

WIN 2 - The Integration Journey

Culture and the 'Iceberg' Model

Gurwinder Gill, India:

I am of Indian origin. I was born in Singapore, but I was brought up in England, and now I'm living in Canada. So I only lived in India for about three or four years of my life, before I was five or six. But going back it was quite the experience, and it was a culture shock - and I'm Indian!

Dr. Umberin Najeeb, Pakistan:

We do have a Canadian culture, although we do know that Canada is a country of immigrants, and there are so many ethnicities and different groups of people; but still there is a culture which one has to acclimatize to and integrate to. We don't want to lose our identity, I mean; I'm not saying that, because wherever we come from we want to keep our personal identity intact because that's how we enrich the organization or the healthcare system where we work with.

Host:

What **is** culture? There are many ways of describing it, but for our purposes, we'll use the "Iceberg Analogy", developed by anthropologist Edward T. Hall. According to Hall, the iceberg represents culture. Only the smallest part, our outward behaviours, can be seen above the surface. The characteristics below influence our thoughts and perceptions. Our values— beliefs. — determine many of our behaviours. These are learned unconsciously while growing up in a particular culture and throughout our lives.

Initially, when two people from different cultures come together, they can only see above the surface. But if they do not understand the basic cultural values that differ underneath the surface, that's when misunderstandings can happen.

In her book called *The (Brown) Elephant In the Room*, Gurwinder Gill points out that culture is unique to each person. Diversity within diversity. This is helpful to keep in mind as you go through the self-reflective exercises below. And as you listen to the individual cultural perspectives of our interview subjects. Here they discuss different approaches to verbal communication.

Dr. Amardeep Bhullar, India:

In India we have unity in diversity. We have diverse states. In Punjab what you say is "Sasrikhal" and you smile. But when you go to Delhi and everything you say "Namaste"; you don't smile. In Punjab, yes; there is difference. In Haryana what they do is they touch feet of your elders, so that's how they greet. In villages and in others you just say "Namaste" and that's it; then you're good to go.

Dr. Umberin Najeeb, Pakistan:

"Salaam wa alaikum", like which is—universal to many Muslim countries.

Dr. Mai Sherif, Egypt:

About male and female, they are more conservative; usually strangers you don't talk to each other at all. In the workplace they are very formal; and in the family, yes, they are more relaxed and we have shared conversation, male and female.

Kenneth Cruz, The Philippines:

In the Philippines, I would say if you meet - if you meet your manager in the hallway it's more of a silent type; you just nod your head or bow your head. Meeting an elderly - let's say your grandma or your grandpa - they usually take their hand and put that on their forehead - that's a sign of respect when greeting them on - for the first time, yes. Which I don't find it here.

Dr. Tushar Malavade, India:

Back home we used to call everyone "sir" and "madam".

Dr. Mai Sherif, Egypt:

For the colleagues we usually have the formal way of addressing.

Kenneth Cruz, The Philippines:

It's a Filipino term; it's called "pauh". It's a sign of respect when you're talking to an elderly or someone who has a higher authority.

Dr. Mai Sherif

But after, when you work with someone for more than years then maybe it become less.

Dr. Umberin Najeeb

For example, when I moved here I was very surprised - like we don't talk to our seniors like "sir" or "madam", but it was very common. And I was talking to a nurse who works with us that 30 years ago it would have been common here as well. So you know we - the things have evolved, but still people coming from a culture where they don't question authority, they may be surprised by that, at how - there is hierarchy; of course there's hierarchy here - but it's still less hierarchical compared to many systems in the world as well.

Just you can ask or approach a conversation as, "Hey - what is happening in Pakistan?" "Why did you move here?" as well is also a good point to start conversation as well. Pakistanis are very focused on cricket; they love cricket.

Kenneth Cruz:

Travel. The Philippines is consisted of like more than 7,000 islands, so you can talk about the different places, where they come from and what they have to offer, like, mountain ranges to the beaches.

Dr. Mai Sherif:

It differs. If I'm a male of course I will talk about soccer; we have big two, you know, groups: Al Ahly, Zamalek. And this is, you know, very popular. If we are females, we talk about kids.

Kenneth Cruz:

Food. Everyone loves food.

Dr. Mai Sherif:

We like food; we talk about food also; this is our culture. We have very delicious food.

Dr. Umberin Najeeb:

A lot of good food. Everybody talks about Indian food, and I think the whole South Asian food is taken as Indian food, but there are different kinds of food. Like, Bangladesh has different food, or Sri Lanka, or Pakistan So food, and cricket - two big things!

Kenneth Cruz:

And then I would also say, maybe family - family is very important for Filipinos, so that's a good conversation.

Dr. Amardeep Bhullar:

In every state, wherever you go, once you talk about the politics you are very frank with them. You can get to know anything and everything.

Dr. Mai Sherif:

The last few years politics took a very—a big share in our conversations because many things happened after the revolution in Egypt 2011. Everybody, even kids, they have now knowledge about the revolution, the constitution, the parliament. We didn't like this before.