



WELCOME!

#720: Cultural Lens

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- Smart Marriages 2009




Our goal for this workshop:
“Mindful Flexibility”

○ **Mindful:**

- *“Cultural Awareness in Marriage Education”*
- Communication and Conflict Styles
- Two Cultural Lenses

○ **Flexibility:**

- *“Cultural Adaptations in Marriage Education”*
 - Recent Adaptation for Diverse Populations
 - Adapting Communication Skills Programs
- 



CULTURAL AWARENESS IN MARRIAGE EDUCATION

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The cultural “game” includes...

Popular Culture

Music

Advertisements

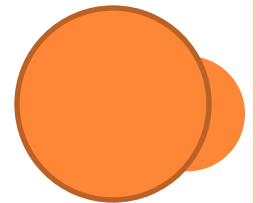
Celebrities

Movies,

TV

Facebook, Twitter,

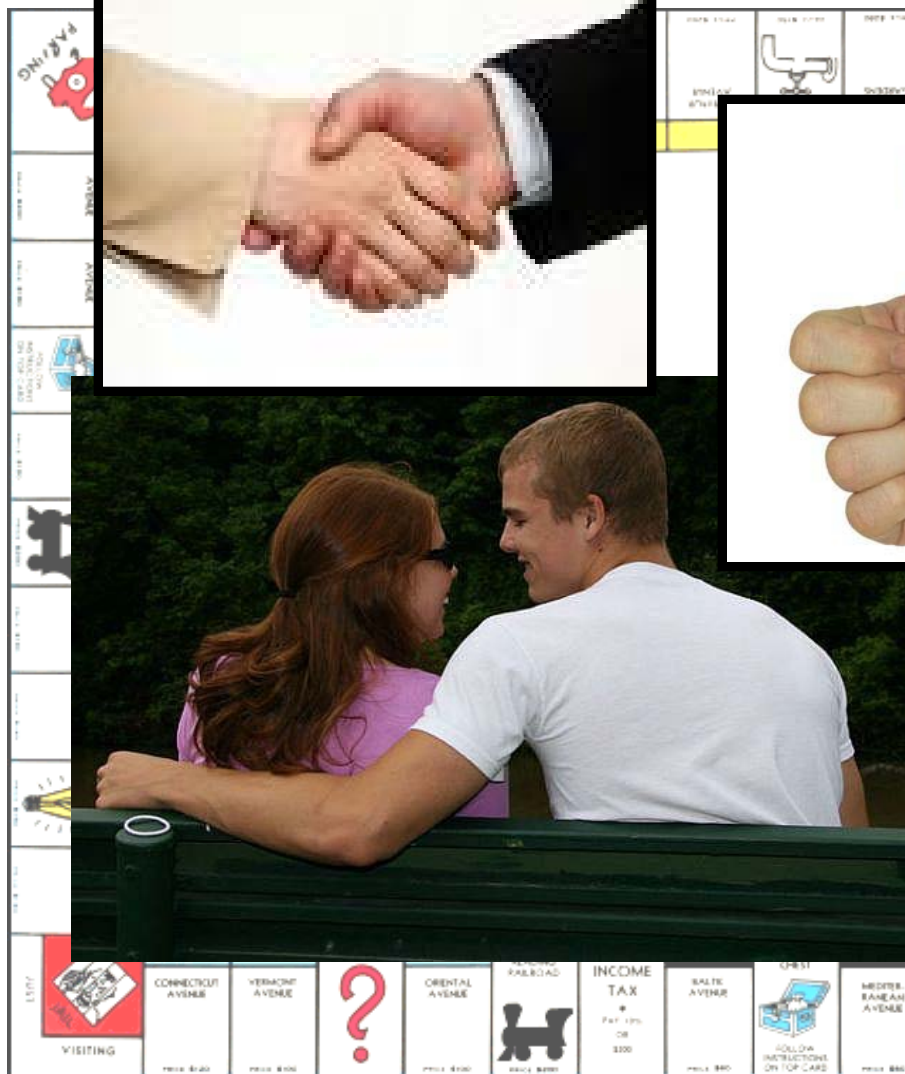
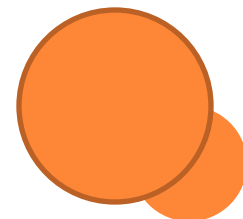
etc.



