

## THE STAGES OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

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### Source

This activity was developed by Oana Nestian Sandu.

### Themes

- ▶ Identity
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Intercultural communication and dialogue

Other topics addressed: intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, ethno-relativism

### Competences addressed

- ▶ Attitudes: respect for oneself and others; tolerance of ambiguity

**Complexity** : Level 2

**Group size** : 12 to 24 people

**Time** : 90 minutes

### Objectives

- ▶ To understand the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity
- ▶ To analyse the difference between ethnocentric and ethno-relative attitudes
- ▶ To reflect upon how attitudes can influence relations between people with different cultural backgrounds.

### Materials

Role cards presented below, a space that can be used as a “stage” for the role play.

### Preparation

This activity can be preceded by “Exclusion breakfast”, focusing on raising awareness about the mechanisms of arbitrary exclusion.

Choose one of the scenarios below as a basis for the role play. Photocopy the scenario and prepare the role cards.

### Instructions

1. Inform participants that this activity involves a short role play. Divide the group into smaller groups of six (you may wish to have a few participants as observers). Give each group the scenario and each participant in the small group one of the six role cards. Give each group about 10 minutes to prepare themselves individually for the role play.
2. Ask each group to describe the scenario and start the role play. The scene is acted out for 10 minutes after which a decision needs to be taken.
3. Ask all groups to perform one after the other.
4. Move to the debriefing.

### Debriefing and evaluation

You may use the following questions for the debriefing.

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ What did the participants in the audience observe?
- ▶ What attitudes did participants observe in the situation related to a new group of people or a minority? Are these attitudes realistic? Could you think of a real situation where these attitudes are present?
- ▶ What arguments could be proposed to stimulate intercultural dialogue among different groups?

## Tips for facilitators

You can ask for volunteer “actors” before the activity begins to give them more time to prepare for the roles.

The roles in the handout were prepared on the basis of the attitudes included in the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity in Chapter 2. It is important to explain to participants that these attitudes are not clear-cut in real life and over time.

## Variations

You could ask all participants to work on different scenarios and become engaged in the role playing. This approach gives them the opportunity to integrate the model further and to perceive different understandings of the phases.

You could show the short Pixar movie *Day and night* to visualise the phases: [http://pixar.wikia.com/wiki/Day\\_%26\\_Night](http://pixar.wikia.com/wiki/Day_%26_Night).

## Suggestions for follow-up

This activity could be followed by “Three steps for my intercultural competence”, an activity that helps participants reflect upon their own competences related to intercultural learning and assists in making a plan to further develop them.

## Handouts: role cards<sup>27</sup>



### Character A

You believe your culture is the only real one. You interact very little with people from other cultures. You do not like to travel to other places. You do not understand or care what cultural differences are since your culture is the only one that matters. You are not very interested in other groups.

### Character B

You understand that people have different cultural backgrounds, but you do not like this. You do not really want to interact with people of different cultures. Cultural difference is responsible for a lot of problems in society. Any interaction with “the others” would only threaten the “purity” of your culture.

### Character C

You understand that people have different cultural backgrounds, but you think difference is not important. You believe most aspects of your own cultural world view are universal. You believe people should be treated the same and make no attempt to understand different cultures or how they influence people’s behaviours. After all, we are all humans, that’s what matters!

### Character D

You acknowledge and respect difference. You accept different behaviours, values and world views. Acceptance does not mean agreement, but you do not judge differences based on ethnocentric and hierarchical world views. You try to understand them. You consider your culture and world view to be just one of the many complex world views. You accept and are interested in interactions with people from other cultures.

### Character E

You interact with people with different cultural backgrounds on a regular basis and this is normal for you. Culture is not a given, it’s a process, it develops all the time. You also learn from other cultures and extend your world view this way. You try to understand others by putting yourself in their shoes.

### Character F

You have a lot of experience of working and living in various cultural contexts. You view your identity as fluid and define it in terms of lived experiences and your relationship to a given context. You have the ability to evaluate different situations and world views from one or more cultural perspectives.

<sup>27</sup> These roles correspond to the attitudes included in the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity; see Chapter 2.

## Scenarios

- ▶ You are the board members of the organisation "Together for youth!". You work with young people from the rural areas around the city and run leisure-time activities at the weekend. This year, one of the ideas is that you invite young people from other countries to volunteer in your local activities. The board of the organisation will meet to analyse this proposal to have volunteers from other countries come to your organisation and take a decision on whether to accept this or not.
- ▶ You are the board of a school and you need to decide whether the newly arrived students who fled a country where there is currently a civil war can be integrated into your school. Their arrival has sparked a lot of controversy among parents, so you need to carefully analyse the situation before making a decision on whether to accept them or not.
- ▶ You are the members of the committee of inhabitants of a block of flats. A foreign family moved in not long ago, and since they arrived there have been complaints from the other inhabitants: some said they make too much noise, others said that they cooked smelly food, others said that they have a lot of children who play all the time with the elevator. You need to carefully analyse these complaints and decide what to do.
- ▶ You are the board members of a school, where 40% of the students belong to one of the national minorities living in your country. This year, the parents' association made a proposal to translate all the school messages and the school website into the language spoken by the minority students, in order to state that the school is truly multicultural and respectful of diversity. They have also proposed organising a "week of diversity" to celebrate the different cultural affiliations students have. You need to carefully discuss this proposal and decide whether to accept it or not.