

How the people of different cultures show their respect to each other

[Experience](#), [Personal Experience](#)



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Respect And Contempt

About two months ago, I took a trip to Africa with my dad. We visited several countries and learned a lot about different cultures. As the days where getting closer I was just thinking about all the negative things that could happen while I was there. One thing I learned is that, most countries in Africa, it is frowned upon when you enter someone's house with your shoes on. A common worry when traveling to a foreign country and or learning a new language, is that you could be completely misunderstood. Before traveling to any foreign country, you should do a research of that country in order to learn the dos and don'ts. Different cultures have different ways they show respect. Therefore, before deciding on a trip to a foreign country, one should learn how they show respect among each other.

First, in learning a new language or visiting a country, you need to know which words, gestures and body languages are culturally sensitive. It is not only important to know how to fluently speak and know the vocabulary and grammar, it important to know cultural sensitivities, and be aware of topics and gestures or words that are interpreted in a negative way. For example,

thumbs-up gesture is a sign of approval in most countries. However, “ in several countries in West Africa and the Middle East, including Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the gesture has the connotation of ‘ up yours!’ It’s used the same way the middle finger is in the US”. Secondly, heavy metal fans are familiar with the ‘ sign of the horns’ or ‘ devil horns,’ made by extending the index finger and pinky. According to Business Insider, “ in many European and South American countries, including Italy, Spain, Greece, Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia, the gesture has an obscener meaning. There, it’s used to mock cuckolds, husbands whose wives are unfaithful”. In addition, in America, personal space is very important. According to my research, “ Everyone has a physical space. It corresponds to a space that we need around us to feel safe and where any threat to our “ personal bubble” would make us uncomfortable. In the USA, it is more important for people to preserve their “ vital space” and to have a certain distance between each other during a conversation”. However, in some other countries, personal space does not exist. For example, in Brazil, “ it is considered normal to talk close to each other and touch each other while talking”. What one country considers a violation of personal space; another country might consider it a sign of friendliness. In order not to run into these problems, you need to learn and understand which words and gestures are culturally sensitive.

Human Prejudice

Another major issue beyond offending people is negatively stereotyping those groups of people. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a stereotype as a “ widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular

type of person or thing". When people analyze another group of people, they often stereotype and mislabel individuals personalities based on a preconceived notion. For example, thinking all Middle Easterners are terrorists. According to my research, because of the attacks on the United States in 2001 most people look at " Middle Easterners as scary and harmful people. They think just because they have dark skin and dark hair that they are going to bomb something. This can be very hard for Middle Eastern students today because other students might be afraid of them because of what their parents have told them". This can cause those students to not have any friends and be very lonely. Also, many people think that black people are " just burglars and delinquents. This can make it very hard for African American students that are trying to just make it through school and get a good education. Another well-known stereotype is that African Americans are good at sports". This can be very true for some, but that is the case for all cultures. Another example is the stereotype for Asians. People always think Asians are extremely intelligent. In many cases this can be true, but there are many other cultures that have students that excel also. According to my research, " Whenever a person sees someone that is of Asian descent, they expect them to be very smart, but if their grades and achievements aren't up to that person's standard then they are look down upon". This more than likely will give that person a very low self-esteem because they don't think they are good enough. People having a preconceived notion about different cultures derives from people not learning about them.

Next, the word respect resonates with everyone. Most people go through their lives and always hear about the word respect, but most of them don't know what it means. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, respect is "a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements". When you show respect to other cultures, you are showing respect to people who belong to that culture. You are showing respect to people who see their cultural as part of their identity. When you disrespect their culture, you are disrespecting these people. Think about how you feel when someone disrespects your culture. According to Rabotin, you can think of examples when "others fail to show you respect: the little slights, disrespectful remarks, or uncivil behaviors that occur every day with shopkeepers and colleagues". Next, every culture has a certain way they show or demand respect. For example, in Kenya, the elderly or people of higher status usually get more respect. When I went to Kenya this past summer, I saw how they treated elderly people. For instance, when it came time to greet someone older, you would grip their right wrist with your left hand then you would shake his hand with your right hand. The other thing that was noticeable was that the oldest male had to be served and start eating before anyone else would. Therefore, before taking a trip to Kenya, you must be aware of the way they show respect. Lastly, one of the most important ways to show respect is most Asian countries is by bowing. According to core languages, "one of the most memorable practices is to show respect by bowing in Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea and other Asian countries. Bowing is used to greet others and express gratitude, among other applications".

Finally, by learning about different cultures, we can increase our horizon and communicate more on a personal level. The most important step people can take to learn about other cultures is to accept that there are many different cultures around the world other than their own. According to Bernstein, “ One of the most important first steps people can take to learn about other cultures is to simply accept that there are many different cultures other than their own”. We need to start thinking about the positives of different cultures and how surrounding ourselves with diverse groups of people will make our lives better. “ Sometimes a person might not know very much about geography or history but by mingling and mixing with people from other cultures, they are given the opportunity to possibly learn about the geography, religion and customs of different countries”. For instance, kids who grow up in a diverse neighborhood tend to be more respectful of different cultures as they grow up than kids who don’t.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we can see why it is important for one to learn about how different cultures show respect among themselves. First, we saw how when learning a new language or visiting a country, you need to know which words, gestures and body languages are culturally sensitive. We also saw how negatively stereotyping groups of people is one of the major issues beyond offending people. Next, we learned that the word respect resonates with everyone. We saw how different cultures show respect. Finally, we learned that by learning about different cultures, we can increase our horizon and communicate more on a personal level. We need to start

surrounding ourselves with diverse groups of people. If I had done my research before traveling to Africa, I would have known most African cultures want you to take off your shoes before entering their house.