



Becoming Culturally Competent.mp4

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Meghan Shah Welcome, everyone. First, I want to thank you all for taking time to join us today. My name is Meghan Shah. I am the marketing and campaign analyst for Vensure Employer Services, and I will be your host over the next hour.

The webinar today is the third in the series focused on sensitivity in the workplace and will be focused on cultural competence and developing cross-cultural skills. We will be covering these relevant topics through a Q&A with our panelist. We will do our best to answer all the questions, but any that we do not get to, we, will be responded to on an individual basis after the session. And I'd like to take a moment to remind everyone that this webinar is being recorded and we will share the recording with everyone that's registered.

This webinar is brought to you by Vensure Employer Services and all of our PEO partners. Vensure Employer Services is the leader of 20-plus PEO partners. Our clients are in all 50 states and generate most of the questions that we will be answering today. Our agenda for today's session includes defining cultural competence, gaining awareness of your cultural worldview, determining your attitude towards cultural differences, increasing your knowledge around cultural practices and worldviews, developing cross-cultural skills, and a Q&A session.

Our panelist today is Robin Paggi. We are thrilled to have her joining us. Robin is a seasoned human resource practitioner specializing in training on topics such as harassment prevention, communication, team building, and supervisory skills.

Robin Paggi Good morning. Before we define cultural competence, we need to talk about what culture is. And it is the beliefs, the values, traditions, and behaviors that a group of people share. That group of people can be even your family. For example, in my family, when I was raised, it was okay to talk about money, pets were family members that were

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allowed on the furniture. As a matter of fact, when my mom and I went to buy new furniture, my father said, “Be sure to buy something that the dog can sleep on.” And we celebrated Christmas morning by opening presents. You only did it on Christmas morning. You did not do it on Christmas Eve. That was wrong in every way. And then I married a man who is not that different culturally than I am. But in his family, he was raised in a home where you do not talk about money, that your pets are simply animals that live outside and do not get on the furniture, and that you open Christmas presents on Christmas Eve while eating pizza. And, when we encountered each other and the first Christmas that we celebrated together, we had a little bit of a cultural clash. When we got our first home and we got pets, we had a cultural clash. When I started to tell people how much our wedding cost, we had a cultural clash.

So that’s one of the things is that our culture teaches us what is the correct way to do things. And we don’t even know it most of the time. It’s just things that we’re absorbing through our childhood and early adulthood. And then when we encounter people who do things differently than we do, we tend to think something’s wrong with them, because we know that our way is the correct way, without even really understanding that we believe that. And, I had a woman challenge me in training one time when I said we think that our way is the correct way, and she said, “No, I believe I am very open-minded”. And I said, “Do you think everyone should be open-minded?” And she said, “Well, yes, of course”. And I said, “Then your way is the correct way.” So that was mind-opening to her to think that she actually thought that when she believed of herself to be very open-minded.

One of the things that we’re going to do in this webinar is try to get you to understand what your culture has taught you, and how the, those beliefs and those values, and those traditions can cause you to clash with other people. And, we don’t need to have those clashes. They are detrimental to our society. They are detrimental to our organizations. What we need to do is understand what our culture has taught us, what other people’s culture has taught them, and create a culture in which we can all coexist and be effective.

Cultural competence is just that: understanding other cultures, being able to communicate with other cultures, and effectively interact with people, cross-culturally. And I will tell you, we’re not doing a very good job of this. We clash all the time. All you have to do is look at your social media feed, or turn on the news, or open a newspaper, or what have you, and you will see culture wars constantly. And maybe they’re not called that, but that’s exactly what they are. A group of people having their beliefs that are clashing with other people who are having their beliefs, everybody thinking that they are correct and that the other side is incorrect. So, we need to get past that. And, it’s crucial to optimizing a company’s effectiveness in order to have cultural competence. It is crucial to our well-being and for our country’s well-being to have cultural competence. And so let’s see what we can do about it.

