

# Culturally Sensitive Care

## I. Highlights

A. Different cultures have different ways of saying “hello” (body language, eye contact, distance, physical contact, etc.). Be sensitive to this when greeting families at school. It’s part of building trust/ relationships with them.

## II. Homework

- A. Program observation assignment is due next week.
- B. Read Chapter 6 for next week. (Journal due the week after.)

## III. Culturally Sensitive Care

- A. Activity: In your home culture, how do you say hello?
  1. Everyone says hello to everybody, even driving down the street past neighbors.
  2. Greeting family and very close friends may hug and kiss, maybe kiss both cheeks.
  3. First say hello to elders in the house and go down the chain.
  4. Middle Eastern culture and Russia/ Eastern Block countries: women only kiss men hello if they’re father/ brother, otherwise just say hello. Men kiss each other both cheeks, women kiss each other, but women to men only if father/ brother. Usually the younger person goes toward the older person, pays respect, and then the older person indicates how close the younger person should come.
  5. The processes of saying hello and good-bye are very important in Middle Eastern and other cultures. Extremely rude to leave without saying good-bye, even if you’re just trying not to disturb people.

6. Asian cultures (especially grandparents) may back off and bow, very different from American culture.
7. African-American culture usually is very warm, hugging, etc. Caucasian culture is not usually as touchy.

B. Party culture (worksheet)

1. Sometimes normal to bring food, sometimes not to bring food (If I'm cooking, come to my house for my food). Sometimes considered demeaning to the hostess to bring food, but other times it's expected to bring something.
2. In Iran when Ms. Zarghami was little, was normal for the gates to be open at 5 am, closed at midnight, people to drop in all day long and stay for meals if they were there at the time. Now gates are usually closed and locked, people rarely drop in unannounced. Culture evolves. Even the same family / country can be different a few decades later.

C. How does all this relate to our work with children?

1. Need to be comfortable with the fact that families may be speaking to each other in a language you don't understand. Don't be offended by it.
2. Parents' reactions to our interactions, style of saying "hello," how close to get in conversation, etc. will affect our relationships. It's hard to develop trust when you both still feel weirded out just from saying "hello" in a weird way.
3. Parents and grandparents who don't speak English may avoid interacting with us in the classroom.
4. You have to work to develop this sensitivity. The key is to go beyond your own culture. If your instinct is to shake hands with everyone, you may have to hold your hands to stop yourself from shaking hands with Asian parents.
5. If you're serving Iranian kids, how would you know their culture isn't to hug, but is to kiss without touching? It takes time to find out and to practice it.