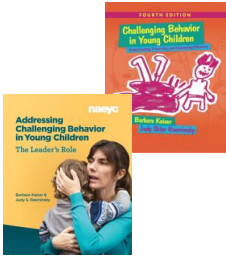**Transforming Challenging Behavior Through Visionary Leadership:**

The Impact of Culture when Communicating with Staff and Families

Barbara Kaiser
barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

1

Culture is a combination of our differences that shape our view of the world, our perspective and our approach

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvb49-Csq1o

3

4

Rings of culture

The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (2017)

5

The goals of today

- Identifying your culture and how it impacts your leadership style
- Understanding the role you play as a support to teachers and families when challenging behavior occurs by --
  - Recognizing the impact of culture on communication when working with:
    - Staff
    - Families

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

6

Have you ever stopped to think about how your culture influences your leadership and interactions with the educators and the families?

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

7

When we understand and appreciate what makes us special we can begin to understand and appreciate what makes others special
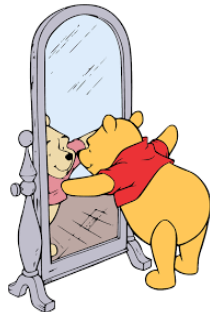
barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

8

Understanding yourself

The importance of self reflection

- Embracing Diversity Starts with Self-Awareness

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

9

A multicultural leader is a leader with the skills to:

- Relate effectively and motivate people across race, gender, age, social attitudes, and lifestyles.
- Communicate effectively with every staff member and every family
- Understand, appreciate, and adapt to these differences

1. Understanding Cultural Context
2. Effective Communication
3. Adapting to Cultural Differences
4. Building Cross-cultural Relationships
5. Resolving Cultural Conflicts

FosterCapital

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

10

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Have you talked about how the teachers feel about having a child with challenging behavior in their class?

What have they said?

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

11

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Have you heard this before?

- "No one is setting limits at home!"
- "She gets to do whatever she wants"
- "Mom just drops her off without saying good-bye or even talking to her at all"
- "There's a new baby in the family and no one seems to have time for her"
- "She's always the last to be picked up"
- "What do you expect? Look at her parents"

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

12

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
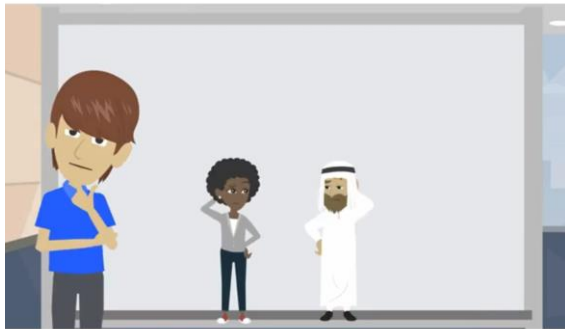_____

Everyone has different button-pushers

- Past experiences with children
- Training experiences
- Level of support for dealing with challenging behaviors
- **Culturally-based beliefs**

Have you thought about the connection between culture and children's behavior and teacher's attitudes?

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

13

14

Personal and cultural beliefs shape attitudes and responses to challenging behaviors
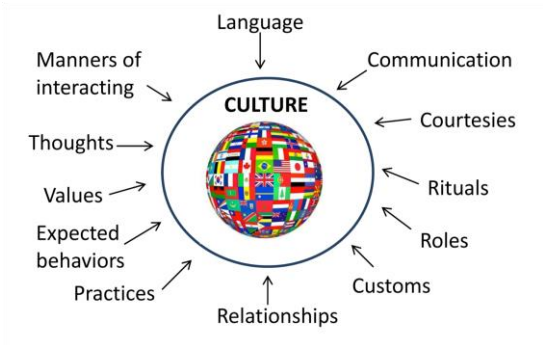
Talk with them about:

- How their culture may influence their teaching style and expectations
- Whether there is a disconnect between what is expected at home and at childcare/pre-school

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

15

Culture influences everything we do

Language
Communication
Manners of interacting
CULTURE
Courtesies
Thoughts
Rituals
Values
Roles
Expected behaviors
Customs
Practices
Relationships

16

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Surface Culture

The Branch/Leaves:
What we see:

What elements do you think they are referring to when talking about surface culture?

barbaraki@challengingbehavior.com

17

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Shallow Culture

At the Trunk:
- Concepts of time
- Personal space
- Rules of conduct
- Nonverbal communication
  - Facial expression
  - Touching
  - Tone of voice
- Concepts of leadership

barbaraki@challengingbehavior.com

18

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Deep Culture

The Roots:
Unseen and rarely discussed:

