



Diversity and Communication in the Workplace

CHERYL BRISTOR-WILSON, LCSW,
CADAC, CEAP

AFSCME PERSONAL SUPPORT
PROGRAM

CBRISTORWILSON@AFSCME31.ORG

Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact

<https://binged.it/2pW4UkY>



Making full use of the unique skill sets of each employee

- Do I bring my “full self” to work?
- My ideas
- My opinions
- My background
- My personality
- My uniqueness

Definition of Diversity

1: Differing from one another unlike people with diverse interests

2: Composed of distinct or unlike Elements or qualities a diverse population



What is Valuing Diversity?

“Recognizing and appreciating that individuals are different, that diversity is an advantage if it is valued and well managed.”

“Diversity is not simply to be tolerated but encouraged, supported and nurtured.”





Workplace Diversity

Workplace diversity is a people issue, focused on the differences and similarities the people bring to an organization.

It is usually defined broadly to include dimensions beyond those specified legally in equal opportunity and affirmative action non-discrimination statutes.

Diversity in the Workplace:



- ▶ Allows individuals to recognize, accept and respect differences among each other
- ▶ Builds stronger relationships between coworkers and clients
- ▶ Increases productivity with a broader skill and knowledge base
- ▶ Provides equal opportunities for minorities

Diversity in the Workplace

Multiple Dimensions in the Workplace

Source: Australian Multicultural Foundation

Gender	Age
Culture	Ethnicity
Regional Culture	Sexual Orientation
Mental/Physical Disabilities	Education
Religion	Language
Literacy	Work Experience
Family Status	Economic Status
Career Roles	Geographic Location
Communication Style	Work style
Learning Style	Thinking style
Personality	Ideology
Profession	Organizational culture



Challenges of Diversity

- ▶ Stereotypes & associated assumptions
- ▶ Actual cultural differences
- ▶ Exclusivity of “in-group” and / or associated access to information & relationships
- ▶ Un-written rules & double standards for success
- ▶ Lack of Communication



Failure to Address Diversity

- ▶ Impacts productivity
- ▶ Diminished morale
- ▶ Higher rates of absenteeism
- ▶ Loss of creativity
- ▶ Leaves company at a disadvantage when competing for employees.



Diversity is only FAIR

- ▶ **F**eedback/communication promotes understanding, reduces conflict; and enhances productivity.
- ▶ **A**ssist others to become culturally competent; support one another we are all in this together!
- ▶ **I**nclusion should be practiced; empower employees to fully perform and participate in pursuit of the organization's mission.
- ▶ **R**espect is non-negotiable; honor the social contract

Stereotyping

- ❑ Stereotyping is an unconscious process by which individuals are viewed as members of groups, & the information we have stored in our minds about the group is ascribed to the individual.
- ❑ Stereotyping is an exaggerated belief associated with a category
- ❑ Its function is to justify / rationalize our conduct in relation to that category
- ❑ A stereotype is not necessarily a valid generalization about the group
- ❑ It is never applicable to all members of the group





Stereotypes in the Workplace: *Impact on the Organization*

- ▶ Encourage low expectations
- ▶ Encourage managers to perceive risk in employing minority groups
- ▶ Affect how jobs are assigned
- ▶ Affect how people are treated (e.g. as subordinates)
- ▶ Result in low morale / loss of energy
- ▶ Reduce motivation

Cultural competence



- ▶ Respect others opinions.
- ▶ Acknowledge cultural/generational differences and historical injustices without becoming defensive.
- ▶ Be open to learning about other cultural and ideas.
- ▶ Give others the benefit of the doubt in dispute.
- ▶ Seek first to understand others' point of views; then to be understood.
- ▶ Don't stereotype.
- ▶ Don't judge others by your own cultural standards.
- ▶ Don't assume your culture's way is the only way.
- ▶ Don't talk down to anyone; communicate effectively.