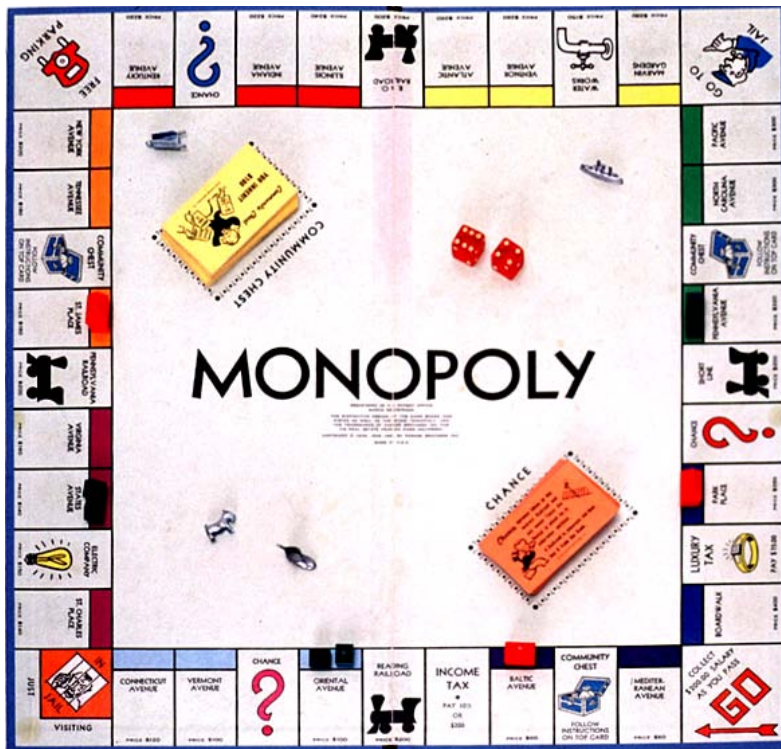
The cultural “game” includes...



Language
Meanings
Societal Norms



*But there is more than one “game”
(social rules, traditions, values, etc.)
being played!*



What is your “cultural lens?”

- Take the quick self-assessment on page A-1 of your handout.
- Scoring (scores range from 5-20) :
 - Total of even-numbered items: _____
 - Total of odd-numbered items: _____
- Even-numbered: measures “Individualistic” culture
Odd-numbered: measures “Collectivistic” culture
- *The higher the number, the more strongly you identify with that culture. Similar scores indicate a person with bicultural values.*
- *(The self-assessment on A-2 is a bonus – do it later.)*



Cultural Lens #1: INDIVIDUALISTIC Culture

- CULTURAL VALUES: INDIVIDUALISM = “I” Identity
 - Independent
 - Self-sufficient
 - Personally responsible for actions, accomplishments
- LOCATIONS:
 - USA
 - Western Europe, UK
 - Australia, New Zealand, Canada
- COMMON SAYINGS:
 - *“Be all that you can be”*
 - *“Pull yourself up by your bootstraps”*
 - *“The squeaky wheel gets the....”*



Individualistic Communication

- Direct communication (aka “low context”):
 - The words themselves carry the message
- Characteristics:
 - Assertive
 - Talkative
 - Informal speaking style
 - Refusal by verbal “No”
- Sayings:
 - *“Just spit it out”*
 - *“Get to the point”*
 - *“Don’t beat around the bush”*



Cultural Lens #2: COLLECTIVISTIC Culture

- CULTURAL VALUES: COLLECTIVISM = “We” identity
 - Interdependent
 - In-group harmony
 - Face-saving, respect
 - Fulfillment of others’ and the group’s needs
- LOCATIONS: ***over 2/3rds of the world’s population!**
 - Asia
 - Africa
 - Middle East
 - Central & South America
- COMMON SAYINGS:
 - *“One finger cannot lift a pebble”*
 - *“The nail that sticks up...”*



