

## 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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