

YOU HAVE A PATIENT/CLIENT FROM A DIFFERENT ETHNOCULTURAL BACKGROUND AND YOU ARE NOT SURE HOW TO HANDLE YOUR INTERACTION.

Cultural knowledge refers to the knowledge about the culture of other ethnocultural groups that includes their social norms, their history, their values, their beliefs etc. Cultural sensitivity and awareness refer to a set of interpersonal skills and sensitive attitudes towards the differences and the similarities that we all have, but without assigning them a specific value. This process is often difficult, but it's about acknowledging our different ways of interpreting our reality. Thus, when you interact with patients/clients of different backgrounds, you need to be more sensitive about your verbal and non-verbal communication such as gestures or eye contact, since the other may misunderstand your way of approaching her/him. Of course, you don't have to know everything about the other's culture to communicate effectively. However, to be a culturally competent professional, you need to be more sensitive and aware of our cultural differences or similarities and their impact on our behavior.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

In a refugee camp, the staff was complaining about refugees, since they always wanted white bread and refused to take the dark bread. Then, the social workers learned that people from African or Arabic countries are used to eating white bread – they have never eaten dark bread/whole grain bread before in their lives and so, they can't eat it because of physical health reasons. Their body is not used to it so, they have to try it very carefully and slowly. They can get used to it and many times they also, like it, but it takes time. Often, people refuse to eat things because they have never eaten them before, not because they are spoiled or unpolite.

SOLUTION

The professionals asked the cultural mediators the reason why they are complaining.

OPTION 01

Ask your patients/clients about their culture and habits. What would they do in their country, in a similar situation? Be flexible and adaptive.

OPTION 02

Listen actively to your patients/clients and show interest to learn about their culture. Check your understanding on what your patient/client describes to you. Ask questions in a clear way, to clarify if she/he has understood your instructions, as well.

OPTION 03

Educate yourself from reliable resources and discuss with your co-workers or an interpreter about culture-related issues.

OPTION 04

Project Partners



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