

Education Update

Understanding Cultural Diversity:

Understanding Ourselves

What makes people unique?

- ◆ Appearance (gender, body size, skin color, hairstyle, clothing)
- ◆ Ethnic background and culture (customs, traditions, language etc.)
- ◆ Age
- ◆ Religious, spiritual or philosophical beliefs
- ◆ Income or social status
- ◆ Sexual orientation
- ◆ Physical and mental abilities
- ◆ Life experiences
- ◆ Educational background

Consider:

- ◆ Country of origin
How long a person has lived here may affect his or her views toward health.
- ◆ Preferred language
Patients who are encouraged to talk or read about care in their own language may feel more at ease and understand their care better.
- ◆ Views of health
The patient may see an illness as having a supernatural cause, such as punishment for sins or needing a certain traditional cure, such as an herbal remedy or a specific diet.
- ◆ Family and community relationships
A patient may expect certain people to visit and be involved in his or her care.
- ◆ Religion
A patient's religion may affect his or her consent to treatment, schedule of care, room arrangement (because of certain prayer practices, for example) or birth and death practices.
- ◆ Food preferences
Religious, healing and other cultural practices all can affect what foods a patient may eat or avoid.

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What is Culture?

Culture is a shared system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shape and influence behaviors of a particular group of people. It includes language, beliefs, customs, rituals and ceremonies. Culture determines how we look (hair color, skin color, appearance), what we eat, how we think and view the world around us, the language we speak and our religious or spiritual beliefs. Our culture also influences our health practices as well as the way we respond to illness, injury and pain.

Who is "Right"?

In order to understand others, we must first take a look at our own cultural backgrounds. It is important to remember that although our beliefs may be *different* from the beliefs of others, they are not necessarily the "*right*" beliefs. In a nation that is the most ethnically diverse in the world, there is no such thing as normal or right, there is only different.

What's in a Name?

Address every Trinitas customer/patient with dignity and respect. If you are unsure how to address the customer/patient ask what is their preference. Always use Mr. or Mrs. unless given permission to use the first name. Never use words such as "honey", "sweetie", or "darling" when talking to our customers, especially the elderly, no matter what the cultural background of the individual.



What Can You Do?

NEVER STEREOTYPE!

- ◆ Everyone is different, even within their own culture.
- ◆ During the admission process, identify which aspects are appropriate for each patient. Ask questions, listen attentively, pay attention to nonverbal cues.

LISTEN WITH UNDERSTANDING!

- ◆ Be open-minded and respectful towards the beliefs, values and practices of others.

COMMUNICATE!

- ◆ Communication begins with identifying the customer's primary language.
- ◆ Remember, the use of direct eye contact, facial expressions, touch, spatial distance, and the correct use of the person's name all play a role in the development of a therapeutic relationship.