Collectivistic Communication

- Indirect communication (aka “high context”):
 - The words – and the context – carry the message
- Characteristics:
 - Indirect verbal style
 - Formality, hierarchy
 - Subtle expression of emotions
 - Importance of silence
 - Refusal by delayed decisions, hesitations, apologies
 - Conversational tone
 - Asian American - understated
 - African American, Arab American - animated



Communication Styles

INDIVIDUALISTIC

COLLECTIVISTIC

Direct <-----> **Indirect**

Germany

US

S. Arabia

Japan

Switzerland

Canada

Kuwait

China

Denmark

Australia

Mexico

S. Korea

Sweden

U.K.

Nigeria

Vietnam

○ *Now let's turn to conflict styles...*



Culture and conflict styles:

What is your “conflict style?”

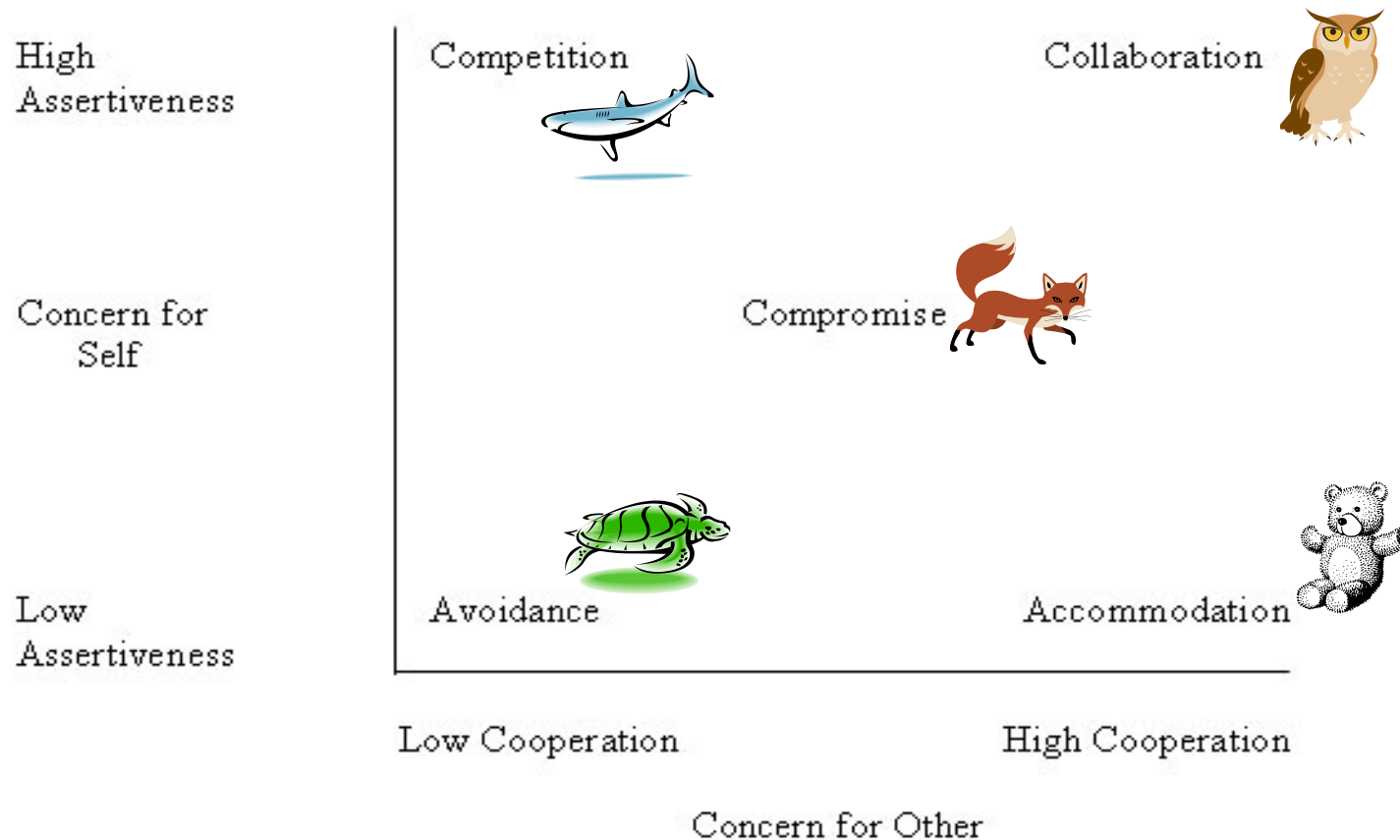
- Take the quick self-assessment on pg A-3 of your handout.
- **Scoring:** Did you circle more “A” or “B” items?
 - Mostly “A” Items = Individualistic conflict style
 - Mostly “B” Items = Collectivistic conflict style
 - If equivalent, you tend to use both.




