OVER FIFTY WAYS CULTURE INFLUENCES US

Culture affects every aspect of a person’s life. Here is a list of over 50 ways culture influences people.

*ETIQUETTE AND BEHAVIOR
- How we greet each other
- What is considered common courtesy
- What is considered impolite
- How we show respect and disrespect
- What is risqué
- How we seek and use health services
- What we find humorous
- How we use mass transit
- Seating placement in a room

*HUMAN RELATIONS
- The role of the individual
- The role and structure of the family
- The roles of men and how men should behave
- The roles of women and how women behave
- The importance of competition between individuals
- Social class system
- Hierarchy in business relationships
- Interactions between strangers
- How to interact with a person in authority (boss, police officer, teacher, etc.).
- How to interact with a person who is serving us
- Relationships and obligations between parents
- Crowd or audience behavior

*TIME
- How time is scheduled and used
- Whether schedules are important or unimportant
- The importance of maintaining tradition
- The importance of preparing for the future
- Whether old age is valuable or undesirable
- The importance of understanding one’s history and passing it on

*COMMUNICATION
- The language we speak
- What should be said; what should be left unsaid
- What is appropriate "small talk"
- Whom we speak to; to whom we should not speak
- Whether conversation should be formal or informal
- The meaning of hand gestures, facial expressions and other nonverbal communication
- How often we smile, whom we smile at, and the meaning of a smile
- In which environments it is "safe" to speak one’s mind; in which environments we must censor
- Identity
- Our tone of voice, use of emotion, use of stories

*BELIEFS AND VALUES
- What is beautiful or ugly
- What are worthwhile goals in life
- The nature of God and other religious beliefs
- Whether a person is in control of his or her own life or whether fate determines one’s life
- Common sense
- Our perceived needs
- Whether privacy is desirable or undesirable
- Appropriate health care
- Appropriate personal hygiene
- What is “right”, what is “wrong”

TEN WAYS THAT “GOOD” COMMUNICATION STYLES VARY ACROSS CULTURES

Task Orientation. It’s important to take care of business without wasting excessive time on small talk and getting to know each other.

Clarity. It is best to be clear and specific in expressing and requesting information. Beating around the bush is annoying or a sign that people are evading the truth.

Face to face communication. Two people should work out their problems directly with each other.

Emphasis on words. If something is important or on your mind, you should speak up.

Importance of individual opinion. People should express their individual points of view and opinions even if they differ from the beliefs or opinions held by others in the group.

Supportive discussion. When disagreeing with or criticizing others, it’s important to do so in a positive, supportive manner. A person may feel personally attacked when someone else argues with them.

Expression of emotion. It is okay to share feelings such as happiness, excitement, enthusiasm, or sadness through words or facial expressions.

Detached/objective style. In meetings, people should stay rational and in control of their emotions. Becoming overly emotional takes away from the speaker’s credibility and effectiveness.

Simplicity. It’s best to simplify ideas, clarify thoughts and avoid ambiguity.

Concrete. The best way to learn or to solve a problem is to examine and discuss concrete examples.

Relationship orientation. Building relationships is more important than completing tasks. People cannot do business together until they have taken time to establish a relationship.

Indirect speech. It is best to be vague and ambiguous when expressing information. Speaking in a direct, straightforward way is unnecessarily harsh and impolite.

Use of third party. The best way to work out problems between two people is to use an intermediary or go-between.

Emphasis on content. If something is important, it should be left unsaid. Putting everything into words weakens communication and relationships.

Importance of harmony. Disagreeing with others, pointing out mistakes or insisting on personal opinions can undermine a group. It causes group disharmony and loss of face.

Critical discussion. Arguing, debating, and criticizing ideas are enjoyable and acceptable conversational styles. One should point out the weakness in the other person’s argument as this promotes the exchange of ideas.

Suppression of emotion. It is important and thoughtful to hide all personal feelings and opinions so that they are not evident in words or facial expressions.

Animated style. Becoming louder and animated is a sign of involvement in the discussion. A person who remains unanimated during the discussion may be insincere or not interested in the topic.

Complexity. Simplicity should be distrusted. Complex communication reflects the depth of the topic.

Theoretical. The best way to learn or to solve a problem is to discuss the underlying theory and philosophy.