industry" and "I've got to manage this; he's bringing everybody else down."

Which is the most appropriate way for Myron to manage his self-talk?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) Acknowledge that he's having negative thoughts about Raoul. Question his thinking to determine whether it reveals a bias about people from Raoul's field and then eliminate the biased thoughts.

OPTION 2 Admit that he's thinking very negative thoughts about Raoul and try to ignore Raoul's behavior from now on.

OPTION 3 Think about the negative messages he's sending himself, acknowledge that they're accurate, and that they reflect Raoul's behavior.

When was the last opportunity you had to spend some time with yourself, developing your abilities and knowledge? Well, embracing diversity requires that you journey inward to gain awareness of how you think and feel so that you can begin to understand your cultural makeup.

In return for taking the sometimes long and difficult journey inward, you'll be well rewarded:

You'll be able to understand and manage your own feelings and reactions to diversity and differences, and you'll be able to challenge and reverse any irrational, negative beliefs and assumptions that you may hold about your colleagues

Your ability to deal with diversity depends as much on what you know as on what you do. First, you must gain knowledge of your core values, core beliefs, and biases. Then you can take action to change what you don't like about your behaviors and challenge negative beliefs that you have about yourself and others.

Think about these questions: Who are you? What do you stand for? What's important to you in life? What gives you joy? These questions are a good starting point for learning about yourself.

And self-awareness is crucial when you work with people from diverse backgrounds. If you're to build trust and connections with others, you must know who you are, what motivates you, what your expectations are, and what shapes those expectations. The key areas to examine in your journey to self-awareness are your core values, core beliefs, and biases.

Values are principles that define you. They determine your thinking about what's good or bad, right or wrong, and fair or unfair. If you are to understand how you behave and communicate in the world, you need to know what your values are.

First of all, do you recognize what these qualities are?

Fairness

Honesty

Ambition

Courage

Challenge

Money

Self-development

Tolerance

Peace

Competition

Independence

Belonging

Family

Achievement

Recognition

### **Values**

To determine your values, you can follow a series of steps: identify values that seem important, choose your core values, think about how you demonstrate your core values, and determine how to change actions or behaviors to demonstrate values you want to achieve.

Identify values that seem important

Ask yourself, What gives me joy and fulfillment? What are the traits I admire in my role models and want to emulate? What traits are important to my family, to my peer group, and to my country, ethnic group, and culture?

Choose your core values.

Go over your list of values. Choose the five or six most important ones and arrange them in order of importance. These are your core values.

Think about how you demonstrate core values.

Think about how you apply your core values in your work and your life. For instance, if family is a core value, do you make it a priority to spend quality time with family members every day?

Determine how to change actions or behaviors.

If you don't demonstrate any one of your core values in your daily life, determine how to change your actions or behaviors to incorporate the value.

In addition to knowing your core values, you need to be aware of your core beliefs. Core beliefs are deeply held truths about yourself and your life. They're not universal truths, but truths as you believe them to be.

For example, do any of these core beliefs resonate with you?

1. "My work is a joyful experience."
2. "I'm a good person."
3. "I can't trust anyone, not even my family."
4. "Why try? I always mess up anyway."

Positive core beliefs – such as "I'm a good person" – smooth interactions with other people because positive feelings easily spread to others. On the other hand, negative core beliefs paint the world in very dark colors. They result in divisiveness, depression, and poor interactions with other people.

Core beliefs often have their roots in childhood experiences. So to identify your core beliefs, go to the source and examine the formative elements in your upbringing – your family, peers, educational experiences, and cultural context.

Present a montage of four images:

A family, any ethnicity

A group of kids, diverse

Kids sitting in a school room

An image that indicates cultural context that would not be considered offensive - people in native dress perhaps?

Family

What kind of messages did your parents and relatives communicate to you about yourself and other people?

Peers

What kind of attitudes and opinions did your peers have about you, your family, and diverse people?

Educational experience

Did your education prepare you to refute stereotypes and think independently?

Cultural context

How did your cultural background affect your thinking and attitudes about the world and diverse people?

Awareness of your core beliefs can lead to change. It may not be easy – core beliefs are deeply ingrained in the psyche; yet it's important to try. You want to be able to live with passion, energy, and gratitude, rather than isolation, depression, and gloom.

Which actions should you take to gain awareness of your own core values and core beliefs?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) Identify the traits you admire in your role models

This option is correct. Role models mirror traits that you admire and want for yourself. Identifying these traits can help you identify your values.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT) Identify influences your family had on your thinking and attitudes

This option is correct. Family has a profound shaping effect on children's attitudes and behaviors.

OPTION 3 (CORRECT) Determine how your cultural context influenced you to think and behave in a certain way

This option is correct. Your cultural teachings and expectations help shape your attitudes and behaviors.

OPTION 4 (CORRECT) Identify the role your peers played in shaping your attitudes and behaviors

This option is correct. Peers play a large role in the formation of attitudes and core beliefs.

