Cross-Cultural Simulation “Scripts”

Cross-cultural interaction and relationship-building don’t always happen easily. To help become more aware of behaviors that may be primarily cultural, rather than “natural”, try some creative simulations. The following can be used in any group task. You just need to plan according to how much time is available. An activity that takes from 15 to 20 minutes is ideal. Examples of group activities are listed at the end of the instructions. Allow for at least 20 minutes for discussion/debriefing after the group activity.

Here is how it works:

1. Make copies of the four Secret Instructions “For Your Eyes Only” on the following pages. Cut out the four different groups of instructions to be distributed evenly in your group. Each person should get just one of the secret instructions to act out during the meeting.

2. Tell the group they are to read their individual instructions by themselves, and not let anybody else know what they are. Tell them they should intentionally act the way their instructions indicate during the group activity.

3. Conduct the group activity.

4. At the end, allow at least 20 minutes to discuss the questions provided below.

Instruction Sheets

Make copies and cut out the four different instructions to be distributed evenly in your group. Each person should only get one of the instructions.

A
Secret Instructions “For Your Eyes Only”
Please read this quietly, and do not discuss it with anyone during the group activity.
You come from a cultural group that believes men and women ought to remain separate in social settings. You may greet the opposite sex with a quick “Hi”, but you would never shake hands or touch. Such demonstrations often carry sexual connotations. You do approve of touch among same sex groups, since it does not hold the same implications. You prefer to be seated in same sex groups during meetings. Women usually sit on one side and men on the other. Please keep within this role during the group activity.

B
Secret Instructions “For Your Eyes Only”
Please read this quietly, and do not discuss it with anyone during the meeting.
You come from a cultural group that is lively and warm in relationships. It is common to greet people with light cheek-to-cheek greetings, hugs and touching while talking. With those you do not know as well, you would at least extend a warm, long handshake. Friendships are important, and you ask lots of questions about the well-being of a person. Gender-mixed relationships are common and touch is a sign of acceptance, nothing more. Please keep within this role during the
group activity.

C
Secret Instructions “For Your Eyes Only”
Please read this quietly, and do not discuss it with anyone during the meeting.

You come from a fairly reserved cultural group which enjoys order and simplicity in life. You greet people quietly, politely and swiftly. You are more interested in personal reflection and inner awareness during any group activity. During the group activity it is important for you to demonstrate a learning attitude by listening attentively, seriously and quietly. It is more important for you to be aware of yourself than it is for the group to “succeed” at its task. Tasks come and go, but personal insight is everything. Please keep within this role during the group activity.

D
Secret Instructions “For Your Eyes Only”
Please read this quietly, and do not discuss it with anyone during the meeting.
You come from a competitive, task-oriented cultural group. You enjoy competition and you want to do a good job on the group task. To get things done, your group needs a plan, a leader and some enthusiastic participants. Too much small talk can be a waste of time. You like to get down to business. Please keep within this role during the group activity.

Debriefing
After the meeting, spend about 20 minutes answering the following questions:
1. How did you feel during the exercise?
2. Describe what happened.
3. What did you learn?
4. How does this relate to the real world?
5. What if you had known why the others were behaving as they did?
6. How will you apply this to living in another culture?

Group Activities
Virtually any brief group task can be used as an activity during which the participants “roleplay” their cultural behavior. Activities can be a discussion of a topic or a “hands on” task.

Examples of discussion topics:
1. What are the most important qualities of a good exchange student?
2. Why are so many people critical of America?
3. What is the most important reason to be an exchange student?
4. Any controversial topic: capital punishment, abortion, racism, etc.

Examples of “hands on” tasks:
1. Build a Tower. Have the group build the tallest free-standing tower they can using only raw spaghetti and marshmallows.

2. Draw a group picture. Give each group a sheet of newsprint or poster paper and markers. Have them draw their idea of some topic: world peace, cultural sensitivity, the youth exchange experience, etc.

3. Scavenger Sculpture. Using materials that can be found in the meeting room, create a group sculpture that represents any topic you assign to them.

4. Virtually any group activity.

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