



Cultural Awareness

The Foundation of Successful Communication
in Today's Global World

CULTURAL SELF-AWARENESS

Culture: the customs, arts and social institutions of a racial, religious, or social group

Awareness: the quality or state of being aware; knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists

Before understanding a different culture, it is important to self-analyze and gain awareness of your own cultural norms.

Whether we realize it or not, we all see the world through our own unique cultural lens. This lens develops as a result of our experiences, beliefs, perceptions and cultural values.

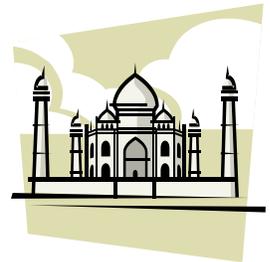
Questions for Reflection

What does my cultural lens look like?

What has influenced my cultural lens?

Why do I do things in a particular way?

Why do I react in a particular way?



DEGREES OF CULTURAL AWARENESS

My way is the only way

You are aware of the way you do things, and your way is the only way.



My way is the best way

You are aware of other ways of doing things, but still consider your way as the best one.



There are several ways, my way and others

Understanding that there is not “one right way” of doing things. There are several ways, and you choose the best way according to the situation.



Our way

Coming together and creating a solution that works for all.

We are a global society and it is important for future veterinary leaders to effectively communicate with people from different cultures.

DO'S AND DON'TS



REMEMBER...

Creating a list of Do's and Don'ts that would be appropriate for interactions with all cultures across the globe is impossible. The following Do's and Don'ts are designed to be used as a guideline.

DO: Take an interest

Read about the country or countries you plan on visiting. Start thinking about potential similarities and differences between their culture and your own.

DO: Develop empathy

Do your best to think about how others might be feeling. Empathy is about being aware of other's feelings and understanding them.

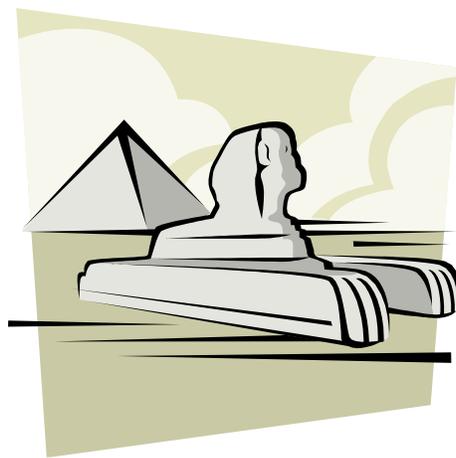
DON'T: Make judgements

Before asking a question, try to ask it in a neutral manner. Think about how your question might be perceived. If you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask about it but don't be quick to judge.

DON'T: Make assumptions

Values and beliefs differ within and between groups. These beliefs can change with new experiences, age, and exposure to new information. The only way to know what another person believes is to ask and have a conversation about it.

Quick Reminders



- **Respect other's opinions**
- **Be open to learning about different ideas and cultures**
- **Be thoughtful and sensitive about the questions you ask**
- **Avoid stereotypes**

CULTURAL AWARENESS IN ACTION

LEAH'S EXPERIENCE

I learned so much from my Global Health Fellowship experience in Tanzania. When immersing myself in Tanzanian culture, there were many things I didn't understand. During my time there, I became aware of my own internal biases. What made my experience a successful one was that I kept an open mind and had a clear understanding of some "Do's and Don'ts" before travelling.

How Leah took an interest

Before going to Tanzania, I researched the country and customs so I could be a respectful traveler. I learned that it is customary to say hello to a person walking down the street. So, I learned how to say "hello, how are you?", "I am good", and "thank you" in Swahili. I also asked the people I was working with lots of questions. In my experience, Tanzanian people loved to answer questions about their families, their religious beliefs and their school system. It was important to keep a curious and non-judgmental tone when asking these questions. Our way of life in the United States, or within our own culture, is not the "only way" to live, as everyone has their own way. I found the Tanzanian people to be so happy and content with their life, contrary to what one might think from stereotypes and preconceived notions, this is why you **should not make assumptions**.

What Leah Learned

Through this experience I learned how important it is to be a sensitive and **empathetic** traveler. People's way of life may be strange to you (I still don't understand why lunch takes 3 hours) and it is ok to not understand as long as you do not judge. People may even do things that you disagree with as part of their religious beliefs or family traditions. It is important to remember that it is not our place to make **judgements** or try to change their mind. If you go to another country with an open mind and an open heart, like I did to Tanzania, I believe that it will be a transformative, eye opening, and wonderful learning experience.

Additional Resources:

UCD SVM Global Programs: <https://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/global-programs>

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