CULTURAL LENS #1: INDIVIDUALISTIC CONFLICT MODEL

(Johnson, 1986)

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



CULTURAL LENS #2: COLLECTIVISTIC CONFLICT MODEL (Ting-Toomey: Face Negotiation Theory)

- Collectivists:
 - Indirectly address conflict,
 - Do not separate the conflict issue from the relationship
 - **Conflict = “Facework”**
 - **Face:** respect, dignity, honor; *“Saving the other’s face”*
 - **Facework:** addressing conflict in a way that does not embarrass or shame my partner, and smoothes over feelings that may threaten the relationship; the primary concern is for mutual dignity and honor.
- 

Now, some specifics about conflict styles...

○ Native American

- Collectivistic
- Fewer words, silence conveys displeasure
- Indirect expression of emotions

○ African American

- Both individualistic and collectivistic
- Animated, emotionally expressive

○ Asian American

- Collectivistic
- Silence sometimes used as powerful conflict style
- Understated, soft verbal tones
- Avoiding and Accommodating styles



Now, some specifics about conflict styles...

- Latino/Hispanic American
 - Collectivistic
 - Tactfulness, consideration of others' feelings
 - Respectful “facework”
- Arab American
 - Collectivistic
 - Animated verbal tones
 - Stories, metaphors, embellishments
- White (EuroAmerican)
 - Individualistic
 - Relatively low-keyed in verbal tones
 - Focus on conflict goals, not relationship goals



Ways to Encourage Collectivists participating in US-Based Communication Skills Programs

- **LISTENING SKILLS** (such as Reflective/Active Listening, Paraphrasing, Showing Understanding, Empathy):
 - Encourage the listener/summarizer to include deferential, qualifying phrases, such as:
 - *“I may be wrong, but what I’m hearing is..”*
 - *“Please correct me if I am misinterpreting what you’ve said. It sounded to me as if ...”*
- **SPEAKING SKILLS:**
 - May need more encouragement to overcome hesitancy to overtly criticize, especially in front of others. Partner could include phrases such as:
 - *“Please tell me what you are upset about.”*
 - *“I care for you and want to know how you feel about it.”*



What about inter-ethnic couples?



- **1/3 higher** chance of divorce within first 10 years.
- **Conflict Styles:**
 - Individualists: more dominating and competitive
 - Collectivists: compromising, accommodating, “avoiding”



What about inter-ethnic couples?

○ Particular Stresses:

- From outside the relationship
 - racism, prejudice
- From within the relationship



Lack of awareness

- Two sets of cultural expectations
- Two styles of communication, conflict

Lack of adaptation

- “Code-switching” = switching between two styles of communication



Different Cultural Lenses:

What “Healthy” Communication is...

INDIVIDUALISTIC

- Direct
- Assertive “I” messages
- Words communicate the message

COLLECTIVISTIC

- Indirect
- Face-saving
- Silence and deferral also communicate



Different Cultural Lenses about Conflict

INDIVIDUALISTIC

COLLECTIVISTIC

Avoidance:

- Unhealthy, does not address issue

- Shows concern for “face”; upholds dignity of other

Accommodation:

- “Giving in”; not assertive

- Concern for preserving relational harmony

Compromise:

- 50/50 split; seen as partial loss for both

- Seen as long-term relationship building



*Now that you're more mindful, let's
turn to flexibility...*





CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS IN MARRIAGE EDUCATION

Goli Amin MSW, LICSW; LCSW-C.