OPTION 5 Determine how to turn negative core beliefs into positive ones

This option is incorrect. You must know what your core beliefs are before you can transform any negative ones.

OPTION 6 Raise your children in a way that fosters the formation of positive core beliefs

This option is incorrect. Raising your children in a way that fosters the formation of positive core beliefs is something you should do, but it doesn't help you identify your own core beliefs.

In addition to core values and core beliefs, another bit of important self-knowledge is your biases.

A bias is an unreasoned judgment that you make about a person. Bias is closely related to prejudice, which is a negative opinion or attitude formed without sufficient knowledge of a person or group of people.

Biases are destructive because they prevent people from reaching their full potential. And they choke off creativity and stifle the synergy that can occur when people of different knowledge levels and abilities work together.

To identify your own biases, you must start by observing your thoughts. Reflect on those around you. What thoughts, feelings, and mental pictures come to mind as you consider the people in your environment? If your thoughts are negative in any way, you might be biased. If that's the case, you need to analyze your thinking by digging deeper than the observation level.

To get an idea of how you should approach thought analysis, project yourself into each situation. Be sure to pay attention to your thoughts:

You could have a montage of images:

Young person at a cash register

Woman executive

A punk-looking teenager (tattoos perhaps)

Man in wheelchair

ITEM 1        You're working with some sales people from another region. You note that they don't ever seem to hurry. You think, "I can't believe these people are so laid back."

ITEM 2        An executive from the Finance Department is at your meeting. The person speaks in a loud tone of voice and starts pounding the table to make a point. You think, "All those people in Finance are so arrogant."

ITEM 3        Several experienced people have left your department, and they have been replaced with new workers. The new workers aren't very skilled yet, and they slow you down. You think, "Why am I surrounded by incompetents?"

Pay attention to your thoughts:

Young clerk

Woman executive

Tough-looking teenagers

Man in wheelchair

Sales person

Ask yourself, "If the sales people had been from my area of the country, would I have had the same reaction?" If not, you may be displaying bias.

Executive

Ask yourself, "If this person weren't from Finance, would I have been so annoyed?" If the answer is no, you may be biased against people from this particular department.

New workers

Ask yourself, "If these people were more experienced, would I have thought of them as incompetent?" If the answer is no, you may have a bias against the new workers coming into your department.

To uncover your biases, examine your thinking. If your thoughts or feelings indicate you may have a bias, dig deeper and analyze those thoughts. Ask questions that can help you determine whether bias truly exists.

John, a more experienced aide in a nursing home, watches a new aide struggle to set up portable X-ray equipment. John thinks, "They're not very well trained today, are they?"

Which question can John ask himself to determine whether he's biased?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) "If the aide was more experienced, would I have assumed her training was inadequate?"

This is the correct option. Because the aide is inexperienced, John assumes her training is inadequate. He has a bias against new workers.

OPTION 2 "Should I ignore the aide's lack of skills?"

This option is incorrect. Ignoring the woman's lack of skills won't resolve John's dilemma. He needs to determine whether his thinking reveals a bias.

OPTION 3 "Why can't we hire people who know what they're doing?"

This option is incorrect. Asking this question won't help John figure out whether he's guilty of bias.

When you're aware of your own values, core beliefs, and biases, you're equipped to manage your reactions in difficult situations involving diversity. One technique for doing this is to take control of your self-talk.

Your mind sends you messages all the time, relentlessly. Self-talk is the little voice in your head that you hear as you experience things and interact with people.

Examples of self-talk include "I'm doing it all wrong." and "Is it almost time for lunch?"

When self-talk is positive, your attitude is also positive. But when self-talk is negative, you can feel defeated and powerless. For example, it's much easier to recover from a mistake when you tell yourself, "I'll get some help next time and do better" than when you say "I'm so stupid. I knew I'd do it wrong." By learning to manage your self-talk, you can change the internal messages from negative to positive ones. It's a useful technique for dealing with your own and other's diversity.

Meet Martin. Martin is an IT worker for a large insurance company. When the Internet revolution hit his company, Martin struggled. He was three years from retirement and needed to keep his job. But he wasn't confident he could learn new skills, or that he'd be able to work with his new colleagues.

Martin, older white male

Martin looks disgruntled

Follow along as Martin reveals how learning to manage his self-talk helped him out of his dilemma.

Martin looking neutral

When the new technology started spreading through the company, I was scared. I told myself that I might be too old to learn computers. Then, when the influx of new people in my department began, I knew I was doomed. I was angry. These newcomers looked at me like I was ready for the organizational trash heap. I didn't want to have anything to do with them.

Martin looks concerned

But I had to keep my job, or I wouldn't be able to retire with full benefits. So I decided to sign up for training classes.

Martin still looks concerned

After the first class, I told my story to the instructor, Charlene. Charlene informed me that it's not my age that's holding me back – it's my attitude. My negative self-talk was sabotaging my ability to move forward.