These are the four features of cultural competence. And we’re going to discuss each of these in-depth as we go along. But first of all, we need to have an awareness of what our culture is and what it taught us. And a lot of times people struggle with that. They, they don’t know. We need to have an attitude that all cultures are worthwhile. We need to be knowledgeable about our own culture and others, and we need to develop some skills, and these are communication skills, and these are things that I teach all the time, because what comes naturally to us does not always help us interact with other people. So, we’re going to look at each one of these in depth in the subsequent slides.

All right, so what is your culture and what did it teach you? I ask this in training. I ask people specifically about communication. What did your culture teach you about communication? What is okay to talk about, what is not okay to talk about? And people really struggle with this because they don’t know that they have been taught anything. But here are some examples. As I said earlier, I was taught it’s okay to talk about money in public. How much did that cost? This is how much we paid for it. Even with relatives and friends, “How much money are you making now?” And as I said, my

husband's culture taught him, that is definitely something that you do not talk about with anybody. And so, that's just one of the things, is as far as our communication is concerned, what were you taught there?

But here are some other things. When were you born? Well, that should be an easy question for you to answer. But what does that have to do with our culture? Well, when we were born has a huge impact on our worldview. And that's one of the things that we're trying to find out is, what is our worldview? So I talked a little bit about the different generations in the workplace in our last webinar, and I'll talk briefly about it again.

First of all, we've got about five different generations right now in the workplace. The oldest generation, there's only about 3% of people that are of the oldest generation, and these are people that were born before 1946. So they're in their '70s and '80s at this point. People who were born between 1946 and 1964 are called Baby Boomers. And, I am one of, a member of that group and I'm at the very tail end of it. I was born in 1962. Those of us who are born between 1960 and 1964 are called Generation Jones, because we were turning 18 around 1980, and at that point we were learning that "greed is good", "the person with the most toys when he dies wins", and "try to be all that you can be". And so, Baby Boomers in general tend to be very competitive because there were so many of us vying for the same resources. Generation Jones was taught, "get as much money as you possibly can". And so, that tends to be our worldview, and that differs from other generations' worldview. And so, sometimes we have culture clashes as a result of that. So, just answer that question, when were you born? By the way, I just realized I violated a communication rule of Baby Boomers, and that is mentioning what year I was born.

All right. Where did you grow up? Now why is that important? Because different regions have different values, and different things that they celebrate, and different cultures. I have been very fortunate to do a lot of traveling. One of the things that my husband and I did was we set a goal earlier in our marriage to visit all 50 states, and we did it. And one of the things that I frequently tell people about going to the southern part of the United States, is of the southern hospitality, and that's one of the things that I really appreciated. And, somebody challenged me on that once and they said, "Well, it's just because you stayed in nice places. Of course people are going to be nice to you when you stay in nice places." And I say, "No, it's even when I went to the Piggly Wiggly." That Southern hospitality was a real thing that differs from other places that I have visited. And so, where you grew up has an impact on your worldview, and on what you think is appropriate, and inappropriate, et cetera.

What groups do you identify with? And, we've got lots of groups that we belong to. Our ethnicity is one of the groups that we belong to. Our sexuality. It can be the region that we come from, et cetera. So try to identify how many groups you think you are in, and the set of rules that are among each group.

What holiday, holidays did you celebrate as a child, and not only which ones did you celebrate, but how did you celebrate them? Because we tend to think that that's the way you're supposed to do it. And if people do it differently, they're doing it wrong.

What rules were impressed upon you? And this is one of the things you might, again, not be able to identify any rules that were impressed upon you. But here are a couple of the rules that I learned. First of all, no public displays of affection. So that was my father's rule for my brothers and me. No kissing your boyfriend or girlfriend in public. And so, now as an adult, that's one of things, my husband was also taught the same rule. And so, you don't make out in the airport, you don't do things like that. And I use that example because I remember very clearly when we were in an airport and a young couple were making out, and my husband and I were both disgusted by that, because you're not supposed to do that. Also, in our culture, we were taught don't show emotion at a funeral, for example. And I remember we were watching

TV once and, I don't remember the specific tragedy that had happened. I just remember it was people of a different nation and they were publicly grieving and wailing, and my husband just thought that that was wrong, that you just don't wail, and grieve, and all of that stuff in public, you do that in private. So, again, rules that we were taught.

