

# Communicating for Cultural Competence

## Culturally Competent Values by Cross, Bazron, and Isaacs (1989, 22-24)

1. Respect for unique culturally defined needs of various client populations.
2. Acknowledgment of culture as a predominant force in shaping behaviors, values, and institutions.
3. Belief that the family as defined by each culture is the primary and preferred point of intervention.
4. Acknowledgement that minority people are served in varying degrees by their natural cultural systems.
5. Recognition that the concepts of family, community, and so on differ among cultures and among subgroups within cultures.
6. Belief that diversity within cultures is as important as diversity between cultures.
7. Awareness that the dignity of the person is not guaranteed unless the dignity of his or her people is preserved.
8. Understanding that minority clients are usually best served by persons who are part of or in tune with their culture.
9. Acceptance that cultural differences exist and have an impact on service delivery.
10. Acknowledgement that process is as important as product when working with minority clients.
11. Awareness when values of minority groups are in conflict with dominant society values. (p 10-11)

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## KNOWLEDGE AREAS WHEN STRIVING TO BECOME CULTURALLY COMPETENT

1. Knowledge of the culture (history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions).
2. Knowledge of the impact of class and ethnicity on behavior, attitudes, and values.
3. Knowledge of the help-seeking behavior of ethnic minority clients.
4. Knowledge of the role of language, speech patterns, and communication styles in ethnically distinct communities.
5. Knowledge of the impact of social services on ethnic minority persons.
6. Knowledge of resources (agencies, persons, informal helping networks, research) that can be utilized on behalf of the ethnic minority clients and communities.
7. Knowledge of the way the professional values may conflict with or accommodate the needs of ethnic minority clients.
8. Knowledge of the power relationships in a community, agency, or institutions and their impact on ethnic minority clients. (p 28)

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## Areas of Knowledge Base

- Review of ethnic minority literature reveals two distinct areas of knowledge base:
  - Specific Ethnic Minority Groups  
Examples: As to African Americans - Historical events and its impact socially and psychologically  
  
Family structures and group concepts of time and roles of group members in relationship to one another
  - Central Concepts – essential to understanding the ethnic minority position in society and how those concepts function in the development of human behavior  
  
Examples: race, racism, stereotyping, ethnicity, culture, integration and separatism, and biculturalism (p 29)

## Effective Cross Cultural Practice

1. Be flexible in the “use of self”
2. Be a risk taker in the sense of being open to others even when they do not fully understand what they are being open to, and
3. Be empathic toward the minority position in society ( p 32)

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## Self-Awareness

- It is an ongoing process. It is never finished.
- It is an avenue of approach to self-understanding and acceptance involves personal exploration of experiences to identify the attitudes, attributes, conceptions, and behaviors that derive from the worker's place in society.
- No person is immune to the imposition of personal worldviews on the helping process. "KNOW THYSELF" has been an axiom for centuries.
- **In cross-cultural practice, the helper must accept that any given culture is paramount to its possessor and alien to the others. The ability to work and understand others of a contrasting culture goes beyond mere civil behavior.**
- The process of self-awareness is both cognitive and emotional.  
(p 33)

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## The Helping Relationship

- For any helping encounter to be successful, a positive relationship has to be established between the helper and the person.
- Rapport is having a close relationship characterized by harmony and agreement.
- Social workers strive to form a relationship that is the HEART OF HELPING.
- Knowledge and skills are important but knowledge must be translated into procedures that can be helpful. There must be a focus on more immediate issues of relation formation.
- In traditional practice modalities, the person is expected to learn about the culture of helping in order to become a client. In cross-cultural practice an opposite stance is argued. The social worker has a responsibility to learn about the other's culture first by crossing the cultural boundaries. (39)

Work Cited: Leigh W. James, *Communicating for Cultural Competence*. Waveland Press, Inc., 1998.