

# CONNECTIONS

*Communicating in Culturally Diverse Settings*

## DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE The Second Competency of Diversity

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In the last issue of CONNECTIONS, I introduced the *competencies of diversity*, which are the skills and abilities you need to perform at a high level in culturally diverse settings. These competencies include **Self-Awareness, Diversity Knowledge, Multicultural Communication, Conflict Management, Empowering Environments** and **Professional Development**. I also described the first competency and discussed 4 steps each of us can take to enhance our self-awareness. In this issue, I describe the second competency, *diversity knowledge*, which refers to the information we have about diverse cultures and groups. Individuals with a significant level of diversity knowledge:

1. Are able to describe the specific benefits and positive outcomes of creating culturally inclusive work settings.

2. Are able to define concepts such as diversity, diversity empowerment, and diversity management.

3. Understand concepts such as racism, sexism, ethnocentrism and sexual harassment, and the impact of these forces within an organization.

4. Understand how the various dimensions of diversity (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, nationality and socioeconomic status) affect individuals and their experiences.

5. Possess knowledge of diverse cultures and groups including information regarding communication styles and workstyle preferences.

6. Continuously attempt to increase their knowledge of "the ways we may be different" as well as the "ways we are similar".

There are several steps you can take to improve your diversity knowledge:

1. **Take a cultural diversity class.** There are many classes, seminars and workshops that provide information on different cultural groups and/or diversity topics. You can identify an appropriate class through a local college, community organization or your place of work.

2. **Read a diversity-based book, magazine or article.** Likewise, there are many books, journals and periodicals that provide information on a wide variety of diversity issues, topics and cultural groups.

3. **Share information about your cultural heritage with others.** Revealing information about your cultural background and experiences can be a powerful tool for building stronger relationships. It helps your colleagues better understand who you are as a human being, and encourages them to be more open about themselves.

COMMUNICATING IN  
CULTURALLY DIVERSE SETTINGS

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## DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE (continued)

4. **Participate in the holiday celebrations of different cultural groups.** Whatever your cultural background, you undoubtedly have celebrations, holidays and events specific to your group. For example, African Americans have Kwanzaa, Latinos celebrate Cinco de Mayo and people of Jewish faith celebrate Hanukkah. Learn more about the culture and traditions of other groups by participating in one of their celebrations.

5. **Visit a cultural museum.** There are many types of museums you can visit that will provide you with an opportunity to meet a diverse array of individuals, and learn more about the background and experiences of different cultural groups.

6. **Visit a culturally different church.** Attend service at a church with a diverse racial or ethnic composition. You will have an opportunity to interact with a wide range of individuals in a pleasant social setting.

7. **Write an article on a diversity topic of interest.** Don't worry, you don't have to be a prolific author. Just identify an appropriate publi-

## DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE (continued)

cation such as your local paper, a website or a newsletter. Write a brief article that describes a diversity holiday, a cultural practice or lists upcoming diversity events. It's a great way to learn and to help others increase their diversity knowledge.

8. **Develop a list of diversity websites and resources.** By doing a little Internet research, you can identify dozens of organizations, websites and companies dedicated to diversity programs and information. Compile a list of these resources and share it with your colleagues and co-workers. Type 'Diversity Resources' in any Internet browser to get started.

## My Fitness Corner Blog

I have a weblog entitled, **The Fitness Corner**. Through this blog, I provide you with specific tips, tools and resources you can use to lose weight, improve your health and fitness, and enhance your work-life balance. I cover a wide array of topics including:

- Developing a *Fitness Lifestyle*.
- Improving your eating habits.
- Losing weight **WITHOUT** dieting.
- Reducing stress in your life.
- Improving your work/life balance.
- Developing an exercise program.
- Exercising without exercise.
- And much more!

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## About the Author

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