Martin looks relieved

After working one-on-one with Charlene for a while, I realized that learning the new technology was no more difficult than other challenges I'd faced. I also realized that my life experience could be very helpful to some of my new colleagues.

Martin smiles

In the end, it wasn't easy, but it worked out. My coworkers and I maintain a give-and-take of skills and knowledge that I really enjoy. We have a mutual respect, which helps to smooth out the misunderstandings that sometimes occur.

Martin smiles

By replacing his negative messages with positive ones, Martin changed his attitude about himself and his new coworkers. He continues to use positive self-talk to keep himself moving forward.

Martin, smiling

In addition to helping you deal with people who have different views, self-talk is useful for coping with feelings of anger and frustration and for dealing with people from different cultures.

So, self-talk is useful. But how do you work on your self-talk? You can follow three steps. First, you must identify your internal messages. Next, challenge them. And finally, replace the negative messages with positive, rational ones.

How do you work on your self-talk?

### **Identify internal messages**

### **Challenge them**

### **Replace negative with positive ones**

#### **Identify internal messages**

Your first step in dealing with self-talk is to acknowledge and identify it. You need to isolate the internal messages that are critical of you and others.

For example, if you're working on a tough problem, do you hear, "I'll figure it out. I'm good at this." Or do you hear, "I'm too stupid to figure this out"? This last message is the kind you need to identify.

#### **Challenge negative self-talk**

Challenge any self-talk messages that are inaccurate, exaggerated, or defeating.

For example, if you hear a message like "I'll never finish this thing on time," ask yourself, "Am I exaggerating the problem?" "Am I being too hard on myself?" or "Is this rational?" Or if the self-talk is about others, ask "Am I being biased?"

### **Replace negative messages with positive ones**

Rewrite your self-talk. If you hear "I can't do this; I'm going to fail," substitute the message with "I'm taking it one step at a time, and I'll get it right."

Consider Trudi. Trudi is a buyer at a department store. She selects clothing for clients and takes it to their homes for them to try on. Many of her clients are from different countries. One client in particular, Mrs. Fisher, is always late. This really upsets Trudi because, to her, time is money. Trudi thinks, "This woman doesn't respect me; I wouldn't do this to her" and "I'm going to end my working relationship with her."

Trudi, Indian female

If Trudi acts on her self-talk, she'll lose a client, and the client may take other clients with her. Fortunately, Trudi becomes conscious of her self-talk. Follow along as she finds another way to approach the situation.

I can't go on thinking these negative thoughts. They're coloring all of my interactions with this woman.

Trudi explains

I wonder if I'm exaggerating or being irrational. I don't have any evidence that Mrs. Fisher is aware that her lateness is upsetting me.

Trudi explains

The best solution is to talk to Mrs. Fisher.

Trudi is resolved, confident

When Trudi talks to Mrs. Fisher, the woman is very surprised. In her culture, people perceive time differently, and showing up late isn't a sign of disrespect. By challenging her self-talk, Trudi was able to clarify the misunderstanding and strengthen her relationship with Mrs. Fisher.

Mrs. Fisher, European, white

Trudi talking to Mrs. Fisher

Your manager is from a different cultural background, and he's a hard taskmaster. He highlights your shortcomings, but never praises your achievements. At first, his behavior made you nervous. Now, though, you're angry.

Whenever you come into contact with your manager, you think, "There he goes, spreading misery. I wish he'd go back to wherever he came from." Eventually, the very presence of your manager makes you queasy.

Which is the most appropriate way for you to manage your self-talk?

**OPTION 1 (CORRECT)**      Acknowledge you're doing it, and pinpoint which messages are negative ones

This option is correct. The first step in turning around the self-talk is to acknowledge you're doing it and identify which messages are negative.

**OPTION 2 (CORRECT)**      Challenge the negative self-talk

This option is correct. Challenge your negativity. Ask yourself, "Is the boss really evil? In his own mind, he's just doing his job."

**OPTION 3 (CORRECT)**      Exchange the negative self-talk for positive self-talk

This option is correct. Instead of thinking, "There he goes, spreading misery," you might think, "There goes a man who has the ability to manage people who don't share his cultural background or beliefs."

**OPTION 4**      Understand that everyone has a different management style

This option is incorrect. This may soothe you to a small degree, but it won't help you manage self-talk.

**OPTION 5**      Talk to coworkers about your feelings and ask for their advice

This option is incorrect. Coworkers can't help you manage your own self-talk, and complaining can make negativity worse.

Self-awareness can determine how successful you are when working with diverse people. The elements you need to be able to identify are your core values, core beliefs, and biases.

Values are the overriding principles that guide your actions and behaviors. Such things as duty, honor, family, and security define how you make your decisions each day. Core beliefs are truths that you hold about yourself. They're not universal truths, but truths as you believe them to be. Biases are unreasoned judgments you make about others. Values, core beliefs, and biases often have their roots in your upbringing.