- Habits & assumptions
- Understandings, values, judgments
- Nature of friendships
- Attitude toward elders
- Concept of cleanliness
- Process of decision-making
- Preference for competition or cooperation
- Problem-solving methods

How can these elements affect your relationship with the educators and families you work with?
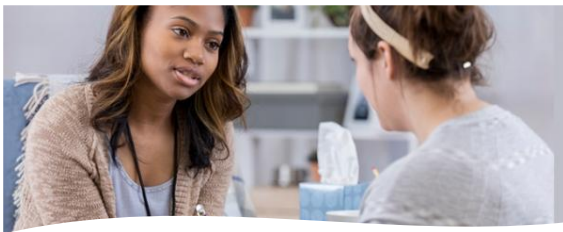
19

Key cultural characteristics

Culture is:
- Learned (absorbed)
- Shared
- Symbolic
- Integrated
- Dynamic

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

20

Talking to families about their child's behavior

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

21

Barriers in Cross-Cultural Communication

- Knowledge
  - Cultural blindness
  - Stereotyping
  - Verbal style and non-verbal communication
- Cultural barriers
  - differences values and attitudes
- Ethnocentrism
- Discrimination
- Worrying that you will do or say the wrong thing
  - Misunderstanding and reacting in ways that can hinder a promising partnership

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

22

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The importance of cultural awareness

Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with people from other cultures

BECAUSE:

- People see, interpret and evaluate things in different ways
- What might seem appropriate to you may not seem appropriate to others

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

23

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

You can't ignore cultural differences

- Cultural differences can lead to:
  - Variations in acceptable behaviors
  - Attitudes toward authority, personal space, and time
- These differences can lead to:
  - Misunderstandings
  - Miscommunication

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

24

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Cultural values

- Shared ideas, core principles and ideals
- Ideas about what is good, right, fair, and just
- Embedded in a person's daily life unconsciously and routinely
- Passed down from generation to generation
- Most cultural values are learned between the ages of 1 -10 years

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

CULTURAL VALUES

SPIRITUAL VALUES · ETHICAL VALUES · USE VALUES · PLACE VALUES · LIFESTYLE VALUES
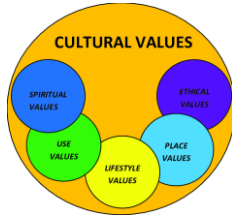
25

Cultural norms and expectations

- Every culture comes with its own set of norms and expectations
- Dictate everything from emotional expression to conflict resolution
  - Some cultures might encourage emotional openness
  - Others might prize emotional restraint
- These differences significantly impact interpersonal relationships and communication styles

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

26

Culture and Social Norms		
Individual vs. group orientation	Focus on functioning independently	Focus on interdependence and as a member of a group
Emotional display	Open, spontaneous	Restrained, polite
Laugh or smile	Happy or amused	Confused, embarrassed
Personal space	An arm's length	Like to stand close when conversing
Touching	Frequent, an important means of communication	Avoid physical contact
Eye Contact	Honesty, attention, trustworthiness	aggressive, disrespectful, or impolite

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

27

Cultural norms influence behavior

- Social and cultural norms within a specific cultural or social group
  - Determine the accepted behavior
  - Define the social standards for appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- Cultural norms determine attitudes toward:
  - Authority, personal space, and time
  - Gender roles
  - Moral values

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

28

LOW CONTEXT Majority USA, Europe **Individual orientation** European American/Western Europe	HIGH CONTEXT 70% of the world **Group orientation** African/Native Americans, Asian, Latino
Independent functioning and achievement Helping oneself Standing out Personal property Talking about oneself Choice, competition	**Interdependence and being a good member of a group** Helping others and being helped Fitting in Shared property Being modest Harmony, cooperation, consensus
Direct verbal communication	**Indirect verbal communication**
Direct eye contact	**No direct eye contact**
Decontextualized communication	**Context is key** Stories, history, relationships, gestures, facial expressions
Implicit statements	**Explicit statements**
Deductive style of reasoning Moving from the specific to the general	**Inductive reasoning** Focus on the big picture, moving from the general to the specific

29

Individualism vs Collectivism

Prioritizes:
- The individual's well-being and needs over the group's
- Independence
  - people are expected to look after themselves
- Personal achievement and rights
- Personal attitudes and goals

Prioritizes:
- The well-being of the group over the individual
- Interdependence
- Integrating into strong groups, often involving extended family
- Cooperation and working together
- Relationships and loyalty

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

30

10

Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Differences

- Different communication styles
  - Degree of importance given to non-verbal communication

