

Cross-Cultural Communication

Each person is an individual with their own ways of doing things, their own style of speech & their own way of communicating. However, there are some common ways in which different cultures communicate. Depending on where you were raised, who taught you to communicate, & whether the language you are trying to use is your native language, your communication style develops in a unique way. From situation to situation, this style may work well, or it might not. Sometimes in communication, you may get frustrated with your co-communicator for differences in style. But before you get frustrated, remember that different is not necessarily a bad thing. It might take a little extra effort, but you can still be successful in communication and by making that extra effort, you might just learn and gain a lot.

Some Common Differences to Consider in Cross-Cultural Communication

- Frequency of eye Contact
- Assertiveness
- Use of Hands While Talking
- Physical Distance Between Communicators
- Speed of Speech
- Use of First Names vs. Titles
- Volume of Speech
- Use of Facial Expressions

Always Remember!

Culture is not the same as race, ethnicity, or country of origin. Although all of these things contribute to culture, many other things do as well. You may have differences in communication style with someone who looks just like you and may have the same style as someone who looks much different. The bottom line is: don't assume and remember that everyone is an individual.

When communicating with someone whose first language is different than your own, you may want to remember the following ideas. Speaking louder or elongating words is not usually helpful. Instead, speak a little slowly, and ask questions to clarify the meaning of what they are saying. If they are having difficulty understanding you, try to rephrase your point. Most importantly, be patient and don't be afraid to ask for their patience too. Neither of you are unintelligent, and by working together, you will be able to communicate with each other just fine.

A few final tips:

- Avoid using slang words
- Use "I" statements, not "You" statements
- Listen as much, if not more, than you speak
- Respect silence in a conversation
- Do not judge someone based on accent
- Do not interrupt or try to finish someone's ideas