One way to take charge of your interactions with other people is to manage your self-talk. You can do this in three steps: identify the negative messages, challenge them, and replace them with positive ones.

## Embracing Diversity

Recognize guidelines for embracing social and cultural diversity in the workplace.

Embracing diversity requires you to understand cultural and social diversity in the workplace.

Which are guidelines for embracing diversity?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT)      Develop a nuanced view of the world
- OPTION 2 (CORRECT)      Don't accept your first reaction or thoughts about other people's behaviors
- OPTION 3 (CORRECT)      Learn about other cultures so you consider people's behavior as reflective of their backgrounds
- OPTION 4 (CORRECT)      Try to understand how other people view their own behaviors
- OPTION 5      Always act toward others according to your values
- OPTION 6      Use your core beliefs as a foundation for judging the behaviors and actions of others

To embrace diversity, you must first understand the cultural and social diversity in your workplace.

Which are guidelines for embracing diversity?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT)      Stop thinking about behaviors in absolutes like right or wrong, or good or bad
- OPTION 2 (CORRECT)      Work to understand how others view their own behavior
- OPTION 3 (CORRECT)      Replace judgment with curiosity, and don't accept your first opinions of others' behavior
- OPTION 4 (CORRECT)      Help other people become open to new perspectives
- OPTION 5      Teach others that they must replace collectivism with individualism in order to embrace diversity

OPTION 6 Learn to judge others according to what they say and how they behave

### **Learning Point 1: Be open to change**

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said, "The only constant in life is change." Although people build their lives on the idea of predictability, very little in life is truly predictable. If you try to cling to old attitudes, ideas, and behaviors, you'll become isolated.

Rate your feelings about your own adaptability, and then select the Get Feedback button.

OPTION 1 I'm not very adaptable

Well, change is hard. Many people have difficulty with it. This course will help you learn about adapting to change.

OPTION 2 I'm working on it

Good! Life is easier when you can adapt your behaviors and attitudes and go with the flow. This course will help you learn about adapting to change.

OPTION 3 I'm very adaptable

Great! This is a good attitude to have for learning to deal with diversity in your workplace. This course will help you learn about adapting to change.

To embrace diversity, you must be open to change. In this topic, you'll learn about tips for improving your awareness of intercultural differences, as well as improving your ability to deal with differences among people.

This is important to both you and your organization. When you're able to fully embrace diversity yourself, you'll be in a good position to work with others in the organization whose viewpoints differ from yours. You'll be helping to unlock the creativity and innovation necessary for you and your organization to thrive.

### **Learning Point 2: Develop a nuanced world view**

One method for embracing diversity is to develop a nuanced world view. As you begin to achieve self-awareness by exploring your core values and beliefs, you'll learn that your perspectives are only relative, and not the universal truths you may have thought them to be.

In fact, there are very few totally right or wrong perspectives. If you can adopt this thinking, you'll gain a truer picture of people and events. Having a nuanced view of the world, however, makes it more difficult to navigate. Just as nothing is really right or wrong, very few behaviors are clear-cut.

To correctly interpret the behaviors and actions of others, you must unlearn or ignore some of the actions that come naturally to you.

Which do you think you should unlearn?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT)     The habit of judging based on first impressions

This option is correct. First impressions are terribly misleading. They cause you to judge people by superficial qualities such as age, gender, and ethnicity.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT)     Judging others by their actions

This option is correct. People from different cultural backgrounds may behave in ways that are quite different from your norms. Judging people based on their differences can keep you from knowing who they really are.

OPTION 3     Looking beyond superficial behaviors

This option is incorrect. This is a behavior you need to practice, not unlearn. You must look beyond the initial superficial impression of people's behaviors.

OPTION 4     Judging people by what they do rather than what they say

This option is incorrect. Actually, you should replace judgment with curiosity and not judge at all.

If you want to correctly interpret the behaviors of others, you must avoid judging people on their first impressions and stop judging people's behaviors according to your own standards. Learn to take time to figure out what's really happening.

Consider this. When Marve met Tupak at their sister company in another country, Marve's first reaction was unfavorable. Why? When the two men shook hands, Tupak's grasp was very soft, and he held onto Marve's hand for a long time. Marve mistook Tupak's gentleness for weakness. Later, after meeting more people, Marve realized that Tupak's handshake was standard in his country. Marve learned an important lesson – don't jump to conclusions.

Marve, white male

Tupak, African male

### **Learning Point 3: Investigate unusual behaviors**

A second method for learning to embrace diversity is to make the assumption that there are no strange behaviors, just behaviors you don't yet understand.

Learning more about why people act the way they do can help you avoid misunderstandings. A good plan for investigating the behaviors of others is to first acknowledge that the behavior makes sense to the other person. Second, question yourself about what the behavior could mean. Finally, ask the person, or someone from the same background, what the behavior actually means.

Sandra and Tai are engineers who are working together on an international project. When Sandra asked Tai to help her out with some administrative tasks, Tai became quite upset and walked away from her.