NASW Cultural Competency Standards

Standard 1:
Ethics and Values

Standard 2:
Self Awareness

Standard 3:
Cross Cultural Knowledge

Standard 4:
Cross Cultural Skills

Standard 5:
Service Delivery

Standard 6:
Empowerment and Advocacy

Standard 7:
Diverse Workforce

Standard 8:
Professional Education

Standard 9:
Language Diversity

Standard 10:
Cross Cultural Leadership

Source: National Association of Social Workers,
naswdc.org

Impediments to Cross Cultural Communication



Irrational Assumptions

An irrational assumption is a belief that is founded on baseless supposition, often skewed by bias. One of the best examples is irrational assumptions are the stereotypes we formulate about people based on their association of membership with cultural or ethnic groups

Misunderstanding

Misunderstandings are a normal part of communication either because we unintentionally or intentionally use the wrong words or because we don't understand what is being said to us. To prevent misunderstanding know who you're talking to, be respectful, and be sure of what you want to say.

Prejudice



By definition. Prejudice is either a bias in favor of or against something. Such biases can of course be benign, however , those preferences having to do with people can be hurtful and cause problems especially in the workplace

Fear

Fear of change in the workplace is counterproductive, especially fear of ideas and people who are different from us

Top 10 Communication Skills

(Source and Based on the following website: [theBalance.com](https://www.thebalance.com))

Here are the top 10 communication skills in the Workplace:

1. Listening
2. Non verbal communication
3. Clarity and concision
4. Friendliness
5. Confidence
6. Empathy
7. Openminded
8. Respect
9. Feedback
10. Picking the right medium





Four factors that produce therapeutic change:

Model/Approach

Hope (counselor)

Relationship

Client Factors

Principles of change

- ▶ Justice and fairness providing equal treatment to all people
- ▶ Fidelity honoring commitment to those we service
- ▶ Individualization
- ▶ Clients have a right to services in a supportive therapeutic environment
- ▶ The client is the director of his/her plan

Principles of change

- ▶ Truthfulness
- ▶ Diagnosis
- ▶ Confidentiality (and its limits)
- ▶ Refusal of services
- ▶ Therapeutic approach
- ▶ Areas of expertise

Counselors unfinished business and ethical dilemmas

- ▶ Abandonment issues and codependency
- ▶ Unresolved trauma
- ▶ Differentiation of self in the family of origin
- ▶ Resentments



Awareness of transference and countertransference

Transference

- Counselor as ideal
- Counselor as a wizard
- Counselor as perfect nurturer
- Counselor as frustrater
- Counselor as non-human, inadequate figure; without needs, desires, wishes, feelings or problems

Awareness of transference and countertransference

Countertransference

- ▶ Being overprotective
- ▶ Secondary PTSD
- ▶ Fear of the client's anger
- ▶ Cross cultural disgust
- ▶ Seeing yourself in your client
- ▶ Needing constant reinforcement and approval
- ▶ Sexual feelings toward the client
- ▶ Giving advise compulsively to a client
- ▶ Biases based on diagnosis
- ▶ Gender bias

CASE #1

- ▶ You are working with a client who is making a great deal of progress and working hard to be a good parent. She confides in you that she hit her 10-year old son yesterday because he was talking back
- ▶ From your perspective, personal cultural or religious- Does this constitute child abuse as a therapist what do you do?

Personal issues of counselor can lead to ethical dilemmas

- ▶ To feel power
- ▶ To feel superior
- ▶ Strong need for approval
- ▶ To win acceptance and recognition
- ▶ Rescue fantasies
- ▶ Perfectionism
- ▶ The need to assume too much responsibility for change



Questions to ponder



- ▶ Who am I qualified to help?
- ▶ What new knowledge do I need?
- ▶ Am I doing what I encourage my clients to do ?

Characteristic of effective culturally competent counselors



- ▶ The counselor moves beyond first impression
- ▶ The counselor searched for strength
 1. What do you do well?
 2. What skills do you have that have enabled you to endure so much?
 3. What do you like to do in your leisure time?
 4. What are the 3 best moments you can recall in your life?
 5. What is the best thing you ever made happen?
 6. What is your current or previous life suffering preparing you to do with the rest of your life?
 7. What have you learned from what you've gone through?
- ▶ The counselor is aware of his/her own biases and strives not to allow them to interfere with her/her work with clients

Characteristic of effective culturally competent counselors

- ▶ The counselor allows the client to be the teacher about his/her own culture
- ▶ The counselor avoids lumping all clients from the same cultural group into one category
- ▶ The counselor is too self-actualized to hide behind isms
- ▶ The counselors advocates for clients
- ▶ The counselor incorporates aspects of the client's cultural into the change process
- ▶ The counselor is able to learn from community based programs of recovery



Where does your
name come from?

