

What is Culture Smart?

A culture smart person is sensitive to the difference between people, respecting them, valuing them and further utilizing them. The differences between people are formed because of many reasons, nationality, education, childhood experiences, socio-economic status, parenting styles, race, gender... and so on. By being aware of the differences one can reduce assumptions that are based on people's behaviors. A culture smart person respects people's differences and values the good that the difference can do. Being culture smart is being open-minded and facing everyday life with positive attitude.

Some General Ideas of Cultural Differences

- What seems logical, sensible, important, and reasonable to a person in one culture may seem irrational, stupid, and unimportant to an outsider.
- Feelings of apprehension, loneliness, lack of confidence are common when visiting another culture.
- When people talk about other cultures, they tend to describe the differences and not the similarities.
- Differences between cultures are generally seen as threatening and described in negative terms.
- Personal observations and reports of other cultures should be regarded with a great deal of skepticism.
- One should make up one's own mind about another culture and not rely on the reports and experiences of others.
- It requires experiences as well as study to understand the many subtleties of another culture.
- Understanding another culture is a continuous and not a discrete process.
- Stereotyping is probably inevitable in the absence of frequent contact or study.
- The feelings which people have for their own language are often not evident until they encounter another language.
- People often feel their own language is far superior to another language.
- It is probably necessary to know the language of a culture to understand the culture in any depth.
- Click [here](#) to learn about the differences between collectivist and individualism in culture.

Strategies for Getting "Culture Smart"

- Learn about differences: ask questions, double check the information gained, observe behaviors, read and attend workshops.
- Look for commonalities: uncover and focus on common goals; look for different "versions" of similar values, reach out to people who are different than you.
- Avoid stereotypical thinking.

URL: <http://cda.uams.edu/cmte/diversity-inclusion/culture-smart/>