- Different approaches to completing tasks

- Different attitudes toward conflict
  - Different approaches to knowing could affect ways of analyzing a problem or finding ways to resolve it
  - Different decision-making styles

- Different attitudes toward disclosure

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

31

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Everyone has their own communication style

Cultural factors to consider are the impact of:

- Face-to-face conversation

- Emotional display

- Facial and body language

- Personal space

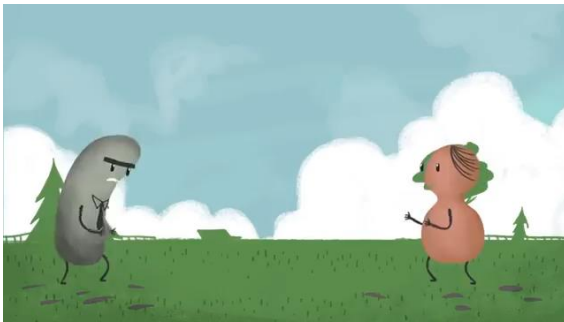- Physical contact

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

32

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Circles of Comfort

Threat
Uncomfortable
Comfortable
Uninvolved

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

33

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Communication Style Checklist

Taking your turn to speak		Notes
Timing- I speak when	Anytime Speaker takes breath Listener takes breath Speaker finishes Listener moves At key point Assume that speaker has finished	
Vocal Characteristics		Notes/Me
Tone	Formal............Casual	
Rate	Rapid...............Slow	
Volume	Loud................Soft	
Nonce Verbal Characteristics		Notes/Me
Eye Contact	Hold Gaze ...... Look away	
Facial Expression	Smile............Serious	
Gestures	Describe	
Personal Distance	Little...................Lots	
Touch	Describe	
Posture and Body Language	Describe	
Dress style and Accessories	Describe	
Nature of Topics discussed		Notes/Me
Kinds of topics discussed	Personal Familial Professional Spiritual Community Other	
Level of self-disclosure	Open..............Closed	
Openness to new ideas	Very.................Cautious	

Treatment of Emotion		Notes/Me
Openness to discuss feelings	Open................Hesitant	
Level of Expression	Open...............Closed	
Content of Communication		Notes/Me
Apologies	Frequency Purpose Quantity Content Timing Style	
Requests	Frequency Purpose Quantity Content Timing Style	
Praise	Frequency Purpose Quantity Content Timing Style	
Disagreements	Frequency Purpose Quantity Content Timing Style	
Feedback	Frequency Purpose Quantity Content Timing Style	
Humor and Joking	Frequency Purpose Quantity Content Timing Style	

34

Keys to communicating

- Recognizing
- Respecting
- Acknowledging
- Valuing
- Encouraging
- Empowering
- Celebrating

35

36

37

38

Important factors to consider

- Getting down to business vs. relationship building
- Informality vs. formality
- Direct vs. indirect communication
- The importance of context
  - Low vs. high context
  - Cultural assumptions about silence

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

39

Getting down to business vs. relationship building

- **Relationship-oriented culture**
  - Critical to develop a great deal of time and effort toward getting to know each other and building relationships before focusing on work
  - Building deep, personal relationships is a precursor for developing trust and legitimacy

- **Task oriented culture**
  - Perfectly acceptable to cut to the chase far sooner and get down to business
  - Tries to diffuse any tension by approaching the conversation without too much fuss

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

40

Informality vs. formality

- **Informal**
  - Diffuses any tension by approaching the conversation without too much fuss
  - The family might even interpret formal setting as a sign that the situation was worse than they'd thought

- **Formal**
  - Meeting in a formal office
  - Observance of protocol would be expected

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

41

Direct vs. indirect communication

- **Direct**
  - People believe it is a sign of respect and professionalism to speak clearly and leave no room for misinterpretation

- **Indirect**
  - People approach problems through subtle hints, vague references, or general statements

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

42

The importance of context

- The setting in which communication takes place
- The shared knowledge and experiences of the communicators

Context Influences the meaning of words and nonverbal cues
- The way that people interpret your tone of voice
- Your facial expression
  - a smile can have different meanings in different cultures

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

43

___

Low vs. high context

- **Low context - Explicit**
  - The message of a conversation is primarily contained within the exact words that are spoken
  - The educator or family may be aware of your posture, facial expressions, but they would not weigh them as heavily as what you are actually saying

- **High context - Implicit**
  - The teacher or family would read between the lines
  - Relate your body language to the message
  - Pay very close attention to the emotional side of the message
  - Find significance in the conversation setting and the relationship status between you and them