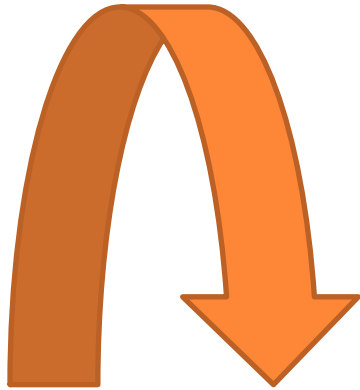
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

www.refugees.org/healthyfamilies

POPULATION PROFILES

Refugee Families

War, Persecution,
Political Violence



All 1st Generation New
American Families

Left Everything Behind



TARGET AUDIENCE / MARKETING

○ Cultural Values

- Families: Group Orientated/ Collectivistic
- Health
- Face Saving

○ Audience Goals

- Success in America
- Maintaining Traditions





ADAPTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Cultural Sensitivity
- Gender Roles
- Communication Styles
- Translations and Interpreters
- Levels of Literacy and English Skills



PROGRAM ADAPTATIONS

- Program Names
- Curricula
 - *Introduction to Relationship Enhancement*®
 - *Family Stress and Conflict Management*
 - *Relationship Enhancement*® and *Financial Literacy*
- Participant Handouts
 - *Relationship Enhancement*® for *Refugees and Immigrants*
 - *Relaciones Enriquecidas*® para las familias





Mastering the Mysteries of Love



**ADAPTATION OF NAMES
- TRANSLATIONS**

**Relationship
Enhancement[®]**

Now translate it!



ADAPTATION OF NAMES - SPANISH

- Mejoramiento de relación
- Aumento de relación
- Relaciones Enriquecidas



RELATIONSHIP ENHANCEMENT® RELACIONES ENRIQUECIDAS®

Para Las Familias



U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS



GENERALIZATION OF MATERIALS

- Children and Youth
- Extended Family - here and abroad
- Widows, Separated, Divorced
- Americans - work, grocery store, schools





ADAPTATION OF CURRICULA

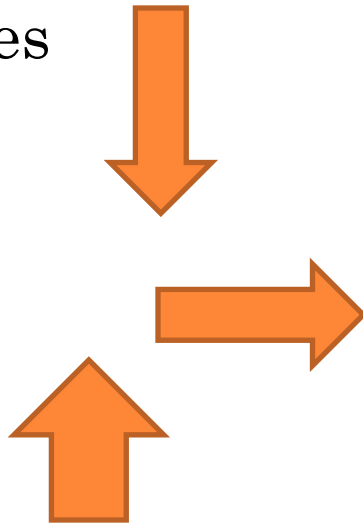
- Marriage in America
- Goals as a couple for family in America
- Changes in Roles
- Family Violence Laws and Resources



CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS

Linear

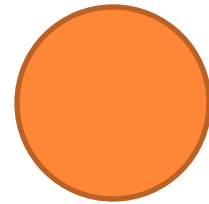
- Factual - inductive
- Theoretical - deductive
- Testimonies
- Models
- Diagrams
- $A + B = C$
- 1, 2, 3,



Circular

- Metaphors
- Similes
- Stories
- Parables
- Religious references

Ex: I'm getting there!
I'm getting there!
I'm getting there!



ADAPTATION OF PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

Circular Communication

- Teach the skill through a story
- Explain the skill with examples and cultural stories
- Use common refugee/immigrant stories of experiences in America
- Adjust for time

