

Culture Shock

Objectives

- To test perceived assumptions within the group
- To test cultural norms (organizational and otherwise) that get in the way of communication
- To experience EQ elements or Type preferences in action when used in conjunction with those instruments

Trainer Instructions

Note: This exercise is best done with a group when the facilitator wants to induce the storming phase or to help a group that is storming come together to re-norm. This exercise can be done as a stand alone or in combination with a problem-solving exercise to add complexity and simulate real life challenges of stereotyping and assumptions we make about each other.

1. Divide participants into three or more subgroups; brief each separately and privately concerning aspects of their “culture.” Give the group either a task or a topic to discuss while observing the cultural norms they are assigned. Explain that as they attempt the task or discuss the assigned topic they observe the instructions handed to them.
2. Group one is told they were a great military power having engaged in and won numerous battles and wars with their neighbors in the past. As a result they developed strong, intimidating and powerful stares which provoked others and led to even more wars. Now, wishing to live in peace and harmony with their neighbors, **they never make eye contact when speaking with others, and even turn away from them when talking.**
3. Group two is said to be a highly intelligent and wise people who, over time,, developed the skill of reading others' minds. As a result, they knew what others were thinking and, were thus quick to speak, not listen, and to finish other people's sentences for them. As a result, they have lived in isolation. Wising now to become part of the world community, whenever they are speaking and **before responding or starting a new thought, they count silently to 7, and only speak after a full 7 second pause.**
4. Group three developed great technological skills over the years, and as “high tech” people, were more concerned with technology than with humans. As a result they lacked compassion and had little occasion to make friendly contact with others. Now, wishing to appear and actually become more compassionate, **whenever they speak with others they maintain physical contact, by touching either the elbow of or placing their hand on top of a shoulder of the person to whom they are speaking.**
5. Group four is instructed that for centuries their culture has been misunderstood. Eventually the leaders realized that their people had excellent hearing and had not needed to speak loudly enough to be heard by humans with normal hearing. **In order to be heard now, your people speak very slowly and loudly.**

Category

Group Storming and/or Re-norming

Post Introduction to Type or post EQ-i Feedback

Exercise Stage

Basic stand alone, as part of a half day to a full day of experiential activities

Post-intro to an organization development instrument

Number of Participants

Minimum: 6 (possible for a small group to engage with this content—but the benefits of group-level interaction are missing)

Ideal: 8 - 15

Maximum: 25

Time Required

Minimum: 20 minutes

Maximum: 45 minutes

(larger groups need more sub-groups, which takes more time, and the amount of discussion/process of exercise output is a variable affecting time)

Materials Needed

- Optional: type the cultures' description/rules on paper slips and distribute to the participants



6. Group five is told they are a culture of philosopher leaders. For years, their culture has had to combat the problem of too many leaders and not enough followers. As a culture, they came to believe that all of their leaders were perfect. Now, unless someone has defined you as a leader, you always agree with whoever is speaking to you. **You always smile, nod your head, and say “Ahhh, YES! I see what you are saying, and I couldn’t agree more.”**
7. The last culture is identified by life in an enormously wealthy, resource-rich land. It is the envy of the world community, and the object of scorn and scrutiny. In order to build a better world image, **they always offer a cookie to whomever they meet and start off a conversation with , “Do you want a cookie?”**
8. Ask the group the following questions:

Processing Questions

- In what ways does this exercise reflect your daily work?
- What were some communication challenges?
- In what ways does this simulate the assumptions we make about people who have different communication or cultural norms?
- What does that remind us of, if we put it in work context?

Debriefing Instructions

1. Ask the processing questions above after the exercise is over.
2. Intervene if the situation gets too heated. The frustration levels are often high when people can’t understand the norms of each culture or if they get in the way of solving a bigger task the group is asked to complete.
3. Ask questions about the group’s ability to communicate regardless of the “cultural barriers.”
4. Discuss what was learned from this exercise and what can be taken back to the work environment and applied to interactions with colleagues.

Debriefing Questions If Activity is Used After Type Introduction

Note: This is a great activity to see how personality Type preferences get in the way of communication and/or decision making.

1. Was everyone heard?
2. Was there stretching out of one’s comfort zone to be able to communicate with another culture?
3. How did we deal with the differences?



Debriefing Questions If Activity is Used After EQ-i Introduction

Note: This is a great activity to see how behaviors associated with many EQ elements manifest in group interactions. Most commonly encountered behaviors associated with EQ elements on this activity are: Emotional Self Awareness, Emotional Expression, Assertiveness, Independence, Empathy, Problem Solving, Impulse Control and Flexibility. The list of questions to ask around EQ elements are numerous, but some common ones are:

1. Did anyone feel frustrated at some point?
2. Were you able to identify the feelings experienced and what was causing them?
3. How did you express or deal with that?
4. Did anyone dominate the conversation or speak incessantly?
5. Was anyone inhibited from voicing their opinion about how you should solve this problem?
6. How assertive were you?
7. Did people think of new ideas that had not been brought up before?
8. Did you voice that?
9. How did your emotions, as you experienced them, help or get in the way of working together on solving the challenging environment of varying opinions and perspectives?
10. How flexible were you in adopting a new way of relating to others and changing your views/emotions about them?
11. Were you able to approach the changing directions with an open mind or were you stuck on “our way of doing things?”

Your culture was a great military power having engaged in and won numerous battles and wars with your neighbors in the past. As a result you developed strong, intimidating, and powerful stares which provoked others and led to even more wars. Now, wishing to live in peace and harmony with your neighbors, **you never make eye contact when speaking with others and in fact, you even slightly turn away from them when talking.**

Your people were a highly intelligent and wise people who, over the years, developed the skill of reading others' minds. As a result you knew what others were thinking and would say so. You spoke very quickly, didn't listen and would complete other people's sentences for them. As a result, your people lived in isolation. Wising now to become part of the world community, whenever you are speaking and **before responding or starting a new thought, you count silently to 7, and only speak after a full 7 second pause.**

Your culture developed great technological skills over the years, and as a “high tech” culture, you were more concerned with technology than people. As a result your culture lacked compassion and had little occasion to make friendly contact with others. Now, wishing to appear and actually become more compassionate, **whenever you speak with others you maintain physical contact, by touching either the elbow or placing your hand on top of a shoulder of the person to whom you are speaking.**

For centuries your culture has been misunderstood. Eventually your leaders realized that your people had excellent hearing and did not need to speak loud enough for any normal human to be able to hear you. **In order to be heard, now your culture speaks very slowly and loudly.**



You are from a culture of philosopher leaders. For years, your culture has had to combat the problem of too many leaders and not enough followers. As a culture you also realized that all of the leaders from your culture are perfect. So now, unless someone has defined you as a leader, you always agree with whoever is speaking with you. **You always smile, nod your head, and say “Ahhh, YES! I see what you are saying, and I couldn’t agree more.”**

Your culture lives in an enormously wealthy, resource-rich land. It is the envy of the world community, and the object of scorn and scrutiny. In order to get a better world image, as a culture, **you always offer a cookie to whomever you meet and start off every conversation with: “Do you want a cookie?”**