



The Power of Cultural Humility

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Extension continues adapting to an increasingly diverse society including diversity of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, income level, religion, living in rural or urban communities, etc. One approach Extension professionals can adopt to better serve clientele is to practice the concept of cultural humility. Originally developed in the healthcare field, cultural humility sought to improve patient/provider interactions but has been adopted in a variety of sectors such as public health, education, social work, and community development.

Regardless of whether you have knowledge of someone's culture, cultural humility means you value learning about people's lived experiences and are committed to self-reflecting on your values, beliefs and behaviors and how they can influence your interactions with others. Cultural humility also recognizes and challenges power imbalances that exist in society. In Extension, for example, there may be power-differentials that exist between you and your audiences. Changing this power imbalance can successfully shift your role to that of a partner working side-by-side with clientele to co-create change for individuals, families, and communities.

Cultural humility has also been described as (1) being open to exploring new ideas, (2) being self-aware of how your values, beliefs, and actions can appear to others, (3) valuing everyone's worth and asking questions to find out what you don't know (4) striving for supportive mutually beneficial interactions, and (5) self-reflecting on interactions to improve them in the future. Through this process, we in Extension can build stronger relationships with our clientele based on respect, trust, and appreciation.