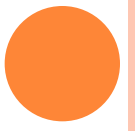
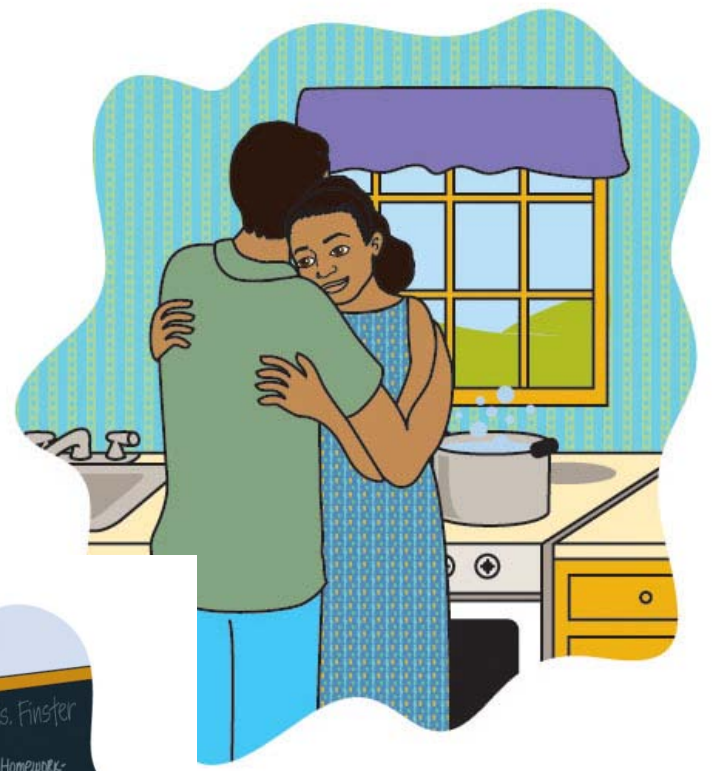


ADAPTATION OF PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

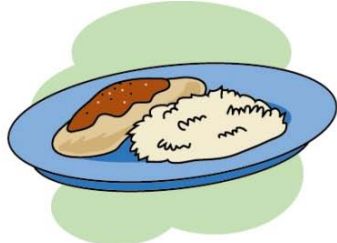
Visuals! Visuals! Visuals!

- Pictures (EXPLAIN THEM)
- Culturally Significant Symbols
- Colors
- Spacing, Numbering
- Bold, Sizing

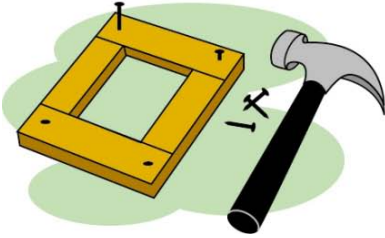
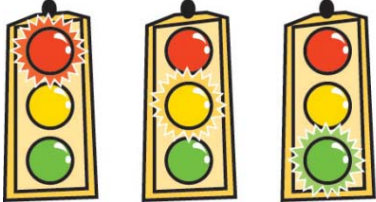








SYMBOLS



ADAPTATION OF PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

Simplify! Simplify! Simplify!

- Use 1 - 2 Syllable Words
- Use Short Sentences
- Eliminate Slang
- Replace American Colloquialisms
- Have Cultural Consultants Review



ADAPTATION OF PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

Eye Contact - Look Into Their Eyes - **Cultural**

Adaptation: *“Show with your body that you want to hear what the other person says.”*



ADAPTATION OF PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

Empathize, Validate - **Clinical, Translation**

“Put yourself in the other person’s shoes” - **Colloquial**

“Become your partner” - **Cultural, Clinical, Marriage Specific**

Adaptation: *“Experience the Other’s View”*



The Cultural Lens: *“Mindful Flexibility”*

- ***MINDFUL***: Be aware that:
 - Couples’ communication styles may differ from your own
 - Couples’ conflict styles may differ from your own
 - Pay attention to your own reactions:
 - Do you think there is a problem when in reality it may be a cultural difference?
 - Is the couple just operating from a different set of “cultural rules” from your own?
 - Support collectivists’ concerns for face-saving while encouraging careful discussion of conflict issues



The Cultural Lens: *“Mindful Flexibility”*

FLEXIBILITY: Remember to...

- Use simple sentences and words
- Consider translation and interpretation complications
- Use visuals
- Be creative in reaching your circular communicators



Questions ?



CULTURAL LENS: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take this self-assessment to help determine your 'cultural lens.'

