

6.2

Unit title: Exploring your own culture

Time needed to complete unit: 2 hours

Why is this important to know:

Our cultural background is based on several factors- including ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and geographic location. Our culture influences our values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. By understanding how culture influences the way we perceive the world and those around us, we can better understand family practices (including child rearing) within our own families and be more open to understanding others' family practices.

This unit is directly related to information covered in module 1, Building Cultural Competence. Learners may want to complete Module 1 before completing this module.

Objectives/Purpose:

Learners will...

- Explore their own cultural background and how it influences their values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

How to use this information:

6.2.1. Activity 1: Family Values Activity

Download and complete the Family Values Activity to identify the values of the family you grew up in and the values of your current family. After you complete the activity, answer the questions below that are also stated on the activity sheet.

Questions/Statements:

- Were the values you listed for the family you grew up in the same or different than the values of the family you currently live in?
- If you are a parent/caregiver, what are some specific behaviors you do as a parent to instill these values in your children?

Ask another person to complete this activity by printing out the attachment and sharing it with them. After the other person has completed the activity discuss the similarities and differences in your responses.

6.2.2 Activity 2: Life Experiences Activity

Download this activity. Through this activity you and others you work with can learn more about one another and how your life experiences are similar or different.

6.2.3 Activity 3: Reflecting on culture:

- When you hear the term, *culture*, what do you think of?
- How do you describe your cultural background?
- What aspect of your cultural background are you most proud of?
- What is acculturation? Is it good? Bad? Indifferent?

Definitions:

Culture: Culture is broadly defined as a specific way of life which is underpinned by the collective values, beliefs, and attitudes shared by a community of individuals. Culture is learned and shared intergenerationally through social interaction within the family and other social groups in the community to define the expectations of individuals in a society. Cultural frameworks impose rewards and sanctions for efficient learning of the group's norms and expectations. Culture is a pervasive and dynamic process that influences every aspect of how we perceive and interact with others. While the implicit values, beliefs, and attitudes of a cultural group may be taken for granted and are largely invisible, they have a pervasive and visible impact on the explicit culture of daily life, including language, communication, clothing, food, and family relationships. Through these shared values and patterns of daily living, culture provides societies with a sense of order, security, and identity. (Kalyanpur and Harry, 1999; Barrera & Corso, 2002; Santos, 2003).

Acculturation: A process that takes place over time. It involves being introduced to a new system and gradually accommodating to it.

Supporting materials:

Family Values Activity
Life Experiences Activity

References

Barrera, I. & Corso, R. (2002). Cultural competency as skilled dialogue. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 22 (2), 103-113.

Chen, D., McLean, M., Corso, R. & Bruns, D. (2001). Working together in early intervention: Cultural considerations in helping relationships and service utilization (Technical report #11). Champaign, IL: Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. [Available from <http://clas.uiuc.edu/techreports.html>]

Corso, R. M., Santos, R. M., & Roof, V. (2002). Adapting and evaluating early childhood education and early childhood special education materials at the community level. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 34(3), 30-36.

Yuan, Susan (2001). Family Support, Self-Determination, and Disability. Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, UCE of Vermont/University of Vermont.