What is Culture?

Video Transcript

Intercultural communication is the study of cultural norms of communication, cultural effects on the communication process, and how people from different cultures interact. To really understand what intercultural communication is, you need to know what culture is.

What do you think about when you hear the word “culture?” Do you think of a museum? Or a history book? Culture encompasses many things, but for the purpose of this video, we have narrowed the definition to this: the way a particular group — age, ethnic, or social — believes or behaves. Your culture is taught to you beginning on the first day of your life, starting primarily with the clothes you are put in! The dress, shirt, pants, or whatever you were dressed in, is one of the ways you began learning your culture.

Can you think of other times when you learned your culture? Think about when you began school and your teacher taught you to stand in a line. This is a cultural norm that you learned, and continue to implement in daily life! Were you ever taught how to shake someone’s hand? Shaking hands when you meet a stranger is a cultural norm in Western society. All of these things culminate to teach you the cultural “norms” that people in that culture abide by.

You probably will notice if someone breaks a cultural norm or a cultural rule. Think about when someone is loud in a movie theater. You notice, and might even become angry! This cultural rule is important to you and everyone around you, in order to watch the movie in a nice, quiet environment. One reason a person might be loud in a movie, however, might be because they grew up in a different culture than you. If that is the case, you might have to implement intercultural communication to gently explain the situation, and ask them to quiet down so everyone can enjoy the movie.

There has probably been a time when you interculturally communicated with another person, without noticing that you did! In this lesson, you will learn what exactly intercultural communication is, and how to best implement this in your life.
About this transcript:

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