Instructions: Recall how you generally feel and act in various situations. Let your first inclination be your guide and circle the number in the scale that best reflects your overall impression of yourself. The following scale is used for each item:

- 4 = YES! = I strongly agree – IT'S ME!
3 = yes = I moderately agree – it's kind of like me
2 = no = I moderately disagree – it's kind of not me
1 = NO! = I strongly disagree – IT'S NOT ME!

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I enjoy depending on others for emotional support. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I believe I should be judged on my own accomplishments. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. My family and close relatives are a part of who I am. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I value my personal privacy very highly. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I usually consult my close friends for advice about decisions I must make. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. My close friendship groups are important to my self-image. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. I am responsible for my actions only – not other people's actions. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Feeling connected with others is more important than "doing my own thing." | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Being viewed as a unique individual is very important to me. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*Adapted from Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2005). *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

COMMUNICATION STYLE: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take this self-assessment to help determine your preferred style of communication.

Quick Quiz: Check off any of the following behaviors that you find irritating or frustrating when you interact with individuals who talk that way:

1. ____ Not answering questions directly
2. ____ Talking bluntly
3. ____ Insisting on calling you Ms., Mrs., Miss, or Mr.
4. ____ Making direct requests
5. ____ Using lots of silence in conversation
6. ____ Talking about themselves and their accomplishments repeatedly
7. ____ Responding to a request with vagueness or hesitation
8. ____ Talking very casually or informally
9. ____ Frequently apologizing
10. ____ Speaking loudly
11. ____ Speaking softly
12. ____ Openly criticizing

Scoring: Identify whether you checked more odd or even items:

Mostly Odd-Numbered Items: Collectivistic style culture

Mostly Even-Numbered Items: Individualistic style culture

*Adapted from Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2005). *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

CONFLICT STYLE: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take this self-assessment to help determine your 'conflict lens.'

Instructions: Consider several conflict situations in which you find your goals or wishes differing from those of another person. How do you usually respond to those conflict situations?

The following are some pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, **circle** the "A" or "B" statement that is most characteristic of your own behavior in most conflict situations.

Overall in most of the conflict situations...

1. A. I attempt to stand firm in my conflict requests.
B. I do my best to soothe the other person's feelings and tend to the relationship.
2. A. I tend to separate the conflict from the relationship.
B. I tend to take time to understand the background or context of the conflict.
3. A. I try to verbally defend my position to the best of my ability.
B. There are often times that I shy away from facing the conflict person or problem.
4. A. I tend to be direct in expressing my feelings about the conflict.
B. I try to downplay the importance of the disagreement.
5. A. I try to show him or her the logic and reasons of my position.
B. I emphasize that our relationship is much more important to me than the conflict itself.
6. A. I'm usually firm in pursuing my goals in a conflict.
B. I'm usually sensitive to the fact that other people might hear our arguments in public.
7. A. I like to get potential conflicts out on the table as soon as I am aware of the problem.
B. I usually figure out whether the other person is angry by tuning in to his or her feelings.
8. A. I usually try to persuade the other person that my way is the best way.
B. I try not to discuss the problem in front of others.
9. A. I believe in dealing with conflict in an up-front, honest manner
B. I usually apologize just to soothe feelings and soften the conflict situation.
10. A. I usually articulate and assert my conflict goals clearly.
B. If it makes the other person happy, I sometimes flow along with his or her wishes.

*Adapted from Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2005). *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

CONCLUSION:

The Cultural Lens: “Mindful flexibility”

MINDFUL: Be aware that:

Couples’ communication styles may differ from your own

Couples’ conflict styles may differ from your own

Pay attention to your reactions:

- Do you think there is a problem when in reality it may be a cultural difference?

- Is the couple just operating from a different set of ‘cultural rules’ from your own?

Support collectivists’ concerns for face-saving while encouraging careful discussion of conflict issues

FLEXIBILITY: Remember to:

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Consider translation and interpretation complications

Use visuals

Be creative in reaching your circular communicators

REFERENCES

Johnson, D. W. (1986). Reaching out: *Interpersonal effectiveness and self-actualization* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice hall.

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Triandis, H. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Boulder, CO: McGraw-Hill.

www.IDEALS.org - Website for information about the adapted version of Relationship Enhancement.