

MODULE 21: CULTURAL AWARENESS

Cognitive goals

At the completion of this module the student-instructor should be able to:

- 21.1 Use his or her own words to define and describe cultural awareness
- 21.2 Understand various ethnic and religious values and traditions that may affect a student's behavior
- 21.3 Explain the behaviors an EMS instructor can model to show awareness of cultural issues in their classroom
- 21.4 Describe aspects of cultural awareness that are important to instill in students in the classroom setting

Psychomotor goals

There are no psychomotor objectives with this module

Affective goals

At the completion of this module the student-instructor should be able to:

- 21.1 Defend the need to consider cultural awareness issues when designing and developing instructional plans and curriculum
- 21.2 Display behaviors that indicate consideration of cultural awareness issues when dealing with students
- 21.3 Share your knowledge of cultural awareness by modeling cultural sensitive behaviors to your students in the classroom

Declarative

- I. Why this module is important:
 - A. United States is a country of immigration
 1. 1940 – 70% of immigrants from Europe
 2. 1992 – 37% from Asia; 44% from Latin America and Caribbean; only 15% from Europe
 3. Many individuals embrace their culture and do not wish to surrender it
 - a. Resulting in cultural pluralism
 - b. The nation profits from contributions different groups make to society
 - B. Cultural diversity in the United States
 1. At least 106 ethnic and over 500 American Indian groups
 - C. It is difficult to set aside strongly held beliefs or values
 1. Individual may not even be aware they have a bias
- II. Understanding age
 - A. Era in which one grows up puts an indelible imprint on one's values and expectations
 - B. Age at which individual is considered an adult and capable of making adult decisions varies within groups

- III. Understanding gender
 - A. Gender roles (female physician or paramedic, male nurse)
 - B. Men and women communicate differently
 - C. Women interact to form relationships
 - D. Men establish hierarchy of order

- IV. Understanding ethnicity
 - A. Ethnic background includes native language and cultural norms (holiday observances, food preferences, social affiliation, health care beliefs and preferences)
 - B. While some Americans are comfortable with self-reliance and independence, this is not the case for all cultures in America
 - 1. Interdependence with relatives and friends
 - a. Family/extended family are very important
 - b. One may not be comfortable speaking out in a group that is not family
 - i. May be perceived as aggressive
 - ii. May bring shame and embarrassment to family
 - C. Some ethnic cultures are non-aggressive and non-confrontational
 - 1. Some may not be comfortable making eye contact when conversing with a person in authority (e.g., teacher, physician, nurse, etc.)
 - 2. Many cultures address persons of authority formally (by title or surname) until receiving permission to do otherwise
 - D. Gestures and speech patterns do not have universal meaning
 - 1. Smile or nod may be a sign of not understanding or not wishing to disagree with authority
 - 2. Snickering may be a sign of embarrassment and confusion
 - 3. “Yes” may mean, “I heard you” rather than “I agree”
 - 4. Some ethnic groups value silence as a sign of respect and attentiveness; for others it may be a sign of disagreement
 - 5. Humor (particularly sexual in nature) and gestures is offensive to various cultures

- V. Understanding physical ability
 - A. Approximately 43 million Americans have a physical disability
 - B. Report being frequently ignored when in a group
 - C. Gauge to what level the individual desires or needs your assistance before offering assistance

- VI. Understanding sexual orientation
 - A. Non-heterosexuals are often assumed to be infected with the AIDS virus

- VII. Understanding race
 - A. Some races are more stereotyped than others

- VIII. Understanding religion
 - A. Student may be unavailable for class assignments
 - B. For Seventh Day Adventists and Jews – Saturday is the Sabbath
 - C. Muslims pray five times each day
 - 1. Student will not be available for class assignments during prayer times

- D. Jehovah's Witnesses forbid celebrations, with the exception of the wedding anniversary
 - 1. Student may not attend birthday, graduation, or holiday parties
 - E. Christian Scientists and Jehovah's Witnesses may not administer blood or blood products
 - F. Mormons fast for 24 hours once a month
 - G. Religious mandates may impose specific dress codes that conflict with field or clinic settings
- IX. Understanding education
- A. Students with less formal education may feel intimidated or be less articulate in the classroom
 - 1. May feel less entitled to ask questions
- X. Understanding marital status
- A. May hinder or enhance student's commitment to obligations of the class
 - B. The cultural or ethnic group may place a great deal of importance on the marriage and decisions regarding student issues may be made by family members
- XI. Understanding income
- A. Can limit access to education, transportation, and additional class expenses
- XII. Understanding parental status
- A. Child care issues can interfere with scheduled student responsibilities
- XIII. Understanding appearance
- A. Can affect one's perception of a student's commitment to the education program and a career as a healthcare professional
 - B. Religious convictions may impact upon appearance as certain clothing may be required or a certain hairstyle may be imposed upon the individual by their religion or culture
 - C. Individual rights may conflict with dress codes in field or clinic settings
- XIV. Understanding personal habits
- A. Things like smoking, drinking and exercising can build or hinder collegial relationships
 - B. Personal choices, ethics, morals and convictions may prohibit some students from participating in group activities
- XV. Understanding geographic location
- A. Students from other areas may not feel welcome in the classroom setting
- XVI. Realities of cultural diversity
- A. Culture is not overt
 - 1. It has a powerful influence but is subtle
 - B. We are all essentially ethnocentric beings meaning we place a great deal of value in our own culture and consider it normal behavior
 - 1. We rarely question our own cultural identity, and naturally assume our rules, values and beliefs to be correct
 - C. We tend to judge negatively those who are different
 - 1. We observe, interpret, then act

2. Based on our own cultural programming, we attach meaning to behaviors
3. We may not know when we are offending others

XVII. Communication and respecting diversity

- A. 50 – 90% of all communication is non-verbal
- B. Pay attention to body language, facial expressions, and other behavioral cues
- C. Try not to use idioms and slang
- D. Do not take others' behavior personally
- E. We walk a fine line between understanding and stereotyping
 1. Be careful not to label individuals simply because you have a given expectation of their cultural values and traditions
- F. Remember that we are all different
 1. This includes various educational experiences and ways of learning

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