And in what do you believe? Well, my culture taught me to believe in honesty, fess up. And so, that's one of the things that I took into the workplace. My parents taught me that if you confess to whatever you've done, the punishment will be less severe than if you lie about it and we find out about it. And so, I learned to fess up. And when I went into the workplace, I would always admit, "That was me. I did that. I'm responsible for that. My bad." But not everybody believes that. And that was very difficult for me, especially when I started doing investigations of misconduct, and people would lie directly to my face. And I really grappled with that until I figured out that people will do whatever they need to do in order to keep their job. And then I realized, okay, it's just up to me to try to figure out if they're lying or not. And, that lessened the root impact that it had on me.

An example of a belief system is Social Darwinism. Now Darwin is credited with coming up with the idea of "survival of the fittest". Actually, from my understanding, what Darwin said is, "It is those who are able to adapt that survive." And that's why adapting to change is so important, because if you can't adapt, then you get left behind. But he is credited with Social Darwinism that says that, "Life is a struggle for survival and dominance, and the most competent and hardworking individuals will be most successful, while the incompetent and inferior will be the least successful." Well, one of the things, I was raised in the Christian tradition, and I also was taught that to a certain degree, that God favors certain people and it's obvious if you're under God's favor, if you're wealthy. And so that's one of the reasons that some people have such a difficult time with people who are poor, because they were taught that God doesn't favor them. And if you're poor, then that means that you're not only out of God's favor, but that you're lazy. And so that's a belief system that some people have bought into, which then transfers to how they behave toward people who are poor, especially those who are homeless. So, those are things to determine about yourself, to figure out what your culture taught you, and that will help you.

Now, here's something to consider before we go on: you pass your culture on to your children, whether you're doing it on purpose or you're not doing it on purpose. Children mimic adults, as you probably know if you have them. When our oldest granddaughter was about four years old, I was driving someplace, and I was late, as usual, and our granddaughter was in the back seat in her car seat, as she was supposed to be, and I was stuck at a red light and it would not turn. And I was late, and there was no one else coming, and that light just wouldn't turn. I can't go through a red light, even if nobody's around. So, what I did instead is I yelled at the light, "Hurry up, change!" And my four-year-old grand-daughter is in the back in her carseat going, "Hurry up, change!" So, we teach our children things whether we want to or not. And what I taught my granddaughter is to yell at red lights, which is not a particularly useful skill to have. So, be careful what you are teaching the people who you are rearing, because sometimes those things can get them in trouble.

Understanding your worldview. One of the things that's difficult for people to understand sometimes is that, what they see is simply their perspective. It's not actually "what is." A lot of times people think that their view of the world is the same view that everyone else has. So, I want to tell you something to demonstrate. I don't know if you could tell from the picture that was briefly shown of me, but I have different colored eyes. My right eye is mostly brown and my left eye is blue. And, it's funny because the first cultural awareness workshop I was in was probably when I was in the fourth grade or so, and I remember it vividly because the teacher told people with blue eyes to go to one side of the room and people with brown eyes to go to the other side of the room and there I was in the middle, not knowing where I was supposed to go. And the teacher hadn't really prepared for this little snafu, and so, I don't remember exactly what she told me to do at that point, I just remember that I didn't like cultural awareness workshops as a result of that little incident. But I tell you about

my different colored eyes because, if you were to sit on my right side and saw only my right side of the face, you might think that I have brown eyes. If you sat on my left side and saw only that side, you might think I have only blue eyes. You would have to sit in front of me to see both eyes, to see what the real truth was, or is.

And so, that's how our perspective is skewed, based upon where we are. And it's not just spatially, but it is just where we are in our culture. So that's one of the things that is really important to understand is that how we see the world is not how everyone sees the world. We see it through our personality. Some of us see the world as a bright place with lots of possibility, and some of us see the world as a scary place full of threats. Some of us see the world as our oys-ter and some see the world as our prisoner. So, who you are, based upon your personality, and your age, and your wealth, and your education, and all of those things impact your worldview.

