

TOUCHSTONES/REFLECTIONS

Following these touchstones will help us work together more effectively and better learn from and serve our international colleagues. *Which of them will you hold close to enrich your journey?*

Presume Welcome and Extend Welcome. We all learn more effectively in spaces that welcome us. Therefore, we have a responsibility to welcome each other to this place and this work and to presume that we are being welcomed as well.

Be 100% Present. Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Bring all of yourself to this work. Allow yourself to “be here now.”

No Fixing. Each of us is here to discover our own truth, to listen to our own inner teacher, to take our own inner journey. We are not here to set another straight or to help right another’s wrong, to “fix” what we perceive as broken in another member of the group.

Suspend Judgment. Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.

Identify Assumptions. Our assumptions are usually transparent to us, yet they undergird our worldview. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.

Speak Your Truth. You are invited to say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Your truth may be different from, even the opposite of, what another person in the circle has said. Yet speaking your truth is simply that – it is not debating with, or correcting, or interpreting what another has said. This behavior honors the previous speaker’s comments without passing judgment. It also avoids introducing defensive feelings that distract from the dialogue.

Respect Silence. Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. This applies to the speaker as well – be comfortable leaving your words to resound in the silence, without refining or elaborating on what you have just said. This process allows others time to fully listen before reflecting on their own reactions.

Maintain Confidentiality. Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions held. Allow what is said here to remain here.

When Things Get Difficult, Turn to Wonder. If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place.” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me.” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now.”

Worksheet #1: Features of Culture

Directions: For each feature of culture, think of one example common to people in the United States or in the country where you were born. Use another sheet of paper if you need more space to write.

1. Styles of dress

2. Ways of greeting people

3. Beliefs about hospitality

4. Importance of time

5. Paintings

6. Values

7. Literature

8. Beliefs about child raising (children and teens)

9. Attitudes about personal space/privacy

10. Beliefs about the responsibilities of children and teens

11. Gestures to show you understand what has been told to you

12. Holiday customs

13. Music

14. Dancing

15. Celebrations

16. Concept of fairness

17. Nature of friendship

18. Ideas about clothing

19. Foods

20. Greetings

21. Facial expressions and hand gestures

22. Concept of self

23. Work ethic

24. Religious beliefs

25. Religious rituals

26. Concept of beauty

27. Rules of polite behavior

28. Attitude toward age

29. The role of family

30. General worldview