Sandra, white female

Sandra was angry, so she confronted Tai. It turns out that, in Tai's culture, asking professionals to perform administrative tasks is insulting. But the damage was done. Sandra's confrontational attitude had angered Tai.

Sandra very angry

The problem could've been avoided if Sandra had acknowledged that Tai's behavior made sense to him. She could have found a different, calmer, and more appropriate approach to use.

Sandra looking unhappy

The second step in investigating unusual behavior is to question yourself about what the behavior might mean.

For example, Laura works with Ken, who recently emigrated from another country. Although she's excited to be working with Ken, Laura quickly becomes frustrated. She's direct and to the point. Ken is very reserved and seems reluctant to offer specifics about his opinions or thinking. Laura steps back and asks herself, "Do I offend Ken without knowing it? Why doesn't he offer ideas or criticisms of my ideas?"

Laura, black female

Ken, Asian male

Show Laura thinking

After observing Ken's interactions with others and reading about his native culture, Laura understands. People in Ken's culture are reserved, polite, and use a circular style of discussion rather than a direct, head-on style. Understanding helps Laura alter her style to accommodate her new coworker.

Show both Laura and Ken looking happy

Now, if you can't figure out why someone is behaving in a way that seems strange to you, ask the person, or someone from the same background, what the behavior means.

Francois notices that one of his coworkers, Jean-Marc, disappears from the office several times a day, always at the same time of day. Francois is curious, but he doesn't know Jean-Marc well and doesn't want to offend him. Francois asks Marie-Andre, a friend of Jean-Marc's, what's going on.

Francois, white male

Marie-Andre explains that Jean-Marc is very devout, and prays several times a day. Jean-Marc leaves the work area so he can find privacy.

Marie-Andre, white female

Marie-Andre explaining something to Francois

A good way to save yourself embarrassment and get a head start on embracing diversity is to educate yourself in the cultural and social norms of different cultures.

Which methods do you think you can use to increase your cultural literacy?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT)      Films

This option is correct. Films are an excellent way to learn about other cultures.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT)      Books

This option is correct. Both nonfiction and fiction books are good ways to learn about people from other cultures.

OPTION 3 (CORRECT)      Discussions with friends from other cultures

This option is correct. If you have the opportunity to talk with friends about their culture, this is a great way to learn more.

OPTION 4      Questionnaires

This option is incorrect. Questionnaires can't really impart understanding about other people's cultures.

OPTION 5      Crossword puzzles

This option is incorrect. You can't really learn much about other people's cultures from doing crossword puzzles.

Attend film screenings, read books, and have conversations with friends to learn how other people live. You'll find out about some important basic differences, including how people

communicate, how they think about time, how they deal with conflict, and their views toward individualism versus collectivism.

## **Cultural differences**

### **Communication**

### **Time considerations**

### **Dealing with conflict**

### **Individualism vs collectivism**

#### **Communication**

In some cultures, things are spelled out explicitly. People depend on instructions and directions that are spoken or written down.

Contrast this with a culture in which people depend on shared knowledge. Less is spelled out explicitly, and much more is implicit or communicated indirectly.

#### **Time considerations**

In some cultures, time is perceived as a limited resource that's constantly being used up. Time is money. It can be sliced, scheduled, and wasted. Meetings begin at the appointed hour.

In other cultures, time is more fluid. Meetings begin when everyone gets there, and it's not as important if meetings exceed their scheduled duration.

#### **Dealing with conflict**

In some cultures, conflict is to be avoided, and preserving good relationships and harmony is all-important.

In other cultures, problems are tackled head-on, and people openly confront each other.

#### **Individualism vs collectivism**

In individualist cultures, people want autonomy. A person is admired for being "self-made" and making decisions independently.

In collectivist cultures, however, people identify with and work well in groups. Individualism is frowned upon.

## **Learning Point 4: Set aside your behavior standards**

In addition to developing a nuanced world view and investigating behaviors that seem strange to you, a third step toward embracing diversity is to set aside your standards when dealing with diverse people. Develop empathy and replace your judgments with curiosity.

Empathy is the ability to identify with others and sympathize with their situations. It involves the heart, as well as the mind. Some people are able to empathize naturally and easily. Others must learn how. To learn how to empathize, practice using three techniques:

Show someone counseling another person, perhaps have the counselor leaning over the other person, showing concern and caring. The person on the receiving end should be a different gender, should be older, or should be of a different ethnicity

- ITEM 1        suspend your judgment
- ITEM 2        set aside your perspective, and
- ITEM 3        communicate your understanding to the other person

### **Empathy**

#### **Suspend judgment**

#### **Set aside perspective**

#### **Communicate understanding**

#### **Suspend judgment**

Don't judge the person or the situation. Instead, allow your natural curiosity to guide you. Tell yourself, "I genuinely want to understand this person."