Time is an aspect of our worldview. So that's one of the things that people have a different idea of what being on-time means. That's one of the reasons that when you supervise people, you have to explain to them what being on-time means, because we tend to think that we all have the same understanding of what being on-time means.

Space. And so, one thing that I like is that people need to stand six feet away from me because I like to have a lot of space around me. One of those reasons is where I grew up. I grew up in Bakersfield, California, and it used to be a fairly small town in the Valley. Now it's much larger. But when you grow up in a space, or in a place that has a lot of space around it, you require more space around you when people are talking to you. When you grow up in someplace like New York or San Francisco and people are crammed more closely together, you don't require that much space. When people are talking to you, when does it become uncomfortable for you? How close they are standing? And I'm talking before COVID. Three feet away? Two feet away? When people are talking to you, is it okay for them to touch your arm? Not for me. I don't like that, when people reach out, and touch me, grab my arm or something, in order to be able to talk to me. So, those types of things have an impact on our worldview and what's okay and what's not okay. And when people violate those little rules we have about space and time, we tend to have a problem with them.

Our relationships. One of the things that I have noticed in my travels, especially in the South, is that before you do business with people, you build a relationship first. You talk about the weather, you talk about all sorts of things, and then you get down to business. And if you do business right away, you're rude. Well, it depends upon what region you grew up in and where you operate your business. One of the things about relationships also, it goes to our significant relationships. And so, is your worldview about your significant other, that you have to find a soulmate because there's only one person in the world that is appropriate for you? Or do you have, that your best relationship is that you find somebody that you're compatible with, and that you are in charge of your happiness and someone else isn't. I'm starting to sound like my dad there.

Technology. What is your view of technology? Is it the most fabulous thing in the world, or are you afraid that robots are going to take over, and artificial intelligence is going to take over, or somewhere in between?

Honestly. I already told you about my worldview of honesty. Honesty is the best policy. And if people are dishonest with me, then they're no longer part of my world.

And religion. What is your view on religion and how has it impacted your worldview? For example, there are some people that feel that God takes care of those who take care of themselves, and other people who believe that God will provide, and other people who don't believe in God whatsoever. And so, all of these things have an impact on our worldview. And we see the world as we are, not as it is.

One of the things, there's this little quote by Amerigo Vespucci. And in case you don't know who that is, that is who America was named after. He is known to "discover" America, and I put that in air quotes there, because there were already people here, but from the Western world, he is the one. And when he came here, he said the manner of their living is very "barbarous" because they do not eat at fixed times, but as often as they please. And so again, the way we do things, if they, if people do it differently, then they're heathens, and heretics, and all sorts of things, because our way is the right way.

So how can we increase our worldview, our perception? Well, first of all - here's another thing - after you have asked yourself when was I born?, and where was I born?, and all of those things, that you look at your multiple identities. We are complex people. We're not all one thing. And here are just a few examples of multiple identities. But what do you want to do is you want to ask yourself, or you want to complete the statement I should say, "I am. I am a white, mid-dle-aged woman. I am a human resources consultant, a trainer. I am agnostic. I am whatever you want to put. So, just put the words I am and list as many things as you possibly can. And one of the reasons to do that is that if you can list 10, or 12, or 15 different things about your identity, it helps you understand that every time you look at someone, they have their own list of the 10, or 12, or 15 things that they have come up with.

What we tend to do is to put labels on people and think of them as only one thing. So we look at people of a certain race, and that's all we see is their race. When they've got their list of 15 things that they are. We look at somebody of a certain gender, and we think of only that gender. And so, again, age. We say a lot of things about people, Baby Boom-ers especially. And I love the phrase, "Okay, Boomer", to dismiss those of us of a certain age. And when people think of people of a certain age, all they think of them is that age and all the stereotypes that go along with that age.

Human resources. When I first went into human resources, I was working for the city government here, and my brother also worked for the city government, and he told my mom, "Oh, now she's one of them". So, we have a stereo-type about those of us in human resources, and that's all people could see is our occupation.