Minority / majority

- ▶ Actual minority fewest members present
 - ▶ Actual majority most members present
 - ▶ Psychological minority least comfortable based on number in the group
 - ▶ Psychological majority feels most comfortable based on number in the group
-
- ▶ 80% majority 20% minority = balance majority
 - ▶ 50% majority 50% minority = balance minority



Avoiding struggles

- ▶ You are the bridge
- ▶ Be available to all
- ▶ Help those in the psychological minority feel more comfortable
- ▶ Try to avoid “tokenism”
- ▶ Be aware of how issues occurring in the larger society can impact group process
- ▶ Be willing to have an open discussion of issues connected to differences



Case vignettes

- ▶ John tells his therapist that he is disappointed with his daughter and himself as a father because of her engagement to a man from another race. John has threatened to write his daughter out of his will if she marries this man. What John does not know is that his therapist is in an interracial marriage. The therapist discloses this fact, then lets John know of her difficulty with what she perceives as his prejudice.

Case Vignette questions

- ▶ How do you react to the therapist's self disclosure? Was it ethical to self disclose?
- ▶ Would it have been ethical not to self disclose?
- ▶ What are your thoughts about the timing of the disclosure?
- ▶ Should the therapist make a referral?
- ▶ What are your values in this situation and what would you do if you were the counselor?

Microaggressions

- ▶ Direct and indirect (conscious and unconscious) insults, slights and discriminatory messages

<https://youtu.be/xMMmRxkwmJk>

Types of microaggressions experienced by members of majority groups

Assumption that I am a racist.

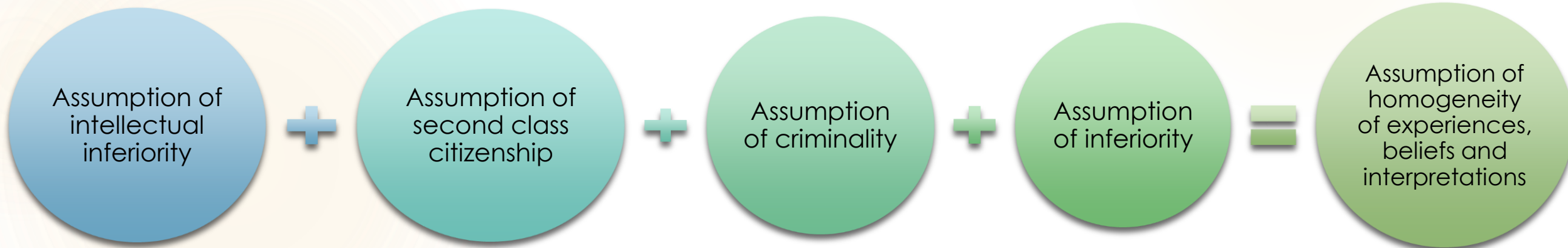
Assumption that I discriminate.

Assumption of wealth.

Assumption that I did not earn what I have.

Assumption of conservatism.

Types of microaggressions experienced by members of minority groups



Cases

Two colleagues, one Asian the other African American board a small 10 seat plane traveling to Tortola, a British Island. They were among the first passengers to board the plane and were greeted with a smile by the flight attendant and told to “Sit anywhere you like.” The two co-workers immediately engaged in conversation as they both sat on aisle seats adjacent to each other near the front of the plane.

The last passengers to board the plane were 3 white males. All vice presidents of XYZ Corporation. Based upon seats already taken they would not be able to sit next to each other on the plane. The flight attendant asked the Asian and African American co-workers if they would move to the back of the plane. The flight attendant stated “You both could sit next to each other and might feel more comfortable sitting back there.” When they moved to the back of the plane, the 3 white males sat next to each other in the front of the plane. The Asian passenger told the flight attendant that he was angry that they were asked to move to the back of the plane. The flight attendant said, “You're being too sensitive,” and walked away. The Asian and African American co-workers said to each other, “she's a racist.”

Case questions



1. What are your reactions to this series of interactions?
2. Any micro-aggressions? If yes, please describe.
3. In this entire scenario whose position do you feel you understand best?
4. Could this situation have been handled differently? If yes, please explain.

Clever story

Story that you tell yourself when you have experienced a boundary violation or an insult, which allows you not to take action as a change agent. The story lets you off the hook and justifies you not taking action



3 types of clever stories

▶ Victim story

“I am completely innocent and I am therefore devoid of responsibility and you are completely guilty.”

