

# CONNECTIONS

*Communicating in Culturally Diverse Settings*

## The Do's and Don'ts of Multicultural Communication: Part 2- The Do's

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In the previous issue of the CONNECTIONS, I introduced the Do's and Don'ts of Multicultural Communication. I offered tips, ideas and suggestions for improving your ability to communicate across cultural differences, and to reduce the possibility of offending others. These tips focused on the **Don'ts** - the behaviors you want to avoid at all costs. In this issue, I describe 7 things you want to **Do** to improve multicultural communication:

1. **DO demonstrate empathy in all of your interactions.** Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand another person's feelings, situation, ideas, values and desires. There are many ways to demonstrate empathy, but the best way is to always listen, to try and understand where your colleagues and co-workers are coming from, and to demonstrate your understanding on a consistent basis.

2. **DO be accepting of cultural differences.** Always remember that acceptance doesn't necessarily mean agreement. You can be totally accepting of a person while still disagreeing with their ideas or certain beliefs they hold. Acceptance refers to a willingness to support and validate your colleagues, to have positive regard for them, and to remain non-judgmental even in circumstances where you do not agree.

3. **DO suspend your judgment.** It is very natural to evaluate others. We do it all the time. However, judging others can create many communication problems so always try to be non-judgmental, even when you disagree with the person, or in situations where your values are different. One way to do this is to say to yourself, "There is always value in difference, even when I have to look hard to find it!"

4. **DO step outside of your comfort zone.** The best way to increase your cultural knowledge and skills is to experience the things that culturally different people experience on a regular basis. This can help you to better understand the values, beliefs and behaviors of people who are culturally different. Go to diverse places of worship, visit different cultural events, go to various social activities, visit different ethnic restaurants, talk to different people at work, or do anything else that puts you in direct proximity with people you don't normally interact with. The most important aspect of this process is to step outside of your comfort zone. For example, if you are a member of a "majority" group, put yourself in the position of being a "minority". This will give you a better understanding of why culturally different people might think or act in certain ways.

COMMUNICATING IN  
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## The Do's and Don'ts of Multicultural Communication: Part 2 (continued)

5. **DO seek common ground between yourself and others.** This is especially important during multicultural interactions. Always remember that no matter what the cultural differences are, you will always have more similarities with your colleagues than differences. Focus on identifying these similarities and using them as a means to better understand your differences.
6. **DO acknowledge the impact of stereotyping.** Stereotypes (the generalizations we make about members of a particular group) negatively impact our interactions and cause us to act in unintentionally biased ways. Therefore, be aware of your stereotypes, and actively work to reduce their impact (see CONNECTIONS newsletter Volume 3, Issue 3 for specific steps you can take to reduce your stereotypes).
7. **DO speak inclusively.** Inclusive language acknowledges different people and creates more positive environments where people feel included. To communicate inclusively, use terms that will be understood and respected by people of different backgrounds, refer to peo-

## The Do's and Don'ts of Multicultural Communication: Part 2 (continued)

ple by the names they wish to be called (e.g., physically challenged instead of handicapped), and eliminate language that suggests men are the standard for all human beings (e.g., use both masculine and feminine pronouns).

For dozens of additional tips, ideas and suggestions read my TIPS booklet:

**50 TIPS FOR IMPROVING  
COMMUNICATION IN CULTURALLY  
DIVERSE SETTINGS**

## TIPS Booklets

It is with great pleasure that I announce the publication of my first three TIPS booklets! Using a concise, easily scannable format, these affordable 20-page guides offer detailed tips, tools and techniques you can use to immediately improve your performance. The following booklets are currently available:

- **50 Tips for Improving Communication in Culturally Diverse Settings.**
- **50 Tips for Managing and Resolving Conflict**
- **50 Ways to Lose Weight Without Dieting.**

Each booklet will be available for purchase as of November 15 at a rate of only \$5 plus \$1 shipping and handling. Visit my website at [www.doctorholmes.net](http://www.doctorholmes.net) for ordering information.

## About the Author

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, Ed.D., LPC, CPT is a speaker, trainer, consultant, fitness coach, author and competitive cyclist.

