



The Cultural Safety Pyramid

The cultural safety pyramid illustrates the process that organizations and providers need to take in order to create an environment where individuals feel safe, respected, and empowered, and where their cultural identity is fully acknowledged and valued. Each stage builds upon and adds to the one before it, allowing organizations and individuals to provide inclusive and culturally appropriate services and avoid reinforcing marginalization.



Cultural Awareness: the foundational tier in the development toward cultural safety; surface-level recognition of the existence of diverse cultures with different practices, beliefs, and values.

To build cultural awareness:

- Have a strong understanding of what culture is—the various elements of culture and what it means in people’s lives.
- Identify the cultures most frequently seen by your organization.
- Seek out education about diverse cultures, including both their visible and invisible elements.

Cultural Humility: the second tier in the development toward cultural safety; involves continuous self-reflection and learning to understand one’s own cultural biases and to develop respectful relationships with others.

To build cultural humility:



- Reflect on your own cultural identities and how those identities influence your values, perceptions, and beliefs.
- Assume the position of the learner when interacting with individuals from other cultures.
- Acknowledge power dynamics in provider-client relationships and work to establish systems of institutional accountability.
- Be open to client feedback, maintain a person-centered approach, and be willing to identify and challenge internal bias.

Cultural Responsiveness: the third tier in the development toward cultural safety; actively adapting behaviors and services to meet the cultural needs of others, showing respect for their beliefs, practices, and ways of being.

To build cultural responsiveness:

- Identify institutional barriers to equitable care, and develop policies and practices to reduce those barriers.
- Prioritize community involvement and centering the voices of individuals from historically marginalized communities.
- Engage in ongoing data collection and analysis, and adjust services and practices accordingly.
- Ensure that a commitment to culturally responsive care is reflected in the mission, goals, and protocols of the agency, and develop an actionable plan, seeking consultation as needed.

Cultural Safety: the creation of an environment where individuals feel safe, respected, and empowered, and where their cultural identity is fully acknowledged and valued. Cultural safety is reached by progressing through and building upon the preceding stages of cultural awareness, humility, and responsiveness.

To build cultural safety:

- Identify and challenge systemic issues; advocate for change; and dismantle harmful practices.
- Allow the client to define what safety means to them and prioritize their sense of safety.
- Practice from a stance that a context of safety is required for goals to be accomplished and relationships to be built.
- Engage in continuous learning and self-reflection, and be intentional about considering the role of culture in your interactions and practices with clients.