#### **Set aside perspective**

Set aside your own perspective and put yourself in the other person's position. "Walk a mile in the person's shoes" as the saying goes. What does it feel like? What are you thinking?

#### **Communicate understanding**

Let the other person know that you understand or that you want to understand the person's position. Say something like "I can imagine how difficult this is for you." Be sure to back up your words with nonverbal communication. The look on your face, the openness in your body position, and the tone of your voice are as important as what you say.

## **Learning Point 5: Be a diversity advocate**

And finally, when you've become confident in your ability to handle situations involving diversity, the final step in embracing diversity is to become a diversity advocate. Be the solution – the person that others go to for guidance in difficult situations.

Advocate for diversity

As a diversity advocate, you'll have a lot to do – bridging differences and building understanding, helping coworkers become more comfortable with diversity, and discussing cultural differences behind different behaviors.

### **Diversity advocate**

#### **Bridge differences and build understanding**

##### **Help coworkers become more comfortable**

##### **Discuss cultural differences**

#### **Bridge differences and build understanding**

As a diversity advocate, you should become a cultural interpreter for others. Help people come together by understanding each other's behaviors.

##### **Help coworkers become more comfortable**

Become knowledgeable about the backgrounds of people around you and spread your knowledge of other people's backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures.

##### **Discuss cultural differences**

Find opportunities to build understanding of people from other backgrounds and cultures. If you hear a disparaging comment about a colleague, take the time to explain to the speaker that the colleague's behavior isn't odd in that person's culture.

To embrace diversity, you must first understand the cultural and social diversity in your workplace.

Which are guidelines for doing this?

**OPTION 1 (CORRECT)** Understand the nuances of behavior and avoid perceiving things as all good or all bad

This option is correct. Behavior is complex and multilayered. You need to perceive it in all its nuances and avoid thinking in terms of right or wrong, or good or bad.

**OPTION 2 (CORRECT)** Put yourself in the shoes of others and try to understand the behavior from their perspective

This option is correct. Behavior that seems strange to you is probably normal to people from other backgrounds. Investigate different behaviors rather than judge them.

**OPTION 3 (CORRECT)** Replace judgment with curiosity

This option is correct. Set aside your behavior standards and tell yourself that you really want to understand the other person. Develop empathy.

**OPTION 4 (CORRECT)** Become a source of information about diversity in your workplace

This option is correct. After you've been able to embrace diversity yourself, it's important to become a diversity advocate.

**OPTION 5** Help people with different backgrounds finish their work

This option is not correct. Finishing the work of others won't help spread diversity.

**OPTION 6** Target people who are different from you for friendship

This option is not correct. Understanding someone from another culture may lead to friendship, but friendship doesn't necessarily lead to embracing diversity.

## **Learning Point 6: Summary**

Embracing diversity may require you to change your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. To practice doing this, follow four steps.

First, develop a nuanced world view. Avoid thinking of other people's behaviors as all good or all bad.

Second, suspend judgment. Don't think of the behavior of others as strange just because it's new to you.

Third, set aside your behavior standards. Other people behave differently – accept their behaviors without comparing them to your own preconceived notions of what's proper. Educate yourself about other cultures.

Finally, become a diversity advocate. After you've learned to embrace diversity yourself, become an advocate for diversity throughout your organization.

### **Communicating in a Diverse Setting**

Identify strategies to communicate effectively in a diverse setting and their implications

Communicating in a diverse setting requires special considerations: flexibility with style, active listening, and inclusive language.

Match the steps of the strategy to implement flexibility with appropriate descriptions. Not all descriptions will be used.

Which statements apply to active listening?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT)      Suspend judgment of the speaker
- OPTION 2 (CORRECT)      Paraphrase what you hear the speaker say to ensure you hear the speaker accurately
- OPTION 3 (CORRECT)      Always ask questions if you don't understand what the speaker says
- OPTION 4      Use verbal cues to fill in missing information
- OPTION 5      Interrupt the speaker to follow up on anything that isn't clear to you

Which statements include examples of noninclusive language?

- OPTION 1 (CORRECT)      "It's fourth and goal, we've got no timeouts left, and there's a minute left in the game – we've got to pull this product together."
- OPTION 2 (CORRECT)      "Be careful with your hiring practices. Getting the right man for the job is critical."
- OPTION 3 (CORRECT)      "Please ask everyone for comments, except for people in the Accounting Department. I don't want to deal with their complaints."

OPTION 4 "Please think about what I've said and e-mail your comments to me by the end of the day."

OPTION 5 "This target date is looming, and we'd better start working together if we're going to finish on time."

When you communicate in a diverse setting, you need to be flexible about your style, be an active listener, and use inclusive language.

Which statements are correct about active listening?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) Asking questions for clarification is an important part of active listening

OPTION 2 (CORRECT) Paraphrasing is necessary to ensure that you understand what the speaker is saying to you

OPTION 3 (CORRECT) An active listener suspends judgment of the person who is speaking

OPTION 4 As an active listener, you must learn more about the backgrounds of people you speak with

OPTION 5 Active listeners are responsible for researching what the speaker doesn't clarify

Which statements contain examples of noninclusive language?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) "The team came up with an idea that was two bricks shy of a load."

