

The Task at Each Stage of Moving from Ethnocentrism to Intercultural Sensitivity and Biculturalism*

How do we address the way people experience cultural difference?

Stage	Developmental Task	Challenge for Facilitator
Denial: Often clumps with defense (see below)	To recognize the existence of cultural differences	To explore nonthreatening, pleasant activities, such as eating, dancing, or watching a movie that explores a different culture
Defense: People experience themselves as being “under siege”—their community and world are changing demographically.	To work against “us-and-them” attitude by emphasizing our common humanity	Avoid direct confrontation, since it will only increase polarization. Provide opportunities for persons to get to know others as individuals and intentionally reflect upon their common humanity.
Minimization: Our commonality is more important than our differences. We must not be judgmental. Persons express fear of being labeled “prejudiced” or “racist.” Persons from dominant group probably not aware of how they are perceived as privileged or culturally imperialistic by those from nondominant ethnic/cultural groups.	To increase cultural self-awareness. For persons in the dominant ethnic group, to become aware of the structures of privilege that shape individual lives.	Ask the question: How do persons in the dominant ethnic group experience themselves as cultural beings? Provide cross-cultural experiences with intentional reflection, either in the world or by way of reflective exercises.
Acceptance of Difference: People are equally complex but different. Begin struggling with moral and ethical issues.	To refine one’s analysis of cultural contrasts, seek out differences, respect others’ values and beliefs, tolerate ambiguity while not really understanding the differences.	Provide in-depth, complex, cross-cultural experiences with intentional reflection. Separate cultural issues from social power issues, so each can be explored. Avoid conflating culture and power. This is an extremely challenging task in emotionally charged racial and cultural environments.
Adaptation to Difference: Ability to organize one’s thinking in different cultural ways depending upon the circumstances. Behavior becomes more transparent; one does not stand out, does not call attention to self.	To develop a willingness to risk shifting behavior in order to function effectively and to develop good cross-cultural–cross-racial relationships. However, as one changes behavior in order to adapt, there is confusion. “How can I be authentic?”	Provide more intense, in-depth, cross-cultural experiences with intentional reflection, such as taking part in immersion experiences, participating in missional opportunities, or developing close personal relationships.
Integration: Persons often experience being marginal to a particular culture, even their own. They have become truly bicultural persons.	To resolve multicultural identity; role flexibility and identity flexibility; control personal boundaries; achieve authentic personal relationships.	Support persons as they deal with internal cultural shock and cultural marginality. Open discussion on the “normalness” of this experience for bicultural persons. Recognize the special insights, gifts, and skills of these individuals and provide ways in which such attributes can be acknowledged openly and utilized. Connect such persons to other cultural “marginals.”

* Summarized from the “Interpreting Your Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Profile,” distributed to persons who have completed the IDI. It is produced by the The Intercultural Communication Institute, Portland, Oregon.