Effective Communication Across Culture

Homeownership Advisors Network Conference

Paula O’Loughlin
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Welcome & Introductions

**Equity Alliance MN:** We are an educational equity service collaborative formed in 1995 as a joint powers district (known as the East Metro Integration District).

We believe that race and culture fundamentally shape and influence our core values, our thinking, our policies, and our practices.
Session Objectives

• Establish shared understanding of what we mean by culture
• Give the opportunity to explore own own culture
• Learn about 3 different dimensions of culture and their impact on our lives
• Provide time for self-reflection & discussion
Agreements

• Accept and expect non-closure
• Assume positive intentions
• Agree to disagree
• Speak your own truth by using “I”
• Experience discomfort and know it’s a necessary part of learning
Know Thyself to Know Others

• Sharing our own culture and learning about another’s culture through personal narrative

• Reflecting on our own lived experiences and being more mindful of how those experiences shape, inform and create our own cultural upbringing

• Pair & Share Activity
What is Culture and Who Has It?

Culture Is:

• How we communicate, how we live our lives and the beliefs & values we hold
• Shared patterns that help us make meaning of our environment and determine socially conditioned appropriate behavior
• Our lived experiences and our learned behavior

*Each one of us has our own culture and every space has a culture*
Components of our Cultural Selves

- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Orientation
- Religion
- Socio-economic status
- Political affiliation
- Relationship(s)
- Family role(s)
- Membership to organizations
- Profession
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Talents
- Etc.
The Culture Tree

Zaretta Hammond, Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain

The Impact on Trust

*Surface Culture* - Low emotional impact

*Shallow Culture* - High emotional impact

*Deep Culture* - Intense emotional impact

*Preservation of one’s own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures.*

~Cesar Chavez, Mexican American Activist
Dimensions of Culture
Dimensions of Culture

1. Emotion or Emotional Style: Expressive and Restrained

1. Delivery of Messaging: Direct and Indirect

1. Approach to Work: Individualism and Collectivism
Dimensions of Culture

- There is a continuum
- All spots on the continuum are neutral - societal norms assign value
- We can increase our capacity to move along the continuum
  - (That being said, we do have a preference)
- Context matters
- A mismatch often leads to conflict, misunderstanding and frustration - especially when the stakes are high
- Wherever we are on the continuum, we bring strengths and opportunities for growth and learning
Emotional Styles

Restrained and Expressive
Restrained

• Internalized Emotion
  • Minimal display
  • Constrained vocalization (monotone)
  • Hides feelings through nonverbal behavior (crossed arms, looking away)

• Sensitive to: attention for emotion or hurting the feelings of other

• Builds trust through emotional control

• Emotional suppression necessary for credibility
Expressive

- Externalized displays of emotion:
  - Overt
  - Varied vocalization
  - Display feelings with nonverbal behavior (facial expressions, hand gestures)

- Sensitive to: being asked to restrain own emotions
- Builds trust through emotional commitment
- Emotional information is necessary for credibility
Emotion

Restrained
• “The first to raise their voice loses the argument” –Chinese
• “Silence produces peace, and peace produces safety” --Swahili

Expressive
• “What is the nearest the heart is nearest the mouth” --Irish
• “After a storm, fair weather; after sorrow, joy” -- Russian
Reflection

What surprised me?

How might I use this knowledge to be a more effective communicator?
Messaging

Direct and Indirect
Messaging
# Messaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The primary purpose of communication is to inform or decide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message and meaning are conveyed by words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual factors such as situation or timing are less important than clearly communicating the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages are communicated directly to and between parties involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses definitive statements and words such as “should” and “have to”</td>
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<tr>
<td>The speaker is responsible for clear communication of the message</td>
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# Messaging

## Indirect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary purpose of communication is to connect or preserve relationships, to consider ideas or plans, to maintain harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning is conveyed by suggestion, implication, story, questions, understatement and/or non-verbal behaviors. (pauses, silence, tone of voice etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays attention to contextual factors that may impact the message and relationship i.e situation or timing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messages may be sent through a 3rd party or written communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses open-ended statements such as “maybe” and “possibly”</td>
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<tr>
<td>The listener is responsible for interpreting the message and understanding the meaning</td>
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<td>Avoids conflict, tension or uncomfortable situations</td>
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## Direct Communication: Values and Phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell it like it is. Get to the point. The facts speak for themselves.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The squeaky wheel gets the grease.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It's okay to say no and no explanation is required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honesty is the best policy. The truth is more important than feelings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Say what you mean and mean what you say.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take communication at face value.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s okay to disagree with “superiors”, it’s okay to disagree in public.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Messaging

## Indirect Communication: Values and Phrases

<table>
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<tr>
<td>If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being polite is more important than being honest. If the truth might hurt, soften it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid saying no; say “maybe” or “possibly,” even if you mean “no.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read between the lines. We mean more than we say, and gather meaning beyond words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save face—do not insult others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small talk before business is important. (The relationship takes priority.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criticism of others, especially people with more authority, should be unspoken or careful and veiled. Should not be done in public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection

What surprised me?

How might I use this knowledge to be a more effective communicator?
View of Work

Individualism and Collectivism
Individualism

• Independence & individual achievement
• Private property (mine)
• Emphasizes self-reliance and the belief that one is supposed to take care of himself in order to get ahead
• Individual contributions and status are important
• Competitive
• Technical/Analytical

Collectivism

• Interdependence and family/group success
• Common property (ours)
• Emphasizes reliance on the collective wisdom or resources of the group and the belief that group members take care of each other to get ahead
• Group dynamics and harmony are important
• Collaborative
• Relational

Reflection

What surprised me?

How might I use this knowledge to be a more effective communicator?
Effective Communication Across Culture...

- Always begins with knowing our own culture
- Takes humility, practice and patience
- Requires us to take ownership and learn from our mistakes
- Invites us to extend grace to others as well as ourselves
- Recognizes the power of the pause

*Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.*

~Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India
Questions or Comments?

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