

Cultural Awareness in Nutrition Counseling

Understanding the broader parameters of a culture is important to providing quality care

Hispanics/Latinos	American Indian	Euro-American
Language: Spanish/English	English	English
Cooperation	Cooperation	Competition
Family harmony	Group harmony	Individual achievement
Modesty & humility	Modesty & humility	Overt identification of accomplishments
Non-interference	Non-interference	Advice giving, directiveness, counseling & education
Silence is valued Ability to listen & wait	Silence is valued Ability to listen & wait	Points made by aggressive verbal behavior; expression of opinion
“Respeto” (respect)	Respect	Respect earned
Emotional control Silence or non-compliance when in disagreement Contemplation	Emotional control No strong emotion or demonstration of anger Contemplation	Direct confrontation Direct expression of anger Action over inaction
Patience Family decision by discussion & consensus	Patience Group decision by discussion & consensus	Rapid response Decision making Problem solving
Time is flexible Present is important	Time is flexible	Obsession with time; time is money
Faith & Church powerful sources of hope & strength Integration into daily activities Magico-religious means of dealing with life (candles, saints, etc.)	Spirituality & religion integrated into daily activities Land-based No original sin/damnation	Evangelical Activity-based Salvation &/or 2 nd coming of Savior
Avoid direct eye contact	Avoid direct eye contact (sign of respect)	Direct eye contact considered sign of honesty & sincerity
Hand shake firm & longer than usual	Hand shake lightly, women touch only finger tips	Firm hand shake denotes power
Information verbal	Information verbal- “word of mouth”	Written preferred Lectures, newspapers, TV, radio, internet
Personal information increases trust & rapport	Personal information not forthcoming	Self-disclosure valued, open & honest communication style
Ideas & feelings conveyed through behavior rather than speech	Ideas & feelings conveyed through behavior rather than speech	Verbal expression of ideas & feelings
Listening valued over talking	Listening valued over talking	Schools teach speaking over listening, importance of expressing one’s opinion
Use of observational skills & non-verbal communication	Use of observational skills & non-verbal communication	Verbal & written communication valued
Criticism communicated indirectly thru other family members (direct criticism considered disrespectful & rude)	Criticism communicated indirectly thru other family members (direct criticism considered disrespectful & rude)	Direct criticism used to alter behavior
Requests given thru direct or indirect suggestions	Requests given thru direct or indirect suggestions	Requests direct

Resources:

Curry KR. Multicultural Competence in Dietetics and Nutrition. J Am Diet Assoc 2000;100:1142-3.

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Snetselaar L. Nutrition Counseling Skills for Medical Nutrition Therapy. Apsen Publishers, Inc. 1997.

Health and Healthcare of American Indians and Alaska Natives

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/ethnoger/americanindian.html>

Kemp C. Mexican & Mexican Americans: Health Beliefs & Practices.

http://www.baylor.edu/~Charles_Kemp/hispanic_health.htm