▶ Villain story

With this story you turn your co-worker into a total villain, assuming the worst intent. This allows you to justify giving him or her the silent treatment, rudeness, or the cold shoulder.

▶ Helpless story

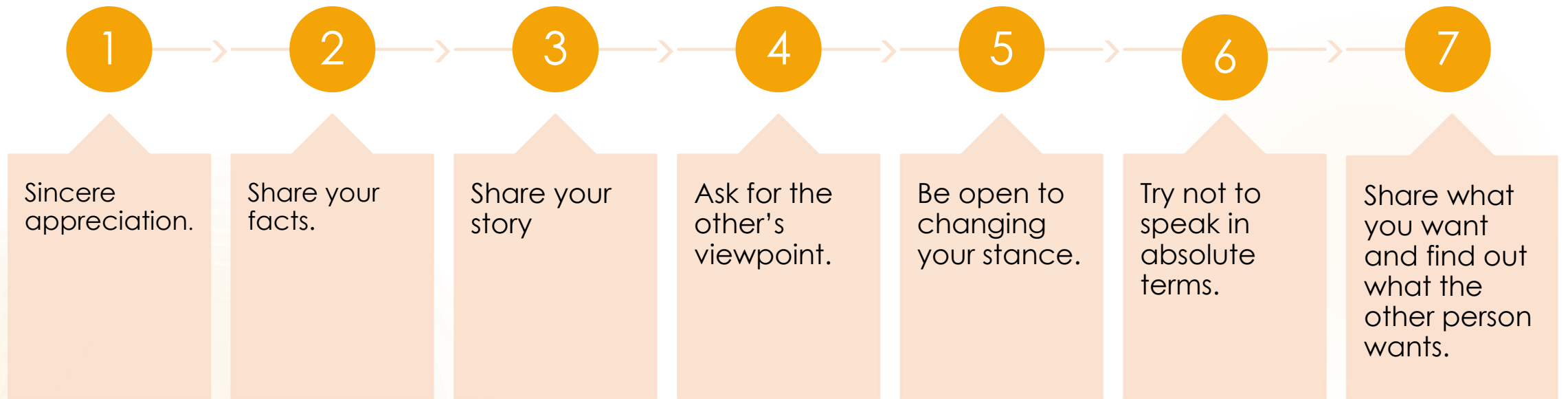
With this story you tell yourself that there is nothing you can do to address the situation, and therefore you say and do nothing.



Helpful story



The opposite of the clever story. You are more likely to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. Less likely to assume the worst, avoid mind reading, and take action as a diversity change agent by engaging in effective dialogue



7 steps to Effective Dialogue

Tips for dialogue



- ▶ People are less likely to become defensive because of what we are saying. They become defensive when they do not feel safe. That is why it is often helpful to start with facts rather than a creative story.
- ▶ People tend to become less defensive when they sense that you are coming from a caring place.
- ▶ Debate story not facts

Case

- ▶ Shirley and Dave are co-workers. They developed a presentation for staff. Their plan was that each would deliver half of the presentation. During the presentation, Dave spoke first and delivered 95% of the material and quickly responded to most of the audience questions. Shirley was angered by this and has not spoken to Dave since the presentation. What are some things she might be saying to herself?
- ▶ Break into groups of 5. Use effective dialogues 1,2, 3, and 4 to describe the words Shirley and Dave should use to address this issue.



∞ When we are in the position of privilege, we must accept that our opinions may not be appropriate in spaces meant for those who are marginalized by that very privilege. ∞

— *Christine Parris*

Intersectionality

WAYS YOUR LIFE IS SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT
FROM CLIENTS

01

Hiring and promotions are based only on skills, talents and ability.

02

There is no glass ceiling.

03

Differences are highly valued.

Inclusive organizations should have

What else is needed



- ▶ Strategies to assure that a diverse workforce is hired.
- ▶ Strategies to assure that a diverse workforce is retained.
- ▶ Strategies to assure fairness in employee discipline.
- ▶ Strategies to assure that supervisors are effective in managing a diverse workforce.
- ▶ Strategies to assure that promotions are based on skills, talents and abilities.
- ▶ Commitment and time.

Last words to ponder

- ▶ **“When we feel a sense of belonging it is not because we are the same as everyone else, but because we have been accepted as we are.”**

