CULTIVATE CQ

MODULE 3

Overcoming **Cultural Biases and** Fostering **Intercultural Understanding**

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Module Overview

Intercultural understanding is the ability to interact and communicate with people from different backgrounds respectfully and effectively. It serves as a bridge that connects individuals and helps create welcoming learning environments. Developing this skill requires intentional steps to foster an appreciation for various perspectives and ensure all individuals feel valued and included in the educational settings.

Key skills and why this topic matters in youth work

Young people come from many different cultures, languages and traditions. Misunderstandings between various groups can cause conflict and exclusion. Therefore, youth workers need the right skills to make everyone feel safe and welcome.

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When youth workers develop intercultural understanding, it:

1. Encourages curiosity and engagement with new perspectives
2. Strengthens problem-solving and decision-making skills
3. Promotes creative thinking and discovery
4. Builds stronger relationships and collaboration.

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Learning outcomes

This module elaborates on the importance of the notion of cultural awareness. The focus of the module is on the understanding of the cultural experience that might be relevant in one context and unacceptable in another culture; youth workers and educators need to recognise potential tensions and respond in ways that protect dignity, fairness, and inclusion.

Through the international exposure and role-plays, the participants will be able to step into the shoes of another person and learn how to recognise and mediate the potential bias and emerging tension in a peaceful manner.

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Activity title:

Role-Play “The Space Between” what lives in the gap between cultures

Example real-life scenario:

PERSONAL SPACE

In this video, we explore cultural awareness through a real-life situation connected to cultural intelligence in youth work.



Key message: What feels friendly in one culture may feel uncomfortable in another. Understanding begins with respect.

WATCH HERE

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Description

Participants act out real-life cultural awareness scenarios where hidden tension, unequal trust, and prejudice disguised as concern affect how a young person from another cultural background is treated.

The activity builds cultural awareness by making invisible bias visible and practising constructive, dialogue-based responses.

Target Group

YOUTH WORKERS - VOLUNTEERS - TRAINERS



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As a result of the participation in this activity, participants will be able to:

- Recognize hidden bias and unequal trust in everyday group situation;
- Understand how prejudice can be framed as care or concern;
- Experience intercultural tension from both sides;
- Practice constructive responses through dialogue and open questions

Learning Outcomes

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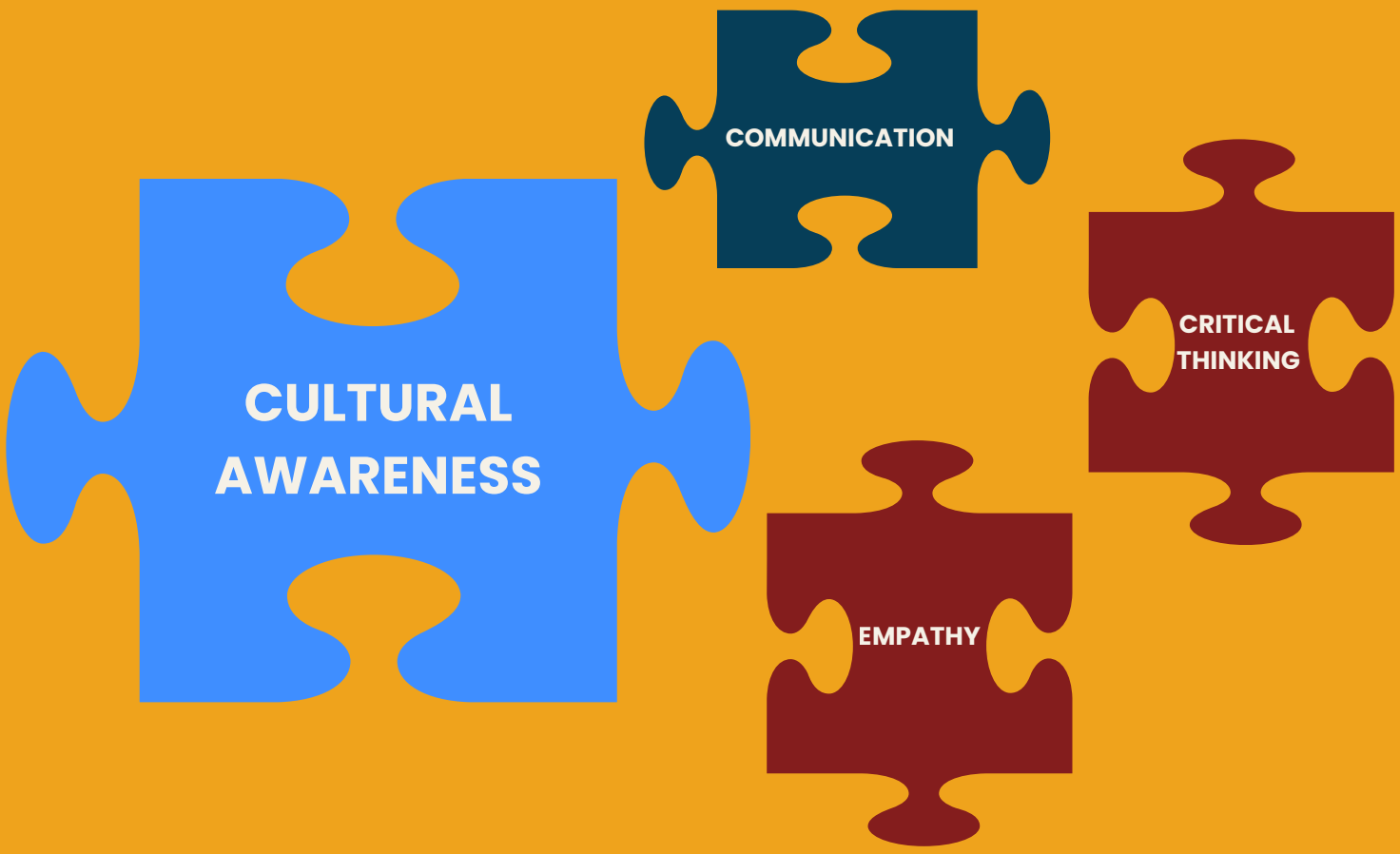
Skills Addressed