When you understand that you have multiple identities, you're less likely to stereotype others based upon just their race, or their gender, or their age. And to understand that they're multilayered and multicomplex, as well. And when we see that, hopefully we can see people as more than just these categories. Hopefully we can see them as very complex people that we can't stereotype because of that complexity.

We want to try to determine our attitude toward cultural differences. And, one attitude is ethnocentrism. The tendency to think that our way is the only correct way, and I've mentioned this several times, but here is the appropriate term for it. Differing opinions are perceived to be incorrect or wrong. And, a lot of us want to be open-minded, and we think that we're open-minded, and I would never, I'm not racist. I'm not, no, I'm not any of those things that other people are. Well, we really need to dive deep and see if we are. I had an acquaintance once and I was telling her about a trans woman that is in one of my social circles. While I was telling her about this transwoman, she wrinkled her face up with a frown on her face, and, indicating disgust. And I said, "Oh, I'm guessing that you are against transpeople". And she said, "Oh, no, I don't judge". Well, I think she wanted to believe that she doesn't judge, but her facial expression said something else.

And so, that's one of the things is that our nonverbal communication usually gives away what we think and feel. And people believe our nonverbal communication more so than our verbal communication. For example, if I were to tell you, "I'm not mad." Well, just by the tone of my voice, you wouldn't believe me. So that's one of the things is that we need to be careful about what our nonverbal communication says to other people to make sure it matches our verbal com-

munication, but to also understand that sometimes it gives away what we're really thinking and feeling.

Unexplored assumptions. We become blind to ethnocentric behaviors and attitudes regarding our biases or preconceived ideas. And a couple of weeks ago we talked about unconscious bias and I made the statement, we are all biased in some way, even if we don't want to be. So we need to come to grips with the fact that we are biased and we need to understand what our biases are.

So, here's another exercise for you. So what are your preconceived ideas about other races? And be honest with yourself. Other sexual orientations? Other religions? Other countries? I live in California, as I mentioned, and, I was going to a certain church and a new minister came to town and from the pulpit he said, "Yeah, when I told people I was going to California, they said, 'Well, that's the land of fruits and nuts'". So he said, "So I want to find out which one you are." All right. "Have you ever been to California before?" "No, just what people have told me about it." "Okay." Also I'm in Bakersfield. And Johnny Carson many years ago said that Bakersfield is the armpit of California. When I was going to graduate school in Sacramento, I met some people and when I told them I was from Bakersfield, they went, "Oh, my God! How can you stand to live in Bakersfield?" And I said, "Have you ever been there?" "No." "Oh, so you make decisions about places that you've never been to." "Well, I've just heard." Well, come on.

All right, so, what are your unexplored assumptions about people that you don't even know, that you have learned from other people in your life, who told you about people, who told you about places and things and anything else, and you just take their word for it? So we need to not do that. And so, we can now go to the next slide that tells us how, specifically, to increase our knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews.

First of all, talk to people who are different from you. We have a tendency to segregate ourselves. And we align ourselves with people who are like us, whether it's our occupation, our age, our religion, what have you. We're comfortable with people who are like us, and there's nothing wrong with that. The reason that we're comfortable with them is that we get them, we understand them, they understand us. One of the things, when we meet people, the first thing that we do is try to figure out what we have in common. And as soon as we figure out we have something in common, then we feel closer to them. "I went to South High." "You went to South High? I did, too. Wow, okay!" And now we're one step closer to friendship just because we went to the same school.

So that's one of the things that we need to do, is expand our groups. Talk to people who are different from you, even if it's people at work; we segregate ourselves at work. I used to work for a law firm. And when I would go into a company party, or event, or something, you've got all of the secretaries together, the attorneys together, the people who work in accounting together. I mean, people segregated themselves according to their occupation. And so, that's one of the things, we've got to mix it up.

Choose to read culturally diverse literature. This can be magazines if you're not a big book reader, but just read about different cultures by people who are of different cultures, and that will help you expand your world.