OPTION 2 (CORRECT) "Marie left work early because she was exhausted and completely out of gas."

OPTION 3 (CORRECT) "If we give the customer what he's asking for now, we'll be busting at the seams for the entire project."

OPTION 4 "The meeting is set to begin at 9:00 a.m. If you can't make it, please e-mail me immediately."

OPTION 5 "The boss was notified about a hiring slowdown; we won't be replacing the two people who left."

## **Learning Point 1: The most important tool**

The most important tool you have for building rapport with others is communication. But communication can be tricky in diverse organizations, where people have different attitudes, behaviors, and values. For instance, ask yourself these questions: "How will I know that others understand me?" "How much detail should I give?" "How much background can I assume my listeners have?" "Should I tell a joke to break the ice?" "Should I be formal or informal in my manner?"

Fortunately, you can follow guidelines to help minimize the risk of miscommunication and help create an inclusive climate. These guidelines concern three aspects of communication: your style, the way you listen, and your verbal and nonverbal language.

## **Learning Point 2: Be flexible about your style**

Think about your own communication style.

Are you direct and to the point? Or are you indirect and circular? Are you detailed and specific? Or are you general and open ended? Do you like to tell jokes or use interesting metaphors? Or are you more formal?

When it comes to communication, one size definitely doesn't fit all. A style that's direct and to the point can alienate those who need a more indirect approach. A conversation full of sports references will turn off people who aren't interested in sports. And if you like to tell jokes, tread carefully. Humor is highly subjective and can cause offense in an instant.

The most important guideline when it comes to your communication style is to be flexible. To be effective in a diverse environment, you have to adjust your style to the people you're speaking with. You should take into consideration all aspects that make the person an individual.

Adjusting your style isn't always easy. But you can learn to do it if you're mindful of others' needs and use a series of steps:

Adjusting your style.

1. Make a list of people at work you deal with the most

You can't possibly accommodate everyone, but you can adapt your style to people you work with every day. So make a list of who those people are.

## 2. Analyze their communication style

Go down the list and determine how you should communicate with each person. For example, does the list contain anyone of a different ethnicity who may require a different style?

## 3. Determine how to improve your compatibility with them

Depending on what different people need in step two, decide what you must do to communicate better.

## 4. Implement changes

Incorporate your ideas from step three when you communicate with each individual. If you know the person well, you may want to ask for feedback so that you can improve even more.

Remember, when you adapt your style to others' needs, you make it easier for people to understand you. You're better able to be a good communicator in a diverse environment.

### **Learning Point 3: Practice active listening**

A second guideline for communicating in a diverse setting is to practice active listening. Listening is an important skill in any environment, but especially in a diverse environment.

You'll face many obstacles to effective listening in a diverse environment. For example, your attitude about the speaker could prevent you from hearing what's being said. You may be listening only for facts rather than the speaker's underlying meaning. Or you could be focusing on how the speaker looks and sounds, thereby missing the shades of meaning. It's very easy to misunderstand others from different cultures and backgrounds.

Attitude about the speaker A scene of an older person listening to a young person. The older person is frowning, angry at having to take direction from someone younger.

Listening for facts rather than meaning An image of a woman listening to a man. The woman has a list of facts on a white board. She's distracted while the man is explaining something to her

Focusing on delivery and nonverbal communication It would be nice to show an Indian woman in sari, speaking with a man who is obviously more interested in how she looks than what she's saying. OR substitute something else that seems to get the message across and avoid anything lascivious

You may be able to prevent most misunderstandings if you follow some guidelines for active listening. To be an active listener, perform these specific actions:

Active listening actually helps the speaker learn to communicate better. By following active listening techniques, you're teaching the speaker how to communicate with you in the style that works best for you.

Which statements are correct about active listening?

**OPTION 1 (CORRECT)**      Active listening requires you to ask questions if you don't understand the speaker

This option is correct. When you listen actively, you have a part to play in the communication. If you don't understand something, ask the speaker for clarification.

**OPTION 2 (CORRECT)**      Your attitude toward the speaker can prevent you from understanding what the speaker is saying

This option is correct. You may have some biases that prevent you from listening to and understanding the speaker.

**OPTION 3 (CORRECT)**      Active listening requires you to suspend judgment of the speaker

This option is correct. You can't listen if you're busy judging the speaker or the style in which the information is being delivered.

**OPTION 4 (CORRECT)**      With active listening, you should paraphrase what you've heard to check your understanding

This option is correct. Paraphrasing allows you to check your understanding and correct any misimpressions.

**OPTION 5**      Active listening requires learning about the backgrounds of the people you speak with every day

This option is incorrect. You can practice active listening without knowing the background of the speaker.

