

Multicultural Guidelines for Communicating Across Difference

- **Try On** Try on each other's ideas, feelings, and ways of doing things for the purpose of greater understanding. Keep what you like and let go of the rest at the end of each interaction, discussion, session or meeting.
- **Okay to Disagree and NOT okay to blame, shame or attack ourselves or others** because of our differences. One of the necessary ingredients for differences to be expressed and valued is that people need to let go of the need to be, think or act the same.
- **Practice "Self-Focus" and use "I" Statements** Begin by talking about your own experience. It is helpful to make "I" statements when speaking about your experience, rather than saying "you", "we" or "one". When you intend to refer to others, be specific about them- by name or group. This invites and creates space for multiple perspectives to be shared especially- when they are different than yours.
 - Learning from uncomfortable moments is an important part of this process so, pay attention to your feelings.
- **Be Aware of Intent and Impact** Be aware that your good intentions may have a negative impact - especially across racial, gender or other cultural differences. Be open to hearing the impact of your statement.
 - If you want to "stretch" yourself - seek the feedback from the individual before they bring it to your attention.
- **Practice Both/And Thinking** Look for ways to fit ideas together and not set up an "either/or" process or a competition between ideas.
 - Look for the existence of many truths from the perspective of the many cultural backgrounds involved or that you are serving.
- **Notice Both Process and Content** Notice both process and content during work sessions. Content is what we say, while process is how and why we say or do something and how the group reacts.
 - Notice who's active and who's not, who's interested and who's not, and ask about it.
- **Confidentiality** with regard to personal sharing is important. You can carry the work of the group, your own learning, stories and perspectives, and the public work from the group. Allow others to tell their own stories.
 - Ask first to see if an individual wants to follow-up on the initial conversation.
 - Do not use any information shared negatively towards a progress report or against a supervisor.

This Multicultural Tool was created by VISIONS, Inc. – added info by Amy Stickle

VISIONS, Inc. is a nonprofit training and consulting enterprise providing a variety of services that support organizations, communities, and individuals as they continue to clarify their diversity-related goals and engage in a dynamic process of multicultural development. VISIONS, Inc. was established in 1984 as a nonprofit, educational organization. Today it is a 501(c)(3) entity with offices in Roxbury, Massachusetts, Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and is supported by a team of consultants around the United States and abroad. www.visions-inc.com