Select culturally diverse media, including TV shows, movies, and music. So again, watch movies or TV that are made by people from a different culture about people in a different culture. Now, you need to be careful about that, because one of the things I remember, I was a big fan of the Big Bang Theory, and there is a character from India on that show. And so, we can't watch shows and see this character and then think that we know all about people from India, or wherever. And that is American-made television show, and so that's one of the reasons it's important to watch shows from other countries.

Attend cultural festivals. I'm sure where you are, you have a lot of different festivals. In Bakersfield we have a big Basque community, people from a region of Europe that moved here. And we've got Basque festivals, and Greek festivals, and all sorts of festivals. And so go there, eat the food, get a little bit more familiar with that.

Travel. And I told you I was able to visit all 50 states, which was awesome. That's an awesome goal to have. People often ask me, where was your favorite place? I couldn't choose a favorite place. Every single place that I went had something of value to it. And the great thing is that it made us go places that we probably wouldn't have gone otherwise. Natchez, Mississippi. Cleveland, Ohio. I mean, just all sorts of places that we might not go to because they're just not right on the radar. And every single place was great, maybe because that's my worldview. But, that's one of the things is that the more you travel, the more exposed to other people you are, you find out, number one, that people aren't that different wherever you go. We all have things in common. Another thing I've been fortunate enough to travel outside of the United States, and you get a great view of the United States from outside of it. And to see what people think about Americans from outside of the United States. And so, travel as much as you possibly can.

And learn a different language. And especially if you're getting older, that's one of the best ways to keep your brain really healthy, is to learn a different language. So I strongly encourage you to do so. So those are just a few things. But the main thing is just to interact or become exposed to things that are different from what you've always been taught, what you've always thought, what you've always believed, what you've always done. And then you see there's a whole other world out there who thinks that they're doing it right, too.

So how do we develop some cross-cultural skills? Well first of all, shift your mindset. How do you do it? You do it with the things that we've talked about. You have those exercises as far as trying to determine what your culture is through a self-assessment. So that's where you do the list of where I was born, when I was born, what group I identify with. You've got your aspect of your worldview. What is my view of time, space, relationships, et cetera. You go through your multiple identities of I am, I am, I am, and list all of the different things that you are. You travel, you read different things, you do all of those things to shift your mindset. It will expand your mind. And when you expand your mind, you see that your way isn't necessarily the right way.

You develop intercultural empathy. One of the things that I've read recently, I think is a great exercise: when you see someone who is different from you that you might be taken aback by, or just I, I don't want to interact with that person, or, or what have you, think about "Just like me, they have a family. Just like me, they need love. Just like me, they want to be happy." So, just go through the "Just like me". All these things that you have in common with people that at first glance, you think you have nothing in common with.

And take steps to be empathetic toward different cultures. Now I had an opportunity to do this a few years ago. I was in an airport. And as I was approaching the attendants to check in at the gate, I noticed that there was a young woman that was sitting close to the attendants and she was crying. And she was on a cell phone and she was crying, and the people around her were ignoring her, and maybe they were trying to give her privacy, and so that's why they turned their backs toward her, and that type of thing, but I just thought, wow, this, this gal is in pain. Now and looking at her, she is not somebody that I would think I would have a connection with. She was of a different race, a different age. I mean, she just looked very different than me. And I just turned around and went in the other direction. But, I was just compelled to continue to look at her. And finally when she got off the telephone, a voice inside me said, "You need to go to her", and so I did. And I asked her if there was anything that I could do for her. Now I thought that she was going to ask me to get her some water or something, which I would very easily do, but she asked me to pray with her and I was out of my comfort zone. I don't pray publicly, and I did not want to do that. But I thought, well, you're in it, so you got to go all the way now.