**OPTION 6**      Your attitude toward active listening can affect the style of the speaker

This option is incorrect. As an active listener, you help the speaker communicate with you. Your attitude toward active listening is immaterial.

## **Learning Point 4: Use inclusive language**

The third guideline for communicating in a diverse environment is to use inclusive language. Language shapes reality, and you must choose your words and phrases carefully to include everyone in this reality.

Show someone speaking in a conference room. Everyone laughing except for one person, perhaps of a different gender or ethnicity. The one person is obviously left out of the conversation.

For instance, it's surprising how many people assume others understand their slang, sports references, and colorful metaphors. The fact is, many people don't understand, and using this kind of language excludes them from the discussion.

Two people having a conversation. One is a man who is laughing. The other person should look blank, not understanding.

Meet Sean. Sean is a lawyer with an American engineering company. He received an urgent call from a client in England. Sean had faxed a contract to the client for his signature, with a note that he needed the client's "John Hancock" – American slang for "signature." The client was very confused because John Hancock hadn't been involved in the contract negotiations, and he wanted this person brought into the discussions immediately.

Sean, African American male, professionally dressed. He's an attorney.

Sean speaking on the phone.

Move on to a white person speaking on the phone, looking very concerned.

Sean was embarrassed, and the misunderstanding was quickly cleared up. But Sean could've easily avoided the whole issue in the first place. If he'd used a little common sense, Sean would've known that his English client wouldn't get the reference to an American patriot who lived in the eighteenth century.

Sean, looking embarrassed perhaps the image of John Hancock's signature

The point is to think before you speak. Use language that doesn't exclude anyone from understanding your meaning. What this means is that you must not make assumptions about what others know, you must use gender-neutral language, you should avoid using culturally specific metaphors, and you must avoid slang.

### **Avoid assumptions about what others know**

### **Use gender-neutral language**

### **Avoid culturally specific metaphors**

### **Avoid slang**

### **Avoid assumptions about what others know**

Some experiences are so overwhelming that they create a common reference. However, there are very few experiences that are like that. So be very careful about what you assume others know. People from other cultures won't have any idea what you mean if you refer to the ride of Paul Revere or even the Super Bowl.

### **Use gender-neutral language**

If you use language that refers to males as the dominant gender, you exclude over half of the population.

So when you refer to all human beings, use "humanity," not "mankind." Use terms such as "chairperson" instead of "chairman." Avoid prefacing an occupational title with the person's gender – woman doctor, woman firefighter, or female supervisor could cause offense.

### **Avoid culturally specific metaphors**

Metaphors are powerful figures of speech that convey meaning to people who share common knowledge or experiences. However, in a diverse workplace, metaphors prevent many people from understanding your message.

If you use language like "three strikes and you're out," for example, some members of your audience simply won't know what you mean.

### **Avoid slang**

Slang is pervasive in many cultures. Try to avoid slang, because it's very culture-specific. For instance, if someone said to you "The escalator is broken; use the apple and pears," would you know what to do?

New slang expressions enter languages all the time, so be careful. If you refer to coworkers as your "peeps," don't be surprised when you get blank stares in return.

Using inclusive language is imperative. Doing so helps to ensure understanding and fosters an environment in which everyone feels valued and equal as a contributor. Do your best to eliminate obstacles to understanding – be mindful about slang, metaphors, common assumptions, and potentially derogatory language.

Which statements include examples of noninclusive language?

OPTION 1 (CORRECT) "The vice president of purchasing will be attending our meeting, so we need to get our ducks in a row."

This option is correct. Instead of talking about "getting ducks in a row," this person could have talked about "coordinating our efforts," which means the same thing.

OPTION 2 (CORRECT) "Maya needs to improve her performance; she's got two strikes against her already."

This option is correct. Would someone from a different culture know that Maya has one chance left? Likely not. Sports metaphors are noninclusive.

OPTION 3 (CORRECT) "Our new CD will be produced by the big shots at the recording studio."

This option is correct. "the big shots" makes this statement non-inclusive. This is slang which could be misunderstood, it would be better to use the word "people" instead.

OPTION 4 "We ought to congratulate ourselves; the customer loved the presentation."

This option is incorrect. There are no obstacles to understanding in this statement. The language is plain and inclusive.

OPTION 5 "If we leave now, we'll all make it back to our offices in time for the conference call."

This option is incorrect. The language is inclusive, and this statement contains no obstacles to understanding.

### **Learning Point 5: Summary**

Communication is your most important tool for dealing with diversity in the workplace. And it's one of the most difficult things to master. You can use certain guidelines for handling communication.

First, be flexible in your communication style. Rather than stick with the style that suits you, consider how you may need to adapt your style to suit the people you speak with.

Next, practice active listening. Make eye contact with the speaker, listen carefully, summarize, and ask questions to ensure you understand the message being sent.

Finally, use inclusive, gender-neutral language. And avoid slang, humor, or metaphors that could be culture-specific or offensive.