



Disability Awareness: Cultural Values

Est. Time: 45 Minutes

Objective

To gain a better understanding of how cultural values affect perceptions about disability.

Overview

The way we live and interact with others is shaped by our cultural perceptions. This activity is about how varying cultural views can affect our perceptions of an individual who has a disability.

Activity

Compare the two columns in the table below and discuss the following scenario:

TRADITIONAL NATIVE VALUES	MAINSTREAM AMERICAN VALUES
Sharing	Saving
Cooperation	Domination
Noninterference	Competition
Sense of being	Aggression
Importance of the tribe and extended family	Individualism and the nuclear family
Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature
Present-time orientation	Future-time orientation
Preference for explanation of natural phenomena according to the spiritual realm	Preference for scientific explanations of everything
Deep respect for elders	Reverence for youth

Garrett, M. T., Bellon-Harn, M. L., Torres-Rivera, E., Garrett, J. T., & Roberts, L. C. (2003) Open hands, open hearts: Working with native youths in the schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*. 38(4) pp. 228–235.

Jim George is a fifth-grader who recently moved from the reservation to a new city due to his father’s transfer. He has limited life experiences outside his Native American culture. He attended school on the reservation, where he was diagnosed with dyslexia and received appropriate services. Though Jim’s parents are confident that he will continue to receive help in his new school, they are concerned about the impact mainstream American values will have on him. They worry that these values might put more focus on his disability rather than his ability.



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Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Compare the traditional native values with the mainstream American values.
2. Discuss why Jim's parents might be concerned.