Materials Needed

- Scenario description template handout
- Flip chart or whiteboard
- Markers
- Timer
- Short video clip showing a similar intercultural moment

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Step-by-Step Implementation

STEP 1

Session Opening & Agreement

10 min

Welcome participants and co-create the Safe Space Agreement. Ask: “Any additions?” to signal that norms belong to the group, not just the facilitator. Briefly summarise the video scenario. Ask who knows what cultural awareness is, why it is important in youth work.

STEP 2

Introduction

10 min

Briefly introduce cultural bias and the idea that prejudice is often hidden in language that sounds caring or protective. It can also be expressed through body language and physical senses.

Ask: "Can bias look like concern?" Take two or three short answers. You can also make a silent discussion where participants would write their answers on a big sheet of paper and a short reflection may follow on that.

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STEP 3

Look for cultural challenge

10-15 min

Every community or group that participates shall get together for a few minutes and come up with a cultural challenge they find of utmost relevance in their particular contexts.

That would allow to place those challenges within the broader frame of cultural awareness and have further dynamic based on the real challenges.

STEP 4

Real-life scenario writing

10 min

Suggest participants to write down on the sheet of paper the cultural challenges they have discussed, why is it important and how it can be addressed through a peaceful perspective.

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STEP 5

Role-play round (group 1 and group 2)

20-30 min

Every group should demonstrate what they have come up with and the other participants should guess what kind of cultural challenge is described. Run the scenes as described by the groups of participants. Encourage young people to stay natural - no exaggerated playing. The bias should feel subtle and plausible, not obvious.

STEP 6

Pause and observe

5 min

The facilitator stops the role-play. The observer audience (all the participants who are not involved in the role-play) share one or two specific moments they noticed. What did they see? What felt unequal? What sounded like concern but was not?

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STEP 7
Role play (group 3)

10 min

Play continues with another scenario from the last group.

STEP 8
Constructive dialogue practice

10 min

In small groups of three-five, participants share their experiences on the role-play using constructive dialogue as an instrument to facilitate cultural awareness. Every small group shares their experiences to the full group.

STEP 9
Debrief

10-15 min

Full group reflection using the questions below. Close by naming one concrete thing each person will do differently in their own practice.

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Debrief

Reflection Questions

- When you were in role-play, what did you feel when the concern sounded friendly but the treatment was unequal?

- Where in your own work might prejudice be hiding behind care or protection? What would it look or sound like?

- What specific words or behaviours could change the dynamic of the situation?

- How is intercultural communication expressed in a diverse setting?

Tips for Learners

Stay in the role: the discomfort is part of the learning. Do not step out early.

When observing, focus on language and tone, not just actions. Bias often lives in small words.

Speak from your own experience during the debrief. Use "I noticed" rather than "you did".

Remember that recognising bias in yourself is a strength, not a failure.

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Resources

1. **Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People** (https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass)
2. **Intercultural Communication Resource Pack** (https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1789/Booklet%20Intercultural%20Communication%20Resource%20Pack.pdf)
3. **T-Kit 4: Intercultural Learning:** (https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-4-intercultural-learning)
4. **Ted Talks: How to overcome own biases** (https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them)
5. **Cultural Diversity as a Learning Tool in Youth Work** (https://www.vicolocorto.org/public/file/goodpracticeguide-red_1.pdf)
6. **Collection of Good Practices in Building and Maintaining Intercultural Environment in Youth Organisations** (https://project-bic.vum.bg/wp-content/uploads/BIC-Collection-of-Good-practices-in-building-and-maintaining-intercultural-environment-in-youth-organisations.pdf)



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