

Culture is the lens with which we evaluate everything around us; we evaluate what is proper or improper, normal or abnormal, through our culture. People naturally use their own culture as the standard to judge other cultures; however, passing judgment could reach a level where people begin to discriminate against others whose "ways of being" are different than their own--essentially, we tend to fear that which we do not understand. Cultural diversity is important because our country, workplaces, and schools increasingly consist of various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. We can learn from one another, but first we must have a level of understanding about each other in order to facilitate collaboration and cooperation. Learning about other cultures helps us understand different perspectives within the world in which we live, and helps dispel negative stereotypes and personal biases about different groups. In addition, cultural diversity helps us recognize and respect "ways of being" that are not necessarily our own, so that as we interact with others we can build bridges to trust, respect, and understanding across cultures. Imagine a place where diversity is recognized and respected; various cultural ideas are acknowledged and valued; contributions from all groups are encouraged; people are empowered to achieve their full potential; and differences are celebrated. Intervene in an appropriate manner when you observe others engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, bias, or prejudice.