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

44

___

POLL

Have you noticed these cultural influences impacting the meetings or debriefing sessions that you have had with the educators or families?

a) Getting down to business vs. relationship building
b) The context
c) Informality vs. formality
d) Direct vs. indirect communication
e) Low vs. high context

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

45

The difference between generalizations and stereotyping

- Generalizations are broad, neutral statements about a group of people that are based on facts, experiences, or logic

- Stereotypes are rigid, evaluative descriptions of a group that are based on generalizations applied to every individual in that group

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

46

47
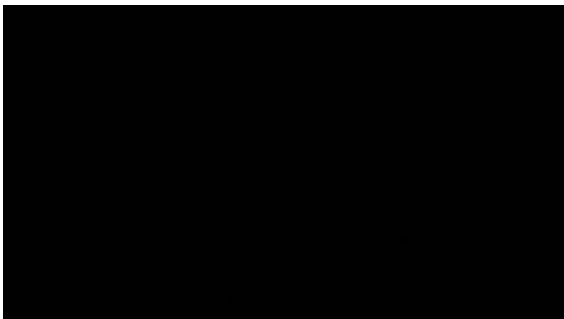
48

Stereotypes and communication

Stereotypes are generalizations or assumptions about individuals based solely on their membership in a group, regardless of their individual characteristics

Types Of Stereotypes
- Gender Stereotypes
- Race And Ethnicity Stereotypes
- Sexuality stereotypes
- Social class stereotyping
- (Dis)Ability Stereotypes
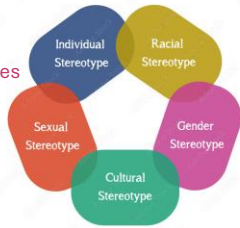
barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

49

The impact of stereotyping

Stereotypes are the idea that everyone within a certain group shares the same characteristics

- Stereotypes influence the way you process information
- Stereotypes may lead to ineffective communication
  - have a direct influence on your communication with others
  - influence the way you process information
  - exert a powerful influence on our interactions with others
  - lead to misinterpreting messages or failing to engage with others authentically
- We tend to see behavior that confirms our expectations even when it is absent

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

50

Stereotypes and the ladder of inference

I take **ACTIONS** based on my beliefs.

I adopt **BELIEFS** about the world.

I draw **CONCLUSIONS**.

I make **ASSUMPTIONS** based on the meanings I added.

I add **MEANINGS** (cultural and personal).

I select **DATA** from what I observe.

All the information in the world.
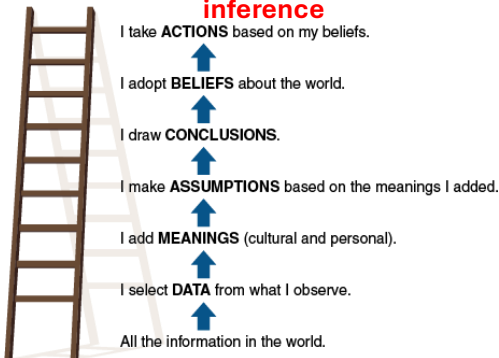
51

Guidelines for Multicultural Collaboration

- Ask questions
- Don't assume that there is one right way (yours!) to communicate
- Don't assume that breakdowns in communication occur because other people are on the wrong track
- Listen actively and empathetically
- Respect others' choices and honor their opinions about what is going on
- Stop, suspend judgment, and try to look at the situation as an outsider
- Be flexible
- Focus on solutions

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

52

53

Effective cross-cultural communication

- Learn about the culture

- Avoid assumptions

- Always maintain etiquette

- Show cultural empathy

- Speak clearly and simply

- Be conscious of your non-verbal gestures/messages

- Practice active listening

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

54

18

Keep in mind

- Culture matters
- Culture is real
- Culture is a people's common history
- Culture plays a role in both children's behavior and teacher and family expectations
- Feedback about a child's behavior is often inconsistent because expectations differ from teacher to teacher
- The behavioral requirements in classrooms can be different from those in the child's everyday world
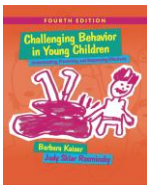
barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

55

When you respect and are open to cultural differences

- You develop personal, meaningful and positive relationships with the educators and the families
- Educators and families feel that you understand their perspective
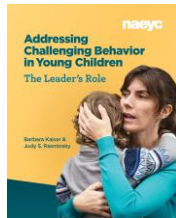- You can have meaningful and positive conversations and provide useful feedback

barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

56

THANK YOU

Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively

Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky

www.challengingbehavior.com

Email: barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

57