



Intercultural Development Inventory Cultural Disengagement

Activity to Resolve Cultural Disengagement

Cultural Disengagement

Cultural Disengagement (CD) is a measure of our cultural identity, specifically can we clearly identify the cultural group(s) that we belong to and are we engaged with or do we feel attached to those groups. When we are unresolved with CD we are either not able to identify our cultural groups and/or not feeling engaged with that group.

Examples

- A young mixed-race man that said, “My mom is Asian and my dad is white but I don’t know what I am.” That statement reflects the first aspect of CD which is our identity. He then went on to say, “And I don’t know if I like either.” That statement is a reflection of the lack of engagement with his cultural groups.
- A middle-aged executive who described growing up on a farm but now is an executive who spends most of his days in designer suits sitting on various company Boards. He described feeling like he doesn’t know where he fits because he feels comfortable in the role as executive as well as when he visits and works on his family farm—just as comfortable drinking vintage wine with fellow Board members as cheap beer at the local bar near the family farm with other farmers. Feeling like he fit into two very different worlds, he wondered if that meant that he was somehow not authentic with either of them.

While some cases of unresolved CD are related to significant identity issues, many times they are related to a lack of seeing the complexity of our cultural identity. When we define culture along traditional definitions of ethnicity or country of origin, we are limited to groups we may not feel engaged with.

Development

Think of the groups that you belong to. Think broadly beyond your ethnicity or genealogy. Think particularly of groups that are so important to you that if you didn’t have that group to identify with, you almost wouldn’t be you. They may be as obvious as our profession or as obscure as Chihuahua lover. Using the list on the next page, identify 20 different groups that you belong to.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

Now narrow your list down to the top 3-5 most important groups that you belong to, groups that again you would almost feel like you weren't actually you if you weren't a part of this group. These are your cultural groups. Likely, because you've identified them with the qualifier that you wouldn't be you if you didn't have this as a part of your identity, you not only identify with these groups, but are engaged with them as well.

