



Supervised Visitation Monitor Training

Helping Families- Cultural Sensitivity

Hi and welcome to part thirty-five, Cultural Sensitivity training for the Supervised Visitation Monitor, brought to you by Family & Children’s Counseling Services.

In this segment, we will learn about culture, cultural bias, stereotyping and awareness.

Humans experience and interpret interactions through their own cultural lens- usually without conscious awareness. That does not mean we are bad or racist. To some extent we are a product of our upbringing, experiences and environment.

- Think about the Country you were raised in
- Where were your parents from?
- What values did they place on you?
- What faith did you have?
- What kinds of foods did you eat?
- What language did your family speak in the home?
- Think about the neighborhood you grew up in.
- Was it affluent? Poor?
- Was there a strong sense of community?
- Did you participate in sports, scouts, or 4H?
- Was your family educated? Blue collar?

Culture is not simply about skin color or ethnicity. Culture can be about socio-economic status, faith, hobbies, values, career goals, marital status, and style of parenting. There is drug culture; gang culture, small town and big city culture, cowboy culture and Harley riders’ culture.

You see, culture is really about the rules, rituals, customs, language, dress, religion, food, music, education, work, social habits and values of any group of people.



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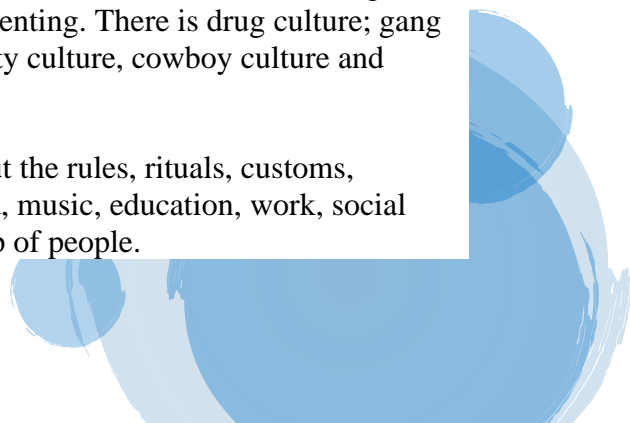
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If I mention gang bangers, people from the South, the Midwest, the East Coast, Christians, Muslims, Jewish people, teen parents, Mexican-Americans, African-Americans, Caucasians, single moms, drug addicts, or perpetrators of domestic violence... you'll get an idea or image in your head. Those images aren't from the Big Book of Cultural Awareness. Those images are your own ideas – dare I say stereotypes- about groups of people.

A stereotype is a vague, oversimplified or exaggerated idea of any group of people.

Examples of some stereotypes are: Asians are good at math, women are bad drivers, men are messy, Native Americans are alcoholics, single mothers are poor, lawyers and car salespeople are shady... you get the picture.

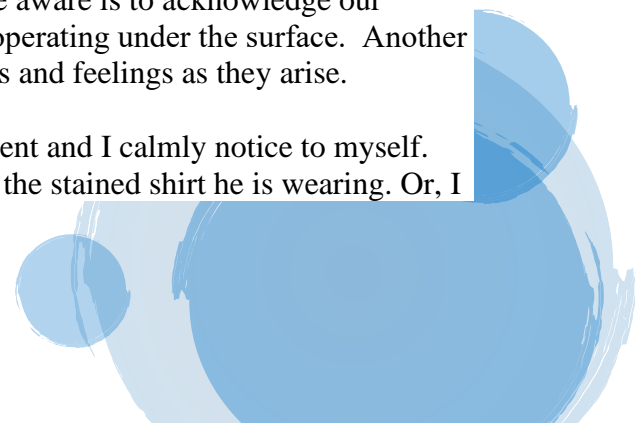
If I've offended anyone, I'm doing my job. No one wants to be thrown in to a lump of people and dehumanized into some caricature.

Cultural bias is the human tendency to interpret and judge others by our own standards. If we are working with families who are Court-ordered into Supervised Visitation, we may have a bias.... Against parents who have been accused of domestic violence or child abuse, of people who stay in relationships with people who abuse or have anger issues. We may have a bias against drug user or alcoholics. We may lean in favor of domestic violence survivors, or mothers or fathers. We may judge someone for their financial status, clothing, weight or hygiene.

The point is, Monitors need to be aware. It's impossible to be 100% neutral. We are humans, not robots. So, yes, we can notice that we have a tendency to lean toward that brave single dad or that weary divorced mom... or vice versa. The goal isn't to completely eliminate our bias. The goal is to be aware of it.

One way we can become aware is to acknowledge our various biases so they aren't operating under the surface. Another way is to observe our thoughts and feelings as they arise.

For example, I meet a new client and I calmly notice to myself. Hmm, I just judged him for the stained shirt he is wearing. Or, I





am imagining her as a dirty cat woman based on one phone call. We acknowledge the thought or feeling and let it float by.

List all the cultures you belong to (samples are Ethnic heritage, female, male, single, married, divorced, middle-class, college-educated, age / generation, faith, etc.)

Pause the video if you need time to list them all. How many did you come up with? How many of these have a stereotype?

Now, think of all of the various combinations of cultures a client might belong to. Some could include cultures you belong to as well, and some could be very different.

The fact is, we get clients from every kind of culture you can think of. There is no “typical” client. Everyone faces trials or stormy seasons in life. Getting ordered into Supervised Visitation just happens to be some people’s stormy season. We are not doing anyone any favors by pre-judging, assuming or stereotyping our clients.

Before you move on to the next segment, answer these questions:

- 1) Describe how your thinking was challenged during this video.
- 2) What action will you take to increase your awareness of your clients’ culture?

Thank you for watching. I’ll see you again at the next video, Issues relating to Substance Abuse, Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Domestic Violence.

Family & Children’s Counseling Services, Inc. is a California LMFT non-profit Corporation directed by Melinda Haynes, MA, LMFT 102308.

You can find FCCS online at www.HealPlayLove.org.

You can find Melinda’s therapy channel, Can We Talk?, at <https://www.youtube.com/canwetalk>

