



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.13 Adapting to Cultural Differences

### **Objectives**

Develop an awareness of certain cultural assumptions.

Devise respectful responses to cultural differences.

### **Material needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students read and respond to the scenarios provided.

Discuss in small or large groups.



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## 1.13 Adapting to Cultural Differences Handout

### Directions

Read and respond to the following scenarios:

#### Scenario 1:

You have just spoken at an event sponsored by the local Coalition for Tolerance, describing your religious tradition, which is unfamiliar to most members of the audience, and emphasizing the importance of diversity, understanding, and mutual respect among members of different religions. A member of the audience approaches to thank you for your presentation and to shake hands with you. However, your cultural background forbids you to have skin-to-skin contact with this person, since you are of opposite sexes and are neither married nor related. Quick! Devise a response, verbal or nonverbal, that honors the audience member's intention without violating your own values.

#### Variation on Scenario 1:

You are the one making the overture, and realize that the speaker cannot accept your handshake. Devise an alternate way to express your appreciation while still honoring the speaker's cultural values.

#### Scenario 2:

You are bringing your significant other, who is a vegetarian, to your athletic awards banquet. You call the banquet facility to ask about vegetarian entrée options for the meal, and the assistant in charge of the event explains that the menu includes roast beef, chicken, salad, broccoli, and au gratin potatoes, and adds happily that "there is something for everyone." When you repeat that your date is a vegetarian and can't eat a meat entrée, the assistant replies that vegetarians "can choose what they eat." Identify the assumptions the assistant is making, and devise a nonconfrontational way to ask for appropriate accommodations for your date.

#### Scenario 3:

You are making arrangements for an end-of-year party for your school organization. The guest list includes someone whom you know to be hearing impaired. After some investigation, you find out that the guest has oral communication (i.e., speaks rather than uses

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sign language), reads lips, and has a very residual amount of hearing that diminishes in a noisy environment. Decide how to arrange the atmosphere, including furniture/seating, lighting, background noise, party activities, and any other important factors, to maximize that guest's comfort at the party.