So I said to her, “Okay, what are we praying for?” And she told me that her father had just died, and he was, she was on vacation. And while she was on vacation, her sister called her and said, “Dad’s in the hospital. You need to call him and talk to him.” And she said, “Well, I’m on vacation, so I’ll talk to him when I get home from vacation.” And then the call from her sister came and said, “Dad died.” So this woman was grieving her father, she was also wracked with guilt on the decision that she had made. And, that was our connection. I love my dad to pieces and I would have felt terrible if I had made that decision. So, I took her hand, which is, I don’t do that, you know I like my space. And I prayed out loud for her, and her father, and her trip home. And after I was done, I said to her, “Tell me about your dad.” And she starts talking about him. And the tears dried and a big smile came out on her face. And, we were able to talk for a few minutes before she boarded the plane. She got called to the plane before I did, we were on the same plane home. But as she was going to get on the plane, she turned around to look back at me. And that look was priceless. I mean, this was years ago and it’s still making me tear up, telling you about it. The connection we had and that look was all there is to life. And I understood the meaning of life through that connection. And after she boarded the plane, I just wanted to go around asking people if they needed my help because it felt so dang good to have that connection. So, develop your intercultural empathy with people, “Just like me, they have a dad. Just like me, they experience guilt. Just like me, they feel pain.”, and that’s how we get connected.

Understand differing values, beliefs, and assumptions. Everybody you run into was taught that their way of doing things was the correct way. And when you do not understand it, just remember that. Now one of the things that I have very difficult time with is people who throw their trash on the ground. And when I’m walking my dogs by the park and I see this trash, I just start to shake my head and think about those people who did this. And I remind myself, they were taught that it’s okay to throw trash on the ground. They were taught that it’s somebody else’s job to pick this up. Whatever they were taught, they were taught that. And whether I believe that that’s the right thing to be taught or not is beside the point. That’s what they were taught. And we all think that the way we were taught was the correct way.

And then, we need to develop a high degree of cog, cognitive complexity. So what’s that mean? Well, in our country especially, we have a very either-or type of mentality for the most part. I mean you’ve probably heard people say you’re either a cat person or you’re a dog person. Well there are more choices than that, I’m both. I love my cats and I love my dogs. So, it’s not either-or, but we tend to get into that pattern of thinking. One of the things that’s happening right now in our country is people are thinking you’re either good or you’re evil. And so, we’ve got people wanting to get rid of monuments of Washington, Jefferson, people like that, who were good, but who also committed evil. We are all good and we are all evil. And, so, we can’t, we have to understand that it’s not one or the other, and that’s cognitive complexity. Being able to understand there’s more than just one way. And we can have two opposing thoughts in our brain, and they are both right. And when we are able to understand that, then hopefully we’re able to move away from the, “You’re all this or you’re all that”.

So, what specifically can we do? As an individual, focus on becoming more culturally competent. I’ve given you some tools that you can do, some activities that hopefully can help you. And hopefully one, or two, or three resonated with you. “Yes, I want to travel more! So as soon as this COVID thing is over, I’m going.” Or, “Yeah, I, I do need to watch different TV shows than the ones that I’m watching. Or, “You know, I haven’t picked up, picked up a book for a while.” Or, “Hey, my book club is looking for a new book, so maybe we can read something by a South-American author.”, what have you. Hopefully you’ve found something that resonates with you that you can do to expand your mind when it comes to culture.

And for your company, create a plan to increase the cultural competence of employees. How can you do that? One of the best ways is through food. People love food. Now, when we get comfortable eating other people’s food

again, having a potluck and having people bring food from their culture. And so, that's one of the great ways. First of all, people eating together helps connect them. And exposing them to different food helps to broaden their horizons when it comes to other cultures and what they value. So, that's one way.

But there are a variety of things that companies can do to help increase. And so, one thing is that learning a different, or an additional language, is always a good idea for companies. And so, maybe companies can offer classes that employees can take during work hours that will help them learn a different language, and it helps expand employees' minds, while at the same time creating another skillset that the employer can benefit from.

Have a cultural awareness workshop, where you are talking about different cultures, where people share what their culture taught them.

And creating a culture for the company and talking about the values, and the beliefs, and the behaviors, and all of those things that you want your company to have so that it has a culture that is available for all. Lots of different things that we can do individually and as a company in order to increase our cultural competence.

Why do we want to do it? Because in our diverse world, we can't afford not to. So that's the business reason. And for the human reason, because we all need to embrace each other to make our lives better, because when we don't, when we isolate ourselves, when we have our stereotypes, when we segregate ourselves, when we do all of those things, it actually makes our world a scarier place to be. And I don't want to be scared and I don't think you want to either. Now it's time for questions.

Meghan Shah What with, what should you do when people of different cultures get into conflict at work because of their cultures?

Robin Paggi Well, one thing I would try to help them see that we are all bound by a set of rules that we were taught, and to have them explain what their rules are to each other, so that they can become aware of the fact that it's just a different upbringing or a different philosophy, that neither one is correct. And when people begin to explain why they do what they do, we tend to be able to understand them a little bit better. So, when people get into an, an intercultural conflict, I would definitely address it by having them talk to each other about the culture clash that they experienced and why they experienced it, and, how they can understand each other a little bit better, where they're coming from and, if necessary, to create a rule for them to then go forward with, for example, I won't say this if you won't say that, so that they can avoid any future culture clashes.

Meghan Shah Next question: Is it wrong to encourage employees to try to fit into our organization's culture?

Robin Paggi Well, that's one of the things, organizations have a culture, sometimes they're not aware of what their culture is either. So it's important for the organization to look at the values, the beliefs, the behaviors of the culture. And, it's important for somebody to be able to be a good fit in the culture. But, we need to make sure that we are not just hiring people who are like us so that they fit into the culture, number one. And number two, we want to make sure that we don't punish people from bringing their uniqueness to the organization. But actually onboarding, the onboarding process, is trying to help employees fit into the culture, or that's what it should be anyway. It's trying to teach people this is how we do things here so that they will be successful. And so, it's a good thing to do as long as it's not preventing people who are not exactly the same from being employed there.

Meghan Shah Do we have to celebrate every holiday of every culture in the workplace?

Robin Paggi Well, you can if you want to. But one thing, you don't have to celebrate any holiday at the workplace, not the Fourth of July, not Veterans Day, not Christmas Day, nothing. That's one of the things a lot of employers don't know, is that just because something is declared a federal holiday doesn't mean that you have to get the day off with pay for it. According to the government, holidays are just another day. You don't have to pay people any more for showing up to work on them unless it's part of a collective bargaining agreement. So, you don't have to celebrate any holidays. If you were going to celebrate some, I would suggest you open your mind to celebrating others. And this usually is when it comes to Christmas. All right, people who don't celebrate Christmas, but they might celebrate Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, or something like that, why not celebrate all of those holidays? All it does is be more inclusive to all employees, but you don't have to.

Robin Paggi However, having said that, religion is a protected class. Employers do need to accommodate people's religious beliefs and practices. And if an employee asks for time off work to celebrate their religion, you need to accommodate that, if it's reasonable. And not doing so could get employers into legal problems.

Meghan Shah People are at different levels with their cultural awareness and how they navigate the lines of difference. Is there an all-inclusive approach to building cultural competence?

Robin Paggi I would say that you're just going to have to start at the very beginning. And so, if it's going to be all-inclusive, that you start with the first step. And, so if you had a cultural awareness workshop, as I have them, the things that I do is, I have people identify three things about their culture and share those things with everyone else in the room. And so that might seem very rudimentary for some people who are more culturally competent than others. Still, it's something that would benefit them and I think they'd enjoy doing. During those workshops, when somebody shares something that they have learned about their culture, I ask if somebody learned just the opposite. So it's like talking about money. If I were to share, one of the things my family taught me is that we talk about money, then I was, at the facility would say, was anybody taught to not talk about money and everybody else would raise their hand, and to demonstrate, see, some of us are taught this is the way to do it, while others are taught that's not the way to do it. And it's just things that we were taught. It doesn't mean that it's right or wrong. And that begins to open up people's minds of, "Oh, that you're right. It is just stuff that we're taught." And, and we're taught opposite things. And so no wonder we've got some clashes going on. So, I think that those things, they're very rudimentary exercises. And I think that they are good for everyone to participate in, regardless of where they are on the cultural awareness spectrum.

Meghan Shah Thank you, everyone, for taking the time to join us today. I'd like to thank Robin for her expertise and participation. Once again, please email any questions you might have to webinarhrhelp@vensure.com. Thank you and have a great day.

Robin Paggi Thank you.